

Ordinance 2025-09

ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF HACKETTSTOWN, COUNTY OF WARREN AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY AMENDING CHAPTER 12 ARTICLE 11 OF THE GENERAL CODE ENTITLED "TREE REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT" IN ORDER TO REMOVE THE PROVISION OF FEES

WHEREAS, the Town of Hackettstown has a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit from the State of New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Hackettstown is subject to the Community-wide Ordinance requirements of the Tier A Municipal Stormwater Permit; and

WHEREAS, the Community-Wide Ordinance requirements in the Town of Hackettstown's Tier A Municipal Stormwater Permit necessitated the adoption of a Tree Removal and Replacement Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, on July 11, 2024, Chapter 12 of the General Code of the Town of Hackettstown entitled "Streets and Sidewalks" was amended to add an Article 11, "Tree Removal and Replacement" Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and General Council are desirous to amend the Chapter 12, Article 11 at this time in order to remove the requirement that a tree removal application fee be paid by residents and to further remove the option of paying a fee in lieu of tree replacement.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and Common Council of the Town of Hackettstown that Chapter 12, Article 11, of the General Code be amended as follows:

SECTION I

Article 11 - Tree Removal and Replacement

§12-96 Scope and Purpose.

An ordinance to establish requirements for tree removal and replacement in the Town of Hackettstown to reduce soil erosion and pollutant runoff, promote infiltration of rainwater into the soil, and protect the environment, public health, safety, and welfare.

§12-97 Definitions.

For the purpose of this ordinance, the following terms, phrases, words, and their derivations shall have the meanings stated herein unless their use in the text of this ordinance clearly demonstrates a different meaning. When consistent with the context, words used in the present tense include the future, words used in the plural number include the singular number, and words used in the singular number include the plural number. The use of the word "shall" means the requirement is always mandatory and not

merely directory.

APPLICANT

Means any “person”, as defined below, who applies for approval to remove trees regulated under this ordinance.

CRITICAL ROOT RADIUS (CRR)

Means the zone around the base of a tree where the majority of the root system is found.

This zone is calculated by multiplying the diameter at breast height (DBH) in inches of the tree by 1.5 (Result expressed in Feet), For example: a tree with a 6” DBH would have a CRR = 6”x1.5 = 9’.

DIAMETER AT BREAST HEIGHT (DBH)

Means the diameter of the trunk of a mature tree generally measured at a point four and a half feet above ground level from the uphill side of the tree. For species of trees where the main trunk divides below the 4’ A foot height, the DBH shall be measured at the highest point before any division.

HAZARD TREE

Means a tree or limbs thereof that meet one or more of the criteria below. Trees that do not meet any of the criteria below and are proposed to be removed solely for development purposes are not hazard trees.

- A. Has an infectious disease or insect infestation;
- B. Is dead or dying;
- C. Obstructs the view of traffic signs or the free passage of pedestrians or vehicles, where pruning attempts have not been effective;
- D. Is causing obvious damage to structures (such as building foundations, sidewalks, etc.); or
- E. Is determined to be a threat to public health, safety, and/or welfare by a certified arborist or Licensed Tree Expert (LTE).

PERSON

Means any individual, resident, corporation, utility, company, partnership, firm, or association.

PLANTING STRIP

Means the part of a street right-of-way between the public right-of-way and the portion of the street reserved for vehicular traffic or between the abutting property line and the curb or traveled portion of the street, exclusive of any sidewalk.

RESIDENT

Means an individual who resides on the residential property or contractor hired by the individual who resides on the residential property where a tree(s) regulated by this ordinance is removed or proposed to be removed.

STREET TREE

Means a tree planted in the sidewalk, planting strip, and/or in the public right-of-way adjacent to (or specified distance from) the portion of file street reserved for vehicular traffic. This also includes trees planted in planting strips within the roadway right-of-way, i.e., islands, medians, pedestrian refuges.

TREE

Means a woody perennial plant, typically having a single stem or trunk growing to a considerable height and bearing lateral branches at some distance from the ground.

TREE CALIPER

Means the diameter of the trunk of a young tree, measured six (6) inches from the soil line. For young trees whose caliper exceeds four (4) inches, the measurement is taken twelve (12) inches above the soil line.

TREE REMOVAL

Means to kill or to cause irreparable damage that leads to the decline and/or death of a tree. This includes, but is not limited to, excessive pruning, application of substances that are toxic to the tree, over-mulching or improper mulching, and improper grading and/or soil compaction within the critical root radius around the base of the tree that leads to the decline and/or death of a tree. Removal does not include responsible pruning and maintenance of a tree, or the application of treatments intended to manage invasive species.

§12-98 Regulated Activities.**A. Application Process.**

1. Any person planning to remove a street tree, as defined as Tree Removal, with DBH of 2.5" or more or any non-street tree with DBH of 6" or more on their property shall submit a Tree Removal Application to the Hackettstown Department of Public Works. No tree shall be removed until municipal officials have reviewed and approved the removal.
2. Applicants may be required to post an escrow deposit in the event that the Tree Removal Application and subsequent review requires the Town to engage a Licensed Tree Expert to review the requested trees to be removed. The escrow amount shall be determined at the time of the Application. Applicants shall be notified in writing at the time of application filing.

B. Tree Replacement Requirements.

1. Any person who removes one or more street tree(s) with a DBH of 2.5" or more, unless exempt under Section 12-99, shall be subject to the requirements of the Tree Replacement Requirements Table below.
2. Any person, who removes one or more tree(s), as defined as Tree removal, with a DBH of 6" or more per acre, unless otherwise detailed under Section 12-99, shall be subject to the requirements of the Tree Replacement Requirements Table.

3. The species type and diversity of replacement trees shall be in accordance with the list of native tree species published by the Native Plant Society of New Jersey (<http://www.npsnj.org/>).
4. Replacement tree(s) shall:
 - a. Be replaced in kind with a tree that has an equal or greater DBH than tree removed or meet the Tree Replacement Criteria in the table below;
 - b. Be planted within twelve (12) months of the date of removal of the original tree(s) or at an alternative date specified by the municipality;
 - c. Be monitored by the applicant for a period of two (2) years to ensure their survival and shall be replaced as needed within twelve (12) months; and
 - d. Shall not be planted in temporary containers or pots, as these do not count towards tree replacement requirements.

Tree Replacement Requirements Table:

Category	Tree Removed (DBH)	Tree Replacement Criteria (See Appendix A)
1	DBH of 2.5" (for street trees) or 6" (for non-street trees) to 12.99"	Replant 1 tree with a minimum tree caliper of 1.5" for each tree removed
2	DBH of 13" to 22.99"	Replant 2 trees with minimum tree calipers of 1.5" for each tree removed
3	DBH of 23" to 32.99"	Replant 3 trees with minimum tree calipers of 1.5" for each tree removed
4	DBH of 33" or greater	Replant 4 trees with minimum tree calipers of 1.5" for each tree removed

C. Replacement Alternative.

If the municipality determines that some or all required replacement trees cannot be planted on the property where the tree removal activity occurred, then the applicant shall plant replacement tree(s) in a separate area(s) approved by the municipality.

§12-99. Exemptions.

All persons shall comply with the tree replacement standard outlined above, except in the cases detailed below. Proper justification shall be provided, in writing, to the municipality by all persons claiming an exemption. Exemptions shall be granted by the Hackettstown Town Department of Public Works upon review of the applications for tree removal.

- A. Residents who remove less than four (4) trees per acre that fall into category 1, 2, or 3 of the Tree Replacement Requirements Table within a five-year period.
- B. Tree farms in active operation, nurseries, fruit orchards, and garden centers;
- C. Properties used for the practice of silviculture under an approved forest stewardship or woodland management plan that is active and on file with the municipality;
- D. Any trees removed as part of a municipal or state decommissioning plan. This exemption only includes trees planted as part of the construction and predetermined to be removed in the decommissioning plan.
- E. Any trees removed pursuant to a New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) or U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved environmental clean-up, or NJDEP approved habitat enhancement plan;
- F. Approved game management practices, as recommended by the State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife;
- G. Hazard trees may be removed with no replacement requirement.

§12-100. Enforcement.

This ordinance shall be enforced by the Department of Public Works of the Town of Hackettstown during the course of ordinary duties.

§12-101. Violations and Penalties.

Any person(s) who is found to be in violation of the provisions of this ordinance shall be subject to a fine not to be less than the amount required under Section 12-98.C.1.b above.

SECTION TWO

If any section, subdivision, paragraph, clause, or provision of this ordinance shall be adjudged invalid, such adjudication shall apply only to such section, subdivision, paragraph, clause, or provision and the remainder of this ordinance shall be deemed valid and effective. All ordinances or parts of ordinances inconsistent with this ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

SECTION THREE

This ordinance shall take effect upon the publication of notice of final adoption as provided by law.

Notice

Notice is hereby given that the aforesaid ordinance was introduced at a regular meeting of the Common Council of the Town of Hackettstown, County of Warren, State of New Jersey, held on June 12, 2025, and that a regular meeting of the same to be held on June 26, 2025 at the Municipal Building, 215 West Stiger Street, Hackettstown, New Jersey, at the hour 7:00 o'clock in the evening, the said Common Council will consider the final passage of said ordinance.

PJ Reilly
Town Clerk/Administrator