

# Incentive Program to Protect Mature Trees

## Minimum Tree and Shrub Planting Requirements for Several Low Density Residential Zones and Incentives to Preserve Existing Trees

### Recommendation:

That Administration prepare amendments to Zoning Bylaw 12800, as generally outlined in Attachment 1 of the February 23, 2016, Sustainable Development report CR\_3117, and return to a future City Council Public Hearing.

### Report Summary

**This report proposes draft amendments to Zoning Bylaw 12800 that implement minimum tree and shrub planting requirements in several low density residential zones and create incentives to preserve mature trees by crediting preserved trees towards tree planting requirements.**

### Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November 10, 2015, Executive Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Sustainable Development return to Executive Committee with amendments to Zoning Bylaw 12800 that create an incentive program to protect mature trees based on landscaping expectation tradeoffs.

### Report

Current landscaping regulations in Zoning Bylaw 12800 do not require trees and shrubs to be planted on Single Detached, Semi-Detached, Duplex, and Secondary Suite housing in the (RF1) Single Detached Residential Zone, (RF2) Low Density Infill Zone, (RF3) Small Scale Infill Development Zone, and (RSL) Residential Small Lot Zone. Landscaping requirements are limited to the seeding or sodding of all yards visible from a public roadway, other than a lane, within 18 months of occupancy. Alternative forms of Landscaping, including hard decorative pavers, shale or similar treatments, or flower beds or cultivated gardens may be substituted for seeding or sodding.

Further, landscaping regulations in Zoning Bylaw 12800 do not currently provide incentives for the retention of existing trees when redeveloping low density residential sites. For ease of development, sites are often cleared of existing trees before construction begins, a practice that communities have identified as an area of concern as the City encourages more infill development.

Due to the absence of tree and shrub planting requirements for low density residential developments, there is little incentive to retain existing trees on site when redeveloping. The lack of tree and shrub planting requirements can also result in redeveloped sites without any newly planted trees or shrubs. As a result, there is a perception of character

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incompatibility between existing and new development when the outcome is a yard with no tree or shrub plantings.

The proposed amendments are intended to ensure that tree and shrub planting requirements apply relatively equally to all similar types of development throughout the city. Preferences from public engagement initiatives informed the recommended approach, which substantially improves landscaping by requiring a minimum of one deciduous and one coniferous tree and four shrubs per single detached dwelling. The required planting amounts for single detached lots increase as a function of lot width. In order to provide an incentive to retain mature trees, the amendment proposes to credit retained mature trees towards the minimum planting requirements. The complete details of the proposed amendments can be found in Attachment 1.

### Policy

*The Way We Grow*, Municipal Development Plan, Bylaw 15100:

- 3.5.1.1, Support redevelopment and residential infill that contribute to the livability and adaptability of established neighbourhoods and which are sensitive to existing development
- 5.2.1, Enhance established neighbourhoods by ensuring the design of new development, infrastructure and community facilities makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood

*Urban Forest Management Plan*, Edmonton's Urban Forest Management Plan:

- Promote a healthy and sustainable urban forest

*The Way We Green*, Edmonton's Environmental Strategic Plan:

- Objective 3.6 The City protects, preserves, and enhances its urban forests

### Corporate Outcomes

This report contributes to the corporate outcomes "Edmonton is an environmentally sustainable and resilient city" and "Edmontonians are connected to the city in which they live, work and play" as it provides a framework for new and infill development that encourages diverse and attractive landscaping and plant material on private properties that reflects the unique landscape qualities of mature communities. Further, the report contributes to the creation of communities that are attractive and reflect the wishes of the City to preserve biodiversity in the urban forest.

### Public Consultation

Public consultation for this project was undertaken in a variety of ways:

- Information memos were provided to the Canadian Home Builders' Association – Edmonton Region, and the Edmonton Realtors' Association to provide advance

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notice of this work and offering to provide presentations to their memberships, and inviting members to attend the public open house or complete the Insight Community survey.

- On December 1, 2015, separate meetings were held with the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues and the Infill Edmonton Development Association of Edmonton. Administration presented a variety of landscaping and tree retention options and participants provided feedback.
- On December 8, 2015, a public open house was conducted at the Santa Maria Goretti Center. Administration presented a variety of landscaping and tree retention options and participants reviewed the options, indicated their preferred options, and provided feedback on the consultation event.
- From December 7, 2015, through December 22, 2015, a public online survey was presented through the Edmonton Insight Community and on the project website. Data from participant feedback was collected and analyzed, and informed the proposed bylaw amendment. Survey results are included in Attachment 2 and Attachment 3.

### **Justification of Recommendation**

The proposed amendments to Zoning Bylaw 12800 are intended to address inconsistencies in landscaping requirements across all zones and to create effective incentives to preserve mature trees on redeveloped sites.

### **Attachments**

1. Draft Amendment to Zoning Bylaw 12800
2. Insight Community Tree Planting Survey Results
3. Project Website Tree Planting Survey Results

### **Others Reviewing this Report**

- R. Smyth, Acting General Manager, Community Services
- T. Burge, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer