

Managing a Healthy Urban Forest in Parksville

In 2023, Council approved funding for the City's parks team to increase the inventory of trees in City-owned properties, parks, greenspaces, and boulevards. Through this process, more than 6,000 trees were added to our inventory bringing the total to about 10,500 trees. Each tree was measured, photographed, inspected, and added to our *TreePlotter* inventory.

As a result of the inventory, several tree modifications and removals were required. All trees in the inventory are placed on an inspection cycle with frequency based on the risk associated with the tree. Moving forward, pruning of trees will be more targeted and staff will continue to respond to requests from the public. Trees are not pruned for concerns related to size, shape, shade, leaf, flower, pitch, roots in grass, or seed litter. These are inherent to a tree and not considered to be the reason for pruning or removal.

More future work is needed in Foster Park and Craig Heritage Park with 31 trees requiring modification or removal with about half the trees being red alder, a genus known to be a pioneer species with frequent structural issues as they mature. The largest tree to be removed is a spruce at Foster Park which may have failed due to summer drought. A replanting program in partnership with the Friends of Foster Park is seeing a young forest starting to mature with small Douglas fir trees, osoberry, flowering current, and many other varieties taking hold. The Friends of Foster Park are committed to an invasive plant removal program as have the Friends of Shelly Creek Park. These two parks benefit from the volunteers who support healthy forests in our City.

TreePlotter is a web-based GIS tree management software application for field data collection and data management. Operations staff use this information to plan their work, monitor and assess trees. Trees are plotted on a map in the field or in the office with any web connection. Information collected for each tree includes common and Latin name, location, condition, size, required maintenance tasks, and an inspection cycle. The program can generate reports on trees and calculate ecosystem benefits provided by the trees such as estimate of air quality, carbon, and stormwater benefits.

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For more information:

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*The City of Parksville is located on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish Nations,
home to the Snaw-Naw-As First Nation and the Qualicum First Nation.*