

REVISED: Tree Retention & Replacement

Ordinance for SeaTac Parks

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Supervisor

August 14, 2025

Parks and Recreation Committee



PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

PURPOSE OF PRESENTATION

Provide an update regarding questions and concerns about tree obstruction removals by the Port of Seattle.

Provide an overview of the proposed Ordinance: Tree Retention and Replacement for Public Park Spaces and request a Parks & Recreation Committee referral to September 23rd RCM as an action item.

WHY IS THIS ISSUE IMPORTANT?

1. Participation in the Port of Seattle's Flight Corridor Management Program (Flight Corridor Safety Program) identifies that the City of SeaTac does not currently have any municipal code regarding tree retention and replacement for SeaTac public park spaces.
2. Approximately 33 trees located in SeaTac Des Moines Creek Park are considered "tree obstructions" and are anticipated for removal first quarter of 2026.
3. The City of SeaTac needs a tree retention and replacement Ordinance adopted before scheduled removals begin to ensure that the mature trees removed are replaced appropriately.
4. This benefits all public park spaces to increase canopy coverage city-wide.

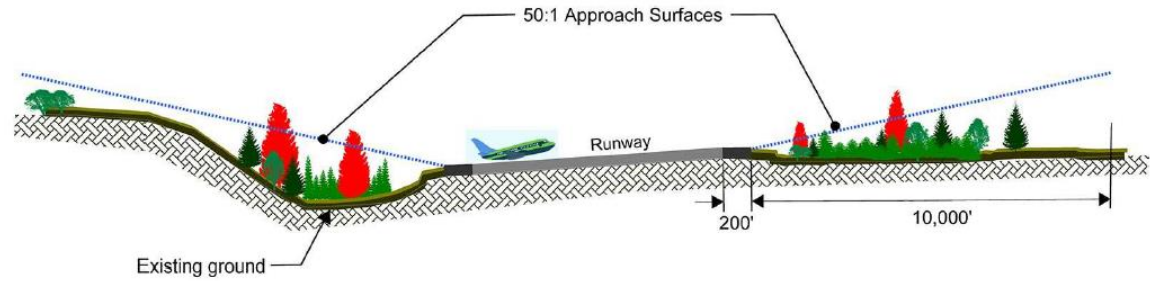


WHAT'S CHANGED SINCE June 12, 2025 MEETING

June 12, 2025 DRAFT	August 14, 2025 FINAL DRAFT
1. Basic components of the Ordinance	1. Reformatted components
2. Confusion regarding exemptions & exceptions	2. Simplified language within subsections
3. Request for monitoring and establishment standards to be added	3. Developed monitoring, establishment, and penalties



FLIGHT CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAM: TREE OBSTRUCTIONS



FLIGHT CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAM: UPDATE

Question:

- Can the Port of Seattle top or snag trees that are considered obstructions rather than entirely remove a mature tree?

Answer:

- The Port of Seattle will not top or snag trees for the following reasons:
 - Topping trees is no longer standard practice in forestry.
 - Creating snags for wildlife to inhabit can attract birds of prey as a food source or as a place to nest/ rest, which becomes a safety hazard within the Flight Corridor Management Program for planes taking off and landing at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

Question:

- Can the Port of Seattle place beacons on top of the trees to help planes avoid them upon takeoff and landing?

Answer:

- The Port of Seattle cannot place beacons on top of trees, as trees are defined as obstructions that can change; whereas buildings do not change. This would not eliminate the hazards presented within the takeoff and landing paths.



TREE RETENTION AND REPLACEMENT FOR PARK SPACES (Title 2, Chapter 45)

Contents:

- SMC 2.45.010- Purpose
- SMC 2.45.020- Applicability
- SMC 2.45.030- Definitions
- SMC 2.45.040- Tree Removal and Pruning Requirements
 - Exceptions for Parks staff, Capital Improvement Projects
- SMC 2.45.050- Tree Retention Requirements
- SMC 2.45.060- Tree Protection
- SMC 2.45.070- Tree Replacement Requirements
 - Exception for sites with existing healthy significant trees (tree canopy coverage)
- SMC 2.45.080- Fee In-Lieu of Replacement
- SMC 2.45.090- Enforcement and Monitoring



PURPOSE, APPLICABILITY, & DEFINITIONS

Purpose:

- The purpose of this chapter is to establish standards for tree retention and replacement on properties owned and/or managed by the City of SeaTac in support of the City's urban forestry, climate, and equity goals.

Applicability:

- This chapter only applies to public park lands owned and/or managed by the City of SeaTac and the Parks & Recreation Department. This includes public lands such as North SeaTac Park, Highline SeaTac Botanical Garden/ Community Center, Riverton Heights Park, Bow Lake Park, McMicken Heights Park, Angle Lake Park, Grandview Park, and SeaTac Des Moines Creek Park.
- It also applies to the removal of trees by the Port of Seattle on land that is leased to the City of SeaTac such as SeaTac Des Moines Creek Park and North SeaTac Park.

Definitions:

- All definitions outlined in this Chapter pertain to trees and their retention, removal, and protection.



TREE REMOVAL AND PRUNING REQUIREMENT

- No person may remove a tree from Parks-managed property without written authorization from the Parks & Recreation Director or designee.
 - Major pruning may be performed by a qualified tree professional (certified ISA arborist)
- *Exceptions:*
 - Emergency removal of trees in situations involving immediate danger to life, property, interruption of utility services, or public safety
 - Routine maintenance conducted by Parks staff or authorized contractors such as deadwood trimming, trail clearance, or groundcover management- pruning that does not qualify as "major pruning"
 - Trees removed in capital improvement projects
 - Removal of invasive tree species as part of an approved ecological stewardship plan



TREE RETENTION REQUIREMENTS

Tree Density Credits:

- Tree density credits quantify the number of trees on a property, represented as trees per acre.
- Trees are assigned a certain number of credits based on its size and taxonomy
- A minimum percentage of tree credits must be from retained trees on the site (50%)

Tree Density Credit Table

DSH:	3-5"	6-10"	12"	14"	16"	18"	20"	22"	24"	26"	28"	30"
Tree Credits:	0.5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

To calculate credits:

- Existing native trees listed on the City of SeaTac's Approved Tree list receive 1.5 credits each
- Non-native trees receive 2 credits each
- Divide the square footage of the site by 43,560 then multiply by 50. Any fraction of credits shall be rounded up to the next whole number.

Example:

8,500 sqft lot/ 43,560 = 0.195; 0.195 x 50= 9.75, or 10 credits rounded up.

- One 16-inch DSH native tree (1 native tree @ 1.5 credits each x 4 Tree Credits) and two 10-inch DSH non-native trees (2 non-native trees @ 2 credits each x 1 Tree Credit) totals 10 credits



TREE PROTECTION

Tree Protection:

- Protection of tree health during construction, restoration, or establishment involves safeguarding trees from damage, stabilizing for initial growth, or mitigating hazards in natural areas that could potentially harm trees.
- Roots, trunk, branches, compaction, and other harm that can result from activities are considered.
- Stakes or guards, cages, or other structures shall be monitored by the Urban Forester and removed after 1 year of installment or if the structure is causing damage to the tree.
- Significant trees receive additional protection during construction or restoration such as fencing, orange-colored stakes no more than 10 feet apart around the drip line, and prevent activities such as installment of impervious surfaces, excavation, storage or operating equipment within the area
- The Urban Forester may request alternative or additional protection



TREE REPLACEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Tree Replacement Credits:

DSH:	3-5"	6-10"	12"	14"	16"	18"	20"	22"	24"	26"	28"	30"
Tree Credits:	0.5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

Tree Replacement Credit Calculation:

1. Native conifer trees on the recommended native tree list shall receive one and a half (1.5) tree credits.
2. Native deciduous trees are worth two (2) credits.
3. Any tree removed measuring between a listed DSH shall be rounded up to the next increment (example: a tree measuring at 17" DSH shall be considered 18" to determine its replacement credits).

Example:

A significant tree measuring 24" DSH has a minimum replacement value of 8 credits. Replacement can be met by planting 4 native conifer trees ($4 \times 1.5=6$) and 1 native deciduous tree ($1 \times 2=2$) for a total of 8 credits.

Exception:

1. Take the measurement of the overall canopy coverage of existing trees on the lot before removal has occurred. If it is above 20%, replacement may be met through fee in-lieu of replacement.



FEE IN-LIEU OF REPLACEMENT

Fee Calculation:

- Calculated from the individual tree's economic value based on the most current iTree's *MyTree* data over 20 years in "good" condition, administration & labor costs derived from SeaTac's most recent fee schedule (Standard Hourly Rate) at a rate of 7 hours, and average maintenance for 5 years set at \$600.
- On-site restoration will be prioritized.
- *Funds may be allocated to support:*

Propagation



Noxious Weed Removal



Understory Enhancement



MONITORING, ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

Authority and Monitoring:

- The Parks & Recreation Director or designee is responsible for ensuring compliance with these standards.
- All pruning, removal, or replacement activities shall be tracked through a Parks-maintained urban forest inventory system.
- Site inspections and verification will be conducted quarterly by the Urban Forester.
 - Routine monitoring of planting and restoration sites track the condition and health and gauge progress
 - If survival rates decrease by 10% or more, other methods for replanting or restoration will be considered to improve the health of the site

Enforcement:

- Code Enforcement Officers: may permit a violator of this Chapter to voluntarily perform City-approved community service in-lieu of paying some or all of the civil penalty. This may include restoration or educational programs.



MONITORING, ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

Penalties:

1. Clearing, damaging, girdling, or poisoning which results in an unhealthy or dead tree
2. Topping that results in the removal of more than 25% of the live crown
3. Damage to roots or trunk that is likely to destroy the tree's structural integrity

Civil Penalty Fines

Unlawfully Removed or Damaged Tree DSH or Stump Diameter	Fines Per Tree
Trees less than 8 inches	\$700
Larger than 8 and up to 10 inches	\$1,000
Larger than 10 and up to 14 inches	\$2,000
Larger than 14 and up to 18 inches	\$4,000
Larger than 18 and up to 22 inches	\$6,000
Larger than 22 and up to 26 inches	\$8,000
Larger than 26 and up to 30 inches	\$16,000
Larger than 30 inches	\$20,000
Tree stump has been eliminated	\$10,000

If the diameter at standard height cannot be obtained, the diameter will be taken of the existing stump.



POTENTIAL COMMITTEE ACTION

COMMITTEE ACTION REQUESTED:

- Recommend that the Committee refer the proposed ordinance as an action item on the September 23, 2025 RCM agenda.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

- Staff recommends that the Parks & Recreation Committee recommend that the City Council adopt the proposed ordinance for Tree Retention and Replacement for Public Park Spaces.

REVIEWS TO DATE:

- Parks & Recreation Committee, June 12, 2025.



QUESTIONS?

