

	Street Trees		Policy #5.6.15
Department Owner:	Planning & Development		
Policy Applies To:	Tree Plantings		
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Intent:

To provide a consistent policy for administration to follow for improving the character and image of the Town of Claresholm in making it a more attractive and enjoyable place to live. This document sets out the Town of Claresholm's approach to the management of street trees as part of a commitment to creating and maintaining an attractive and safe urban environment.

This policy has been prepared to assist residents, property owners, contractors, land developers, administration, bylaw enforcement and interested persons in understanding and appreciating the processes and actions required to appropriately manage street trees within the Town.

The goal of street tree management is based on an understanding of the dynamic nature of the resource, its aesthetic and safety requirements, public attitude and perception and the Town of Claresholm's commitment to engaging and working with the community.

In order to sustain the landscape and meet public demand, trees need to be planted and established, maintained and removed. Planning and consultation is required in order to facilitate each of these purposes.

This policy provides an overview for the management of street trees located on Town of Claresholm's boulevards and public spaces and includes guidelines and actions for:

- Risk Management
- Planting including selection, procurement, planting and establishment maintenance
- Pruning
- Removal
- Root Management
- Protection
- Plant Health Care and Nuisance Pest Control
- Consultation and Inclusion

Definitions:

Street trees shall be defined by the contribution the tree makes to the area's character and the impact the removal shall have on local amenity. A valued tree or group of trees shall specifically include:

- Specimen tree(s) – trunk diameter equal to or greater than 100 millimeters and equal to or greater than 3 meters tall.
- Trees that are representative of more than 30% of trees on any street.
- Trees identified as having heritage or cultural significance.
- Rare or endangered tree species or specimen.
- Boulevard trees.

- Trees on public property.

Benefits of Street Trees to the Community:

The value of street trees to the community and the urban environment is often overlooked but are significant and quantifiable contributors.

- **Community Wellbeing** – Street trees provide a sense of ‘place’ and soften the often-harsh urban environment making it a more serene and welcoming place in which to live and work. Street trees have a significant influence on physical and mental health by providing natural restorative spaces in the urban context.
- **Urban Design and Infrastructure** – Street trees can make an important contribution to neighborhood character and the image of our Town. Street trees provide several architectural and engineering functions. They provide privacy, emphasize views, or screen out objectionable views. They reduce glare and reflection. They direct pedestrian traffic and can calm traffic. They provide background to and soften, complement, or enhance architecture. The shade provided by street trees can also reduce pavement fatigue improving public safety and reducing management costs.
- **Sustainable Environments** – Street trees alter the environment in which we live by moderating climate, improving air quality, conserving water and harboring wildlife. They can act as windbreaks and deflect rain fall along foot paths. Trees intercept water, store some of it, and reduce storm water runoff. Temperature in the vicinity of trees is cooler than that away from trees. Trees can improve air quality as leaves filter the air we breathe by removing dust, carbon dioxide and other particulates and give off oxygen. Birds and other wildlife are also attracted to trees.

Direct economic benefits are associated with reduced energy costs. Cooling costs are lower in a tree-shaded street. Heating costs are reduced when street trees provide a windbreak. Large, appropriate street tree plantings increase local property values. The indirect economic benefits of trees can be greater and community wide.

The use of indigenous tree species in road reserves adjacent to and linking reserves rich in local flora and fauna can assist in the maintenance and enhancement of local biodiversity.

Street Tree Risk Management:

Public safety will be maintained through the use of generally accepted professional practices of tree assessment and treatment in order to reduce risk associated with hazardous trees to an acceptable level.

ACTIONS

- Provide adequate resources to ensure proper tree management.

Street Tree Planting:

The right tree for the right place with due consideration to biological and functional, aesthetic and design requirement criteria is of paramount importance. The most successful course is to match the planting site limitations with the right tree for that site.

Appropriate site assessment and tree selection can have the following benefits.

- Mitigate conflicts between tree roots and adjacent infrastructure.

- Reduce the incidence of pest and disease outbreaks. This can be achieved through selecting resistant varieties of trees and increasing species diversity through the Town.
- Increased tree longevity so that tree benefits exceed the costs. The benefit of an urban tree is directly proportional to its crown size or volume and longevity in the landscape.
- Reduced maintenance costs, e.g. pruning requirements can be reduced by selecting smaller trees under power lines or narrow canopy form for busy roads.
- Produce attractive streetscapes that reinforce the pervading landscape and architectural character.
- Reduced environmental demand – trees that have tolerance of drought and general not require additional resource inputs.

Tree selection will take into account relative plant tolerances and adaptability, and integration into surrounding planting themes.

Procedural solutions such as community consultation and the detailed review of horticultural, arboricultural, planning and historical literature associated with the proposed planting site will be considered where appropriate.

Tree Selection:

Species will be selected that do not require excessive resource input to maintain them in a safe and aesthetically pleasing manner. Tree species known to cause excessive damage to infrastructure will be avoided. Tree species that are known for their structural integrity and limited litter drop will be preferred.

The use of indigenous tree species in streets will have greater impact and benefit when used adjacent to or to link open space that has significant remnant vegetation.

Tree selection will be based on the following criteria:

- **Biological Requirements** – The trees ability to tolerate urban conditions. The species selected should have high tolerance levels that will allow establishment and sustained growth while producing desired benefits with low management inputs. It also relates to available root space to sustain the potential tree size.
- **Ecological Issues** - Includes tree diversity, maintaining and enhancing existing significant areas of native and remnant indigenous vegetation, and selecting plants that do not have the potential to become woody weeds and impact on natural systems.
- **Functional and Spatial Issues** – Includes crown and foliage type within the constraints of the urban environment and the trees tolerance to pruning. It also relates to the tree's root system and its limited impact on adjacent infrastructure.
- **Aesthetic Issues** – The ability for trees to enhance the visual amenity of a streetscape or area, without negative impact to surrounding infrastructure and the fit with neighborhood character, including existing street trees, is also a consideration.
- **Health Considerations** – Species selection will utilize trees that have no known or low levels of toxic or allergenic characteristics.
- **Tree longevity** – The longer a tree is allowed to grow in a site the greater the benefits to the landscape and return on initial investment the trees will have.
- **Commercial Availability** – To successfully provide the desired numbers and size for tree planting programs.

Planting Programs:

Town of Claresholm will maintain two tree planting programs including:

- **Replacement Tree Program** – planting of trees removed prior to the planting season and in response to resident requests for street tree planting.
- **Main Planting Program** – planting of trees along main roads, boulevards and parks.

The Director of Infrastructure Services or delegated representative, based on current suppliers of such goods and services will establish the repair or replacement costs of a tree.

ACTIONS

- Select tree species for planting based on their suitability for the site, performance, and potential to contribute to landscape character meeting functional, aesthetic and ecological requirements.
- Set and maintain high tree procurement, planting and establishment maintenance standards in line with current 'best practice'.
- Street tree planting will endeavor where practicable to maintain the homogenous nature of an avenue planting. However, two species may be selected for streets where site conditions may vary on either side of the road.
- New developments that include street tree plantings will be subject to the same requirements of this Policy.
- Where appropriate space exists, larger growing species will be preferred over smaller trees.
- Undertake appropriate selection, placement and planting of trees to reduce long-term risk.

Street Tree Pruning:

Clearance of street trees from street lighting, traffic signals, advisory signs, road and foot pavements located within road reserves managed by the Town of Claresholm will be undertaken in accordance with the Director of Infrastructure.

Requests for the pruning of street trees from over private property lines will be individually assessed by Town of Claresholm, Director of Infrastructure. The decision on the action to be taken will be based on the level of nuisance created by the street tree and consultation with the property owner.

Notwithstanding the requirements for the clearance of street trees from power lines or along roadways, the Town of Claresholm will not undertake pruning works for the purpose of limiting the height or width of a street tree's current or future crown dimensions for personal preference.

ACTIONS

- Pruning requests will be assessed in accordance with the Infrastructure Services Department. .
- Pruning works will be prioritized according to the level of urgency and available resource.

Street Tree Removal:

The Town of Claresholm will seek to avoid street tree removal whenever possible. However, street tree removal is an acceptable management option when required for human health and safety, to protect infrastructure, to facilitate approved development and infrastructure improvements.

Street trees and groups of street trees may be removed only when one or more of the following criteria are met:

- The tree or tree group poses a severe safety hazard that cannot be corrected by pruning, transplanting or other treatments.
- The tree or tree group severely interferes with a neighboring tree or tree group to the extent that neither tree can develop to its full potential. The more desirable tree will be preserved.
- The aesthetic values of the tree or tree group are so low or negative that the site is visually enhanced by the tree's removal.
- Tree or tree group is dead or close to death.

- The tree or tree group poses an extreme and agreed public nuisance.
- Where improvements, infrastructure repair or maintenance required to be made around the tree or tree group will kill or render the tree a hazard or significantly impact on the trees' condition and useful life expectancy.
- The tree is found to be substantially contributing to damages to public or private property and no other viable means are available to rectify the situation.
- The tree or tree group is infected with an epidemic insect or disease where the recommended control is not applicable and removal is the recommended practice to prevent transmission.

The Town of Claresholm will not consider street tree removal for trees that do not meet the above criteria but will provide advice to affected persons on how the perceived problem (s) may be limited.

ACTIONS

- The Town of Claresholm will identify, assess and take appropriate action for street trees that meet the removal criteria. This will be undertaken as part of its programmed maintenance works.
- Removal requests will be assessed by the Infrastructure Services Department. Removal works will be prioritized according to the level of urgency and available resources.
- In most instances and where practicable, street trees that are removed may be replaced in the following planting season with the same or more suitable species if feasible.

Street Tree Root Management:

Root management works, including root pruning, root deflector and soil moisture cut-off barriers, are occasionally required to be performed on street trees. This work is required for risk management, to maintain public safety and contain tree root growth where necessary to prevent damage to property, roads, curbs and sidewalks.

Root pruning is the practice of removing a portion of a tree's root system. The circumstances necessitating root pruning vary, but the outcome is to always ensure the health, stability and longevity of the street tree. Root pruning of street trees will not be permitted without the approval of the Director of Infrastructure or delegated representative.

ACTIONS

- The Infrastructure Services Department will manage street tree roots that are causing damage to roads, curbs and channels, footpaths and associated infrastructure within the road reserve. The action will include but not be limited to the use of root deflectors, road, curb and channel and /or footpath replacement and reinforcement, root pruning or tree removal.

Street Tree Health Care & Nuisance Pest:

Declining plant health, pest and disease infection are generally a manifestation of street that is directly attributable to static site or short duration inciting factors. Factors include but are not limited to climate, soil type or site conditions, the genetic potential of the tree, frost, drought, flooding, air pollutants or mechanical injury. Maintaining plant vigor is the best form of prevention against declining health and the effects of pest and disease.

Declining health in stands of large maturing or significant individual street trees will be managed through the application of appropriate cultural practices as determined by the Infrastructure Services Department.

The control of pest and/or diseases will take into account static and/or inciting factor and address those issues as part of an integrated approach to the control of the problem.

ACTIONS

- The Town of Claresholm's Infrastructure Services Department will identify and take appropriate action for the control of pests and diseases in street trees where damage exceeds 15% of the total crown volume.
- The Town of Claresholm's Infrastructure Services Department will cooperate and take appropriate action as directed by relevant statutory authorities should introduced pests and/or diseased that threaten southern Alberta horticulture be identified within the street tree population.
- The Town of Claresholm's Infrastructure Services Department will attempt to control nuisance pests such as bees and wasps that sometimes inhabit street trees.

Requests for Street Tree Maintenance & Planting:

Persons may request a street tree planting, pruning, removal, root management, plant health care and nuisance pest control by contacting the Town of Claresholm. All requests for street tree works shall be recorded and forwarded to the Infrastructure Services Department, inspected and assessed by the Infrastructure Services Department or delegated representative.

The person making the request for maintenance will be advised of the action to be taken and the approximate timelines in which the works will be completed.

Persons making the request for street tree planting will be advised whether the request can be accommodated. If the site is suitable, the person making the request will be advised of the species to be planted and the approximate timelines in which the works will be completed. Street tree planting will occur in the planting season following the request. Planting seasons are usually conducted between April – September. The Infrastructure Services Department will endeavor to meet requests for planting made during the planting season although planting will be subject to timing of the request, stock and resource availability.

Land owners cannot plant trees or flowers at their discretion on Town of Claresholm land without written approval from the Town of Claresholm.

If a tree has been removed and was particularly significant due to its size, prominence in the landscape, rarity or other highly esteemed social value, Infrastructure Services may compound the initial costs of repair/replacement figure for the amount of years to have a newly planted tree achieve a similar size in the landscape to the tree removed or to a stage that the tree is established and having an impact on the landscape.