

CATEGORY: Public Service
POLICY #: D.c.033
OWNER DEPT: Community Services
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TITLE: Urban Forest and Tree Management

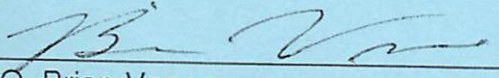
POLICY & PROCEDURE

POLICY STATEMENT:

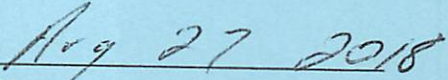
The Town of Slave Lake recognizes that trees and shrubs are an important influence on the quality of life for our residents: environmentally, culturally and economically. The Town of Slave Lake desires to ensure that trees in the community are healthy and maintained at a level that protects the public and property from damage.

POLICY OBJECTIVES:

To set guidelines for annual tree pruning and/or replacement of trees located on Town of Slave Lake properties and on public boulevards. The Council of the Town of Slave Lake will annually establish a level of funding for tree pruning and planting which will influence the service levels that the Town will provide.



CAO, Brian Vance



Date:

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PROCEDURE

1.0 Definitions

- 1.1 CPTED: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design which promotes using natural surveillance to reduce crime.
- 1.2 Urban Forest: is the sustained planning, planting, protection, maintenance, and care of trees, forests, greenspace and related resources in and around cities and communities for economic, environmental, social, and public health benefits for people. The definition includes retaining trees and forest cover as urban populations expand into surrounding rural areas and restoring critical parts of the urban environment after construction.

2.0 Responsibilities

- 2.1. Manager of Parks and Facilities: will direct work, as outlined in this procedure, based on service levels established through approved budgets.

3.0 Procedures

- 3.1. The tree population is an asset to the Town of Slave Lake which helps make it a great place to live! Sometimes it is easy to underappreciate the urban forest, especially when we live in a town surrounded by boreal forest.

The Town of Slave Lake recognizes that trees and shrubs are an important part of the quality of life: environmentally, culturally and economically.

The following are principles intended to guide the implementation of this policy and procedure over the long term:

- Promote a healthy, diverse and sustainable urban forest.
- Inform and engage the community in the work of protecting and managing trees within the Town.
- Think globally and regionally; plan and act locally.
- Use best practices, innovation, science, research, information and technology applicable to the Town of Slave Lake.
- Practice FireSmart principles in management of trees within town.
- Practice CPTED principles in management of trees and shrubs on public lands. Essentially this involves trimming the lower portions (below 8 feet) of the tree/shrub to allow enhanced sight lines of the area.

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3.2. Annual funding provided will be allocated in the following priority:

1. Pruning:

- **Pruning for the health and longevity of the tree;**
- Pruning of trees to enable public safety and remove hazards. This includes pruning and removal of trees and shrubs to comply with FireSmart and CPTED principles;
- Pruning of trees for shaping and aesthetic reasons;

2. Replacement:

- In areas where trees are dead or are causing problems, or are about to cause problems, with surrounding utilities, infrastructure, and/or pose a public safety hazard, the tree(s) may be removed. Replacement of trees shall be in accordance with a level of service adopted by Council.

3.3. Tree Planting & Replacement:

1. Tree Spacing & Siting:

- a. Boulevard trees will be planted and maintained as per Bylaw #25-2015.
- b. Trees are to be planted in a manner so as to not conflict with utilities, both overhead and underground.
- c. Trees shall be planted no closer than 3 meters to an asphalt trail. These trees are also chosen for the location and what is available.

2. Tree Species

Preferred species of trees is based on proven hardiness in the local climate. Tree species which create other problems for the Town (such as aggressive root growth, tolerance to disease, etc.) or attract problem wildlife (such as fruit bearing trees which may attract bears) will not be considered for planting in public spaces.

a. Boulevards

The following are the preferred species of trees for boulevards:

- Schubert Cherry
- Amur Cherry
- Brandon Elm
- Linden
- American Elm
- Green Ash
- Mountain Ash

In boulevards and locations where sidewalks and pathways are in close proximity; trees with a less extensive root system are desirable to prevent damage to nearby hard surface infrastructure from tree roots.

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b. Other sites – including open park spaces

In all other sites trees should be selected in accordance with the existing trees in that particular area.

- Northwest Poplar - usually the least expensive tree but are short lived and have an extremely aggressive root system - open park settings only and shall be planted a minimum of 10 meters away from undergrown or hard surfaced infrastructure
- Spruce Varieties
- Pine Varieties
- Oak Varieties
- Maple Varieties
- Juniper Varieties
- Siberian Larch (or Tamarack)

c. Trees that are not preferred for planting on public spaces:

- Mayday
- Poplar with the exception of areas where there is lots of space (see note above)
- Fruit bearing trees (such as crab apple, pear, plum, etc.)

d. Preferred planting times:

There are two preferred planting times – the spring and the fall. Avoid planting during the heat of midsummer especially if supplemental irrigation is not available.

Spring planting – late May or June is preferred. Spring planting allows the plant to replace some of the roots lost when it was dug out of the nursery. By fall there are more roots present to capture water and help the plant fend off winter desiccation. This is especially important for evergreens.

Fall planting – this is dormant season planting. Plant deciduous trees after the leaves have fallen and coniferous plants about the same time. These plants will wait until next spring to grow out into the backfill soil.

3.4. Tree Maintenance & Pruning:

The Town's maintenance program includes:

- When capital construction programs take place near or in the immediate vicinity; trees are evaluated before construction begins and monitored throughout construction to ensure health of the tree.
- Replacement of trees damaged by wind, vehicles, etc.
- The proactive replacement of aging trees that are no longer able to support themselves or that could cause damage to adjacent property.

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- Pruning and replacement for control of disease and pests
- Pruning to help promote natural surveillance and other CPTED principles
- Pruning to ensure Firesmart principles are adhered to, especially in areas **where the urban forest and infrastructure interface within the Town**
- Fertilizing and watering new trees for the first two years
- New trees are "staked" for the first three years
- Tree assessment is updated annually. High risk trees are assessed yearly where others are addressed every second year.
- Tree planting – As determined in Operating Budget
- Where trees reach a point where they become a safety concern due to structural integrity they will be removed and planting of the new replacement tree as Budget allows.

3.5. Canopy Protection & Hazard Management:

Tree canopies are enjoyed by visitors and residents alike. Most prevalent in the older areas of town, such as the northern quadrants, they are found on the boulevards of many streets. These trees have a finite life span and need to be replaced with new trees as the old ones die out so that the canopy can remain flourishing. It is recognized that near the end of their lifespan the branches and boughs on these trees become weak. They may not be supported during wind or other storms and will likely cause property damage when they fall. Because of the need to protect from the hazards of older trees and to maintain the sustainability of the tree canopy in perpetuity an assessment and replacement program shall be used by Parks.

3.6. New Canopy Protection & Planning:

New canopies are created when:

- New subdivisions and new boulevard trees are added through municipal growth, and
- Boulevard trees are added in existing areas of town.

Planning shall be undertaken in the care and future protection of these trees so that they may provide a future canopy.

3.7. Assessment Factors:

In addition to regular maintenance the following assessment factors shall be used in evaluating trees:

- Tree history and age,
- Canopy structure & strength,
- Firesmart principles,
- Topping damage having created multiple leaders and weakening the tree,
- Previous wind damage where branches have broken off previously, check for cracking at crutches and limbs,
- Root structure,
- Damage to roots from road or sidewalk repair,

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- Rot at the base of the trunk weakening the tree,
- Damage to the base of the tree from collisions, severe weather, or other causes,
- **Core samples may be taken when the outside assessment shows structural integrity issues and is usually done as a last resort. Core sample will look at the inside structure of the tree by boring a sample through the trunk of the tree, and**
- Disease Identification and Insect Damage.

3.8. Natural stands of Boreal Forest:

Throughout Slave Lake, there are naturally occurring stands of Boreal Forest. Where these stands occur on Town owned public spaces, the Town will endeavour to leave these areas as natural, with the exception of maintenance (as noted above).

3.9. Memorial Trees and Donations of Trees:

From time to time, residents may wish to honour an individual by donating funds to cover the cost of planting a memorial tree. The Town will charge \$500 for each tree. The Town will locate (with input from the donor) and plant a tree in memory of the individual. A ground stake with a small plaque acknowledging the individual will be placed nearby.

From time to time, community organizations may wish to donate funds to cover the cost of planting trees. The Town prefers plantings of groves over individual trees. The Town will charge a minimum of \$500 for each tree. The Town will locate (with input from the donor) and plant the trees. A ground stake with a small plaque acknowledging the individual will be placed nearby.

The charge for the trees noted above includes ongoing maintenance and care for the tree (especially within its first three years after planting).

Memorial and donated trees will only be planted in either the spring or fall of the year.

The Town, in its own discretion, may prune or remove donated trees as required. Any tree removed may or may not be replaced, at the sole discretion of the Town, based on the service level established through budgets.

3.10. Ongoing Education:

An ongoing education program is recommended to Town citizens through a combination of website, social media, newspaper and educational sessions. The program will be updated on a semi-annual basis and cover various topics including disease awareness and control; best species of tree for our climate (given the application); what species of shrubs and other plants that work best here; care and

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health of trees and shrubs; assessment factors used by the Town in evaluating municipal trees in their care and maintenance.
