



**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR  
AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: BOULEVARD TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. THAT Council adopt a revised boulevard tree management approach, as outlined in Section 5 of this report.
2. THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission.

**REPORT**

The Environment Committee, at its Open meeting held on 2007 November 13, received and adopted the attached report seeking Council approval to enhance the City's existing boulevard tree management practices.

The Committee noted that the tree management policy of 1989 allows considerable flexibility for staff in the decision making process when dealing with troublesome boulevard tree situations. Appendix III of the policy requires updating to bring it into line with current urban forestry standards. The Committee concluded by noting that the proposed revisions will ensure that residents are treated equitably and impartially within the guidelines of the tree management policy.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Dan Johnston  
Chair

Councillor Pietro Calendino  
Vice Chair

Councillor Lee Rankin  
Member

:COPY - CITY MANAGER DIRECTOR PLANNING & BUILDING DIRECTOR ENGINEERING DIR. PARKS, REC. & CULTURAL SERV.
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**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE **DATE:** 2007 November 05

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES  
DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING  
DIRECTOR ENGINEERING

**SUBJECT:** BOULEVARD TREE MANAGEMENT

**PURPOSE:** To seek Council approval to enhance the City's existing boulevard tree management practices.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **THAT** Council be requested to adopt a revised boulevard tree management approach, as outlined in Section 5 of this report.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission.

**REPORT****1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Trees within the City fall into two broad categories: trees on private property, and trees on public property. The second category, trees on public property includes trees on City property and boulevard trees on road rights-of-way. The purpose of this report is to propose enhancements to the City's existing management practices for boulevard trees on road rights-of-way (i.e. street trees), a subset of all trees on public land. It should also be noted that the City bylaw dealing with trees on private property was the subject of a recent report to Council.

Boulevards and medians throughout the City have been designed, constructed and maintained through a coordinated effort among the Planning, Engineering and Parks Departments. Boulevards have been designed through the development process and generally contain a mix of hard landscape elements including sidewalks, light poles, street furniture, gravel parking, and soft landscape elements including grass and street trees.

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From: *Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services*  
*Director Planning and Building*  
*Director Engineering*

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In addition, residents have taken it upon themselves to enhance their neighbourhoods by personal planting of trees on boulevards in front of their homes. Street trees and vegetation are an integral part of Burnaby's image as a "green" City and are considered an important environmental resource.

As Burnaby's streetscapes continue to grow, develop and mature, issues related to street plantings have arisen, including maintenance requirements, resources, pest management, leaf/needle litter and damage from wind/snow storms.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

Boulevard tree planting has been practiced in the City for decades. Many older neighbourhoods have mature trees that were planted when housing developments were put in place forty to fifty years ago. Mature trees of this magnitude require considerably more maintenance than younger, smaller trees. In addition, trees planted decades ago may not be appropriate in today's setting or consistent with current best practices.

The City adopted a Tree Management Policy for Public Lands in 1989 which was designed to allow for a balance between responsibility to preserve and enhance the City streetscape as well as provide a basis for tree maintenance, conservation, tree planting and tree removal where necessary and appropriate.

Over the last eighteen years, the amount of street planting has increased. New streets now may include planted medians and boulevards, and the Planning and Engineering Departments have initiated several improvement programs to upgrade boulevards, medians, sidewalks, street trees, lighting and services. ACRT Inc. Environmental Specialists was retained by the City in 2000 for the purpose of surveying boulevard trees and developing an outline management plan to assist the City in making more informed choices about boulevard trees. The survey estimated that over 57,000 street trees exist in Burnaby plus numerous other shrubs and planted areas along boulevards and medians.

## **3.0 CURRENT PROBLEMS RELATED TO STREET TREE PLANTINGS**

A number of issues related to street tree plantings have arisen in recent years. The types of situations can be classified under four main areas:

### **3.1 Appropriate Species**

The ACRT report of 2000 revealed that 62% (38,000) of the City's trees on boulevards had been planted by residents or were naturally established. The location of many of these plantings did not take into account suitable species for the urban environment or the location of service lines such as sewer, water and gas. As these trees have matured, their root systems have expanded and caused damage to services, sidewalks, walkways, and perimeter drains around homes.

### **3.2 Boulevard Tree Maintenance**

Street tree maintenance is done by three parties with residents responsible for leaf/needle litter on their property and adjacent boulevards; Parks maintains street trees on medians and boulevards; and Engineering is responsible for repairs to damaged sidewalks, roads and services on City property.

### **3.3 Utility Damage**

Street tree planting practices during the early years did not take into account the location of underground services such as water, sewer, natural gas, hydro or proximity to driveways, city sidewalks and power lines. These services all suffer to some degree from the maturing trees. In many cases, the City has incurred expenses for repair of property and in locations where this is expected to continue, the City removes the inappropriate tree species and replants with a more suitable type. City staff work closely with BC Hydro to reduce costs and prevent duplication of work.

### **3.4 Resident Concerns**

#### *3.4.1 Damage*

Property owners have similar concerns about utility damage, sidewalk damage, roots lifting driveways and getting into perimeter house drains with a potential for flooding. In a number of cases, claims have resulted against the City for driveway repair, sidewalk repair and utility damages. As a preventative measure against future claims, the trees are removed and replaced with more suitable species in appropriate locations.

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### 3.4.2 Personal Safety

The severe wind storms in the winter of 2007 with resulting tree blow-downs have brought resident concerns about safety and security to the forefront. Calls of concern are addressed on an individual basis and action taken as required. These situations sometimes result in a disagreement between the property owner and City Arborist's professional appraisal of the integrity of the tree in question.

### 3.4.3 Litter

Some of the boulevard trees that were planted 25 - 30 years ago have reached considerable size, have large crowns and when fall arrives they deposit leaves and needles in residents yards, residents roofs, on boulevards and on City streets. Often staff receive citizen requests to attend to their property to clean up the leaf or needle litter from City trees. Accumulated tree litter on the streets often plug catch basins and results in localized flooding. These trees, although in good condition and good health, may no longer be appropriate for certain locations due to their size.

### 3.4.4 Insect Problems

There are a few species of trees that have annual cycles of insect infestation. Recent examples of this include: Tulip trees along Pender and Williams streets with aphid problems and resulting "honeydew" that drops on residents cars, sidewalks, fences and lawns; Red Oak trees along Cambridge street that are infested with the "red oak casemaker", a small worm like insect that drops from the trees and gets on cars, sidewalks, lawns and houses. The primary treatment for these problems is to thin out the tree canopy and use non-toxic soap spray to control the insects. This practice is costly and often meets with limited results.

## 4.0 CURRENT RESPONSE TO PROBLEM SITUATIONS

Residents contact the Urban Forestry section of the Parks Recreation and Cultural Services Department to register their concern about a boulevard tree. The inquiry is entered into a software tracking system and one of the City Arborists attends the site, discusses the situation with the property owner, examines the tree health and safety issues, and then takes action as required. Residents are occasionally not satisfied for various reasons (view, litter, shade, safety, insects, property damage) and proceed to press their complaints further to supervisors, managers or, on occasion, directly to Council.

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## 5.0 PROPOSED POLICY ENHANCEMENTS

The tree management policy approved by Council in 1989 provides flexibility for staff in dealing with the majority of the tree situations that arise on a day to day basis. Normally, over 99% of tree inquiries are handled by staff without the need for residents to pursue their concern through alternate channels. Depending on weather conditions, the Urban Forestry section receives between 650 and 1,100 calls annually to attend to various tree concerns. Through the course of a year there are perhaps a dozen or so cases where further consultation is requested by the residents.

The tree management policy has three appendixes that assist staff in the handling of trees on public boulevards. The first two appendixes are listings of desirable tree species and non-preferred tree species for boulevards which are updated periodically by Urban Forestry staff according to acceptable urban forestry standards. The third appendix is the tree inspection procedure and tree removal guidelines practiced by staff.

A staff committee comprised of representatives from Planning, Engineering and Parks have reviewed Appendix III with respect to the issues raised in this report and propose the following enhancements to improve boulevard tree management in the City. The proposed revisions are included in Attachment A.

### 5.1 Hazardous or Dangerous Trees (see page 1 of Attachment A)

Current Practice: City may remove trees that are brittle, damaged beyond repair due to insects, disease, vandalism, vehicles, extreme weather or other causes.

Proposed Practice:

- each request is discussed with resident by City staff.

This initial consultation and subsequent work results in satisfaction of the residents concerns in 99% of the cases. However, in the rare cases where the resident is not satisfied with the outcome of this first step, the following additional steps could be pursued.

- resident disagrees with City's assessment - 1<sup>st</sup> independent Arborist hired by the City
- resident disagrees with 1<sup>st</sup> independent Arborist - 2<sup>nd</sup> independent Arborist paid for by the resident
- same assessment (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> independent Arborists) - work carried out accordingly

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- different assessment (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> independent Arborists) - 3<sup>rd</sup> Arborist hired by the City
- City/resident abide by 2/3 decision

The reason that the proposed process would allow for up to three potential Arborists to be engaged is in recognition of the aspects of liability associated with hazard trees and to ensure that due diligence is exercised in cases where there are differing opinions on the proposed remedy.

### **Insect Infestations**

(see page 2 of Attachment A)

Current Practice: City may remove trees damaged beyond repair from insects or disease.

#### Proposed Practice:

- each request is discussed with resident by City staff
- apply biological treatment and best management practices
- infestation/disease continues
- initiate a neighbourhood consultation process to develop an appropriate mitigation strategy
- strategy could involve removal and replacement of selected street trees

## **5.2 Property Damage**

(see page 3 of Attachment A)

Current Practice: City may remove trees that are causing damage to private or public property such as root damage to underground services, roads, drainage, sidewalks and walls.

#### Proposed Practice:

- each request is discussed with resident by City staff
- *minor damage* - preventative maintenance done on tree
- *major damage* – tree(s) removed, restoration done, suitable replacement tree(s) planted

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**5.3 View, Litter, Shade**  
(see page 4 of Attachment A)

Current Practice: City does not remove or top trees for reasons of too much shade, too much leaf litter or loss of views.


Proposed Practice:


- each request is discussed with resident by City staff
- City uses best management practices to assist (enhanced maintenance by way of pruning, thinning, etc.)
- Resident not satisfied
- in exceptional circumstances, the resident's request is referred to a joint staff committee

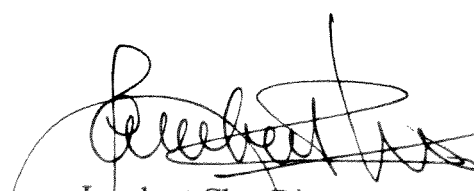
**6.0 CONCLUSION**

The tree management policy of 1989 allows considerable flexibility for staff in the decision making process when dealing with troublesome boulevard tree situations. Appendix III requires some updating to bring the policy in line with current urban forestry standards and to provide staff with improved processes and tools to satisfy resident concerns.

Therefore, it is recommended that Council adopt the revised boulevard tree management approach as outlined in section 5.0 of this report for the purpose of providing Burnaby residents with boulevard tree concerns, an avenue to make themselves heard, and be treated impartially within the guidelines of the existing tree management policy.

  
Kate Friars, Director  
PARKS, RECREATION &  
CULTURAL SERVICES

  
Basil Luksun, Director  
PLANNING & BUILDING

  
Lambert Chu, Director  
ENGINEERING

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Attach.

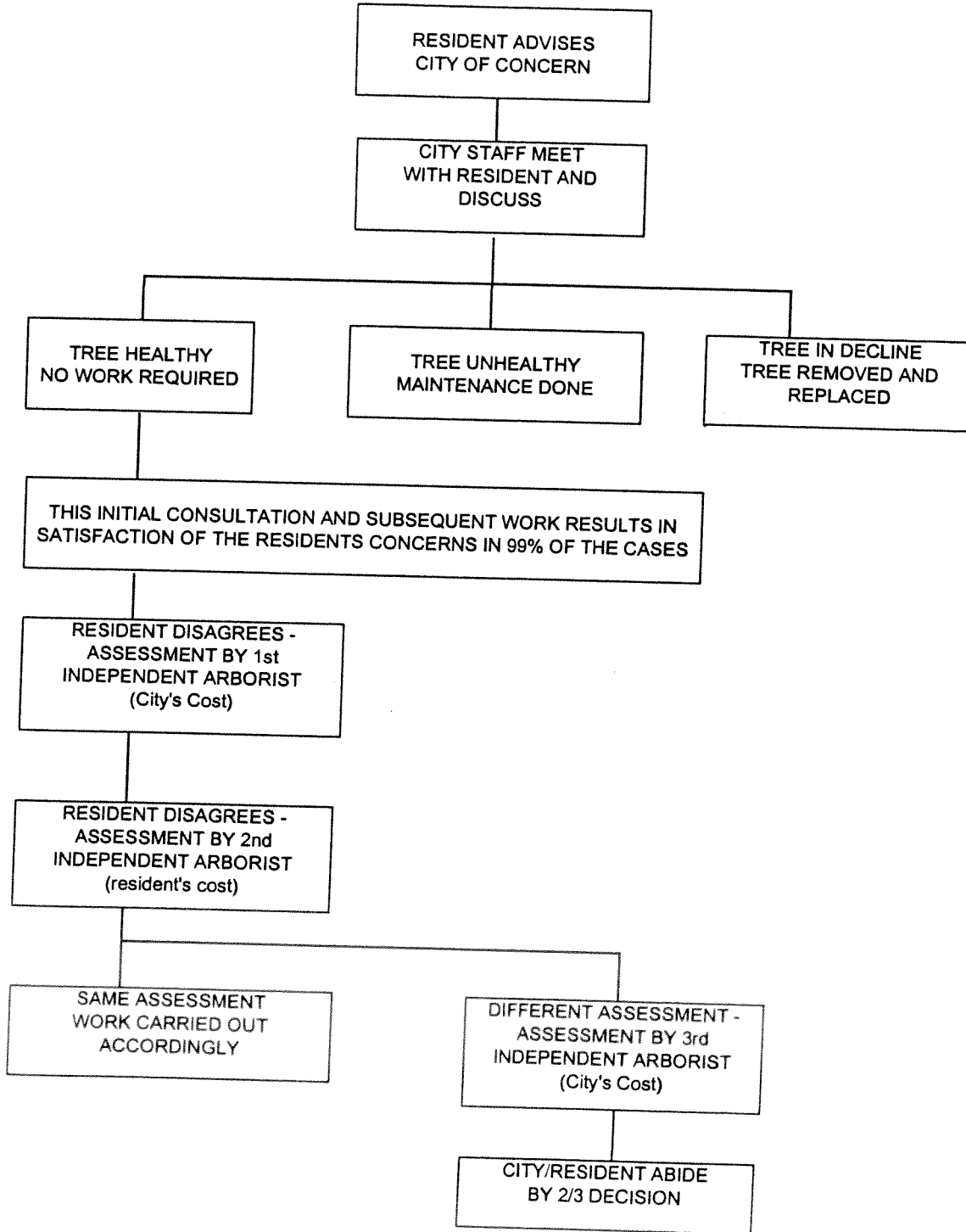
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cc: Director Finance



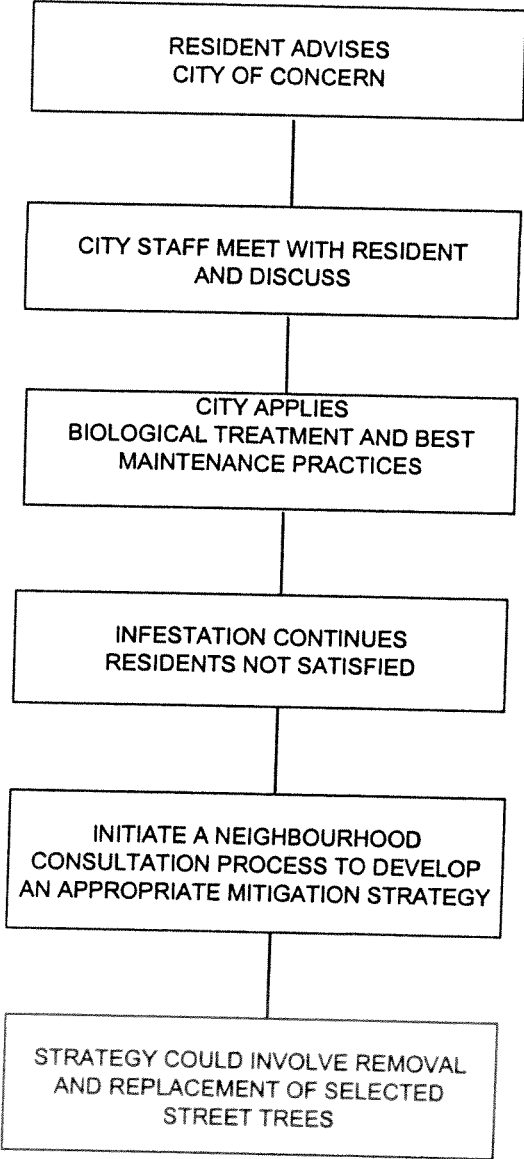
# BOULEVARD TREE RESPONSE PROCESS

## HAZARDOUS OR DANGEROUS TREES



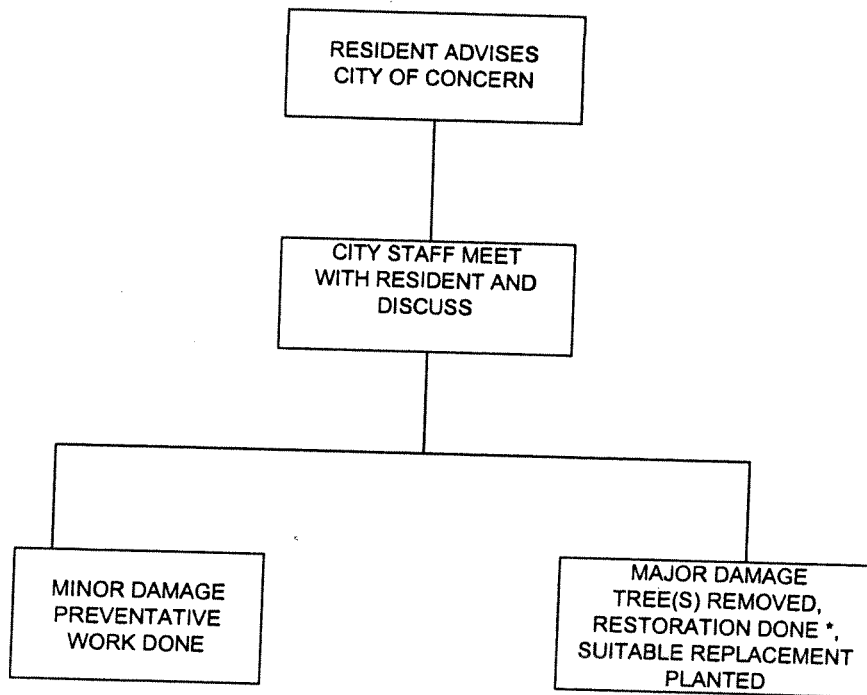
**BOULEVARD TREE RESPONSE PROCESS**

**INSECT INFESTATIONS**



### BOULEVARD TREE RESPONSE PROCESS

#### PROPERTY DAMAGE (INCLUDING SIDEWALK AND UTILITY)



Note: \* Restoration may involve the localized relocation of utilities in some cases.

## BOULEVARD TREE RESPONSE PROCESS

### VIEW, LITTER, SHADE

