

To: Richmond Planning Committee, February 8, 2022

From: Sharon MacGougan, President, Garden City Conservation Society

Re: **Enhanced Protections for Significant Trees**

Mayor Brodie and Councillors,

The Garden City Conservation Society strongly supports the proposed amendments to the Tree Protection Bylaw. We are especially pleased with (a) the language that supports habitat retention and restoration and (b) the language that affirms the importance of wildlife and birds.

As you know, Richmond is on the Pacific Flyway, so we are very significant for migrating birds along with native ones. We are on the verge of being designated a Key Biodiversity Area. By embedding the importance of birds and wildlife into our OCP, we take a positive step. Thank you to the authors of this report for recommendations that can help mitigate some ecological loss, adjusting our direction for the better.

In North America, three billion birds have been lost since the 1970s, sometimes with extinction of species, and habitat loss is the number one cause. It's our responsibility to figure out ways we can help turn that trend around. The protection of significant trees has a part in it, as recognized in the staff report, especially because they take decades to grow in capacity to deliver their benefits.

I will refer to some amendments to Bylaw 8057 and comment each time.

Article (2) says, ***“compel a property owner to remove a hazardous and/or standing dead or dying tree.”*** Here’s our comment:

We agree but point out that “wildlife trees” are important habitat for insects and birds. In some cases, residents maintain dying birch trees by cutting off the dead tops but retaining the tree for the food and nesting opportunities it provides. Other residents let a tree fall and stay for the same purposes. Those wildlife trees retain habitat. We hope they will *continue to be permitted* unless the tree is hazardous.

Article (4) says, ***“when a ‘Significant tree’ is willfully damaged ... one of the three required replacement trees ... is a minimum of 8 m high.*** We respond:

Someone has done great thinking here! We support amendments that work toward replacing canopy. We can’t replace “Significant trees” – without waiting decades – but mitigating that loss is always good.

Article (5) says, ***“Amend Consolidated Fees Bylaw 8636 to establish the various security amounts.”*** We agree:

We support the increase in the tree survival security for significant trees and would like to see it higher. There have been problems around the loss of trees for too long in Richmond.

Article (6) says, ***“Amend Tree Protection Bylaw 8057 to stipulate how securities are used, how long they are held (for significant trees) and how they are returned or cashed.***

We point out that the bylaw needs to go beyond trees that ***“die within the one-year maintenance period.”*** Many trees are struggling through the one-year maintenance period and then dying. Can the City extend the length of the maintenance period?

I will refer next to Bylaw 10039 (Significant Tree Protection) PLN – 39

Section 1, subsection 14.2.5 A(e) would be replaced with this: **(e)**
To reinforce the image of a well-established landscape, developers are encouraged to retain and incorporate mature trees and landscaping into the development area.

We respectfully suggest deleting “the image of “so the text reads “To reinforce a well-established landscape ...” That is what’s needed!

Section 2 (h) says, **“Incorporate mature trees and landscaping into the development area.”**

We suggest that the word “landscaping” be replaced with the term “biodiversity.” The amendment would then say, **“Incorporate mature trees and biodiversity into the development area.”** An aspect of a “Significant” tree is the biodiversity around it. (“Landscaping” can mean grass, which is not usually good for biodiversity.)

Section 2: (g) says, **“Preserve natural heritage by retaining, relocating and augmenting existing healthy on-site trees and shrubs.”** We say:

Thank you for including *shrubs*! We are losing valuable lower canopy habitat every time mature shrubs are cut down. Birds need lower growth as well as trees.

That section also says, **“Wherever possible, plant new landscaping which will be beneficial to native and migratory birds.”**

Wonderful! Whatever actions we take to mitigate ecological loss is a positive step and a shining legacy for our city.

Thank you to everyone who has had (and will have) a part in the excellent and thoughtful recommendations in the report this committee is considering.

TO: MAYOR & EACH

COUNCILLOR

From: Sharon MacGougan <sharonmacg@telus.net>
Sent: February 8, 2022 1:40 PM
To: Mayor and Councillors
Subject: ADDITION/Enhanced Tree Protection
Attachments: AdditionEnhanced Tree Protection.docx

ON TABLE ITEM

Date: Feb 8 2022
Meeting: Planning Committee
Item: #2

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Dear Mayor and Councillors,

I have added more information to my Speaker's Notes for today's Planning Meeting, per attachment.

Thank you,
Sharon MacGougan
President, Garden City Conservation Society
604.618-8866



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To: Planning Committee, February 8, 2022
From: Sharon MacGougan, President, Garden City Conservation Society
Re: **ADDITION/Enhanced Protections for Significant Trees**

Article (2) says, **“compel a property owner to remove a hazardous and/or standing dead or dying tree.”**

We would like to see acknowledgment of the importance of wildlife trees in the wording; and given the significant loss of habitat, especially for cavity nesters, that efforts are made to keep at least some portion of dead and dying trees as habitat whenever it is possible.

Dead or dying trees can be important nesting sites for cavity nesters such as woodpeckers and owls as well as smaller birds like nuthatches. Of course, hazardous trees need to be managed but automatic removal shouldn't be the first option. An assessment of level of risk, nesting values and pruning to maintain a wildlife tree for as long as safely possible would be preferred. Below is some potential wording:

“ for trees over XX diameter, compel a property owner to undertake a risk assessment of standing dead or dying tree to identify beneficial pruning practices based on the Wildlife Tree / Dangerous Tree Assessor's Course Workbook to safely maintain the tree as a wildlife tree until the tree is determined to be a risk public safety based on the Tree Danger Rating criteria defined in Wildlife Tree / Dangerous Tree Assessor's Course Workbook.”

Link to work book. <https://www2.unbc.ca/sites/default/files/sections/continuing-studies/harvsilvhandbook-09jan2019.pdf>