



**SIDNEY COMMUNITY
ASSOCIATION INPUT ON
SIDNEY'S URBAN FOREST
STRATEGY**

Draft submission for comments by SCA members and
friends

November 25, 2018

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Introduction

The Community Association commends the Town for addressing the long term management of trees on both public and private land in Sidney. We support the establishment of a clear vision and set of objectives then identifying how to achieve them. We recognize that some work has already been done. We believe that every Sidney resident has a part in creating the future of the Town. Few of our members have technical expertise in arboriculture or environmental management, but all of us have daily experience with the trees and green space around our homes, in the parks and natural places we love and on the streets we travel. Many SCA members feel an emotional connection to Sidney’s trees and are deeply concerned about the loss of mature trees to development. Many residents want to be informed and engaged with Town staff and Council in growing a sustainable urban forest for the future.

To create this submission, we a) invited all interested members to meet October 21 and [recorded the input](#) of the 12 people who attended; b) developed draft recommendations; c) sent the draft to all SCA members to solicit their feedback.

Vision – 30 years from now (2049)

In 2049, Sidney’s citizens are proud of their green town and shady neighbourhoods. Ever since 2019, Town planning in Sidney has recognized and employed trees and green space as part of essential sustainable infrastructure. Residents actively participate in a culture that recognizes the value of trees for human health, air quality, connection with nature, wildlife habitat and sustainability. A web of green space is integrated with neighboring municipalities, connecting parks & ecologically sensitive areas. Sidney has more than doubled its tree cover since 2019 with appropriate species. Protected, functional

wildlife habitat exists along the shoreline, Reay Creek and in many other parts of town, supporting diverse and abundant fish, birds and other creatures.

General Recommendations

1. Emphasize the “Whys”
 - The Strategy should emphasize the reasons for maintaining and increasing the presence of trees in Sidney, including human health, air quality, recreation, wildlife habitat, carbon storage, climate change mitigation (energy saving, shade), human mental and physical health, property values, sea level rise, stormwater management and many more.
2. The Urban Forest Strategy must be differentiated by zone and neighbourhood.
 - Sidney is compact but has various zones based on land use, soils and other ecology and history. What is appropriate for single and 2 family residential areas is not appropriate downtown. Proximity to the shoreline, environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife habitat are other considerations. See Appendix A for ideas about zones.
 - Engage residents in the development of neighbourhood plans and measurable targets. (See # 18 below.)
3. Publish an inventory of the current canopy, identifying species, approximate age, size, public or private land, general health and prognosis. Such an inventory is essential for planning and to inform residents. How many protected trees have been lost in the past 5 years, 10 years? Setting a time frame to recover that lost canopy would be a good interim goal. (Canopy replacement vs planting saplings.)
4. Sidney’s current 14% canopy is very low compared to Oak Bay and Victoria. We should at least set targets to match the best regional municipalities in tree cover and double our current coverage.
5. Canopy goals should be measurable and include annual interim targets to discourage future Councils from postponing action.
6. Goals and targets should not be limited to trees but also include shrubs and groundcover, green space and natural areas necessary for habitat, ecology and sustainability.
7. Include preparation and preservation of healthy soils.
 - Currently, residents observe developers dumping cement and paint and using heavy machinery on clay soil, then bringing in a layer of good soil on top without apparently mitigating the underlying compaction. The result requires irrigation and increased water use. The compacted clay cannot be healthy for large trees to grow to maturity.
8. Stewardship – planning for the care and management of both new and mature trees is essential.
9. Include green corridors between parks and natural spaces with substantial flora and fauna (but designed to prevent deer coming into town). Encourage pollinator- friendly species.
10. Where possible and especially in sensitive habitat, preserve big, old trees, dead wildlife trees and other native vegetation.
11. Review the criteria for saving old trees in residential areas, including economics and other issues. Create incentives for developers to save trees under appropriate circumstances and to give back green space to the community. (See # 12 below)
12. The Strategy should identify appropriate species for new plantings in specific zones, species that have the most impact on goals without growing to damage public infrastructure (sidewalks, utilities etc.) or that of neighbours’ property (driveways, parking, patios), or become dangerous or require unreasonably costly maintenance in the future.

13. The goals of the Urban Forest Strategy should be a priority consideration in a review of all Town Bylaws, including:
 - Review and expand Environmentally Sensitive Area boundaries to include significant nest and perch trees, especially Allbay peninsula, Resthaven Island.
 - Development Permit Guidelines should require an environmental assessment by a professional not selected by the developer of any request for tree removal in an ESA.
 - Incentives and regulations should encourage property owners and especially developers to design their structures to retain rather than remove healthy mature trees.
 - Include tree protection in the objectives for Environmentally Sensitive Areas
14. Bring transparency to the management of trees by requiring a Tree Management Report similar to the Monthly Building Permit Report listing all protected trees as defined in the Tree Protection Bylaw that have been cut down, indicating location, species, approximate age, reason for removal and whether the owner paid or replaced the tree. The report should also list the location and species of replacement trees and the current funds held by the town under the Tree Bylaw.
15. Protect Beaufort Grove. Concerned SCA members believe the only way to do this is to acquire it for parkland. It is now in the private hands of a single, elderly owner. What options could be used?
16. The Strategy should take account of the full range of existing mechanisms and a combination of regulations and incentives for public and private property to achieve objectives. (See Appendix B.)
17. The Urban Forest Strategy needs flexibility to adjust to new information and science to avoid becoming obsolete.

Recommendations about Public Engagement – Role of Sidney Residents

18. Educate and engage all levels of community – youth and families, seniors, existing organizations
 - Tree Appreciation Day – as is done in [neighbouring municipalities](#), hold a community event to plant trees, inform and engage residents about the role of trees in a healthy community.
 - Sponsor or encourage a program to connect volunteers with homeowners and renters who need help to pick fruit, rake leaves, etc. Does this already exist through the Shoal Centre?
 - Give residents information about how to help trees on the boulevard and their own property. This might include watering during drought, removing invasives. Encourage property owners who will be away for long periods to notify the Town and/or neighbours to care for boulevard trees. “Adopt a tree”.
 - Provide information and incentives to help residents choose trees for their own property.
 - Identify how volunteers can help care for trees in parks and beach accesses, eg. Invasive plant removal, with some training and supervision by staff. Seek “Friends of Sidney Parks”.
 - Interpretive signage helps all ages understand the value of trees and nature.
19. Make sure that residents know about and can participate in planning for their neighbourhood. Neighbours are more likely to support and protect what they have helped to create.
20. Require the developer to notify neighbours (within 100 meters) when applying for a tree removal permit and provide time for comments.
21. Encourage developers to treat neighbours with courtesy and respect when cutting down trees. Our members have too many stories about developers removing long standing trees without understanding what they mean to neighbours and without any warning.

22. Educate and inform so residents understand the benefits of and best practices for Sidney's urban tree coverage.

Conclusion

Preserving and expanding Sidney's Urban Forest is important to residents. The Community Association looks forward to participating in further discussion and acting to help engage the community.

Appendix A - Thoughts on Urban Forest Zones in Sidney

- The [Downtown Streetscape and Urban Design Standards](#) document provides good information on location, species, soil and other conditions for healthy trees downtown. (page 39-45)
- Multi-family zones – many residents believe that reduced setbacks have led to loss of large trees and limit opportunities to replace them. The Urban Forest Strategy should consider where shade trees can be located in these zones.
- High Density Residential
- Other residential – Single and 2 Family
- Parks
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas – conserve, maintain and restore native species
- Shoreline – natural and residential shorelines, industrial shoreline, marina shoreline.

Appendix B Tools and Mechanisms for achieving Urban Forest Goals

See the [Green Bylaws Toolkit](#), for discussion of the conditions for use and the pros and cons of #1-8. It would be necessary to determine which are appropriate and available for Sidney.

1. Property tax exemptions – exemption agreements to tie tax exemptions to measurable performance by the property owner
2. Conservation Covenants - can apparently be hard to enforce, especially if the property is sold.
3. Canada's Ecological Gifts Program
4. CRD Conservation Fund
5. Private Conservation Funds
6. Environmental Impact Assessments
7. Development Permit Information Areas (p 211 [Green Bylaws Toolkit PDF](#))
8. Environmental and Social Review to identify required information, eg Highlands Sustainability Appraisal Form Policy (p. 111 [Green Bylaws Toolkit](#))
9. Can amenity funds be used to acquire property such as Beaufort Grove?
10. Can the funds from tree removal permits be used to acquire property such as Beaufort Grove?
11. Waive subdivision and other fees to help acquire Beaufort Grove
12. As a condition of Development Permit approval, require and hold back a sufficient deposit to cover the cost of removal and replacement of trees, until it is established that healthy soil and trees are established (2 years?) by impartial inspection and testing. (See [Town Council Minutes of October 9, 2018](#), APC Recommendations p 2,3)
13. Require a Construction Management Plan similar to that recommended by the Advisory Planning Commission for 2325 Harbour Road. ([Advisory Planning Commission Minutes June 5, 2018](#) regarding heron nests) where construction will temporarily disturb wildlife.

Appendix C Some Notable stands of trees in need of protection (in private hands)

Beaufort Grove	Allbay peninsula, Eden Place
Mermaid Creek area	Resthaven Island

Appendix D Locations for more trees

N.B. All residential streets should be assessed in the course of developing neighbourhood goals

Sidney Elementary	Rathdown Park
New Employee Parking Lot	New Community Safety Building
West Sidney Industrial and Residential areas	Peter Grant Park
Between Mary Winspear Centre and the highway	Iroquois Park and Tulista Parks??

Appendix E List of References

[Urban Forest Strategy SCA Workshop Notes Oct 21 2018](#)

[Green Bylaws Toolkit \(PDF\) University of Victoria Environmental Law](#)

Sidney [Downtown Streetscape and Urban Design Standards](#) (p. 39-45),

Town of Sidney [Guide to Applying for a Development Permit](#),

Town of Sidney [Official Community Plan](#), especially Part 3, Development Permit Area Guidelines.

Town of Sidney [Tree Preservation Bylaw](#)

[Town of Sidney Minutes of Town Council Meeting October 9, 2018](#) (#10a, pages 2,3 – Advisory Planning Commission recommendations re. trees)

[Advisory Planning Commission Minutes June 5, 2018](#) Construction Management Plan re heron nests

[Community Trees Matter Network](#) is a network centered in Victoria that advocates for urban trees.

There are excellent, well researched articles on its website, including this one: [Why Trees Matter – A Lot!](#)