

Beacon Ave S and 15th Ave S Safety Project

Tree Walk

July 28, 1-2 PM



Please note that we updated the map after the tree walk to clarify that all trees being planted as part of this project will be planted in the future.

Key tree information from the meeting:

- The project had to remove six trees. We knew that we would need to remove five of these trees since the design phase. Only one tree needed to be removed according to our root evaluations during construction. This tree was on the east side of Beacon Ave S just south of S Hanford St.
- The project is planting 18 new trees! Most of these trees will be planted this fall, during the fall planting window. Others may be planted in winter 2026.

- The species of trees we will plant is mostly American or Japanese Hornbeams. These are a little smaller than many of the mature trees you see in North Beacon Hill. Their roots grow down instead of out, making them great for urban environments nearby sidewalks. Their smaller size makes them less likely to need branch pruning to keep them out of the way of overhead power lines. Other species may be planted, too, depending on planting strip width and overhead clearance, with a goal of maximizing tree canopy.
- Why are trees so often in conflict with sidewalks? Years and years ago, some Seattleites and even some City planners planted lots of trees without understanding the long-term effects. With good intentions in mind, they planted many trees that cause nearby sidewalk and roadway damage and can cause conflicts with overhead power lines. Now we need to rebuild many of these roads and sidewalks and prune these roots and branches. These days, we make better choices about what trees to plant, prioritizing ones that work better in the specific environment where we plant them.

The project team and members of the public met outside of Beacon Hill Station

- The project will reach completion this summer. Currently we're aiming for late August. We will host a celebration event shortly after.
- **What feedback have you heard from the public about the recent construction work?**
 - We've heard from the community some concerns about the roads being narrow now that the new bike lanes are installed. This is an intentional element of the design to help slow cars down.
 - We've also heard that the bike lanes contain some debris and gravel. We're working to officially open the bike lanes as soon as possible, and we are working to make sure the bike lanes are added to the regular street sweeping maintenance schedule. Only some street sweepers are small enough to fit in the bike lanes, so sweeping of the bike lanes may be less frequent than sweeping of the roadway.
- **Are there planting strips for plants but not necessarily trees?**
 - Our project did not add any planting areas that are not intended for trees. Doing so would leave adjacent property owners responsible for the maintenance of those plants. This is a big cost for businesses, so while we would all love to see more plants, we prefer for businesses to reach out to

the City to ask for planting areas rather than to asking businesses to take on this responsibility.

- The Department of Neighborhoods does matching grants for up to \$75,000. This money can be used to create plantings. If any business owners in our project area are interested, we can help connect to these resources.

Beacon Ave S & S McClellan St

The first stop was on the west side of Beacon Ave S, outside of Perihelion Brewing and Milk Drunk.

- The trees in this area are beech trees, and they're around 40 years old. This species can't handle much or any root pruning. Instead, we regraded the whole area and replaced all the surrounding concrete to accommodate their roots while keeping the sidewalk ADA-accessible.
- **Will root pruning be needed in the future? How long will these trees live?**
 - It's possible, but since these are mature trees, it is less likely and wouldn't be expected for years or even decades. We expect the roots to grow downward, not outward.
 - We expect these trees to live for around 80 years.
- **Were any steel plates used to protect the roots?**
 - No, our project did not use any steel plates. Steel plates provide about three inches of protection between the sidewalk and tree roots. We considered it for trees we worked around, but it wasn't the right solution for any tree in our area.
- **Who is responsible for watering the trees?**
 - We'll water the trees for the first five years after the tree is planted. After that, the trees will be able to use their roots to collect groundwater and support the life of the tree without anyone watering them.

Beacon Ave S between S Stevens St and S Hanford St

On the west side of Beacon Ave S just south of S Stevens St

- We filled this area with pavement. We couldn't plant any additional trees here because of the need to maintain distinct from the ADA ramp and the sewer system.

Further south, outside of Homer, Coupe & Flute, and Oak

- Through strategic sidewalk design, we maintained ADA sidewalks, all sidewalk and street cafe seating, and all trees. We didn't need to prune any roots.
- **Will there just be dirt in the planting areas surrounding the trees?**

- No, this fall, we will add mulch as a groundcover for these trees and all future trees we plant for this project.
- **One of these trees seems pretty close to the sewer system. Could that damage the sewer system?**
 - No, trees are not known to damage sewer systems. If a pipe is broken and leaking water, trees will take advantage of this water, so sometimes it looks like the trees created the damage, but they usually do not. This tree is mature and gets its water from groundwater without impacting the nearby sewer.
- **What are the empty spaces and bike symbols on the ground between the sidewalk and the bike lane? It seems like people are parking in them when they shouldn't be.**
 - You're right, this isn't vehicle parking. The space furthest north is a street cafe spot for Homer. The area in the middle where there are bike symbols is bike parking. We will also be adding a bike rack here. We had a bike rack here before, but it was damaged and is now being replaced. The space furthest south is a street cafe spot for Oak.
 - Our project is in communication with these adjacent business owners about their street cafe plans and will work to discourage parking in those spaces if those businesses don't plan to use their street cafe spaces soon.

Continuing south towards S Hanford St

- The trees in this area are beech, maple, or lantern trees. We didn't need to prune any roots to maintain accessible sidewalks.
- In one area, we elevated the sidewalk to accommodate the tree roots. This grade is still ADA-accessible. The adjacent private development (the mostly empty lot) will need to match their driveway/walkway to the new sidewalk elevation.
- Some trees in this area used to have asphalt piled up and covering some of their roots. We uncovered the roots and replaced the nearby sidewalks. All sidewalks are a minimum of four feet wide.
- Will tree branches need to be pruned so they don't touch these power lines?
 - Yes, some may need pruning. City planners used to plan for trees to make a "Y" shape around power lines. These days, we prefer to keep trees below the height of power lines by pruning branches earlier and choosing smaller species.

- Trees should be 10 feet away from primary power lines, 3 feet away from neutral power lines, and not touching service lines. Most of the power lines you see here are just service lines.

Beacon Ave S and S Hanford St

On the east side of Beacon Ave S just south of Hanford St

- This is where we had to remove one tree after root evaluations. We would have needed to trim so many roots of this tree to create ADA-accessible sidewalks that it would have harmed the tree. The tree would be at risk of dying or falling, creating a public safety risk. We had no choice but to remove this tree.
- We're planting six new trees on this block. There will also be one just north of here, and one more just west of here, near Bar Del Corso, for a total of eight new trees in this general area.
- **When are tree branches be pruned?**
 - Urban Forestry has a tree pruning schedule. They try to cover 3 sectors per year, covering each sector every 9 years.

Beacon Ave S and S Spokane St

- The tree on the northwest corner of this block has been surrounded by lots of construction work recently, including our project. Only small feeder roots, not any main roots, have been pruned. It had its branches pruned to maintain clearances of power lines. We're monitoring this tree closely, and so far it is doing well.

Questions about trees nearby our project

- **Some recently planted trees on nearby side streets (not in this project area) seem to be dying already. Can you check in on those?**
 - Yes, we will connect with Urban Forestry and ask them to check up on other recently planted trees in the area.
 - If these trees are owned by SDOT and they are dying, SDOT will replace them.
 - If you reach out to our project inbox with specific locations of these trees, it will make it easier for us to check their statuses. Email us at Beacon15thSafety@seattle.gov.
- **Recently, two large trees were chopped down near Shell Gas Station/14th Ave S and S Holgate St. Why did this happen?**

- We were not aware of this and will check with others at Urban Forestry to see if they know. If these trees were on private property, we may not be able to find out.
- If you reach out to our project inbox with specific locations of these trees, it will make it easier for us to check their statuses. Email us at Beacon15thSafety@seattle.gov.