

SEA Tree Replacement Standards for Airport Activity Area

SECTION 1. Purpose.

Port-owned properties are subject to tree replacement standards established by the local jurisdictions in which the properties are located. Certain Port-owned properties within the SEA airport boundary, within the “Airport Activity Area”, are not subject to City of SeaTac tree replacement standards.

The purpose of this policy directive is to offer tree replacement standards for “Airport Activity Area”, that may be impacted by Port operational and development purposes, consistent with the Port-wide Environmental Land Stewardship Principles.

SECTION 2. Definitions

When used in this policy directive, the following words and phrases shall have the meanings given below unless the context in which they are included clearly indicates otherwise:

- A. Adjacent location. Port-owned property contiguous to and easily and directly accessible from the development footprint.
- B. Airport Activity Area (AAA). The area defined in the 2018 Port-SeaTac Interlocal Agreement, attachment to Resolution [3741](#), as being within Airport Building Department jurisdiction and subject to the tree replacement standards herein.
- C. Forest. An area with predominant tree cover.
- D. Forest cover. The proportion of tree canopy in a given area. Includes trees in forested areas and tree groves as well as individual trees.
- E. High-value tree. A tree providing significant ecological function due to size, maturity, species, or location in a tree grove. In general, trees greater than 30 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) are considered high-value due to its size. All regulated native conifers occurring within a tree grove that contains at least three trees greater than 30” DBH are considered to be high-value trees. Other trees may be determined by the SEA Ecologist and/or a certified arborist to be high-value based on their location, maturity, or other special or historical characteristics.
- F. Invasive species. Non-native plant species that aggressively colonize areas, threatening native plants and habitat as well as infrastructure. Invasive species cause environmental and economic harm. Invasive species prioritized for management are listed on King County’s Noxious Weeds List.
- G. Off-site location. Distant from and not directly associated with a proposed development footprint.

- H. On-site location. Within the development footprint, which includes the building and supporting infrastructure (e.g., parking areas, landscaping; exterior fencing and lighting).
- I. Port-wide Environmental Land Stewardship Principles. Refers to [Order 2023-10](#), approved by the Commission on July 11, 2023
- J. Regulated Tree. A tree that is subject to replacement according to the development standards herein.
- K. Tree. A woody perennial plant with a single stem growing to more than 30 feet at maturity and bearing lateral branches beginning some distance above the ground.
- L. Tree Grove. A group of trees that grow close together, generally without many bushes or other plants underneath, and anchored by at least three high-value trees.

SECTION 3. Scope and Applicability.

This standards pertains to “Airport Activity Area”, as defined in the 2018 Port-SeaTac Interlocal Agreement, attachment to Resolution [3741](#).

SECTION 4. Policy.

The tree replacement standards include components for retention of existing trees on the development site and replacing trees permitted to be cleared. The retention requirement recognizes the intensive industrial and commercial land use that typifies Port development. The replacement standard relies on a holistic ecological approach that gives credit for planting trees and for taking actions to improve forest health at off-site locations, including protecting the life of existing high-value trees and converting areas infested with invasives to native vegetation. This approach is consistent with the Environmental Land Stewardship Principles, which recommends using holistic ecological methods and practices, which includes site planning information that inform project planning and design, including tree replacement.

A. Tree Replacement Standards

- a) Regulated Tree. A regulated tree must be replaced according to the standards herein. Regulated trees meet one of the following criteria:
 - (1) equal to or greater than six inches diameter at breast height (6” DBH); or
 - (2) any tree planted by design as part of landscaping for existing development.
- b) Tree Retention. The intensive industrial/commercial land use supporting airport operations provides limited opportunity for retaining existing trees on development sites. Therefore, projects with clearing impacts will not be subject to a minimum retention requirement but shall retain existing trees to the extent practicable.

c) Tree Replacement. If a Regulated Tree is to be cleared:

(a) It must be replaced at a 4:1 credit ratio.

(b) Replacement uses a “stewardship credit” approach for which a replacement credit can be generated the following ways:

- i. Tree Planting. Plant one tree in an on-site or off-site location, or
- ii. Invasive removal. Remove 200 square feet of invasive vegetation from an off-site location and replanting the area with native understory vegetation, or
- iii. Tree Protection. Protect the life of one tree using one of the following means:
 - a. Retain one regulated tree within the development footprint through project design and construction methods, or
 - b. Protect the life of one high-value tree in an off-site location from invasive threats (e.g., removing English ivy from the tree trunk and vicinity).

B. The tree replacement standards shall be supplemented by specific design criteria, to be applied as part of capital project planning and design. The criteria ensure that tree replacement concepts and designs are consistent with Environmental Land Stewardship Principles, operational requirements, and equity policy.

- (1) Tree replacement requirements are to be evaluated using site inventories for the development site and potential adjacent and off-site planting areas. Site inventories are required to be completed as part of the project planning and design.
- (2) Stewardship credits generated by tree planting shall account for greater than 50% of the replacement requirement.
- (3) Tree replacement shall be prioritized and maximized first on-site, then adjacent to the development footprint before utilizing off-site locations.
- (4) Projects shall consider integrating employee access to on-site and adjacent tree replacement areas to the extent feasible to improve project equity and worker wellness.
- (5) Designed tree replacement shall be consistent with rules for safe aviation, including the Wildlife Hazard Management Plan; Flight Corridor Safety Program vegetation height limits and regulatory requirements; and all applicable environmental laws and regulations.