

TO: MAYOR & EACH  
COUNCILLOR  
FROM: CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

Schedule 1 to the Minutes of the  
Planning Committee meeting of  
Richmond City Council held on  
Wednesday, April 7, 2021.

**From:** Sharon MacGougan, President, Garden City Conservation Society, Richmond  
**To:** Richmond Planning Committee meeting, April 7, 2021  
**Re:** Tree Protection Bylaw No. 8057, amendments

Dear Planning Committee,

The Garden City Conservation Society supports the proposed amendments. Our concern is to mitigate ecological loss in Richmond, and trees are a key element of biodiversity. Planting more trees, especially bird habitat trees, is a good idea.

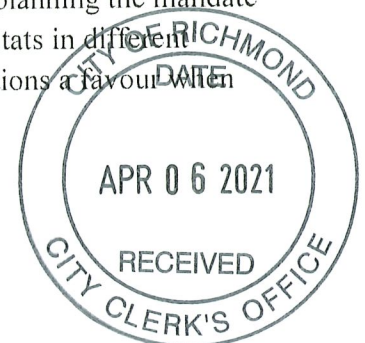
We have a few comments and suggestions about the trees in Richmond neighbourhoods:

- **Large, healthy, mature trees have value.** They take decades to reach maturity, and their ecological benefits increase greatly over many years. We lose a lot when these trees are cut. We are not currently replacing decades-old trees in a way that is commensurate with what we lose when they are eliminated.
- **Planting a sapling does not make up for killing an eighty-year-old tree.** In this time of rapid ecological loss, we need more than ever to protect what we can, in as many ingenious ways as possible. At the very least, we need to give back as much as we take away.
- **“Review the current value of replacement trees”** was the referral to staff at the Talisman public hearing when this issue of valuation of mature trees came up. A summary of current practice has been given, perhaps as a first step in a response. But has there been a review?
- **The kind of tree planted is important.** Birds need habitat. The number of birds in North America has declined by 3 billion birds since the 1970s, and loss of habitat is the number one cause. Birds don't have trees to make nests in neighbourhoods where large mature trees are routinely replaced by decorative smaller trees.
- **Can we mandate better bird-habitat trees in clearer ways?** That would balance this helpful statement of what to avoid: “We **DO NOT** accept the following as replacement trees: hedging cedars, palm trees, banana plants, dwarf species or topiaries.” That's from a City of Richmond Bulletin, “Tree Bylaw Section (Replacement Tree Guideline) 2012/12/18”.
- **We can build for birds.** Cities can track how bird-friendly their forest canopy cover is with *Building for Birds*. It would be great if Richmond could use this tool when planning the mandate and when measuring the effectiveness of the bylaw in maintaining bird habitats in different neighbourhoods. Birds are part of our community, and we do future generations a favour when we plan for the future community of birds in Richmond.

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- **We need to discourage pollarding.** That extreme way of pruning trees that are mature enough to be useful for birds makes them useless for it. Pollarding appears to be increasing at multi-unit development sites, and this practice negates ecological give-back to a neighbourhood.
- **We need more public education about tree topping.** As the City staff who deal with trees know, topping trees is very harmful to them. Unfortunately, the harmful behaviour seems increasingly common.
- **We need to get a handle on the extent of tree loss.** One facet is that trees are disappearing from yards and not being replaced, as I notice on my walks. To me it means the situation is worse than realized and that new or better-implemented strategies are needed. That might include a persuasive awareness campaign.
- **We can apply our public-lands values to neighbourhoods.** Mixed groups of good habitat trees are being planted on our public lands. For example, the City has helped establish a wonderful variety of street trees on the north side of Alderbridge Way, east of No. 4 Road. It is like a small mixed forest—the way a forest grows.

In closing, we are grateful that Richmond has a Tree Protection Department that works hard to protect our trees. We give our full support to their proposed amendments, and we would like to see better value for mature trees.