

Background on SDOT's Trees and Sidewalks Operations Plan

Seattle's urban forest continues to thrive, guided by the [Urban Forest Stewardship Plan](#), updated in 2013. Our urban forest includes trees in parks and on private property as well as street trees within the public right-of-way. The urban forest is an important part of Seattle's ecosystem and is home to diverse wildlife. Our 4.35 million trees are worth about \$4.9 billion.

With ambitious goals to expand the urban canopy cover to 30% by 2037, the city has invested significant resources in the protection and growth of a robust and healthy urban forest. Since 2007, SDOT has planted an average of 1,200 trees a year. The department currently shares the responsibility—with adjacent property owners—of managing over 140,000 trees in the right-of-way.



In addition to supporting the growth of a healthy urban forest, Seattle is committed to increasing pedestrian mobility by building and maintaining an attractive and accessible pedestrian realm. The [Pedestrian Master Plan](#) was adopted in 2009 to encourage walking as a healthy and sustainable mode of transportation and to identify areas for investment. The plan calls for a "walkable zone," an area that is six feet wide by eight feet tall (6' x 8') and clear of obstructions both on and above the ground. Trees play an important role in enhancing the pedestrian experience by creating shelter from the elements, reducing air and noise pollution, creating habitat for wildlife, and improving the aesthetic quality of city streets.

While our urban forest is greatly valued for its environmental and social benefits, there are times when street trees can create challenges for the traveling public or for adjacent property owners. Unhealthy trees may fall or drop dead limbs, and poorly sited trees can damage sidewalks, streets, and utilities.

