

Urban Forest - Subdivision Servicing Bylaw

Following a presentation by engineering staff at the December meeting, Council approved a motion directing staff to repeal the "City of Parksville Subdivision Servicing Bylaw, 1996, No. 1261" to update and address various housekeeping items and replace the City's Engineering Standards and Specifications (1998) with the revised information as presented. Council also directed staff to advance the draft subdivision servicing bylaw and standards to the statutory process.

One of the items in this new bylaw proposes to remove the requirement for street tree planting on boulevards along local or residential roads. The proposal to no longer require residential road street trees is due to the planning, engineering and operational needs while balancing infrastructure, safety of residents and financial considerations. Requirements for arterial and roads and highways remain the same.

The City is committed to looking for ways to better manage trees throughout the City. One option is to offer residents the opportunity to purchase a tree at a reduced cost to plant on their own property. Staff will ask Council to approve a tree rebate program which would encourage planting of trees on private property to be maintained by the homeowner.

Similar to other urban centres, the City is keen to increase the urban forest in a manageable way and where appropriate, the City will continue to replant trees lost in urban forest areas, parks and public areas. This is evidenced by recent and ongoing tree planting City projects with the TD Bank, Tree Canada and BC Hydro as well as the many other trees planted throughout the City.

Downtown property setbacks which are zero feet from the property line do not allow for planting of trees with a significant canopy; as a result, trees with a more upright narrow form are being planted in urban centres. When these trees are planted too close together they tend to form a wall along the street. As the trees mature, there is no allowance for breathing space between trees, causing them to lose form, effectively reducing both the health and the aesthetic value of the tree.

Current standards have trees in sidewalks planted in concrete tree barrels to reduce and eliminate tripping hazards caused by roots lifting sidewalk panels. The expensive remediation of these hazards from trees not planted in a barrel often results in the removal of the tree just when the tree starts to mature. Unfortunately, planting trees in the barrels, while reducing tripping hazards, also leads to a reduced lifespan of the tree.

As well, many trees outside the downtown core are currently too close together and would be healthier if spacing was every second tree as shown in this picture on Pym Street North. This spacing would then allow for sun/photosynthesis on all sides, creating healthier and more visually appealing trees in the urban forest.



With this spacing there will be fewer trees; however, in an effort to improve the urban forest, the City will provide more space for new trees and also provide a better surface growing area. Specification changes in the proposed subdivision servicing bylaw also include the requirement for a root barrier to better protect sidewalks outside the downtown core allowing the roots to grow in a more appropriate direction.

For more information:

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