



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL
CENTRAL STAFF

Tree Protection Modifications

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Presentation Overview

- Background
- Summary of Draft Legislation
- Potential Issues

Background (1/2)

- Council passed Ordinance 126821 in May 2023 to comprehensively update the City's regulations for trees on private property
 - Created new tree naming convention
 - Expanded protections for trees beginning at 24 inches diameter at standard height (DSH)
 - Increased restrictions on tree removal on developed lots
 - Established a fee-in-lieu of planting option
 - Created new lot coverage standard for lots undergoing development in Lowrise, Midrise, commercial and Seattle Mixed zones

Background (2/2)

- In July, the public became aware of the planned removal of a large double-trunked western red cedar in Wedgwood that was assessed by an archaeologist to be a culturally modified tree (CMT), which is regulated as an archaeological site by the State
- Chapter 27.52 RCW regulates archaeological sites, administered by the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)
- DAHP consults with affected Tribes to develop permitting guidelines before granting permission to disturb archaeological sites
- City does not have a process for verifying whether a tree is part of an archaeological site before approving its removal

Summary of Draft Legislation

The legislation would:

- Establish a process for verifying whether a tree is part of an archaeological site
 1. Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) notifies DAHP when a permit applicant is seeking to remove a Tier 2 or Tier 3 tree
 2. DAHP confirms whether the tree is part of an archaeological site
 - a) If the tree is not part of an archaeological site, SDCI may approve its removal
 - b) If the tree is part of an archaeological site, and the applicant wants to proceed with the removal, the applicant must obtain permission from DAHP before SDCI may approve its removal
- Add a definition for CMT

Potential Issues

- **Administration**
 - Increase to workload at SDCI and DAHP
 - Permit processing delays
- **Trees subject to verification process**
 - SDCI estimates there are 70,400 trees 12 inches DSH and greater on lots in single family, multifamily, and commercial zones
 - Certain species of trees more likely to be CMTs than others and CMTs would be larger due to age

Questions?