

MOTION ON NOTICE

Tree Protection in Sunshine Hills

Submitted by: Councillor Dylan Kruger
Date submitted: September 15, 2025

WHEREAS the Sunshine Hills neighbourhood is defined by its mature tree canopy, which is central to the character, livability, and environmental health of the community;

WHEREAS increasing redevelopment pressures stemming from provincial legislative changes are resulting in the removal of large, mature trees, leading to concerns from residents that the unique character of Sunshine Hills is being eroded;

WHEREAS while Delta has a citywide Tree Protection and Replacement Bylaw, residents of Sunshine Hills have expressed a desire for stronger, neighbourhood-specific protections to preserve their unique tree canopy;

WHEREAS under the current framework of the Community Charter, municipalities cannot use tree bylaws to override the development potential of a property permitted under zoning regulations;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. Staff be directed to consult with the Sunshine Hills community to develop a Neighbourhood Tree Protection Pilot Program, which may include:
 - Establishing a Heritage Tree designation to protect landmark trees of significant size, age, or community value.
 - Enhanced tree replacement requirements or higher cash-in-lieu contributions within Sunshine Hills to better reflect the value of lost mature trees.
 - A clear opt-in mechanism for neighbourhoods like Sunshine Hills that wish to adopt stronger protections while ensuring consistency within the community.
 - Education and incentive programs for homeowners to preserve large trees during redevelopment.
 - Enhanced reporting on the number of heritage trees impacted by development and replacement trees required.

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2. Staff report back to council on the results of this community engagement by February 28, 2026.
3. The City of Delta write to the Minister of Municipal Affairs requesting amendments to the Community Charter to provide municipalities with greater authority to protect mature trees in established neighbourhoods, even in areas where redevelopment is permitted.

Comments provided by the Corporate Services Department:

In 2021, following public consultation and regional benchmarking on tree protection regulations, Council adopted the updated Tree Protection and Regulation Bylaw No. 7969, which provided additional protections for trees. The bylaw provisions included higher fees for a Tree Removal Permit, higher replacement requirements for larger trees (60+ cm diameter), and higher penalties for unauthorized removals, with a goal of balancing private property rights with the interests of the City and community in preserving the urban tree canopy.

Should Council adopt the motion, staff will undertake the requested community engagement with the Sunshine Hills community and report back to Council with recommendations. Staff would also prepare the requested letter to the Province seeking regulatory amendments.