

Seattle Tree Ordinance

Tree Protection Area Definitions and Uses

Urban Forestry Commission Feedback

Background

The tree ordinance update passed in 2023 includes definitions of “tree protection area” (TPA) that are used in evaluating whether a tree can be retained in a development project and in delineating tree protection zones during construction.

Christy Carr, Environmental Team Lead for Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections’ (SDCI) Land Use and Engineering Services group provided briefings to the UFC at their June and August meetings, which included descriptions of and some discussion around the TPA definitions and uses.

Below is information on this topic that Christy provided at the August meeting:

There are two tree protection areas defined in the tree code:

"Tree protection area, basic" means the area surrounding a tree in which excavation and other construction-related activities must be avoided unless approved by the Director.

This area is delineated using a radius that is equal to one foot for every inch DSH of the tree.

The basic tree protection area is used only in the analysis to determine whether a Tier 2 tree may be approved for removal as part of a development permit application.

"Tree protection area" means the area surrounding a tree defined by a specified distance, in which excavation and other construction-related activities must be avoided unless approved by the Director.

The tree protection area is variable depending on species, age and health of the tree, soil conditions, and proposed construction.

The tree protection area is the physical space needed to protect a tree during construction. Tree protection fencing is required around the tree protection area on a construction site.

UFC Discussion

The UFC is interested in providing feedback to SDCI on these TPA definitions and the implications for their implementation. This will be discussed at the September 11 UFC meeting. Below are topic areas to be discussed.

1. **Nomenclature of the Basic Tree Protection Area**
2. **Radius of the Basic Tree Protection**
3. **Other topic areas**