

CITY OF WHITEHORSE

COUNCIL POLICY

POLICY TREE REMOVAL

PURPOSE To establish management methods for efficiently and fairly assessing citizen applications for tree removal on lands under the jurisdiction of the City and ensuring a site clean up is conducted as part of any tree removal. It is also a guide for City staff in the management of the urban forest and for dealing with a variety of special situations and specific park plans.

AUTHORITY Council Resolution # 97-14-18 dated July 14,1997

TREE REMOVAL POLICY

Introduction

Trees define the park-like nature of Whitehorse and set this community apart from other increasingly urbanized municipalities. Demands for the preservation of views, public safety and forest trees are sometimes in conflict. Council is faced with the responsibility of achieving a balance in these demands on land under the jurisdiction of the City. As such, the policy governs the removal of trees within City of Whitehorse boundaries.

Objective

Trees are a community resource, an integral part of our natural environmental and a recreational and visual amenity for everyone to enjoy. The need for an effective policy has been demonstrated as conflicts arise between those who wish to preserve all trees and those who request tree removals.

The function of this policy is to establish management methods for efficiently and fairly assessing citizen applications for tree removal on lands under the jurisdiction of the City as well as ensuring a site clean up is conducted as part of any tree removal. It is also a guide for City staff in the management of the urban forest and for dealing with a variety of special situations and specific park plans.

Policy

1. This policy addresses a number of challenges. They are:
 - (1) Introduce a tree management system that conserves the landscapes, views and forest ecosystems that identify the present day community.

- (2) Develop and implement a fair and reasonable mechanism for the settlement of complaints related to City trees.
- (3) Preserve community and neighbourhood character and ensure services such as water, sewer, electrical and transportation systems are maintained and able to operate.
- (4) Identify hazardous trees and remedy the problem.
- (5) Develop a procedure for the removal of trees.
- (6) Establish penalties for tree removal violations.

Intervention Criteria and Process

2. The Facility Parks Supervisor will evaluate trees that present a safety and/or liability hazard to persons or property and which are within City jurisdiction. A hazardous tree is deemed to be one having the potential to be felled by persons pushing or climbing, or be a dead or diseased tree in a location that is in falling distance of private property, structures or an identified trail as per the Cities Trail Plan. City staff will treat such trees without recourse to a regular tree maintenance application or to the regular evaluation and posting procedures.
3. Key criteria for intervention consists of:
 - (1) **Culturally Inappropriate** - A tree or trees that are crowded, weak wood, aggressive roots, shading, non-indigenous species or are considered unsightly.
 - (2) **Damaged** - A tree or trees damaged by natural forces such as wind, snow, ice, environmental stress or unnatural forces such as vehicular damage, vandalism or construction damage.
 - (3) **Dead** - A tree or trees that are no longer living.
 - (4) **Diseased** - A tree or trees that is possibly diseased or has a blight that may be contagious to other trees or weakens the tree causing risks to the public. Deterioration of the tree by fungi, dwarf mistletoe, heart and root rots, sucking, chewing or boring insects.
 - (5) **Fire Prevention** - A tree or trees that cause a fuel build up causing threat from fire to the City.
 - (6) **Liability** - A tree or trees that presents a risk to the public and/or if felled on a structure, road, private property, public property or on a trail, could be a risk to the public.
 - (7) **New Construction/Development/Street Engineering** - A tree or trees that interfere with development, construction or traffic flow ensuring that wherever possible, reforestation will occur in the redevelopment.
 - (8) **Safety** - A tree or trees that pose an immediate threat to public and employee safety, private and/or public property.

Process

4. The public will be expected to make a formal application to Parks and Recreation to cut or prune trees on lands under City jurisdiction will be evaluated using factors that recognize the unique situation presented by each site. The Facility Parks Supervisor or his/her designate will carry out landscape evaluations. Treatment will vary depending on the site specifics of each location. At the discretion of the Facility Parks Supervisor or his/her designate, an arborist or horticultural specialist may be consulted.
5. In all treatment of trees on lands under City jurisdiction, the scale of intervention will be determined by the Facility Parks Supervisor balancing private interests with preservation of environmental quality and the community amenity.
6. Posting of the intention to cut trees on lands under City jurisdiction will occur for a period not less than seven (7) days in specified areas and where a resident application has been approved for tree cutting of a significant nature. Intervention due to required public works, emergencies, and routine maintenance by City staff will be exempt from posting.

Tree Management Practices and Procedures

7. Applications for maintenance work on City trees will be accepted from any member of the public. Each applicant will be evaluated based on the principles described in this policy. The Facility Parks Supervisor will attempt to achieve, with each applicant, a mutually agreeable treatment of the subject trees. In cases of dispute or disagreement, the route of appeal will be through the Parks and Recreation Manager and then to the Director of Municipal Services.

Emergency Removals

Approval Authority - Crew

8. A street tree may be removed at the discretion of a field crew if that tree is judged by the responding crew to be an immediate threat to public safety or public property. Emergency removals are normally in response to hazardous situations arising from severe weather, vehicular damage, vandalism, beaver felled trees or construction damage.

Routine Removals

Approval Authority - Facility Parks Supervisor

9. Trees removed as a component of daily horticultural maintenance include those that are dead, damaged, diseased, hazardous or culturally inappropriate. The decision to remove is the responsibility of the Facility Parks Supervisor. Trees deteriorate to a condition whereby routine removal is required by a variety of factors including:

(1) Culturally Inappropriate

Routine maintenance occasionally requires the removal of trees for cultural reasons including crowding, weak wood, aggressive roots or shading of

ornamental beds. This is a rare practice engaged to improve the appearance and health of horticultural displays.

(2) Damage

Natural forces such as wind, snow, ice, or environmental stress (drought) may damage trees. Unnatural forces such as vehicular damage, vandalism or construction damage may also damage them. This damage often leads to tree decline and a requirement for its removal. Trees in decline or dead have the potential to be hazardous depending on their location in relation to private property, structures or identified trails as per the Cities Trail Plan.

(3) Development/Street Engineering

Situations arise in the construction or renovation of homes and businesses and in traffic flow management that require the removal of trees. This will, however, be kept to a minimum whenever possible.

Engineering projects that may require tree removal include sidewalk reconstruction, property access (i.e. driveways and entrances) and inappropriate trees at a commercial site.

After consultation with appropriate internal authorities (i.e. Engineering, Environmental Coordinator), the Parks and Recreation Manager will approve tree removals that are required for street widening and left turn bays.

(4) Disease and Insect Infestation

Fungi, dwarf mistletoe, heart and root rots, sucking, chewing and boring insects are leading causes of tree decline. Diseased and insect infested trees can be removed when they become hazardous, aesthetically unappealing, or breeding sites for the spread of disease and insects to healthy trees.

Non-Routine Removals

Approval Authority - Parks and Recreation Manager

10. Occasions arise when the Parks and Recreation Manager is required to authorize the removal of a tree or trees. Senior administration will be informed prior to these removals. These occasions include:

(1) Cultural Removals

Senior management is required to consent to the removal of particularly large trees or large numbers of trees that need to be removed for the health of other plant material and the viewing enjoyment of the public. For instance, a grove of trees will eventually require thinning whose members were initially planted in close proximity to achieve an attractive setting.

(2) New Construction Removals

Trees may be removed at the discretion of the Facility Parks Supervisor in the course of new construction on City owned or controlled lands. This includes, but is not limited to, projects such as parks, playgrounds and trail construction.

(3) View Vistas Within Parks

On occasion, trees are removed within City parks to facilitate the creation or re-establishment of views that benefit the general population. This is a rare occurrence, generally responding to public input.

Fire Prevention

11. The City of Whitehorse may initiate measures to do significant reductions to fuel build ups in forested areas within City boundaries in the effort to reduce fire hazards. This would involve the controlled removal of numerous trees surrounding residential areas. This initiative would be done in accordance with the Fire Risk Assessment Report as submitted by the Yukon College Renewable Resource Program of 1996. Extensive thinning, limbing and deadwood removal shall take place outside of the guidelines of this Tree Removal Policy. Should tree removal be required for fire prevention, full consultation with the Fire Department, Forest Resources of the Federal Government, Parks and Recreation Department, Environmental Coordinator, YTG Renewable Resources, EMO Coordinator and Bylaw Department (when appropriate) would occur.

General Evaluation Factors

12. Tree Removal Applications will be evaluated with the following evaluation factors. They will be considered in the decision to approve or deny the application.
- (1) **Habitat** – The type of vegetation and the capacity of a forest area to sustain plant, animal or bird life.
 - (2) **Neighbourhood Identity** – The part that trees play in making subdivision, street or precinct unique in character.
 - (3) **Recreation** – The potential for use of a forest area for public recreation purposes.
 - (4) **Separation** – The screening of a private area from public view and separation from artificial light sources.
 - (5) **Sunlight and Shade** – The degree to which natural light and shade are enhanced or limited by the presence of trees.
 - (6) **View In** – What an area looks like from afar looking back into it.
 - (7) **View Out** – What the viewer sees from a specific point, i.e. a view of rivers, lakes, sky, mountains, trails, playgrounds and trees.

13. The Facility Parks Supervisor will use the factors in each application to a greater or lesser degree depending on whether they apply to a specific site. The Facility Parks Supervisor will determine whether or not a factor applies as will the degree of importance of that factor. The final decision on the action to be taken will be based on consultation and input from the Environmental Coordinator.

Posting

14. Public notification of City intent to remove trees will be done by means of signs posted on the trees to be removed. In general, all removals will be posted for a period not less than seven (7) days. Work that will not be posted includes the removal of hazardous trees, removals required due to public works, emergencies and routine maintenance. Individuals who wish to object to tree cutting will have recourse to the Parks and Recreation Manager with appeal to the Director of Municipal Services. Phone numbers for this appeal will be noted on all postings.

Penalties

15. Unauthorized tree removal penalties shall be governed under Parks and Recreation Bylaw 92-15. This bylaw specifies a minimum penalty of \$200.00 and maximum penalty of \$500.00 per unauthorized tree removal, or alternate remedy as agreed to by the City.

TREE REMOVAL REQUEST

Application for a Permit

Date: _____

Please complete the following information to help us process your application. This includes the written information on the front of this form and a sketch of the site on the back.

Name: _____

Day Time Phone Number: _____

Address: _____

Type of Trees Requested for Removal: _____

Number of Tree(s) Requested for Removal: _____

Reason for Removal Request: *please circle one of the following numbers that best describes your situation*

1. dead or dying, thus a potential hazard
2. interfering with utility *wires*
3. *roots interfering with sewer*
4. roots interfering with water line
5. too close to building face
6. other: _____

Useable wood to be retained by applicant

Yes

No

I acknowledge that the information on this application is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

.../More on the next page

Tree Removal Request

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Make a sketch of your property or site plan:

YOUR PROPERTY OR SITE PLAN SKETCH MUST INCLUDE:

- Name of Subdivision
- Street Name and House Number
- The dimensions of the property and location of the street(s)
- The location of your house and any other buildings on the property
- The exact location and type of tree that you wish to remove
- The greenbelt, open space or park location affected by the removal

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Office Use Only

Modification or Note: _____

Approved By: _____

Applicant Contacted: _____ Date Work Done: _____

***The City Of Whitehorse Encourages The Retention Of Trees
Wherever Possible.***