Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections

Seattle Home Fair

SDCI: How Does the Code Impact You & Our Community

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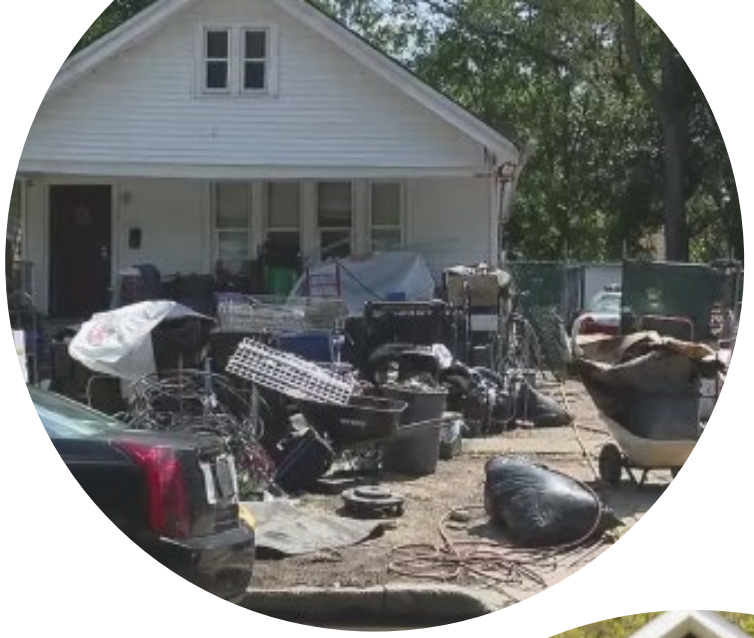
Helping people build a safe, livable, and inclusive Seattle.

Code Compliance… Who Are We?

The Code Compliance Division investigates inquiries to community standards for all neighborhoods, such as:

- ✓ Housing Issues
- ✓ Land Use Issues
- ✓ Junk Storage
- ✓ Tree-Cutting
- ✓ Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA)
- ✓ Vegetation Overgrowth
- ✓ Tenant Issues
- ✓ Rental Registration & Inspection Ordinance (RRIO)
- ✓ Vacant Building Standards and Monitoring
- ✓ Noise
- ✓ Shoreline Master Use Program
- ✓ Construction without permits



COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT

City of Seattle Code Compliance is focused on providing you and our neighbors with a beautiful, clean, and safe place to live.

Our goal is to educate and partner with the public on ways we can work together to create a positive impact within our community.

HOUSING

We rely on complaints from the public to identify potential violations of our housing code for tenants in Seattle.

- Housing Building Maintenance Code (HBMC)
- Ensure minimum housing standards are met
- Emergency condition response
- Different from the Rental Registration Inspection Ordinance (RRIO) required inspections.

LAND USE

Land Use requirements are site, situation and zone specific. Code Compliance will investigate alleged complaints related to:

- **Required Setbacks**- Areas on the front, side, and rear of your yard that limits what you are able to put in them.
- **Unpermitted Structures-** any structure larger than 120 square feet must be permitted.
- **Unpermitted Uses-** every zone has requirements for how land or a structure is designed, built, arranged, intended, occupied, maintained, let, or leased.
- **Unpermitted Dwelling Units**-the creation of a housing unit without it being permitted, such as a DADU or an AADU.
- **Junk Storage**- the temporary or permanent storage outdoors of junk, waste, discarded, salvaged or used materials or inoperable vehicles or vehicle parts.
- **Encampments**- any unpermitted structure (tent, tarp, etc.) on private property that is used to shelter individuals or groups.
- **Light & Glare**- exterior lighting that is not shielded and directed away from adjacent properties.
- **Keeping of Animals**- codes regarding animals within the City of Seattle.
- **Fence Heights**- zone specific requirements for the height of fences on private property.

JUNK STORAGE

You are not allowed to store junk outdoors on your property or adjacent right-of-way, such as an alley or planting strip. Junk includes used materials, scrap metal or car parts, construction debris, furniture, trash, and inoperable vehicles. We regulate junk storage on private property.

Our ordinance requires that you:

- Keep yards, grounds, and right-of-way areas, such as planting strips, clear of junk
- Keep items in active use (outdoor furniture, and materials for active construction projects) neatly stacked or stored when not in use
- Store non-working vehicles in a garage or off site

What we don't do:

× Dumping in alley or on curb

× Junk or abandoned vehicles on public property

For dumping on public property or in the right-of-way: Submit an **online illegal dumping report form** or use the ***Find It, Fix It* mobile app**. You may also call the illegal dumping hotline at **(206) 684-7587**.

For junk vehicles in the public right-of-way: Contact the **Seattle Police Department Parking Enforcement** or call **(206) 684-8763**

TREE CUTTING

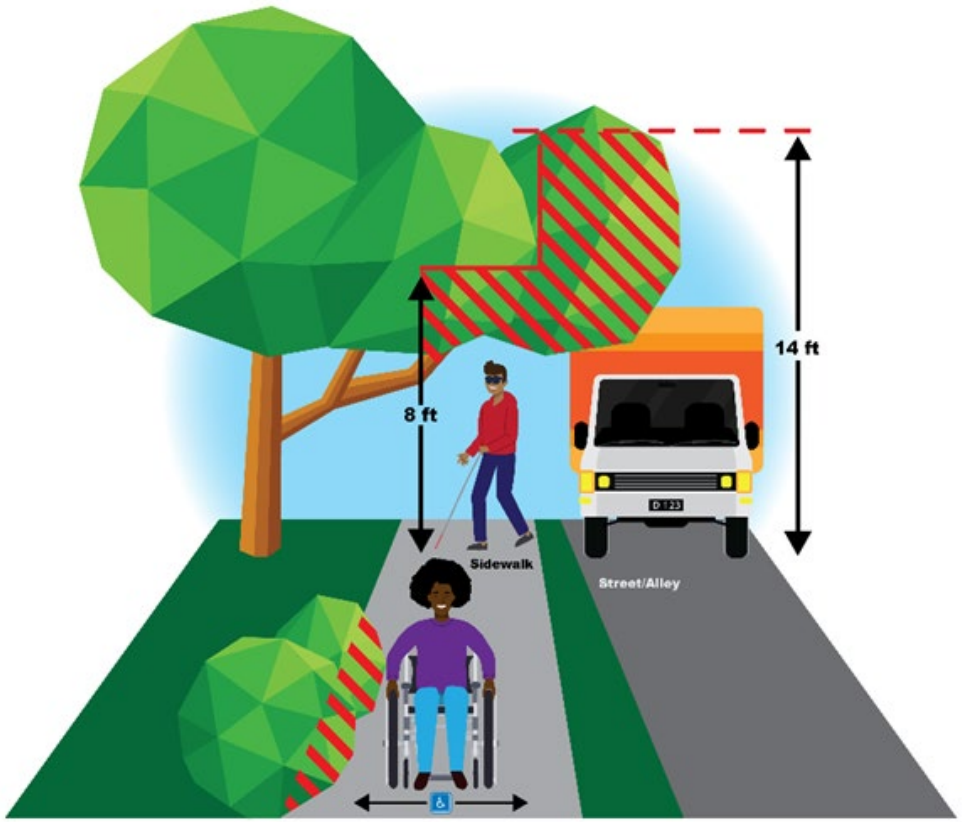
The tree life including removal, planting, and pruning may be regulated by Code Compliance, and these standards are dependent on several factors.

- Where your tree is located – either on private property or in the right-of-way, or along a street will determines which regulations you should follow and who to reach out to for more information (SDCI for private property and SDOT for public).
- Unpermitted tree removal is generally prohibited when no development is proposed, however tree protection regulations have several exemptions and allowances for tree removal outside of development proposals.
- The Seattle Municipal Code (25.11) limits the number, size, and type of trees that may be removed from your property.
- If you unlawfully remove a tree or hire an unregistered tree service provider, the penalties can be expensive.
- Tree protection requirements vary based on the size (tree tier), species, whether there is construction occurring or proposed on the lot, and the zoning of the property.
- If you are hiring someone to do extensive trimming or removal of a tree in Seattle, they must be on the Tree Service Provider registry. SDCI maintains a Tree Service Provider Registry of the companies eligible to conduct commercial tree work on private property in Seattle.

City of Seattle Tree Service Provider Directory

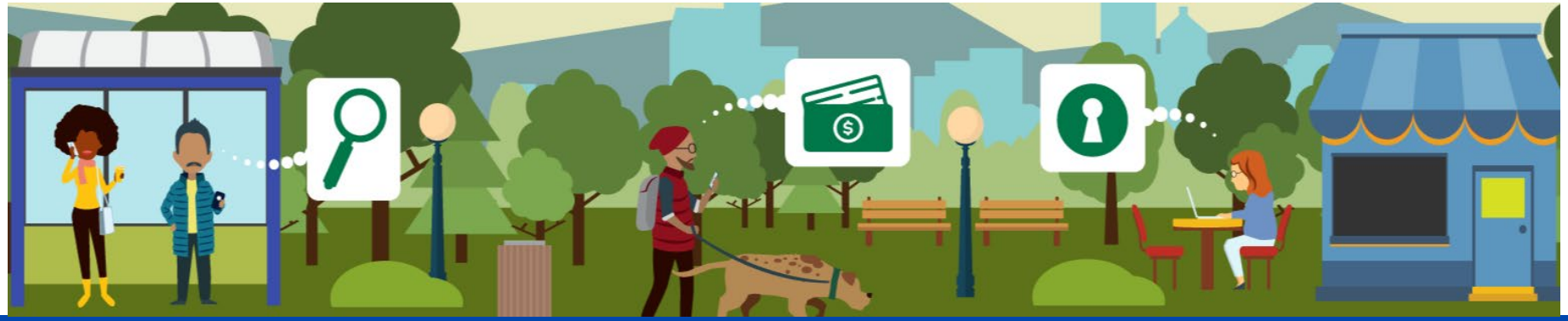
VEGETATION OVERGROWTH

- Sidewalks must be clear from concrete edge to concrete edge.
- Vegetation over a sidewalk must be trimmed to 8 feet above the sidewalk; no branches or other parts of the plants hang over the walkway below 8 feet.
- Streets and alleys: vegetation must not grow onto the roadway.
- Vegetation hanging over the street or alley must be trimmed so that the roadway is clear to 14 feet above the street surface.
- Vegetation must be trimmed so that traffic signs and drivers' views at intersections are not blocked.



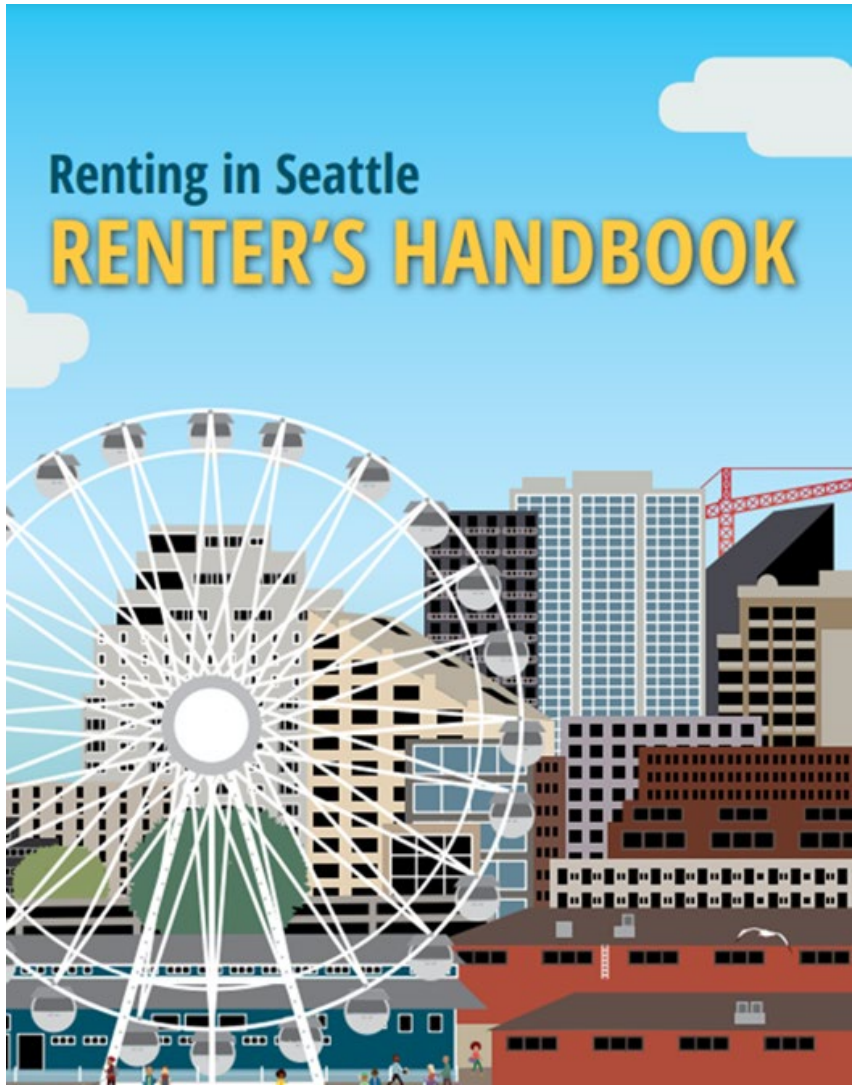
PROPERTY OWNER/TENANT ASSISTANCE (POTA)

- Enforce tenant protection ordinances
- Provide guidance on Seattle rental regulations
- Review landlord notices to ensure they meet compliance
- Administer relocation funds related to displacement:
  - Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance – displacement by development (demolition, substantial rehab, change of use)
  - Economic Displacement Relocation Assistance Ordinance – displacement by a rent increase of 10%
  - Emergency Order – displacement by non-habitable housing conditions



RENTING IN SEATTLE

- Provides a dedicated website for renters and landlords www.seattle.gov/rentinginseattle
- Publishes the Renters Handbook translated into 13 languages
- 7,000 handbooks distributed in 2024
- Community Outreach - 44 events in 2024
- Quarterly landlord workshops
- Trainings for community-based tenant-serving organizations
- Renting in Seattle Helpline: (206) 684-5700



TENANT SERVICES GRANTS

- 112 households received rent assistance to stay housed
- 222 tenants received representation at eviction proceedings
- Over 9,000 individuals attended trainings or received assistance

Organization	Grant Amount	Services
Be:Seattle	$160,803	Tenant education, Outreach
Catholic Community Services – Tenant Law Center	$434,000	Eviction defense, Direct counseling, Referrals
Interim CDA	$88,150	Direct counseling, Tenant education, Language access, Paperwork assistance
King County Bar Association – Housing Justice Project	$1,050,000	Right-to-Counsel, Eviction defense, Tenant education, Case management, Referrals
Queer Power Alliance	$75,937	Tenant education, Referrals, Outreach
Solid Ground	$165,747	Direct counseling, Tenant education, Referrals
Somali Community Services	$83,000	Case management, Outreach, Tenant education, Referrals
Tenants Union	$251,766	Direct counseling, Tenant education, Referrals
United Indians of All Tribes Foundations	$75,000	Direct counseling, Tenant education, Referrals, Outreach
Villa Comunitaria	$185,376	Direct counseling, Case management, Language access
Total	$2,569,779	

RENTAL REGISTRATION & INSPECTION ORDINANCE (RRIO)

The Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance (RRIO) was established by the Seattle City Council. RRIO helps ensure that all rental housing in Seattle is safe and meets basic housing maintenance requirements. All rental property owners in Seattle must register their properties with the City. The Inspection requirement ensures all registered properties comply with minimum housing and safety standards at least once every 5 - 10 years.

What is a RRIO inspection?

A RRIO inspection is a careful look for specific maintenance items. Owners have the option to hire the city or a private inspector. An inspection is not a look at your/tenant's possessions, how people live, or what they do in your living space. The RRIO inspection is limited to a checklist that includes things like:

- No holes or visible leaks in the roof or walls
- Plumbing fixtures, such as sinks and toilets, work properly
- Windows and doors work properly and are secure
- A permanently-installed, working heating system

VACANT BUILDINGS

Vacant buildings in Seattle must be secured and maintained to prevent unauthorized entry and deterioration from the weather.

SDCI has created a Vacant Building Monitoring program that is a proactive, inter-agency partnership to reduce or eliminate issues that can arise with vacant buildings within our community.

This ordinance does not cover:

- Unauthorized or criminal activity, squatters, or vagrants in vacant buildings; contact the Seattle Police Department at (206) 625-5011 (non-emergency) or 911
- Rodent (e.g., rat) infestation; contact the Seattle-King County Health Department at (206) 296-0100

Our ordinance requires that you:

✓ Keep your vacant building in good repair, secured from unauthorized entry, and protected from the weather

✓ Keep the grounds free of junk, parked cars, and overgrown vegetation

✓ Remove deteriorating or unsafe building parts, such as staircases that may pose a danger to firefighters or other city personnel

SHORELINE

The Shoreline Master Program (23.60A) regulates development in the city's shoreline environments to:

- Protect shoreline ecosystems
- Encourage water-dependent uses
- Provide for public access and enjoyment of the shorelines

Our ordinance requires that developers:

- Obtain a shoreline substantial development permit, or a shoreline exemption, for any development in the Shoreline District
- Obtain a master use permit for any use or change of use in the Shoreline District
- Use best management practices in the shoreline to minimize and mitigate impacts on the aquatic environment
- Obtain and display a City-issued identification number for a floating residence (learn about the Floating Residence verification and registration process)

NOISE

Seattle's Noise Ordinance contains rules to minimize Seattle resident's exposure to excessive construction related noise. Under our ordinance we screen commercial projects during plan or permit review for potential permanent and recurring noise issues associated with operating your facility. We require mitigation measures for both temporary and permanent major noise generators.

Our Ordinance:

- Sets limits for exterior sound levels in residential, commercial, and industrial districts
- Specifies required quiet hours, and hours during which construction and maintenance are allowed
  - 7:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m., weekdays
  - 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m., weekends and legal holidays

What It Isn't:

We do not enforce loud noises from horns or sirens, motor vehicles, musical instruments, human voices, car stereos, watercraft, parties, or official special events. Contact the Seattle Police Department non-emergency line at (206) 625-5011 for these types of noise problems.

CONSTRUCTION WITHOUT PERMITS

Our ordinances require that you get a construction permit for projects that involve new construction, renovation, or alterations of buildings.

You need to get a permit for most construction projects that involve:

- New Construction
- Alteration or remodeling
- Demolition of a building or structures
- A change of use or occupancy on a property (for example if you are changing an office to a restaurant)
- Work in an environmentally critical area, such as a steep slope, potential slide, and/or a known slide requires a permit and inspections (this includes any construction, demolition, and tree or vegetation removal)
- Grading (excavating, moving, or adding soil to your property)

Questions?

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