

June 19, 2016

### **Save Richmond Trees - Strategy for Tree Protection**

The Save Richmond Trees group recommends that the City of Richmond adopt the following strategies which guide the Bylaw changes (listed below) that we believe should be enacted:

- A. **Richmond must save mature trees on private land** (where most trees are growing).  
This strategy recognizes:
  - The value of mature trees
  - The environmental, health and green infrastructure benefits of large trees
- B. **Richmond must vastly reduce the loss of trees caused by new construction.**
  - Re-balance the building footprints for more tree retention
  - Trees lost due to construction must be replaced on the same lot (not on public lands)

### **Recommended Tree Protection Bylaw changes:**

1. Increase the fees for cutting down a tree and significantly increase fines for contravening the Bylaw.
  - To create a meaningful disincentive for cutting down healthy trees.
2. Amend Bylaw to remove the ability for an owner or builder to remove one healthy tree per year.
  - Permits issued for the removal of dead, diseased, and hazardous trees only (eg. Vancouver) <http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/tree-removal-permit.aspx>
3. Any trees that are removed (whether hazardous or permitted for removal) must be replaced **on the same lot.**
  - Protects trees (on private property) where the majority of Richmond's population resides
4. Provide Tree Protection staff with the mandate and powers to require builders to adjust plans to retain significant trees.
  - Re-balance approval process so construction preferences do not always "trump" tree retention
  - For example: relocate driveways to retain significant trees
  - Consider applications to remove trees in conjunction with redevelopment permit reviews
  - Include tree survey / tree retention plan with residential Building Permit Application Requirements (design checklist)

### **Recommended Building Bylaw changes:**

1. Increase minimum backyard setbacks to 30 feet (currently 20 feet) on a standard 120 foot lot (with proportional increases for smaller lots).
  - Most trees and green space are lost due to minimal setbacks (Richmond has some of the lowest setbacks in Metro Vancouver)
  - Current low setbacks encourage house designs with no regard for tree retention (such as 3 car garages set in front, pushing house structures to the very rear of lot)
2. For new construction, must achieve a minimum of 2 trees, from City-approved lists, and 2 shrubs by retention and planting on a single family building lot.

3. Ban new construction of brick walls and gates from entrances in residential neighbourhoods.
  - Causes the loss of many mature trees close to property lines (where they are commonly located)
  - Other municipalities (eg. Surrey) have controlled these unwelcoming structures  
[http://www.surrey.ca/files/General Guide to Driveways.pdf](http://www.surrey.ca/files/General_Guide_to_Driveways.pdf)
4. Enforce current side yard setbacks.
  - Retain room for trees and vegetation
  - Eliminate projections into setbacks
5. Address large projecting garages and other detached structures.
  - Encourage livable space above garages
6. Adjust bylaws and strengthen enforcement to increase area covered by live plant material.
  - Current new construction practice results in far less than 30% living plant material on site (actual coverage approx. 15 – 20%).
  - Limited green space impacts the opportunity for trees
  - Protection is needed for other significant plants (including hedges and shrubs)
  - Limit driveways to 6 meters in width (eg. Surrey, Delta) and increase landscaped areas.  
[http://www.surrey.ca/bylawsandcouncilibrary/BYL\\_Zoning\\_12000.pdf](http://www.surrey.ca/bylawsandcouncilibrary/BYL_Zoning_12000.pdf)  
<https://delta.civicweb.net/filepro/documents/39447?preview=39448>

#### **New Policy Priorities:**

1. Complete a tree canopy cover study for Richmond.
  - Will allow Richmond to establish tree canopy goals for **increased** tree coverage, and to monitor canopy change over time.
  - Bylaw changes cannot wait for completion of a tree canopy study - protection of existing inventory is now a paramount strategy
2. Adopt Richmond's Ecological Network Management Strategy report into policy.
  - Embed a biodiversity checklist (eg. Port Moody) into new development applications  
<http://www.portmoody.ca/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=839>  
<http://stewardshipcentrebc.ca/case-studies/naturescape-british-columbia/>

#### **Increase Staffing:**

1. Increase City Tree Protection staff to assist with enforcement.
  - The existing 3 staff members are not an adequate level to keep pace with development

Thank you,

Save Richmond Trees group