

STREET TREE PLANNING STUDY

Roxhill | Census Tract 114.02

City Council District 1

Submitted 5/30/25



Seattle
Department of
Transportation



Study background

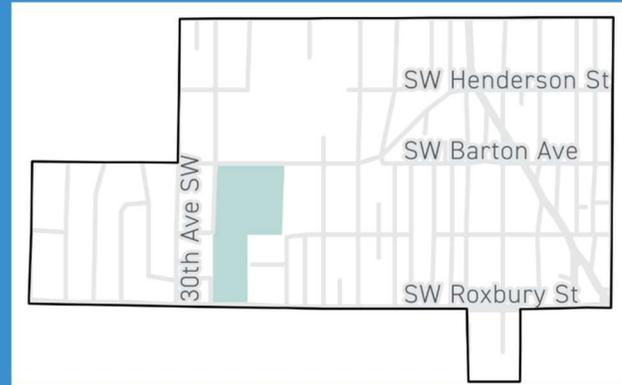
The City of Seattle is committed to ensuring all communities have access to healthy trees and the benefits they provide—especially in the face of a changing climate. In early 2025, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) launched the Street Tree Planning Study as a pilot project to identify tree planting opportunities, assess community support, and understand local concerns in four census tracts that represent conditions across the city. Funds for the study were provided by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources Urban and Community Forestry Program. This memo summarizes findings from the Roxhill census tract. It includes results from an arborist assessment and from community engagement.

What are street trees?



Street trees grow in public rights-of-way—usually in planting strips between sidewalks and curbs—and are managed by SDOT. Street trees provide environmental, health, and social benefits, such as cooling neighborhoods and reducing air pollution.

Seattle aims to achieve 30% tree canopy coverage by 2037, across all public and private spaces. A 2021 study showed street trees comprise nearly one-quarter of Seattle's existing tree canopy. The study also showed an overall loss of tree canopy, prompting SDOT to analyze opportunities and barriers to planting street trees.



Roxhill overview

Census Tract 114.02 is the Roxhill neighborhood, located in West Seattle. The neighborhood includes nearly 300 acres of residential area bordered by SW Roxbury St, 35th Avenue SW, SW Trenton St and 16th Avenue SW. The center of the neighborhood is Roxhill Park and BRIDGES, a Seattle Public School designed for young adults with disabilities. Roxhill is primarily residential, with nearly 10 miles of public streets. Existing tree canopy coverage in Roxhill is 18.6%.

As of 2023, Roxhill is home to 4,199 people. About 41% speak a language other than English. About 34% of the population is between 20 and 39 years old. Approximately 44% of residents are white, 12% are black, 14% are Asian, 11% identify as another race, and 15% identify as two or more races.

Equity and health snapshot

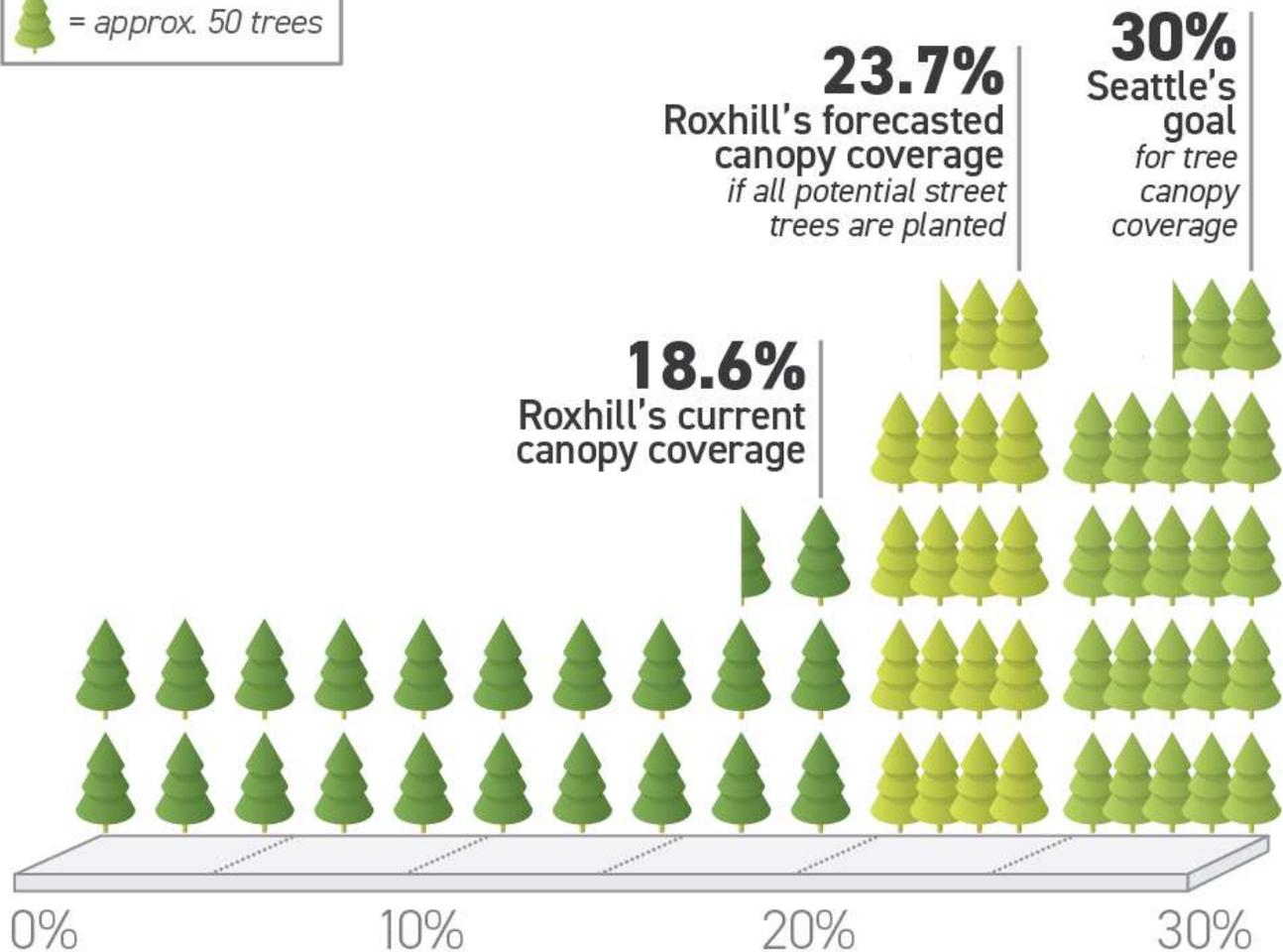
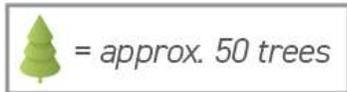
The city uses a [Racial and Social Equity Index](#) tool to plan and prioritize investments throughout the city. Based on this index, Roxhill is considered a part of the Highest Equity Priority in Seattle across race, language, socioeconomic, and health indicators.

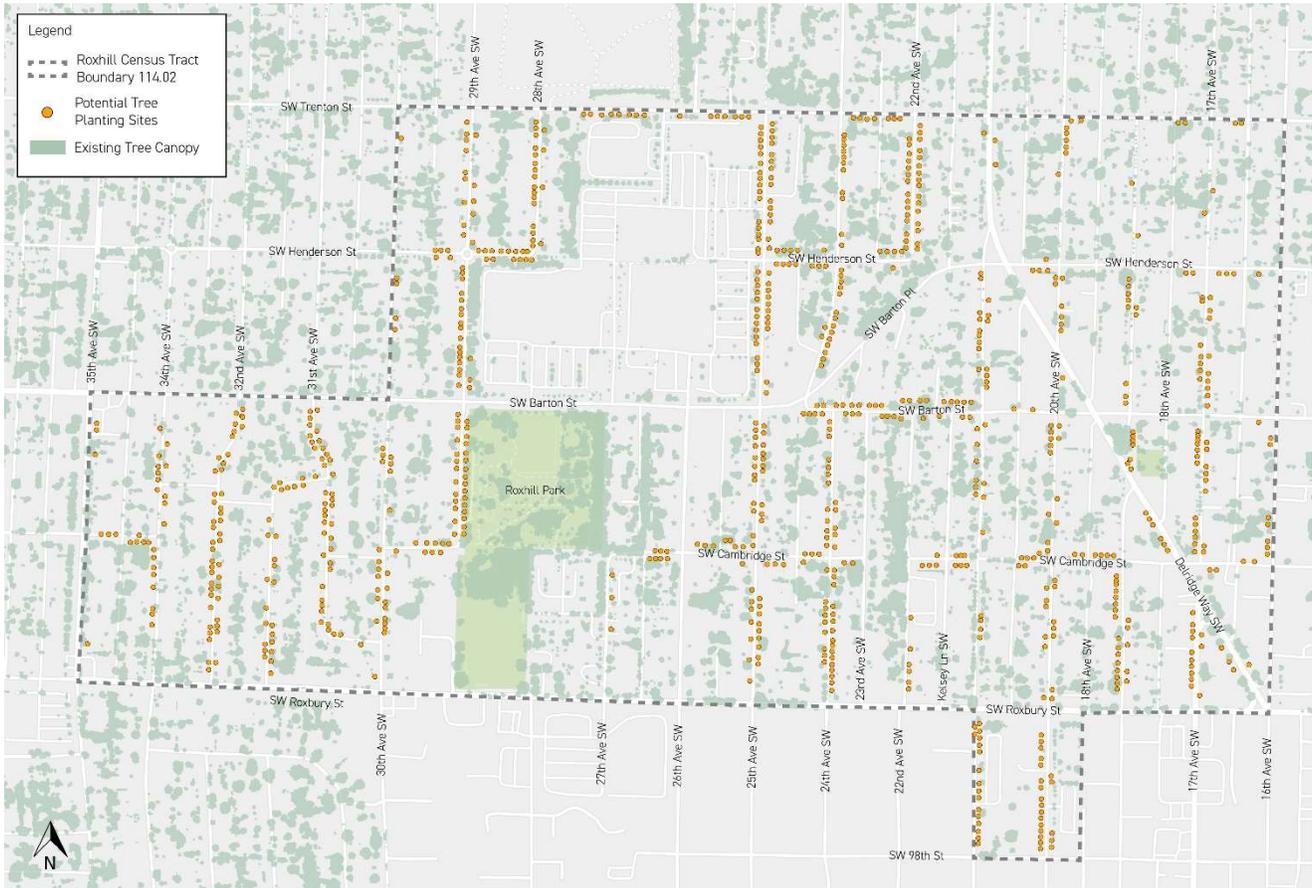
The 2025 [Washington Environmental Health Disparities Map](#) shows health measures divided into four themes: environmental exposures, environmental effects, sensitive populations, and socioeconomics. Roxhill ranks high overall, particularly for traffic-related pollution, Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5, and toxic releases. Trees absorb, bind, intercept, and sequester pollutants, including PM 2.5 emissions. PM 2.5 is small particle air pollution that enters the lungs and can cause serious health problems. Trees also reduce air temperatures, which lowers ozone levels. This census tract ranks fifth out of 10 for ozone concentration.

Where can we plant street trees in this census tract?

Roxhill's 18.6% tree canopy is lower than the city's 30% goal. This gap is due in part to the lack of street tree planting space. Every new street tree requires planning and coordination. The city identified potential planting locations using mapping analysis and on-site inspections. In addition to 1,084 existing street trees and 927 potential planting locations, this census tract requires 1,132 more trees to reach the city's goal of 30%.

While 927 potential street trees represent only part of the neighborhood's overall need, each street tree is progress toward our goal.





Census Tract 114.02 – Existing Tree Canopy and Potential Street Tree Planting Locations

What are our existing challenges with street trees?

The neighborhood suffers from a lack of sidewalks with planting strips, and conflicts with existing utilities in infrastructure such as sidewalks, curbs, and planting strips. In addition, some utilities are installed in non-standard locations that prevent planting street trees even when there is a planting strip. Of the 927 potential planting sites identified, only 58% could be planted today.

To increase the tree canopy in this census tract, the city would need to address the following key challenges:

- Limited space: Roxhill has fewer planting opportunities due to historic development patterns—specifically, a lack of sidewalks and planting strips that typically support street trees.
- Utility conflicts: A high volume of underground pipes, overhead wires, and other infrastructure often limit where street trees can be safely planted. For example, an underground electrical vault in a planting strip would prevent planting street trees nearby.
- Pavement removal: In many locations, paved surfaces would be removed to create space for street trees.

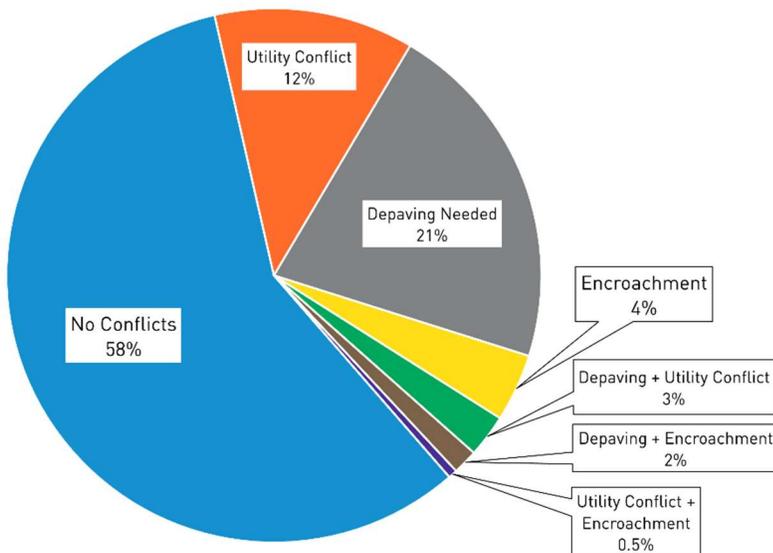
To overcome these barriers, the city is exploring potential solutions. These solutions include balancing sidewalk space with planting areas for street trees and reclaiming paved areas. All efforts would comply with the following SDOT standards:

- A minimum five-foot-wide planting strip.
- At least 25 feet between street trees.
- Setbacks from driveways, poles, hydrants, and other infrastructure.

These standards are designed to support healthy tree growth, reduce long-term maintenance issues, and help prevent damage to sidewalks and utilities. They also help ensure that public spaces remain safe, accessible, and functional for all users.



Many neighborhood sidewalks lack planting strips for street trees



Challenges to planting street trees in Roxhill

WHAT WE HEARD

“There are many places in Roxhill where parked cars make road and pedestrian safety challenging due to poor sight lines. Replacing parking in these areas with a planted curb would provide double the benefit.”

- Roxhill Community Member



In May 2025, SDOT asked people who live, work, or visit the Roxhill area to share their thoughts about street trees. The city gathered input from over 30 community members through a pop-up table in the neighborhood, meetings with local groups, and an online survey.

What we heard

Street trees support healthier communities

Roxhill community members strongly valued street trees for their role in cooling neighborhoods, improving air quality, providing shade, supporting wildlife, and helping the community adapt to climate change.

Tree preferences

Community members preferred trees that are pet-safe, low-pollen, and native species that have the ability to soak up water.

Barriers to maintenance

Many community members supported trees but lack time or resources for upkeep. They would like city support and tools for volunteers.

Trees and safety

Street trees are linked to traffic calming and improved walkability. Framing trees as part of public safety and health could strengthen community support.

Infrastructure and development

Street tree planting space is limited, but there is strong interest in integrating more sidewalks and trees, with thoughtful consideration of past,

present, and future infrastructure. Concerns were raised about the removal of mature trees during new development and the lack of accountability for their replacement or long-term care.

What the survey showed

- 91% of respondents strongly supported planting more street trees.
- Respondents were frustrated that mature trees have been removed. They would like to see new housing construction keep mature trees and care for new ones.
- Over 46% raised allergy concerns, 46% voiced safety concerns (such as falling branches and root damage to sidewalks), 38% cited concerns about maintenance costs, and 15% had concerns about blocking views or sunlight.
- Many respondents were willing to volunteer for planting and care if provided with tools, water, and guidance.
- Respondents said they receive limited outreach and communication from the city about tree programs and opportunities to get involved, and rarely see any information in any language beyond English.

Most supported new planting strategies

Survey participants ranked potential solutions for creating more planting space:

1. Remove pavement or compacted gravel - 84%
2. Install sidewalks with planting strips - 73%
3. Remove on-street parking - 52%

What future recommendations and outreach should we consider?

Based on community feedback, the following ideas reflect what residents hope the city will consider as it plans for a greener, more livable Roxhill:

Tree protection and planting

- Prioritize care for new trees and protect mature trees, especially those over 50 years old.
- Replace removed trees to maintain canopy.
- Encourage tree planting on private property to expand canopy coverage.
- Avoid pollen-heavy species to reduce allergy impacts.

Maintenance and infrastructure

- Design for long-term tree and sidewalk care, especially in high-traffic areas.
- Add street trees and curbside greenery at bus stops.
- Reclaim paved areas—such as unused asphalt and gravel—for trees and permeable surfaces.
- Coordinate with utilities to avoid and resolve utility conflicts and reduce excessive pruning.
- Convert select parking spaces into tree planting zones where feasible.

Community support and resources

- Include indigenous voices in land restoration efforts.
- Engage homeowners and residents in caring for trees on private land.
- Collaborate with local groups like A Cleaner Alki, Dirt Corps, and Delridge Neighborhoods Development Association to support education and maintenance.

Education and outreach

- Expand access to free city resources on tree planting and care.
- Ensure outreach reaches all residents, especially non-English language speakers.
- Use flyers, tree tags, and events to raise awareness.
- Connect tree education to community events to make learning fun and accessible.

Policy and program development

- Update building codes to protect mature trees during development.
- Enforce green space protections

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

SDOT is committed to growing our city's tree canopy and creating greener, healthier neighborhoods.

Explore the study: Learn about other neighborhoods included in SDOT's [Street Tree Planning Study](#).

Plant a tree: Visit [Trees for Neighborhoods](#) for free trees and planting resources in your community.

Learn about street trees: Visit the [Trees for Neighborhoods Street Trees](#) page for more information.

Connect with SDOT

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