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The Public Tree Management Strategy

Planning the City's public urban forest of 2045

1.1 Introduction

The Public Tree Management Strategy (the Strategy) provides the framework for **managing trees on City property**. It is an update to the 2001 Urban Forest Strategy and summarizes the current state of the resource, the challenges ahead, and provides the direction to implement the City's vision for managing public trees out to 2045:

Richmond's public trees are managed as a high-value, civic asset. Richmond trees are beautiful, resilient and sustainable and are supported by the community for the benefits they provide.

The urban forest includes all of the trees, vegetation, soil and associated natural processes across Richmond's landscape. The urban forest functions as green infrastructure by providing services and benefits to the City. Trees are the keystone structure of the urban forest – there is no forest without trees. Richmond's public trees are an important part of the City's infrastructure assets.

The City of Richmond has a significant urban forest comprised of approximately 360,000 trees on public and private property in the city. Of those, it is estimated that approximately 100,000 are on public land, that is, on streets, parks and natural areas. The City maintains an inventory of 56,000 trees in streets and parks but has not inventoried trees in natural areas.

The Strategy's emphasis on **trees in the public urban forest** acknowledges the important role the City plays in maintaining healthy trees and a healthy community. The rapid pace of development and a changing climate is affecting the quantity and characteristics of Richmond's public trees. These changes demand a response and a renewed focus on the City's tree management practices.

This Strategy incorporates best management practices, such as preventative tree maintenance and climate suitable species selection, that will improve the health and resilience of the City’s trees. It recognizes the City’s desire to expand the urban forest, and the benefits that the community will receive. Finally, it identifies the budget and resources required to deliver the program efficiently and meet the community’s expectations for a well-managed urban forest on City lands.

Public trees are managed by the City Parks Department but the urban forest is enjoyed and cared for by everyone.

City of Richmond Tree Facts (as of 2019)

City Wide	
Richmond land area	12,760 ha
Richmond % canopy cover	12 %
Estimated trees citywide	350,000+
Public	
Public land area	2,570 ha
Public land % canopy cover	20 %
Public tree canopy area	510 ha
Trees inventoried (individual and groups)	56,000
Estimated tallest tree (poplar)	50 m
Largest diameter tree measured (sequoia)	2 m
Largest canopy spread measured (elm)	23 m

Richmond’s Public Tree Management Strategy is for the public urban forest...



While the urban forest exists across public and private land, the Strategy is focused on the trees and green infrastructure in public streets and parks. Green infrastructure encompasses the components of the natural and built environment that provide ecosystem services such as drainage, water filtration, green space, and wildlife habitat.

1.2 Urban Forest Policy Context

The 2045 Public Tree Management Strategy will work alongside Richmond's current environmental strategies to ensure that trees are a valued and integrated part of the City's natural assets.

Supporting Policies and Plans

The Official Community Plan, Regional Growth Strategy and high-level City Policies and Plans provide the broad context for why the City needs an urban forest and more comprehensive guidance for managing public trees (this Public Tree Management Strategy and Operations Manual).

The City's policies for managing public trees are comprised of several integrated components:

1. The Public Tree Management Strategy (this document);
2. The City Tree Policy;
3. The Public Tree Operations Manual (an internal departmental manual); and
4. The Public Parks and School Grounds Regulation Bylaw No. 8771 and the Tree Protection Bylaw No. 8057.

These components support the overarching vision, processes and regulations that govern public tree management and protection. Trees on private property in Richmond are maintained by the relevant landowner and their removal or replacement is regulated by Richmond's Tree Protection Bylaw.

City Environmental Strategies

The City's suite of environmental strategies work together to implement these higher level plans by guiding environmental protection, park and trail development, urban forest management, rainwater management and dike upgrades across the city.

These strategies integrate with one another and inform the land use tools used to effect change on the ground. Land use tools guide the form of development and can be employed to support the urban forest.



1.3 Strategic Framework

The Public Tree Management Strategy outlines the plan for managing Richmond’s public trees to 2045. The strategic framework for the plan is driven by the City’s vision for Richmond as “... *the most appealing, livable and well-managed community in Canada*”.

The chosen planning horizon for the Strategy is 2018 to 2045, which reflects both the time it takes for trees to grow and aligns with the 2041 vision of Richmond’s Official Community Plan.

Over time, urban forest management, urban development and climate change will impact the health, quantity and distribution of trees in the urban forest. The Strategy anticipates these impacts and responds with objectives and actions to be achieved over the next 27 years. The Strategy also provides metrics to monitor success over time and enable adaptive management to address the uncertainty associated with the long planning horizon.

Goals

Four goals capture the policy, practice and resource recommendations to provide a resilient and sustainable public tree resource for the future. The Strategic framework’s four goals are:

1 Conserve and Protect

2 Manage and Maintain

3 Enhance and Expand

4 Educate and Engage

