

# **Tree Protection Code Overview (SMC 25.11) Ordinance 126821 -- Effective July 30, 2023**

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# TODAY'S PRESENTATION

- Tree Tiers
- Can I Remove a Tree? -- Types of Removal Requests
- How to Apply for a Tree Removal Request
- Tree Replacement Requirements
- Site Plan Requirements
- Tree Service Provider Registry and Noticing Requirements
- Where to go for Help/How to Contact SDCI
- Q&A

## Tree Tiers

Seattle's tree protection regulations categorize trees into 4 different tier groups:

**Tier 1 Trees** -- all Heritage Trees

**Tier 2 Trees** -- 24" or greater DSH, tree groves and specific tree species below 24" DSH noted in (Director's Rule) DR 7-2023

**Tier 3 Trees** -- 12" or greater DSH but less than 24" DSH

**Tier 4 Trees** -- 6" or greater DSH but less than 12" DSH

*These are regulated trees. In most cases, you must get SDCI review and approval before removing them.*

## Tier 2 Trees

“**Tier 2 tree**” means any tree that is **24 inches** in diameter at standard height or greater, tree groves, each tree comprising a tree grove, and specific tree species below 24 inches in diameter at standard height as provided by **Director’s Rule 7-2023**.

- There are exceptions – e.g., red alder – that are not Tier 2 at any size (listed in Director’s Rule)
- Any tree within a grove is a Tier 2 tree
- Invasive trees listed on the King County list are not Tier 2 trees with some exceptions

**Read the rule!**

# Can I Remove a Tree? – Types of Tree Requests

The tree code includes a number of tree removal request types:

- Removal allowed within specific **timeframe**
- **Emergency** action
- To comply with **ADA requirements** or for **elderly access**
- Dead tree removal
- To **thin trees** that were initially overplanted resulting in 40% or higher canopy cover on the property
- **Hazard** tree removal
- For an **insect, pest, or pathogen** infestation
- Any **invasive or nuisance** tree
- If needed because the tree is causing **obvious physical damage** to building foundations or utility infrastructure

# Can I Remove a Tree? – Types of Tree Requests

The removal request types apply to certain trees on certain properties. Things you need to know about the tree and the property include:

- Tree
  - Size
  - Species
  - Health
- Property
  - Zone
  - Developed/Vacant



## Can I Remove a Tree? – Types of Tree Requests

- 1 No SDCI review or approval needed; no replacement required
- 2 SDCI review and approval needed; no replacement required
- 3 SDCI review and approval needed; replacement required

## Can I Remove a Tree? – Types of Tree Requests

- 1 No SDCI review or approval needed; no replacement required

Removal allowed on developed property without SDCI review and approval:

Zone	Tree Removal Allowed
NR, RSL, LR, MR, NC, C, and Seattle Mixed zones	Removal of no more than two Tier 4 trees in any 3-year <i>**Note: Trees 12” or greater DSH require SDCI review and approval to remove and must meet one of the removal allowances.</i>
All other zones	Removal of no more than three Tier 3 and Tier 4 (combined) trees in any 1-year period



## Can I Remove a Tree? – Types of Tree Requests

- 2 SDCI review and approval needed; no replacement required

Removal allowed with SDCI review and approval on undeveloped and developed property:

Any tree to comply with ADA requirements or for elderly access

Any dead tree

Removal allowed with SDCI review and approval on only developed property:

In all zones, Tier 3 and Tier 4 trees may be removed to thin trees that were initially overplanted resulting in 40% or higher canopy cover on the property.

## Can I Remove a Tree? – Types of Tree Requests

- 3 SDCI review and approval needed; replacement required

Removal allowed with SDCI review and approval on undeveloped and developed property:

Any tree if hazardous, including emergency removals

Any tree for an insect, pest, and/or pathogen infestation

Any invasive or nuisance tree

Removal allowed with SDCI review and approval on only developed property:

In NR, RSL, LR, MR, NC, C, and Seattle Mixed zones, Tier 3 and 4 trees may be removed if needed because the tree is causing obvious physical damage to building foundations or utility infrastructure\*\*

*\*\*Replacement required only for Tier 3 trees.*

# Tree Replacement Requirements

- **Most** Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 trees removed require replacement
- Replacement tree/s must achieve upon maturity a **canopy cover that is at least roughly proportional** to the canopy cover prior to tree removal.
- Replacement tree/s must be native and/or culturally significant and resilient to climate change
- Replacement can be on-site, off-site, or via a voluntary payment in-lieu fee
- See DR 8-2023 for how to calculate payment in-lieu amount; based on tree tier and size
- See DR 12-2023 for other tree replacement requirements



# How to Apply for a Tree Removal Request – Where to Apply

When SDCI review and approval is required to remove a tree, you can request approval using the Tree Removal and Vegetation Restoration application through the Seattle Services Portal.

Either login to your existing account or create a new account if necessary. Instructions for submitting this application are at: [How to Apply for SDCI Approval for Tree Removal and Vegetation Restoration](#).

The screenshot shows the Seattle Services Portal Help Center interface. At the top, there is a blue header with the Seattle logo and text: "Seattle Services Portal Help Center | Back to Seattle Services Portal | Seattle.gov". Below the header is a breadcrumb trail: "Help Center - Seattle Services Portal > Permits - Trade, Construction & Land Use > Apply for a Permit". A search bar is located on the right side of the page. The main content area features a section titled "Articles in this section" with two links: "How to Purchase Seattle Code Books From SDCI" and "Renewal Process for SDCI Permits". The primary article is titled "How to Apply for SDCI Approval for Tree Removal and Vegetation Restoration" and is attributed to the "City of Seattle", updated "7 days ago".

# How to Apply for a Tree Removal Request – What do I Need?

Required submittal documents for a Tree Removal Request vary depending on the type of tree removal. You will need to provide one or more of these documents specific to the removal request type:

**Arborist Report** that summarizes factors contributing to the tree's condition.

- If the tree is clearly dead, the arborist report is not required. SDCI staff arborists will rely on photos submitted with your application to confirm the status of the tree.
- For emergency actions, the report must only include a brief narrative documenting the tree status and emergency.
- For other tree removal request types, the arborist report should include sufficient information about the tree and documentation of the specific conditions contributing to the need for removal.

## **(ISA) Basic Tree Risk Assessment form**

- Required only for hazard tree removal. If the tree is clearly dead, the assessment form is not required. SDCI staff arborists will rely on photos submitted with your application to confirm the high-risk rating.

# How to Apply for a Tree Removal Request – What do I Need?

Required submittal documents for a Tree Removal Request vary depending on the type of tree removal. You will need to provide one or more of these documents specific to the removal request type:

- **Photos** that document the tree location and status. Photos need to be clear and detailed enough to determine the tree species and proximity to any other site features. Photos need to clearly show the reason for the tree removal request; i.e., signs of pest infestation, obvious damage to building foundations or utilities, or location of the target contributing to the risk.
- **Site Plan** that is legible and scaled showing the site address, site tax parcel number, site configuration, location of existing structures or other potential targets, and location of the tree. You need to show the type and location of replacement trees, if required, either on the site plan or a separate document.
- **Statement of Financial Responsibility** form

# How to Apply for a Tree Removal Request – What does it Cost?

Fees for tree removal requests vary on the request type. Additional fees may apply if the tree is located within an environmentally critical area or the shoreline district.

Minimum Fee Calculation for Tree Removal Requests by Type	
Request Type	Minimum Fee Calculation
ADA/Elderly Access	No LU fee
Dead	No LU fee
Emergency	0.5 x LU hourly rate
Hazard Tree Removal	0.5 x LU hourly rate
Insect/Pest/Pathogen	0.5 x LU hourly rate
Invasive/Nuisance	No LU fee
Obvious Damage to building foundations or utility infrastructure	0.5 x LU hourly rate
Response to Tree Code Violation (25.11)	0.5 x LU hourly rate
Thinning Tier 3 and Tier 4 trees that were initially overplanted resulting in 40% or higher canopy cover	0.5 x LU hourly rate

# Site Plan Requirements

If you are proposing development/construction on your property, you must show all regulated trees and tree protection areas on a site plan submitted with a building permit application. Site plans must show:

- **All regulated trees (Tiers 1 – 4)** including **off-site** trees with canopies overhanging and/or roots extending onto the lot
- **Tree protection areas for all regulated trees (Tiers 1 – 4)** that will be retained during construction including **off-site** trees with canopies overhanging and/or roots extending onto the lot
- **Tree protection fencing** and signage for all regulated trees (Tiers 1 – 4) that will be retained during construction including **off-site** trees with canopies overhanging and/or roots extending onto the lot
  - *Alternative tree protection measures may be approved when no impacts to trees or tree roots and branches are anticipated.*



# Tree Protection Requirements during Development

Tree protection during development varies based on tree tier:

**“Tier 1 tree”** may not be removed unless hazardous or an emergency

**“Tier 2 tree”** may not be removed unless hazardous, an emergency, or permitted to achieve allowed development capacity

These trees will need to be **retained and protected** on most sites.

**“Tier 3 tree”** may be removed as part of a development permit

**“Tier 4 tree”** may be removed as part of a development permit

These trees will need to **be protected if they are retained.**

# Who can remove a tree? -- Tree Service Providers

Tree removal and most emergency actions are likely considered **commercial tree work**. Commercial tree work includes the following actions conducted in the City of Seattle **in exchange for financial compensation**:

- Removal of any Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 tree.
- Reportable work, which is the removal of live branches 4 inches in diameter or greater, pruning or removal of live roots 2 inches in diameter or greater, or removal of live branches constituting 25 percent or more of a tree's foliage-bearing area. Pruning of trees cultivated for fruit production and maintenance of hedges is not reportable work.
- Consultation on the health of trees

All commercial tree work on private property must be conducted by a registered tree service provider. **If you do the work yourself, it is not commercial tree work, and these requirements do not apply.**

Any person or company you hire must be registered to complete commercial tree work. You can locate a registered tree service provider on SDCI's  Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections

# Who can remove a tree? -- Tree Service Providers

Any person or company you hire must be registered to complete commercial tree work. You can locate a registered tree service provider on SDCI's [Tree Service Provider Directory](#).



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections website. It features the Seattle logo, a language dropdown set to 'English', a search bar, and buttons for 'Pay or Apply' and 'Menu'. Below the navigation bar is the main header 'Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections' and a 'Seattle Services Portal' button. A horizontal menu contains links for 'About Us', 'Permits', 'Codes', 'Renting', 'Inspections', and 'Resources', with 'Codes' currently selected.

[Home](#) > [Codes](#) > [Codes We Enforce \(A-Z\)](#) > [Trees & Codes](#) ▾

## Tree Service Provider Directory

SDCI's Tree Service Provider Directory is a list of providers who have met SDCI's registration requirements. Below you will find each provider's business name, services, registration number, and application status. If the business name is in blue text, you can click on the name to visit their website. Click the blue circle to the left of the business name to see the business contact information. You may also use the search box to find specific providers or service types. You can sort each column by alphabetical order by clicking on the grey arrow icon on the right-hand side of the column heading.

### What Do You Want To Do?

[Apply for a Permit](#)

[Pay Permit Fees Online](#)

[Report Illegal Tree Cutting](#)

[Search Tree Public Notices](#)

### Check Status

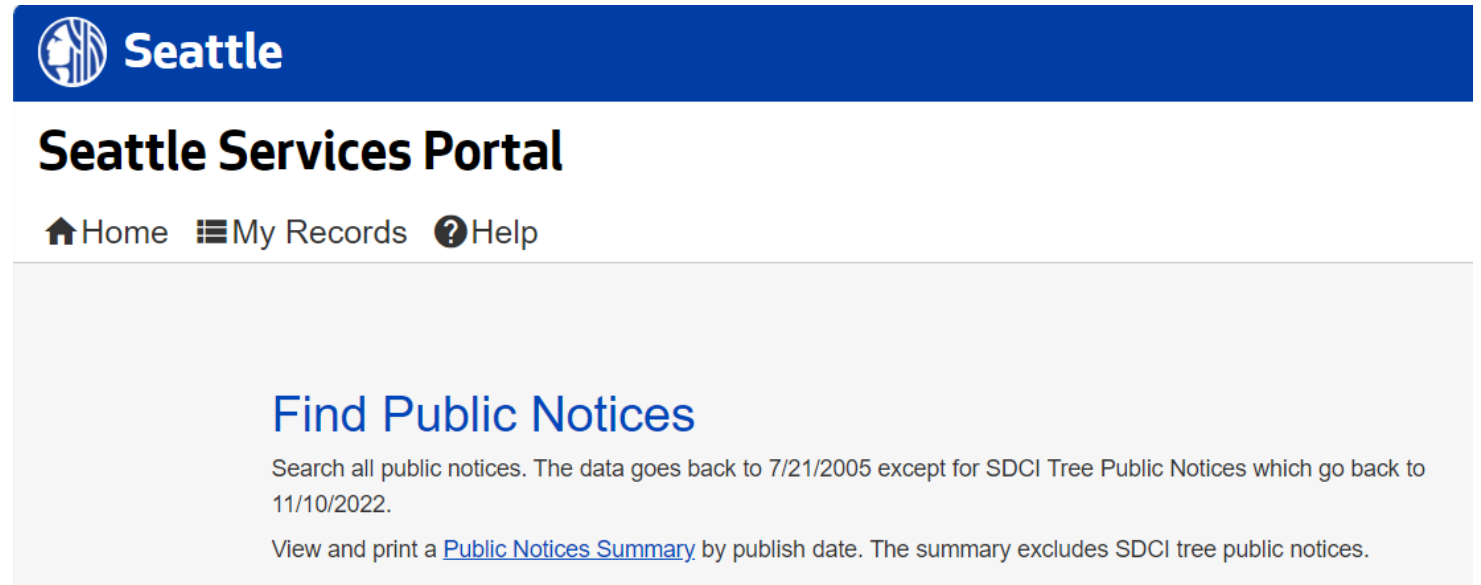
# Public Notice Requirements

- All commercial tree work must have a tree public notice posted per code
- **Online** posting requirements
  - Post online 6 full business days before tree removal
  - Post online 3 full business days before reportable work
- **On-site** posting requirements during work
  - Must be posted in a visible location and should remain for 5 days following
  - Display tree service provider information on vehicle



# Public Notice Requirements

Online public notices are posted automatically to the Seattle Services Portal:



Once in the portal, select "SDCI Tree Public Notice" as notice type

The screenshot shows the search filters section of the portal. A black box highlights the "Notice Type:" dropdown menu, which is currently set to "SDCI Tree Public Notice". Other filters include "Address Range:" with "From" and "To" input fields, "Prefix:" with a "--Select--" dropdown, "Street Name:" with an input field, "Type:" with a "--Select--" dropdown, "Suffix:" with a "--Select--" dropdown, and "Notice Number:" with an input field. Each filter has a help icon (question mark) next to it.

You can search by address or notice number

# Tree Tracking Data Map

[Trees & Codes - SDCI | seattle.gov](https://seattle.gov/SDCI/Codes)

## Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections

Seattle Services Portal

[About Us](#) [Permits](#) [Codes](#) [Renting](#) [Inspections](#) [Resources](#)

 > [Home](#) > [Codes](#) > [Codes We Enforce \(A-Z\)](#) ▾

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### Trees & Codes

What Do You Want To Do?

[Apply for a Permit](#)

## [Trees & Codes - SDCI | seattle.gov](https://seattle.gov/sdci/trees-codes)

Other helpful resources include:

- The [Tree Service Provider Directory](#) lists the approved SDCI Tree Service Providers.
- [How To Apply for the Tree Service Provider Registry](#) describes the application requirements and steps.
- [How To Revise an Existing Tree Service Provider Registration](#) describes how to revise an existing registration.
- [How To Renew an Existing Tree Service Provider Registration](#) describes how to renew an existing registration.
- See [Tree Service Provider Registry Requirements](#) for more information.
- [Seattle Services Portal Public Notices](#) allows you to search for posted tree public notices by date range, address, or notice number.
- [Tree Public Notice Map](#) is an interactive map that displays Tree Public Notices required for reportable work or tree removal on private property.
- [Tree Tracking Data Map](#) is an interactive map that displays tree information from SDCI records that required SDCI staff approval of tree removal, tree protection, or tree planting.

Tree Public Notice

Permit Tree Tracking Database



## Permit Tree Tracking Database

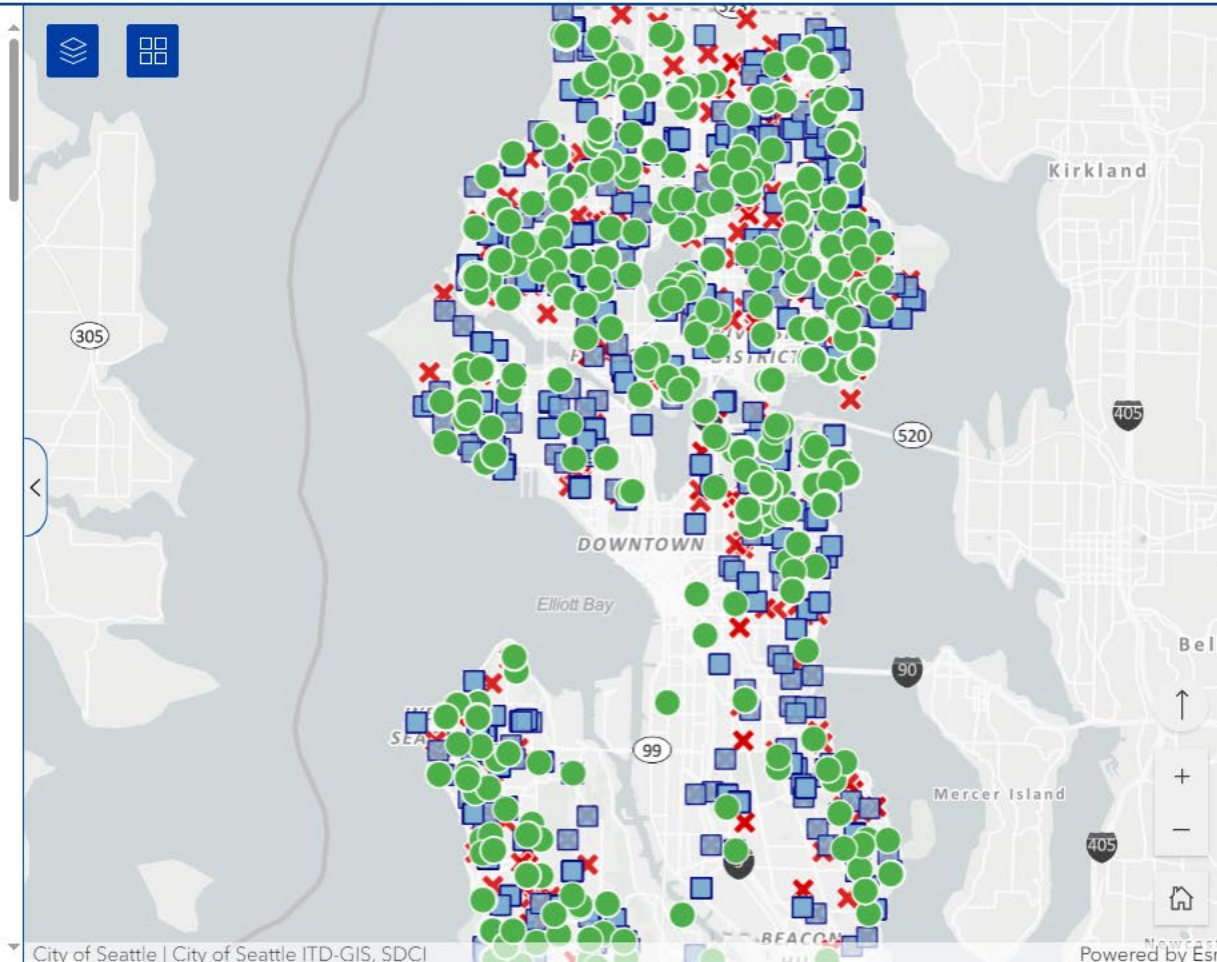
### About the Map

This interactive map displays tree information from SDCI records that required SDCI staff approval of tree removal, tree protection, or tree planting. Not all tree activity requires prior SDCI approval, including pruning, maintenance, or certain removals in accordance with the code.

For more information on code authorized exemptions and allowances, please see [Tip 242B, Tree Removal on Private Property](#).

You can search this map by address or SDCI record number to learn more about tree activity in your neighborhood. The data on this map represents approvals compliant with the Tree Protection Ordinance that went into effect on July 30, 2023 ([SMC 25.11](#)). Trees may be planted to comply with replacement requirements of removed trees or as part of the development standards of the zone in which the property is located.

Information on each tree allowed to be removed, or required to be protected or planted, is shown by different colored shapes on the map.



### Search by Address or Record Number

Enter an address or SDCI record number in the search bar to navigate the map.

### Tree Tracking Database Map Layers

Click the checkboxes to turn map layers on and off. Close the layer's legend by clicking the three lines to the right.

- Protected Trees
- Planted Trees
- Removed Trees
- Relocated Trees



# Resources – Where do I go for Help?

- **SMC CHAPTER 25.11 – KNOW THE CODE!!**
- **TIPS**
  - See 242A through 242D for tree information
- **ADOPTED DIRECTOR'S RULES**
  - DR 7-2023, Designation of Tier 2 Trees
  - DR 8-2023, Payment in lieu of tree replacement pursuant to the Tree Protection Code
  - DR 10-2023, Administration of Tree Service Provider Registry
  - DR 13-2023, Tree Replacement Requirements
  - DR 17-2018, Clarifying Tree Valuations & Civic Penalties for Tree Protection Code Violation

**Tips** are designed to provide user-friendly information on the range of City permitting, land use and code compliance policies and procedures you may encounter while conducting business with the City. Tips are updated by staff as needed.

**Director's Rules (DRs)** are binding rules about land use, construction, housing, and other codes the City administers. The rules are adopted according to the administration section in the Seattle Municipal Code, including at least a 14-day public comment period.

## ➔ [Resources - SDCI | seattle.gov](https://seattle.gov/sdci/resources)

## Forms & Publications

- ➔ [Director's Rules](#)
- [Forms](#)
- [Publication Pricelist](#) 
- [Renter's Handbook](#) 
- ➔ [Tips](#)

## ➔ **Resources**

**Still Need Help?**  
Ask Us  
Call us at (206) 694-8950

# Resources – Online Resources

SDCI WEBSITE	HOW TO GET HELP?
<a href="http://www.seattle.gov/sdci/codes/codes-we-enforce-(a-z)/trees-and-codes">www.seattle.gov/sdci/codes/codes-we-enforce-(a-z)/trees-and-codes</a>	<b>Questions? Email us</b> <a href="mailto:SDCI-trees@seattle.gov">SDCI-trees@seattle.gov</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 25.11 - TREE PROTECTION   Municipal Code   Seattle, WA   Municode Library</a> <b>OR</b> <a href="#">City Clerk website</a>	Visit website and search for “ <b>Chapter 25.11</b> ” for Ordinance 126821
<a href="#">Director's Rules - Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections</a>	Visit website and search “ <b>Tree Protection</b> ” for new Rules
<b>Tip 242A</b> <a href="#">Tree Requirements Associated with Development</a> <b>Tip 242B</b> <a href="#">Tree Removal on Private Property</a> <b>Tip 242C</b> <a href="#">SDCI Tree Service Provider Registry</a> <b>Tip 242D</b> <a href="#">Tree Public Notice</a>	Visit website and search for Tip series “ <b>242</b> ” which include all tree-related topics  <b>Questions? Email us</b> <a href="mailto:SDCI-trees@seattle.gov">SDCI-trees@seattle.gov</a>