



Seattle
Office of the Waterfront
and Civic Projects

PRESS RELEASE FROM CITY OF SEATTLE

Contact: Iris Picat, (505) 600-1227, info@waterfrontseattle.org

Note: A commemorative sign unveiling event with Mayor Harrell and Consul-General of Japan in Seattle, Iyori Makoto, along with other speakers, will take place at 10 AM on Wednesday, Dec. 6, at the Pike St and First Ave intersection.

City honors Japanese history by planting new cherry blossom trees near Pike Place Market

A commemorative plaque will be installed on Pike Street next to the eight new cherry blossom trees.

Seattle (November 29, 2023) – Eight new cherry blossom trees were planted this month on Pike Street, between 1st and 2nd avenues, to honor the shared history and bond between the City of Seattle and Japan. The City will also be installing a commemorative plaque highlighting the historic meaning of these cherry trees in remembrance of the Japanese and Japanese American farmers who sold their produce at Pike Place Market. The plaque, which will be unveiled next week at a community ceremony, will be located near First Avenue.

The eight new *Prunus First Blush* cherry trees were planted in November, replacing the eight trees that stood at the same location, across the street from the Pike Place Market entrance. In alignment with the City's goal of reversing the decline in Seattle's tree canopy, the City will [plant sixteen additional cherry trees](#) in other locations, including at the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Washington and within the new Waterfront Park, currently under construction.

“Cherry blossom trees have a special place in hearts of many Seattle residents, serving as a symbol of our enduring ties to Japan and the resilience of our Japanese and Japanese American community,” said Mayor Bruce Harrell. “These magnificent blooms and commemorative plaque will add beauty and historical significance to this corridor framing the iconic Pike Place Market and leading to our world-class waterfront, making it a vibrant, welcoming place for residents, workers, and visitors alike. I’m grateful for the thoughtful collaboration with the consulate, cultural organizations, and downtown stakeholders to commemorate the history and contributions of our Japanese community for generations to come.”

The replacement of the cherry trees on Pike St, between 1st and 2nd avenues, is part of Waterfront Seattle's [Pike Pine Streetscape and Bicycle Improvements project](#). This project is creating a safe and vibrant experience for all users with more visible crosswalks, wider sidewalks, protected bike lanes, new trees and landscaping, and artwork, strengthening the east west connections between Capitol Hill to Pike Place Market and our new waterfront.

“The planned improvements on this important block of Pike Street are nearly complete, with curbsless streets, new sidewalks, street furniture, improved lighting, and the new cherry trees, all intended to prioritize pedestrians. Thanks to the newly planted cherry trees and commemorative plaque, residents and visitors alike will gain a broader understanding of the historical and cultural connection between the Japanese community and the Pike Place Market,” said Angela Brady, Director of the Office of the Waterfront and Civic Projects. “We are delighted to see enthusiastic crowds already gathering in this vibrant public space enjoying one of our city’s most iconic locations.”

The City worked with the Japanese American and Japanese community to capture the sentiment and significance of these trees through the plaque’s inscription. The plaque was written in collaboration with the Japanese Consulate, the Japanese American Citizen’s League and the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Washington. The plaque shares the significance of the cherry blossom trees to Japanese people and Japanese Americans and highlights the fact that Japanese American farmers once represented over 75% of the vendors at Pike Place Market. The plaque additionally honors Japanese Americans who were unjustly incarcerated in 1942 during World War II solely based on their race.

“The blossoming of cherry trees heralds the end of the cold and gloomy winter, ushering in the bright and uplifting spring,” said Consul General Iyori. “These newly planted Sakura trees will paint Seattle with pink and bring happiness to those who see them. As we take in this seasonal beauty, I hope it can remind us of the bonds of friendship and mutual understanding enjoyed today by the diverse communities of Seattle and between Japan and the United States.”

The Pike Pine Streetscape and Bicycle Improvements project broke ground in February and is expected to be completed in fall of 2024.