



CHERRY TREE REMOVAL ON PIKE STREET

The removal 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.

Project background

The Pike Pine Streetscape and Bicycle Improvements will provide a vibrant pedestrian experience on Pike and Pine streets between Capitol Hill and the Pike Place Market, with connections to the new waterfront. The City of Seattle's Office of the Waterfront and Civic Projects has designed this project in coordination with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) to improve east-west connections between the waterfront and surrounding neighborhoods. As part of the project, we will create a curbless street on Pike St between 1st and 2nd avenues in efforts to prioritize pedestrians and public space.

The project is expected to be completed in Fall 2024.

Why are you removing the cherry trees on Pike St?

These cherry trees have reached the end of their lifespan. Cherry trees typically remain healthy for 20 to 30 years before they begin to decline in health in urban environments. The existing cherry trees on Pike St between 1st and 2nd avenues were planted in 1980 and are reaching the end of their lifespan. Five of the original cherry trees have already died and were removed in past years.

What opportunities has the public had to engage with the City on the removal of the cherry trees?

From 2017 to 2021, there were several opportunities for public engagement during the design process at two open houses (2017, 2021), public presentations to stakeholders along the corridor (2020, 2021, 2022), and flyers and emails were sent out at each design milestone. In addition, we posted tree removal placards on the trees in October 2021 and again on February 2023 for public comment. Comments both for and against removing the trees were expressed.

Can the current cherry trees be moved, replanted or repurposed?

No, SDOT Urban Forestry has tried to transplant trees with little success in the past. Trees less than 6 inches in trunk diameter have a better chance to survive being transplanted while larger and older trees, such as these cherry trees, typically die within 2 to 4 years after being transplanted.

We are planning to salvage some of the wood and are currently considering repurposing options with the Pike Place Market. Nothing has been determined yet.



What will the cherry trees be replaced with?

Based on public comments and community input, particularly regarding concerns about the cultural and historical meaning of cherry trees, we have decided to replant twenty-four new cherry trees to replace the eight declining cherry trees. Eight of the new trees will be planted along Pike St, between 1st and 2nd avenues approaching the Pike Place Market to replace the previous trees, and the remaining sixteen cherry trees will be planted at a location to be determined. Replacing these trees as part of this project ensures a high-quality tree selection as well as dedicated consistent post-planting care and establishment.

How will the new cherry trees be maintained (public vs. private)?

The trees will be maintained by the City, specifically the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) Urban Forestry Division.

Why must the cherry trees be removed now?

When developing the plans to begin construction in this area we worked closely with downtown partners and stakeholders to find ways to minimize impacts to residents, commuters, visitors and businesses while we build these improvements. This block is in front of the iconic Pike Place Market and has high pedestrian volumes. Construction is scheduled to be completed prior to Memorial Day – a commitment we have made to the Pike Place Market. Delaying the tree removal would delay construction of the block and push us into the busiest season downtown when maintaining mobility for all modes of travel is crucial. Delaying our work on this particular block would also increase project costs and would prolong our overall schedule for completion.

How will you be acknowledging the cultural and historical significance of the cherry trees?

We will be adding a memorial plaque nearby highlighting the cultural significance of these trees. We will work with the Japanese American community to ensure we capture the sentiment and significance of this heritage.

Don't see your question answered here?

Email us at info@waterfrontseattle.org or call us at 206-499-8040.