# Comparative Study of Vegetative Cover – A Sampling of Bellevue Neighborhoods

October 2010

Washington Sensible Shorelines Association

**Purpose:**

To contrast the varying degrees of vegetative cover (esp. trees) present in Bellevue neighborhoods compared to shoreline neighborhoods.

**Methodology:**

Google Earth was used to obtain aerial photos. These were focused to a scale reflecting about 70 acres in each view.

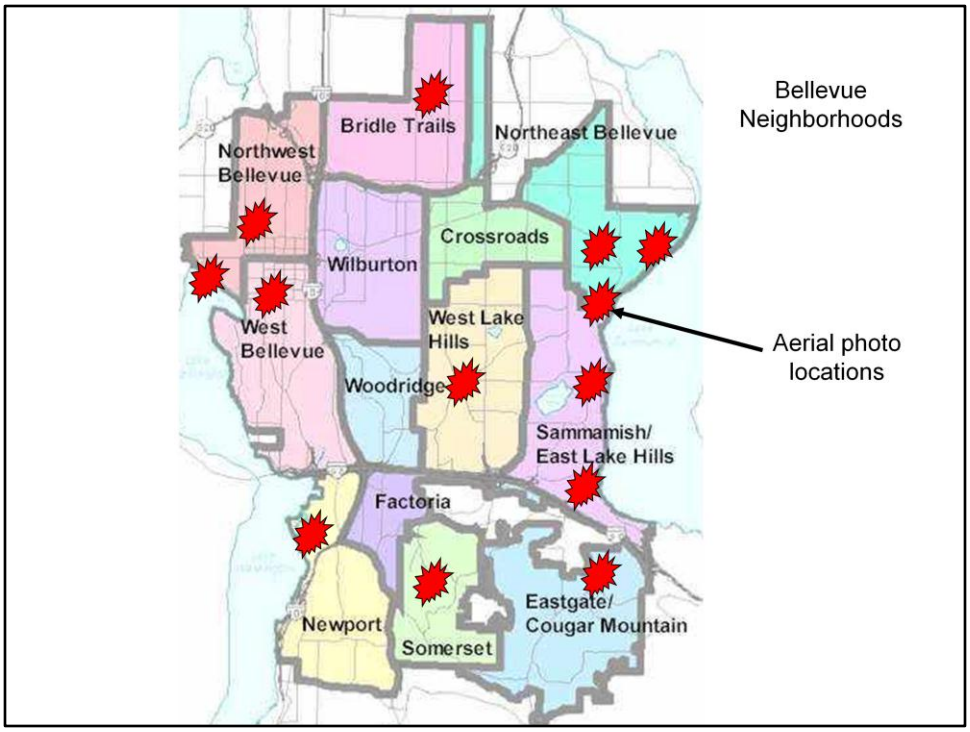
NWMaps.Com was used to obtain Zoning information.

**Limitations:**

All areas could not be included due to time constraints.

Development density figures are approximate.

The shoreline residents have prepared this presentation to better inform the Commission of the differences in vegetative cover present in Bellevue communities. It shows, through the use of aerial photos, some interesting facts which should be taken into consideration in setting setback and other shoreline regulations.




Representative shoreline and non-shoreline neighborhoods were selected as shown by the red symbols on this slide.


We start in Bridle Trails showing the State Park and near-by residential development. Naturally, a park can retain most trees and significant vegetative cover. Likewise, when there's only 1 home on 3 to 5 acres, as shown here, there's sufficient "room" for vegetation. Unfortunately, we all don't live in such areas.


As shown by one of our older neighborhoods, Surrey Downs, as development density increases, vegetation is replaced by man-made objects – houses, driveways, roads, etc.


And, as will be shown in many of Bellevue's non- shoreline neighborhoods, significant removal has occurred.


Yet, you'll find that shoreline properties, as shown here in Meydenbauer Bay, have as great or greater retention of vegetation as elsewhere.


Some neighborhoods, as here in Newport Shores, have removed vegetation in favor of canals among the homes.


Others, such as Somerset, actually stipulate in their covenants that one owner cannot block the views of another; thus giving favor to views, and leading to tree loss.


Similar situations can be found in Lakemont, one of the more recent developments.


Perhaps due to the lack of long distant vistas, Lake Hills, one of our older neighborhoods, shows surprising retention of trees and other vegetative cover.


Close by, Phantom Lake residents have also shown good stewardship, retaining vegetation in an exemplary fashion.


Moving to other eastside areas, Tam O'Shanter, can only be given passing grades on its cover.


Moving from south to north on Lake Sammamish, East Lake Hills has succumbed to the desire for views, showing fewer tree coverage than immediate neighbors along the lake's edge.

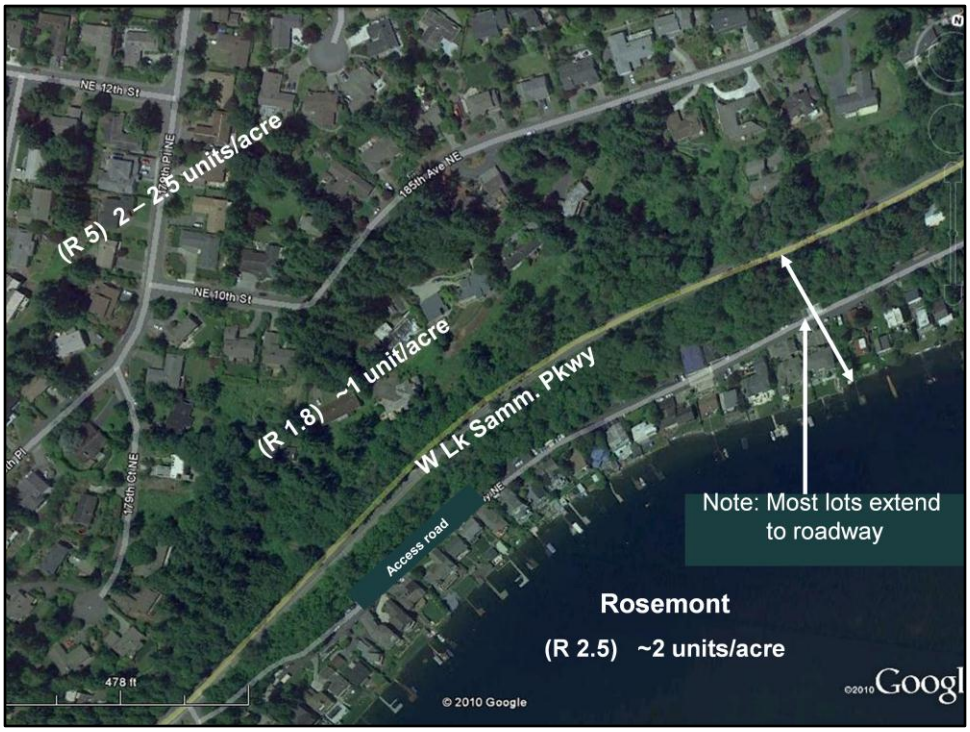

Further north, park land tree coverage (left of the roadway) can be seen extending to the properties along the lake. These properties show more extensive tree retention than non-shoreline neighborhoods.


And, that pattern persists as we move to the north. . .


. . . even in areas such as Bass Cove, where lot depth is much shallower.


And, the pattern is even more distinct when you reach Northup Way; here Lochmoor residents, above the lake, have much less vegetative cover than neighbors on the lake shore.


And, as the lots become deeper again, to the north, significant retention is evident.

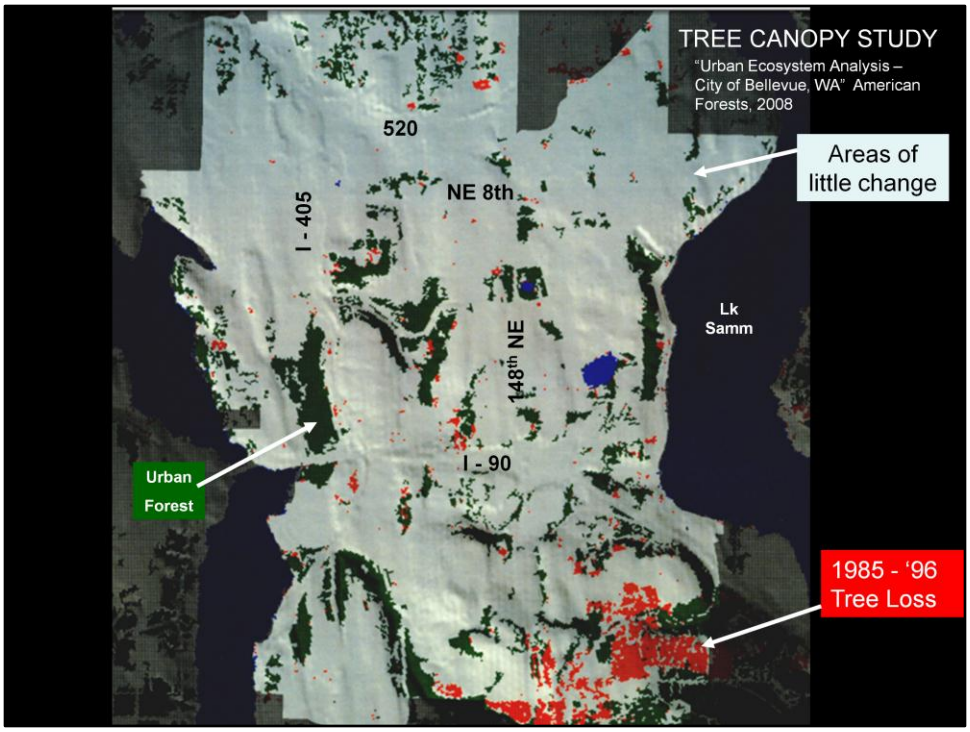



Even in Rosemont, where houses are among the closest to the water, extensive vegetative cover remains.


Here is the same view showing that the majority of these lots extend more than 200 feet from the shore.


Figure 7-2. Representative view of the western Lake Sammamish shoreline under existing conditions, Bellevue, Washington.

Even the City's BAS report acknowledged the extensiveness of preservation of foliage on these properties as shown in this figure from the report.




Finally, the Urban Forest organization's report on tree canopy loss, delivered at last year's Commission retreat, attests that shoreline property owners have not been responsible for the losses witnessed over the last 20 years.

## Conclusions

- Lower density lots retain more vegetative cover; higher density lots less.
- The greatest amount of tree loss has occurred in newer developments, not along shorelines.*

* This has been independently reported – "Urban Ecosystem Analysis – City of Bellevue, WA" American Forests, 2008

The conclusions are obvious. Development has been accompanied by removal of vegetation, with more recent, higher elevation neighborhoods contributing greatly to tree removal . . .

## Conclusions

- Shoreline properties have retained significant amounts of cover, even on the shoreward side of many dwellings.
- There is insufficient justification to require extensive re-vegetation and re-forestation of lake shorelines.

. . . while shoreline properties provide exemplary coverage, even down to the shore itself.

Based on this, as well as the lack of fact-based wildlife needs, plus documented safety issues, and the very real potential for actual increases in pollution to our water bodies, we urge your support of our position that tree requirements be dropped and only sensible levels of vegetation be required.