

# Will Seattle's new tree ordinance (CB 120534) TRULY protect our trees?

True protection of our mature trees during development is MISSING from the tree ordinance, and...*it should be added!*



**Seattle's new tree ordinance helps us plant more trees, but misses the mark by encouraging development practices which remove trees from the places where people live: in our residential zones.**

**Q: I thought Seattle's new tree ordinance provided protection for thousands more trees?**

**A:** While it is true that more trees will be REGULATED — they are not necessarily preserved. Property owners will be limited in removing trees. Developers, on the other hand, will be able to remove **all** trees on lots except Heritage trees, of which there are **only a few hundred** throughout Seattle.

**Q: Won't people still have these benefits since trees will be replanted?**

**A:** New trees will need decades of growth to provide the benefits our existing trees provide now. Also, replanting will primarily be on public land. There is no requirement to leave space for trees near homes. Newly planted trees also have low survival rates, while our existing trees are already well established.

**Q: Can't we just integrate AC into our homes, as hotter cities like Phoenix and Atlanta already do?**

**A:** AC or heat pump cooling is expensive both in terms of installation and energy costs. This will add another burden to those in frontline communities as they struggle with unabated heat or the additional AC-related costs.

**Q: But does trying to build around trees ADD to the cost of housing?**

**A:** The claims of the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties (MBAKS) have not been substantiated. This was the conclusion of the Hearing Examiner in the **2021 MBAKS legal action**, which attempted to show that preserving trees makes housing more costly. After three days of considering the evidence, the Hearing Examiner concluded that the arguments "were based on speculation" and **determined that the claim was invalid.**

**If you, too, are concerned about the prospect of future tree loss in Seattle, send your comments to City Councilmembers at [council@seattle.gov](mailto:council@seattle.gov), and please copy us at [fixthetreeordinance@gmail.com](mailto:fixthetreeordinance@gmail.com).**

Facts presented by:

**Seattle United: Fix the Tree Ordinance**, a coalition of organizations and individuals who support true protection of Seattle's existing trees.

A PDF version of this fact sheet with links is available at: [www.dontclearcutseattle.org](http://www.dontclearcutseattle.org) or email us at [fixthetreeordinance@gmail.com](mailto:fixthetreeordinance@gmail.com)



# The Facts

**People need trees where they live, but the new ordinance promotes housing without trees.** Living close to trees dramatically improves our health. Lower rates of **asthma, cardiovascular disease** and **cancer, improved pregnancy outcomes, better mental/emotional health** and **improved cognitive function** are all correlated with living near trees.

**Large trees shading housing can be the difference between life and death during heat waves, but this ordinance promotes the removal of trees near homes.** Summer heat events are becoming more frequent and are expected to increase with climate change. **Several hundred people** died during the Pacific Northwest's 2021 heat dome event. Trees lower indoor air temperatures as much as **nine degrees** during heat waves – a critical survival difference.

**New housing CAN be built WITH trees.** Most of Seattle's large trees grow on the edges of lots and are not necessarily an obstacle to development. Others on the lot can be worked around in many cases. **Seattle's 2021 tree canopy study** showed a 50% decline in tree canopy when multifamily lots were developed. Washington state's **new middle housing bill**, HB1110, will expand multifamily housing throughout the city.

**Frontline communities, including South Seattle, will bear the brunt of a tree ordinance that misses the mark.** Frontline communities already have low tree canopy and lost more trees, faster, than other parts of Seattle. While the new ordinance focuses tree re-planting in these communities (a good start), it also promotes inequitable and unsustainable building practices by allowing removal of the few large trees remaining.

**Polls show that two-thirds of Seattle voters are concerned about tree loss** as housing density increases and believe that Seattle needs to do BOTH: build new housing AND do a better job of protecting its trees.

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For future alerts and information, or to volunteer your help, please write to us at: [fixthetreeordinance@gmail.com](mailto:fixthetreeordinance@gmail.com).