

Re RZ 20-919113
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Richmond

Our society is opposed to the rezoning of the four properties on Patterson Road (8911, 8931, 8951, 8991) for two reasons:

1. According to Andrew Peterson's recent Letter to the Editor, there appears to a vibrant community in this area and community is important. And,
2. For the permanent ecological loss of a highly-functioning ecosystem.

I'm speaking mainly about trees but also the biodiversity that a tree is part of. Richmond's tree canopy stood at 12% last time I heard. It may have improved and we hope it has—Richmond has been planting lots of trees throughout our city—but each time we lose mature and significant trees, regardless of tree replacement ratios, it is a big loss. One that takes a long time to recover from because trees take a long time to grow. By the time these new replacement trees can provide nesting or feeding opportunities for birds, the birds may not be there to use them. We all know North America has lost 3 billion birds since the 1970's and the number one reason is habitat loss. Each clearcut we do of established mature trees aids and abets diminishing numbers of birds and pushes forward possible extinctions.

Our society has struggled with the question of how to mitigate ecological loss in Richmond. That's why we decided on the Miyawaki method of planting fast growing biodiverse forests. We need to restore biodiversity onto our public lands and into our neighbourhoods. But, new forests, however biodiverse, should be alongside all of the mature trees we have managed to save. Restoration and protection need to partner. We need to retain as many mature trees as possible and actually plan for those trees to remain. If significant mature trees, like a Western Red Cedar and Douglas Fir, for example, are situated at the edge of a development area, those trees could be set to be retained early in the planning process.

Andrew Peterson is correct when he says "High-rise construction often leads to the loss of green spaces and ecosystems". But we would change the word "often" to "almost always" or "always".

The ecosystem in this area will be lost forever and currently is not being mitigated through the development process. Solitary trees, placed at exact distances apart, with traditional grass boulevards is not an ecosystem.

We could use the Miyawaki model of having trees with partners. One upper canopy tree with one or two lower canopy trees planted in close proximity, as an example. Changing the language from landscaped boulevard to biodiverse landscaped boulevard would make a difference in both with what happens on the boulevard but also how people think about boulevards.

The city has planted a huge number of trees on the Garden City Lands. But our real success comes when the birds move in. I saw a nest on a boulevard tree along the Lands and it made me feel happy. Because that bird had found a good home. That's what we want to do, I hope, with the decision-making we do.

I want to end with the concept of community. The word gets thrown around a lot, and often activities are planned to "create community". Community is a good way to think and to act. It seems like there is a vibrant Patterson Road community, and why wouldn't there be? It is a beautiful area and it's due to the richness of the ecosystem that the community of humans lives alongside of. We are better as a community when we include our natural world, both in our lives and our neighbourhood. That means protection and restoration for good purpose!

Development is an unstoppable force most of the time. We are losing far more trees and ecosystems than what's on this development site. But each ecosystem matters, both for the betterment of our lives but also for the future. That's why it is important to speak and thank you for everyone in this room, who at one time or another, has spoken for our beloved trees and the magnificent biodiversity that surrounds them.