

THE CORPORATION OF THE
CITY OF WHITE ROCK
CORPORATE REPORT



DATE: September 20, 2021

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Jim Gordon P.Eng., Director, Engineering & Municipal Operations

SUBJECT: Tree Management on City Lands Policy 611

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT Council approve:

1. The revised Tree Management on City Lands Policy 611 and shown as Appendix B; and
 2. Adding a section to the Corporate Report Template to include implications for tree preservation and tree canopy enhancement where applicable.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2019, Council requested the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) to review White Rock's principal tree management instruments, Tree Management Bylaw 1831 (Bylaw) and Tree Management on City Lands Policy 611 (Policy). The record of this referral underscores Council's concerns regarding both decision-making processes and the effectiveness of the City's tree protection efforts – the latter against the background of City and Metro assessments documenting a serious decline in White Rock's tree canopy over the past two decades.

The EAC provided Council with 19 recommendations that will result in enhanced tree protection and expanded opportunities for tree planting. Some of these recommendations can be incorporated in an amended Bylaw and an amended Policy. However, other more fundamental changes likely to shift the balance between views and tree protection were not approved by Council at the Governance and Legislation Committee meeting on April 26, 2021. Other changes introduced additional requirements for residents modifying their properties or addressing on site tree concerns.

This report is a follow up to the April 26, 2021 Governance and Legislation meeting concerning tree policies on City lands (Policy 611). A separate report will discuss proposed changes to the City Tree Bylaw 1831. A revised Tree Management on City Lands Policy 611 is attached as Appendix B.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

Motion # & Meeting Date	Motion Details
Governance & Legislation Committee April 26, 2021 Motion # 2021-G/L-031	THAT the Governance and Legislation Committee directs the following be removed from staff bringing forward with potential bylaw amendment: <i>Limit the criteria under which applications for pruning, crown thinning, or width reductions are approved to those where the property owner has clearly demonstrated that the tree has increased in size to completely obscure a previously existing view from the applicant's property.</i>
Governance & Legislation Committee April 26, 2021 Motion # 2021-G/L-032	THAT the Governance and Legislation Committee directs the following be removed from staff bringing forward with potential bylaw amendment: <i>Prohibit the topping or removal of city trees for the re-establishment of views.</i>

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

In July 2019, Council requested the EAC to review White Rock’s principal tree management instruments, Tree Management Bylaw 1831 (Bylaw) and Tree Management on City Lands Policy 611 (Policy). The record of this referral underscores Council’s concerns regarding both decision-making processes and the effectiveness of the City’s tree protection efforts – the latter against the background of City and Metro assessments documenting a serious decline in White Rock’s tree canopy over the past two decades. This report addresses tree preservation on City lands through proposed amendments to Policy 611 while a separate report will address the Tree Bylaw (Bylaw 1831) and trees on private properties.

Council considered the recommendations from the EAC concerning trees on City lands and Policy 611 on April 26, 2021. It was noted that the next step was for staff to bring back a new Policy 611 with the EAC recommendations along with direction given at the meeting. In addition to the EAC recommendations, specific direction is outlined in the two approved motions shown above.

Appendix A details the recommendations from the EAC concerning Policy 611. Appendix B is a proposed revised Tree Management on City Lands Policy 611. Appendix C discusses tree preservation and tree canopy enhancement initiatives proposed by the EAC; many of these will be subject to Council’s future direction that may also consider budget and staffing priorities.

DISCUSSION

The Governance & Legislation Committee approved proposed changes to Policy 611 which are incorporated into a new Tree Management on City Lands Policy 611 in Appendix B. Appendix C details tree preservation and tree canopy enhancement initiatives proposed by the EAC. Many of these are subject to future Council direction and budgets as noted in Appendix C; however, the following are highlighted:

1. Tree Canopy Target – It is suggested that an explicit target be identified (such as 27% vs current estimate of 19%) by 2045; however, setting a target without fundamentally changing the policy relationship between trees and views and increased Council support for tree planting will not increase the tree canopy. Continuing the current practices and balances between trees and views, albeit with the recommendations in this report, will likely result in a slight reduction in the tree canopy as private properties are redeveloped with larger homes.

2. Council Report Template – The committee suggested that a section be included in the Corporate Report Template to discuss implications for tree protection and canopy enhancement. If Council directs, this can be done.

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The work of the EAC in preparing the extensive document related to tree preservation and canopy enhancement reflects community input into tree matters as does Council consideration of delegations related to trees and views.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS

The Planning and Development Department also worked with the EAC on tree preservation and canopy enhancement but within the context of Bylaw 1831 that regulates activities related to trees on private properties. A report regarding the EAC recommendations for Bylaw 1831 is forthcoming.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

Increasing the focus on tree preservation in White Rock is a small, but important step in the fight against climate change.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The EAC suggesting improvements to bylaws and policies to protect the tree canopy is a Council Strategic Priority, as is a review of Policy 611 Tree Management on City Lands.

OPTIONS / RISKS / ALTERNATIVES

The following alternate options are available for Council's consideration:

1. Remain with the status quo and not adopt the recommended changes to Policy 611 or the report template as proposed. There would be a diminished focus on tree protection and canopy enhancement.
2. Reverse the April 26, 2021 decision of the Governance and Legislation Committee and adopt the EAC recommendation shifting the balance between trees and views. This would result in more pushback from residents and delegations to Council related to views.

CONCLUSION

Council considered the recommendations from the EAC concerning trees on City lands and Policy 611 on April 26, 2021. Attached as Appendix B is a revised Tree Management on City Lands Policy 611 containing the EAC recommendations along with direction given at the Governance and Legislation Meeting.

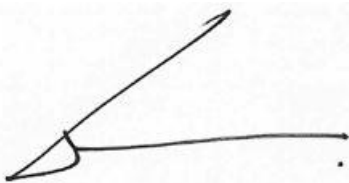
Respectfully submitted,



Jim Gordon, P.Eng.
Director, Engineering and Municipal Operations

Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer

I concur with the recommendations of this corporate report.



Guillermo Ferrero
Chief Administrative Officer

- Appendix A: Environmental Advisory Committee Recommendation Details Concerning Tree Management on City Lands Policy 611
- Appendix B: Revised Tree Management on City Lands Policy 611
- Appendix C: Tree Preservation and Tree Canopy Enhancement Initiatives proposed by the Environmental Advisory Committee

APPENDIX A

Environmental Advisory Committee Recommendation Details Concerning Tree Management on City Lands Policy 611

Following are EAC recommended changes to Policy 611 Tree Management on City Lands:

1. EAC recommendation 1 - *Change the title of the Policy to "Tree Protection, Canopy Enhancement and Management on City Lands.*
2. EAC recommendation 2 – Policy Primary heading 1: Replace with “*In managing trees on City land, it is the priority of the City of White Rock to protect existing trees and increase the number of healthy trees and amount of tree canopy and thus enhance and ensure the sustainability of the City’s urban forest and realization of the environmental and esthetic benefits it provides. In this context, the interest of property owners in preserving or restoring private views obstructed by City trees will be addressed through procedures outlined in **this Policy 611.**”* The intention of the EAC was to create a policy annex to describe the process in detail, but this was never accomplished. Instead of the reference to the Annex, reference is made to Policy 611 as shown above in red text.
3. EAC recommendation 3 - Primary heading 3, secondary heading a: Insert as tertiary heading 1 “*For the overriding purposes of protecting existing trees and increasing the number of healthy trees and amount of tree canopy*” Renumber the existing tertiary headings.
4. EAC recommendation 4 - Primary headings 5,6,7 and 8: The intention of the EAC was to develop an Annex to the Policy to incorporate the content of these primary headings; however, this was not done. It is recommended to leave these clauses in place and include further EAC recommendations within these existing clauses where feasible, subject to Council approval.
5. EAC recommendation 5: The EAC recommended “*Limit the criteria under which applications for pruning, crown thinning, or width reductions are approved to those where the property owner has clearly demonstrated that the tree has increased in size to completely obscure a previously existing view from the applicant’s property.* The Governance and Legislation Committee did not approve this recommendation.
6. EAC recommendation 6: *Prohibit the topping or removal of city trees for the re-establishment of views.* The Governance and Legislation Committee did not approve this recommendation.
7. EAC recommendation 7: *Remove references to "narrow corridor" and "single object" views in the definition of “view/view corridor.*
8. EAC recommendation 8: *Allow for the siting, species selection, and planting of new or replacement trees on City lands in all locations where future growth is not expected to completely obscure established views.* Even though approving this recommendation would be inconsistent with the two approved April 26, 2021 recommendations from the

Governance and Legislation Committee, the G&L Committee did not give direction on this recommendation.

9. EAC recommendation 9: *Provide that “significant trees” on City lands, to be defined pursuant to a “Significant Tree Policy” to be developed and presented to Council by Staff, will not be removed for other than safety reasons or as approved by Council. [R6]* Significant Tree Policy could be developed by staff subject to Council resource priorities.

10. EAC recommendation 10: *Require that, when the City is evaluating initiatives that might result in tree removal on City lands, all possible ways to protect the trees should be considered, and specify ambitious replacement requirements for trees that must be removed. [R8]* Staff will continue to investigate all ways to protect trees and will pursue ambitious tree replacement strategies. This could result in potential conflicts with residents who do not wish trees as per recent Council rejection of tree planting on Cypress Street.
11. EAC recommendation 11: *Require that notice of, and opportunity to comment on, any application or proposal to remove a “City tree” be provided to property owners within 100 metres of the affected tree at least 14 days in advance of a decision. [R15]* The EAC confirmed that this would not relate to the removal of hazardous or dead trees.
12. EAC recommendation 12: *Require that City Arborists visit and inspect all sites under consideration for a tree permit. [R16(b)]* This practice will continue.
13. EAC recommendation 13: *Incorporate criteria established in the revised Bylaw 1831 to govern decisions taken by officials regarding the management of trees on City lands. [R17(b)]* Staff to endeavor to ensure that Bylaw changes are consistently reflected in updates to Policy 611.
14. EAC recommendation 14: *Incorporate any amendments, consistent with the EAC’s recommendations, that may be needed to ensure currency and clarity and consistency with other policies and bylaws. [R19]*