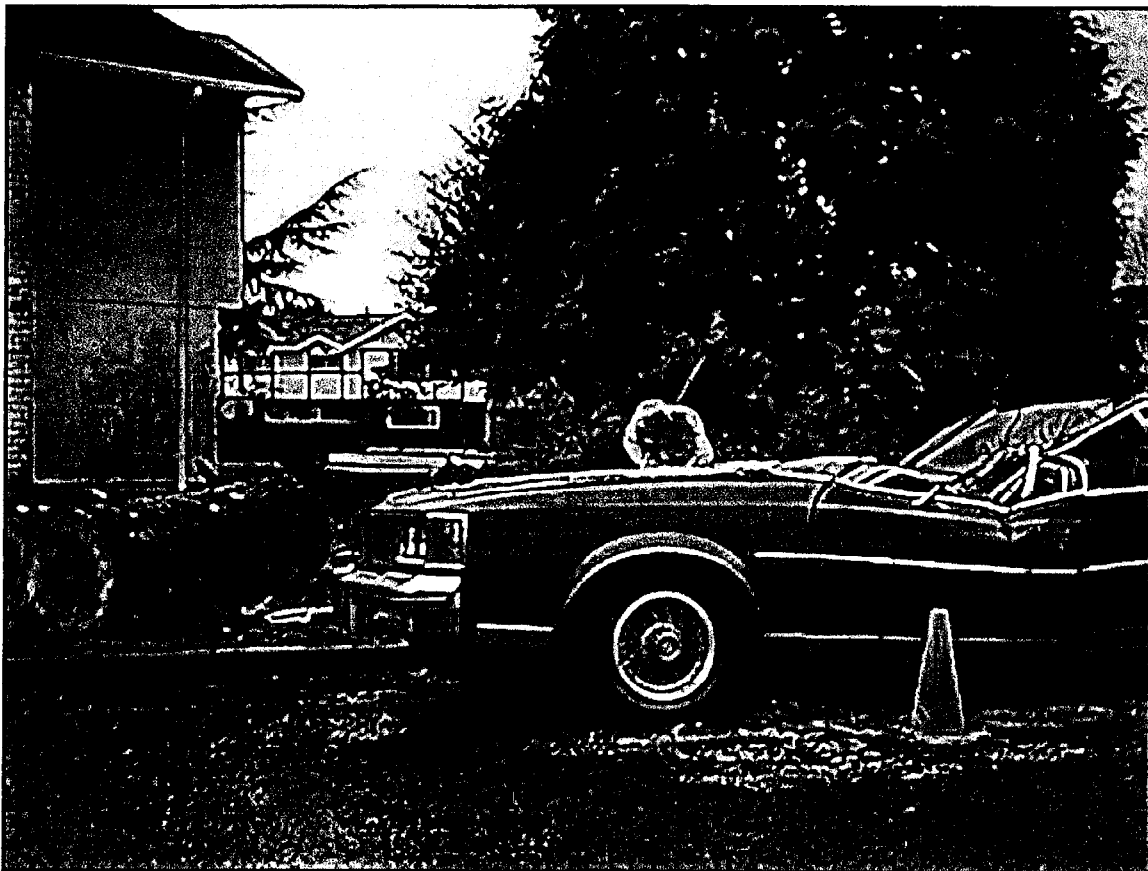


Tree Promotion Bylaw



Richmond Tree Protection Bylaw

Current Tree Protection Bylaw #8014 was enacted last autumn as a measure in response to expressed concern that significant sized trees were being cut down as a prelude to redevelopment.

It should be noted that the precipitating incident was removal of a large sequoia tree whose future was already protected by a development application, and that it has been widely admitted that 99.9% of the City's residential homeowners have not removed significant trees. It should also be noted that since the enactment of the tree bylaw the largest remover of significant City trees is the City itself for its Olympic Oval project, yet the City will not be subject to the Tree Protection bylaw.

Tree Protection Bylaw 8014 received negative reaction from many long term city residents because it was seen as flawed because:

- 1) It deems trees that are 10cm (~4") or larger diameter at breast height (DBH) as "significant" and therefore regulated, whereas Vancouver whose climate is not as hospitable as ours sets 20 cm (~8") or larger as significant.
- 2) It captures many hedges too, because their individual trees, cedar, cypress, holly, or various other tree stock are often over 10 cm and sometimes much larger dbh.
- 3) It allows no reasonable provision for replacement of non productive fruit trees.
- 4) The bylaw makes no special provision for removal of diseased or nuisance trees.
- 5) It particularly punishes those who have planted large numbers of trees in past and wish to remove some of them as they grow to overcrowd a property, crowd buildings, lean over, block street lights or utilities or obstruct roadways. There are provisions for these situations but they are onerous, and the larger the tree that is the problem the greater replacement charge the City exacts – typically from the citizens who have been most considerate in planting trees in the first place.
- 6) The City also potentially assumes liability for subsequent damage caused by trees whose removal it rejects.
- 7) The bylaw is also currently budgeted to cost over ¼ million dollars per year, which is as much as the reported cost in Vancouver with 3x as many taxpayers, because the bylaws answer for almost every situation is to require a time consuming detailed application to the City requiring review by a City staff arborist.

As flawed as the tree bylaw is in terms of these issues, it has even bigger flaws. Until the bylaw was approved the City estimated the number of trees in Richmond increased 1000/year. This bylaw provides absolutely no incentive for homeowners with few or no trees to plant some trees.

Indeed the tree protection bylaw provides a disincentive for homeowners to plant trees or let them grow beyond the prescribed bylaw inclusion size, because for each tree that grows the owners future options for use of their private property decrease. There is incentive to cut down trees as they approach bylaw inclusion size.

The bylaw also provides no guidance in terms of appropriate trees to plant in Richmond, or appropriate locations or spacing for planting to obtain best results.

This bylaw is an expensive City sanctioned make work project for arborists, landscapers, garden centres, and tree nurseries. It restricts a few irresponsible tree cutters, but also penalizes 30,000 responsible single family homeowners, educates only by punishment, and does nothing to encourage voluntary tree planting.

Proposed replacement Bylaw 8057 is a very small step in the correct direction, in that it allows homeowners a few more years to see if the tree they planted will become appropriate, and fruitful, before removing the homeowners control of it.

However, this slightly modified bylaw suffers from every other flaw I've mentioned.

To expedite matters, Bylaw 8057 should be approved as an interim bylaw only, with budget support levels restricted to one (1) arborist and (1) assistant.

Staff should be requested to prepare a PROACTIVE Tree Promotion Bylaw that:

- 1) Requires no more than (1) arborist, and (½) administrative assistant to operate, (plus perhaps 1 vehicle?). The cost should only be a fraction of Vancouver's cost.
- 2) Provides time to continue to catalog truly significant trees.
- 3) Contains a work plan to plant trees that may grow truly significant in City parks, conservation areas, greenways, school grounds with cooperation, larger city medians, and other suitable areas for large stately and massive significant trees. This is essential because City housing will densify over time, tree roots grow shallow in Richmond's high water table, and proximate massive trees place people at risk. We must therefore anticipate removal of some significant trees over time.
- 4) Encourages people with few trees on their property to plant trees.
- 5) Interferes as little as possible with the 30,000 responsible homeowners who have planted hundreds of thousands of trees on their properties throughout Richmond.

Peter Mitchell, 6271 Nanika Crescent, Richmond, BC.