

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Planting Strip Paving and Tree Planting Rules

January 3, 2011

General Provisions

Beautification of planting strips is encouraged to enhance and soften the streetscape; to provide a buffer between vehicular and pedestrian traffic; and to discourage vehicular parking on planting strips, which is illegal. Please refer to CAM 2305 for Gardening in the Planting Strip.

Street trees are required by municipal code and standards set by SDOT to provide maximum public benefit and compatibility with other infrastructure in the street right-of-way. Street trees are to be protected during construction and otherwise routinely maintained for optimum health, longevity, and public safety. SDOT Urban Forestry advises applicants on tree selection, installation and protection measures to preserve the functional, environmental, social, and economic benefits of trees and to support the citywide urban forestry goal to increase canopy cover.

Definitions

Planting Strip: That portion of street lying between the constructed curb and property line, exclusive of the sidewalk area: Provided, that if there is no constructed curb, then the “planting strip” means that portion of the street lying between a constructed sidewalk and the property line: Provided further, that if there is no constructed curb or constructed sidewalk, then planting strip means that portion of the street lying between the traveled way and the property line, exclusive of any established pedestrian path.

General Requirement

A Street Use permit is required to perform construction activity, like paving or grading, in a planting strip. A Street Use permit is also required to prune or remove a tree(s) from the public right of way. The following requirements govern the issuance of a Street Use permit:

Planting strip paving: Up to 40% of the area in planting strips may be paved if the following conditions are met:

- Paving is done in combination with street trees;
- Related landscape architectural features pose no public safety concern; and
- The combination of paving and trees provides an equal or better balance of functional and environmental benefits than a fully planted condition.
- Paved area is not used for parking.

Pervious pavement materials are encouraged to allow for the infiltration of runoff from the sidewalk before it enters the street to maximize the water quality entering the planting strip. Paving materials and installation details are subject to approval by SDOT.

Planting strip grading: The final grade of soil surfaces in planting strips must accommodate runoff from sidewalk surfaces cross-sloped to drain toward the street. In cases where a mounded planting strip is proposed to provide a more effective separation between the sidewalk and street, a centerline height of 6” above the adjacent sidewalk grade is typical and gaps between mounded areas must be provided so that backup of runoff and ponding does not occur on the paved sidewalk.

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Tree planting: A deciduous tree(s) planted in a planting strip shall be a minimum of two inch (2") caliper when planted on an arterial street and one inch (1") caliper when planted on a residential street. For the purpose of calculating planting strip coverage, each tree shall be considered equivalent to 100 square feet of plant material.

A tree(s) shall be planted a minimum of 3.5 feet from the face of curb and 2 feet from the edge of a sidewalk or established pedestrian path. A tree(s) may not be planted in a planting strip less than 5 feet in width unless reviewed and approved by the City Arborist.

A tree(s) may extend over the right of way when kept trimmed to a height of 8 feet above a sidewalk and 14 feet above a roadway.

The selection of tree species shall be made in accordance with: The Seattle Department of Transportation Tree Planting Standards & Master Tree List.

When work occurs around a tree in the planting strip area, a tree protection device shall be provided to prevent damage to the tree root structure, trunk, and branches.

Setbacks:

- Curb face. Closest part of any fixed object-three feet (3').
- Edge of sidewalk. Closest part of any fixed object- one foot (1').
- Utility pole/fire hydrant. Closest part of any fixed object-five feet (5'). All installations must provide adequate setback and access to all utilities in the planting strip, including utility vaults and meters.
- Driveways. Plantings in planting strips within ten feet (10') of driveways shall be clear of sight obstructions between thirty-two inches (32") and eighty-two inches (82") in height from the ground.

All planting or installations must be in compliance with the applicable regulations of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) and Right-of-Way Improvement Manual (ROWIM).

Permit Application

You can apply for a Street Use permit online at: http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/stuse_permits_online.htm

Or you may also apply in person at the Street Use Permit Counter on the 23rd floor of the Seattle Municipal Building at 700 5th Avenue.

The permit applicant shall provide the following information:

- Street Use Permit Application
- Site Plan including address of proposed site and description of the improvement, tree planting, or tree(s) to be pruned or removed.
- When paving a planting strip, or pruning or removing a tree(s) in the right of way within a Historic Landmark or Special Review District, a Certificate of Approval must also be submitted.
- \$172 Field Review Deposit (not required for tree planting permit)

Permit Issuance and Fees

A Street Use permit may be issued to install improvements, paving or grading in a planting strip, or plant, prune or remove a tree(s) in the public right of way whenever SDOT has reviewed the permit application materials and determined that:

- The requirements of the SMC and ROWIM have been satisfied.
- The Department of Planning and Development has reviewed the application when the proposed installation is a requirement of the Land Use Code and/or a Master Use Permit.
- The Seattle Public Utilities, City Light and private utility companies have reviewed the application when utility installations may be affected.
- An application requesting an exception to these Rules has been approved by the Director of Transportation.
- When required by the Director of Transportation, payment of a cash deposit or provision of a bond to ensure installation, maintenance, and removal of the installation has been made.
- When required by the Director of Transportation, the applicant has obtained public liability insurance. The insurance shall be an amount deemed sufficient by the Director of Transportation to cover potential claims for bodily injury, death, or disability and

for property damage which may arise from or be related to the permit and shall name the City of Seattle as an additional insured. Insurance shall be maintained in full force and effect for the duration of the permit. Refer to CAM 2102 for Insurance Requirements.

Fees due at permit issuance

Paving, tree removal, or other approved construction activity:
\$146 permit issuance fee + \$172 inspection fees

Tree planting: No permit fee

Street Use Permit Cancellation

All Street Use permits are wholly of a temporary nature, vests no permanent rights, and are revocable pursuant to SMC 15.04.070.

Circumstances which may result in cancellation of a permit include, but are not limited to violation of SMC Title 15 and/or the ROWIM.

The Director of Transportation will issue all Street Use permit cancellation notices in writing, setting forth the basis for the cancellation therein. The cancellation will customarily be effective thirty days from the date of the notice, subject to the terms of the permit.

If a safety or health hazard is involved, such as root damage to a sidewalk or sewer system, an installation or plant material may be removed by a duly authorized employee of The City of Seattle immediately and without notice.

References

This CAM references the following documents:
Seattle Municipal Code (SMC), Title 15, Street and Sidewalk Use.
SMC, Title 23, Land Use Code.
SMC, Chapter 25.05.902, Environmental Protection and Historic Preservation
SMC, Chapter 10.52.030, Weeds and Vegetation, Duties of Owners and Occupants.
Seattle Right-of-Way Improvement Manual (ROWIM) located at:
<http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/rowmanual/>