

CITY OF SANDPOINT HERITAGE TREE PROGRAM

Recognition + Education

Heritage Tree Program

The City of Sandpoint Heritage Tree Program is a voluntary recognition program that celebrates trees and groves that contribute to the community's environmental quality, history, character, and sense of place. The program is intended to promote public education and awareness of the value of Sandpoint's urban forest by highlighting trees that are meaningful to the community because of their history, size, rarity, ecological value, or contribution to the landscape.

The program is honorary and non-regulatory. Designation as a Heritage Tree does not restrict removal, pruning, or development, does not create permit requirements, and does not impose maintenance obligations on the City or property owner.

Why Heritage Trees Matter

Heritage Trees help tell the story of Sandpoint. Some are valued because they are associated with historic places or events. Others stand out because they are exceptional examples of their species, are rare within the local urban forest, provide ecological benefits, or form a grove that helps define a neighborhood, park, or corridor. Recognizing these trees creates an opportunity to educate the public about the importance of the urban forest and the role trees play in community character, environmental stewardship, and quality of life.

Eligible Categories

A tree or grove may be considered for Heritage Tree designation if it meets one or more of the following categories:

- **Historical**
A tree associated with or contributing to a historic structure, district, event, person, or landscape.
- **Specimen**
A tree that is exceptional within its species locally because of age, size, health, or aesthetic quality.
- **Rare**
A tree that is uncommon in the local urban forest because of species rarity, limited presence, or unusual form or growth characteristics.
- **Significant Grove**
An outstanding or significant group of trees that contributes to the city's landscape and sense of place.

- **Ecological**

A tree that provides a unique ecological benefit or service to the urban environment.

To be considered, a tree or grove should be in fair or better condition and visible from a public right-of-way.

How the Program Works

Nominations may be submitted by property owners, community members, City staff, or members of the Urban Forestry Commission. Nominations should include photographs, a description of the tree's significance, and property owner consent if the tree is located on private property.

The Urban Forestry Commission may assist with nomination development and public education and may review nominations as part of the recognition process. The Urban Forester or designee is responsible for confirming consistency with the program criteria and maintaining the program records. Trees that are submitted for this program will be evaluated according to the criteria described in Appendix A to this document.

Recognition

Designated Heritage Trees may be recognized through the City's website, maps, educational materials, public presentations, certificates, or other public-facing features. The goal of recognition is to share the story and significance of these trees with the community and encourage greater appreciation of Sandpoint's urban forest.

Submit a Nomination

To nominate a Heritage Tree, please complete the nomination form and submit the required materials to the City of Sandpoint Public Works Department.

Required materials include:

- nomination form
- photographs
- description of significance
- property owner consent, if applicable

[Download Nomination Form]

Questions

For more information about the Heritage Tree Program, please contact the City of Sandpoint Public Works Department.

Heritage Tree Program – Q&A

What is the Heritage Tree Program?

The Heritage Tree Program is a voluntary, non-regulatory program that recognizes trees and groves that contribute to Sandpoint's environmental quality, history, and community character. The program is focused on education and awareness, highlighting the role trees play in shaping the community's identity and environment.

Does this program regulate trees or private property?

No. The program is honorary only. Designation as a Heritage Tree does not restrict removal, pruning, or development, does not create permit requirements, and does not impose obligations on property owners or the City.

Is participation required?

No. Participation is entirely voluntary. Property owner consent is required for any tree located on private property.

Who can nominate a tree?

Nominations may be submitted by property owners, community members, City staff, or members of the Urban Forestry Commission.

Who decides if a tree is designated?

Nominations are reviewed by the Urban Forester for consistency with the program criteria. The Urban Forestry Commission may review and recognize nominations as part of the program. Designation is an administrative determination confirming the tree meets the program criteria.

What types of trees qualify?

Trees may qualify if they meet one or more of the following categories:

- historical
- specimen
- rare
- significant grove
- ecological

These categories reflect adopted definitions and focus on trees that are meaningful to the community.

Why is the program non-regulatory?

The program is designed to promote education and community awareness without creating property restrictions or additional permitting requirements. This approach allows the City to recognize significant trees while respecting private property rights and keeping the program simple to administer.

Why involve the Urban Forestry Commission?

The Commission provides a valuable role in community engagement, education, and visibility of the program. Their involvement helps highlight significant trees and supports public awareness of the urban forest.

Why doesn't Council approve individual trees?

Council's role is to establish policy and provide direction, not to review individual nominations. Keeping designation at the administrative level ensures the program remains efficient and avoids creating a formal approval process.

What is the City's role in maintaining Heritage Trees?

The City does not assume maintenance responsibility for Heritage Trees. Property owners remain responsible for trees on private property, and the City maintains trees in the public right-of-way as part of its regular operations.

What happens if a Heritage Tree is removed?

If a designated tree is removed or declines significantly, it may be removed from the program. Because the program is non-regulatory, removal of a Heritage Tree does not require City approval.

What are the benefits of this program?

The primary benefits are:

- increased awareness of the urban forest
- recognition of significant community features
- support for environmental stewardship
- reinforcement of community character and identity

Does this create a future requirement to regulate trees?

No. This program is separate from any regulatory framework. If the City were to consider regulatory approaches in the future, that would require a separate policy discussion and Council direction.

What is the cost to implement this program?

Costs are minimal and can be managed within existing staff resources. The program primarily involves nomination review, recordkeeping, and public communication.

Appendix A

These criteria will be used to ensure trees that are nominated are reviewed consistently, the below criteria should be used to evaluate trees nominated for their respective category.

1. Historical

Does the tree have documented historical significance?

- Is the tree located on or immediately adjacent to a designated historic property, structure, or district?
- Is there credible documentation (historic records, photographs, maps, or local histories) demonstrating the tree's association with a historic structure, site, or landscape?
- Is the tree associated with a documented historic event, person, or period significant to the City of Sandpoint?
- Has the tree been intentionally preserved or referenced in historical plans, dedications, or commemorations?
- Does the estimated age of the tree reasonably align with the historic period or event it is associated with?

2. Specimen

Does the tree stand out as exceptional within its species locally?

- Is the tree significantly larger (height, canopy spread, or trunk diameter) than typical specimens of the same species in Sandpoint?
 - Does the tree exhibit an advanced age relative to others of the same species in the city?
 - Is the tree in good to excellent health considering its age and species?
 - Does the tree possess exceptional form, symmetry, or visual presence compared to other local examples?
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3. Rare

Is the tree uncommon or unusual within the local urban forest?

- Is the species uncommon or infrequently found within the City of Sandpoint?
 - Are there few known specimens of this species within the city or region?
 - Does the tree exhibit unusual growth characteristics, form, or genetic traits not commonly seen in the species?
 - Is the tree a remnant of a historically significant or declining species in the local area?
 - Has the species been identified by the City Forester as rare or notable within the city's tree inventory?
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4. Significant Grove

Does the group of trees collectively contribute to the city's landscape character?

- Does the grove consist of a cohesive group of trees that function as a visual or ecological unit?
 - Does the grove significantly contribute to neighborhood character, streetscape identity, or a public open space?
 - Is the grove highly visible or experienced by the public (e.g., parks, trails, gateways, or prominent corridors)?
 - Does the grove provide a measurable benefit such as shade, buffering, or scenic value at a scale not achievable by individual trees?
 - Would removal or degradation of the grove result in a noticeable loss to the city's landscape or sense of place?
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5. Ecological

Does the tree provide exceptional environmental benefits beyond typical urban trees?

- Does the tree provide critical habitat for wildlife, including nesting, roosting, or food sources?
- Does the tree play a significant role in stormwater management, erosion control, or shoreline stabilization?
- Does the tree contribute meaningfully to air quality improvement, urban cooling, or reduction of heat-island effects?
- Is the tree part of a connected ecological system or corridor within the urban environment?
- Would the loss of the tree result in a disproportionate ecological impact compared to removal of a typical urban tree?