

Tree Management

Date of Approval by Council: 06/12/07

Resolution No.: 531/2007

Lead Role: Chief Commissioner

Replaces: N/A

Last Review Date: August 8, 2011

Next Review Date: 08/2014

Administrative Responsibility: Planning and Development Services

Special Notes:

- Cross reference with Policy SER-009-028, Rural Right-of-Way Tree and Brush Removal, Policy SER-001-016, Sewer Line/Tree Root – Damage Control, and Policy SER-009-034, Tree Conservation During Development.
- Tree Management Operation Procedures can be accessed in: EDMS - EEP Environmental and Open Space Planning - 4030/**10732**/Tree Management Procedures

Policy Statement

Strathcona County shall ensure the conservation of trees after development. This will be accomplished by establishing procedures to inspect and manage trees on County lands in order to conserve the urban and rural forests within Strathcona County based on municipal, community and environmental needs. This process is required after the Final Acceptance Certificate (FAC) development stages.

Insofar as financial resources allow, Strathcona County will provide the community with safe and healthy trees. A system assigning County resources to the urban and rural forests on a prioritized basis shall be adopted. Levels of service shall be established for hazard trees dependent upon their priority ranking.

The County shall have a comprehensive inspection and maintenance program to ensure that all tree stands are inspected on a regular basis and that any hazard tree that poses a health or safety hazard to the public shall be assessed and prioritized in accordance with this policy and repaired, removed or otherwise dealt with so as to mitigate that harm.

Definitions

- D1 County Land – refers to (a) any property developed or used by the County as public park, sports field, playground, recreational area; (b) undeveloped reserve land designated as reserve, municipal reserve, school reserve, municipal and school reserve, environmental reserve; (c) municipal rights-of-way including highways, roads, roadways, boulevards, sidewalks, walkways, road allowances, streets, lanes, road diversion, bridges, titled rights-of-way, undeveloped road rights-of-way, public space, water bodies, public utility lots, stormwater management facilities, dry ponds; (d) any property developed or designated by the County as a pathway and the Heritage Parkway Trail System; (e) any property owned and or titled to the County, including those lands which have been developed with a building, structure or parking lot. Excludes developed rural right-of-ways which are addressed under Policy SER-009-028, Rural Right-of-Way Tree and Brush Removal.
- D2 Defect – means any injury or disease that seriously weakens roots, stems, or branches, predisposing them to fail OR structural problems arising from poor tree architecture, including V-shaped crotches in stems and branches that lead to weak unions, shallow rooting habits, brittle wood, etc.
- D3 Forest – means a vegetation community dominated by trees.

- D4 Hazard Tree – means a standing tree, either alive or dead, having defects in roots, trunk or limb, which predispose it to mechanical failure in whole or in part and which is located that such failure has a probability of injury and damage to persons or property OR a tree situated in an area frequented by people or is located adjacent to valuable facilities and has defects in roots, stems, or branches that may cause a failure resulting in property damage, personal injury, or death.
- D5 Management Review Team – means, for **developed** County lands, the Managers (or their representatives) of Environmental & Open Space Planning and Outdoor Recreation; and, for **undeveloped** County lands, the Managers (or their representatives) of Environmental & Open Space Planning and Agriculture Services, together with the Managers of Land Management Services and Transportation and Agriculture Services when appropriate.
- D6 Remnant forest – means fragment of a large forest that existed prior to land development.

Guidelines

- G1 As described in Strathcona County's Strategic Plan, "Strathcona County is a safe, caring and autonomous community that treasures its unique blend of urban and rural lifestyles while balancing the natural environment with economic prosperity; and through strong, effective leadership is a vibrant community of choice". With this in mind, conservation of the trees in urban and rural development areas is a priority for environmental, economic and human health.
- G2 Trees make a difference in our environmental health by:
- reducing air pollution (release oxygen, settle out, trap and hold dust, ash, pollen and smoke particles)
 - fighting the greenhouse effect (act as a carbon sink, remove carbon from CO₂ and release oxygen)
 - modifying climate (lower air temperature through shade and evapotranspiration, increase humidity, reduce glare, reduce wind velocity)
 - conserving water
 - reducing soil erosion
 - reducing noise pollution (absorb, block and mask noise)
 - creating wildlife habitat and plant diversity (provide food and shelter for birds and animals).
- G3 Trees make a difference in our economic health by:
- reducing energy costs (shade reduces air conditioning costs, provide windblock)
 - increasing property value
 - increasing economic stability (attract businesses, residents and tourists).
- G4 Trees increase our quality of life by:
- adding beauty to the community
 - improving human health by impacting our physical and mental health.
- G5 Tree conservation is considered at each step of development, from the initial concept for land use through design, grading and construction, to maintenance. Conserving trees has economic, environmental, and social impacts. For example:
- Both rural and urban communities expect conservation
 - Individuals support conservation, in that they pay more for treed property, or for proximity to trees
 - Recognition that trees provide important environmental and social functions, such as energy conservation, pollution abatement, flooding control, and psychological health to residents
 - It is in a developers best interest to conserve trees as they increase land values
 - It is in a developers best interest to show professional commitment in recognizing the relationship between tree conservation and their image in the community

Procedures

P1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to have in place specific inspection and management procedures for Strathcona County to ensure the conservation of trees on County lands within the urban and rural areas of Strathcona County based on municipal, community and environmental needs. This process is required after the Final Acceptance Certificate (FAC) development stages.

P2 Roles and Responsibilities

1. The Planning and Development Services (PDS) of Strathcona County is responsible to develop procedures to ensure the proper implementation of this Policy and to provide guidance to others in complying with the requirements of this Policy.
2. Certified Arborists employed by the County will be responsible for the assessment and management of trees in developed County lands, as approved by the Management Review Team.
3. The Park Maintenance Branch of the Recreation, Parks and Culture (RPC) Department shall conduct inspections and prioritize the management of trees on developed County lands within Strathcona County. The Agriculture Services Branch of Transportation and Agriculture Services (TAS) or the Environmental and Open Space Planning Branch of PDS shall conduct preliminary inspections and prioritize the management of trees on undeveloped County lands within the rural area of Strathcona County. Prioritization must include budget restraints in order to ensure fiscal responsibility. Hazard trees will be addressed in a timely manner.
4. Biologists employed by the County are available to assist in assessment and planning activities in undeveloped County lands, as approved by the Management Review Team. Biologists employed by the County will also be responsible for conducting migratory bird surveys prior to tree management activities.
5. All responsible parties must be informed of tree management activities prior to field work to ensure conservation goals are being met.

P3 Tree Inspections**1. Scheduled Inspections**

- 1.1 The Park Maintenance Branch of RPC shall conduct inspections of trees on developed County lands within Strathcona County. The inspections shall be scheduled on a 5 year pruning cycle, unless the area is high use or natural events such as wind storms or fire, call for special inspection. The formal inspections will identify the following:
 - 1.1.1 Hazard trees
 - 1.1.2 Unauthorized use of trees
 - 1.1.3 Recommended actions to protect the County and personal property

2. Unscheduled Inspections

- 2.1 When a hazard tree concern is forwarded from internal or external clients, the Park Maintenance Branch of RPC shall conduct inspections on **developed** County lands within Strathcona County. The following will be determined during the unscheduled inspections:
 - 2.1.1 Potential failure of hazard trees

2.1.2 Target (trail, bench, private property, sports field, etc.)

The Environmental and Open Space Planning Branch of EEP shall provide assistance to RPC, when requested.

2.2 When a hazard tree concern is forwarded from internal or external clients, the Agriculture Services Branch of TAS or the Environmental and Open Space Planning Branch of EEP shall conduct preliminary inspections on **undeveloped** County lands within the rural area of Strathcona County. The following will be determined during the unscheduled inspections:

2.2.1 Potential failure of hazard trees

2.2.2 Target (trail, bench, private property, sports field, etc.)

The Park Maintenance Branch of RPC shall provide assistance to TAS or EEP, when requested.

2.3 The results of all preliminary inspections on developed or undeveloped County lands shall be recorded and, based on an assessment of the hazard, shall be prioritized on the basis of urgency and on the basis of budgetary restraints in order to ensure fiscal responsibility.

P4 **Migratory Bird Nesting Surveys**

1. The Federal *Migratory Birds Convention Act* prohibits the damaging, destroying, removing or disturbing of nests or migratory birds. Therefore, migratory bird nesting surveys are required prior to any tree management activities.
2. Migratory bird nesting surveys must be conducted by a qualified professional:
 - 2.1 As per Provincial Government recommendations, surveys are required during the prime wildlife reproduction period from April 15 to July 31.
 - 2.2 If management activities are occurring within a wetland, this exclusion period may be extended to September 1, to avoid disturbing wetland dependant birds.
 - 2.3 If management activities are required from February 15 to April 15, a survey specific to owls is required.

The survey results must be communicated to the Management Review Team, with recommendations for management activities.

P5 **Tree Management**

1. The intent is to conserve forests and remnant forests within the urban and rural area by managing individual trees to ensure sustainability of the overall forest. It is recognized that over time the condition of a tree may change and thus require pruning, conversion to wildlife tree or complete removal. In general, management activities will be permitted to remove or reduce risk associated with hazardous trees.
2. The Park Maintenance Branch of RPC shall prioritize the management of trees on developed County lands within Strathcona County. The Agriculture Services Branch of TAS shall prioritize the management of trees on undeveloped County lands within the rural area of Strathcona County. Prioritization must include budget restraints in order to ensure fiscal responsibility. Hazard trees will be addressed in a timely manner.