



SUNSHINE HILLS NEIGHBOURHOOD TREE PROTECTION PILOT PROGRAM

Project Overview

Sunshine Hills is a well-established neighbourhood in North Delta known for its mature tree canopy and distinct character. In response to community concerns about tree loss, Council directed staff to explore a Neighbourhood Tree Protection Pilot Program. Staff have reviewed available municipal tools and are now seeking property owner feedback on interest in a pilot program.

Read on to learn more about what this could mean for Sunshine Hills residents and how to get involved.

Council Direction

Council directed staff to engage the Sunshine Hills community to develop a Neighbourhood Tree Protection Pilot Program that may include:

- A Heritage Tree designation for landmark trees of significant size, age, or community value.
- Enhanced tree replacement requirements or higher cash-in-lieu contributions.
- A neighbourhood opt-in mechanism for stronger protection.
- Incentives and education for homeowners to retain mature trees during redevelopment.
- Enhanced reporting on heritage tree impacts and replacement requirements.

Working Within the Community Charter

The Provincial Community Charter limits how municipalities can use their authority to protect trees on private property if it would prevent development that is otherwise permitted. As directed by Council, a letter was sent to the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs requesting amendments to the Community Charter to better support the protection of mature trees in established neighbourhoods. At the same time as the City engages with the Ministry on these changes, work is now underway to explore the creation of a pilot program that supports tree retention within the constraints of existing legislation and the provincial mandate to add housing.



Visit letstalk.delta.ca/TreeProtection for more information. If you have any questions, contact us at TreeProtection@delta.ca or 604-952-3800.

Current Tools

Before considering possible options, it is important for residents to be aware of the tools that exist today to protect trees on private property in Delta. These include:

- **Delta’s Tree Protection and Regulation Bylaw No. 7969 (Tree Bylaw):**
Regulates and imposes costs for tree removal and requires homeowners to plant new trees or pay fees when removing trees over a certain size, with greater replacement requirements for large diameter trees.
- **Heritage Register:**
Allows homeowners to register trees on their property that have recognized heritage value under provincial definitions—typically trees connected to heritage properties.
- **Restrictive Covenant:**
Homeowners can choose to register a covenant on their property title to limit certain activities, such as removal of trees. Such covenants “run with the land” meaning they apply to current and future owners.

Potential Tools for the Tree Protection Pilot Program

Delta’s Tree Protection Bylaw is the primary tool for regulating tree removal on private property. It provides an existing framework that could be amended to introduce stronger, neighbourhood-specific requirements for Sunshine Hills, and potentially other neighbourhoods should there be interest in the future. To support discussion, the City has identified a range of possible bylaw changes to explore as part of a pilot program.

1

Increased Fees for Tree Removal

The application fees, cash-in-lieu contributions, and security deposits could be increased to impose greater costs for tree removal on private property to encourage tree retention. The current fees under the tree bylaw that could be increased as part of the pilot program include:

- \$100 application fee for tree removal
- \$700 cash-in-lieu amount per tree when replacement is not possible
- \$700 per-tree security deposit, which is required to be held for one year following replacement



2

Higher Standards for Tree Removal

Additional conditions to retain large trees could be introduced. One option includes amending the current allowance to remove one tree of any size every 24 months without an arborist report. This could be amended so that large-diameter trees (60+ cm) are no longer eligible for this allowance.

3

Higher Standards for Tree Replacement

The number of trees required for replacement could be increased. The current bylaw requires:

- Two replacement trees for the removal of trees measuring 20–59 cm in diameter
- Three replacement trees for trees 60 cm or greater in diameter

4

Special Protection for Significant Trees

While the Heritage Register recognizes a tree, heritage value under provincial definitions, these trees are typically associated with properties also containing heritage buildings. Instead, protections could be considered for certain trees identified as “Significant Trees,” based on their size and species and their importance to the area. As a starting point for discussion, examples of possible added protections could include:

- No Significant Tree of any size is permitted to be removed without an arborist report.
- Requiring development applications proposing removal of Significant Trees to trigger a staff review including consideration of reasonable design changes to support their retention.
- Requiring more replacement trees when a Significant Tree is removed than for other trees.
- Requiring replacement of Significant Trees with the same or similar species.
- Higher fees for removal of Significant Trees compared to other trees in the area when replacement is not possible.
- Simplifying and reducing the cost of registering a voluntary restrictive covenant to protect a Significant Tree (e.g., waived fees, simplified templates, and staff assistance).
- Requiring an additional application fee to remove a Significant Tree that is protected by a restrictive covenant.



5

Other Options

Additional measures that could support tree retention beyond bylaw requirements could include:

- Increased monitoring of replacement trees to ensure successful establishment.
- Providing education to property owners on proper tree care.
- Reinvesting the extra fees collected from enhanced Significant Tree charges into the Sunshine Hills neighbourhood for local tree planting and canopy growth.

What This Means

If the pilot program proceeds, Sunshine Hills could have additional measures in place to support protection of the tree canopy compared to other neighbourhoods in Delta. These measures would focus on encouraging tree retention by increasing fees and replacement requirements for tree removal applications, and by providing added protection for larger and more significant trees.

For property owners, this could also mean higher costs and additional requirements when removing any trees, as well as greater emphasis on retaining trees through site design when properties redevelop. Any extra fees collected through the enhanced Significant Tree charges could be reinvested locally to support tree planting and long-term canopy growth in the neighbourhood.

Community feedback will help Council determine whether to proceed with the pilot program, adjust the proposed measures, or consider alternative approaches.

Online Information Session

Property owners are invited to learn more about how the City regulates tree removal and the options for stronger protection at an upcoming Online Information Session. Registration is required, and residents may submit questions in advance or participate through a moderated chat during the session.

- **When:** February 4, 2026 (6:00 – 7:30 pm)
- **Where:** Online
- Register at letstalk.delta.ca/TreeProtection



Visit letstalk.delta.ca/TreeProtection for more information. If you have any questions, contact us at TreeProtection@delta.ca or 604-952-3800.

Who We Are Contacting

The following is a map showing the neighbourhoods in the Sunshine Hills area that share similar tree types, canopy coverage, and overall neighbourhood characteristics. For the purpose of the pilot program, consultation will focus on the properties within the Sunshine Hills neighbourhood identified by the purple boundary. Should the City proceed with the pilot program, other Delta neighbourhoods could have the opportunity to opt in to a similar program.

All properties within the Sunshine Hills neighbourhood will be mailed a postcard, inviting property owners to provide feedback on the proposed options. Each postcard will include a unique, address-specific code linked to an online survey, which will be made available from January 22 to February 15, 2026.



What We Are Asking

The survey will ask questions that will help the City:

- Understand how familiar residents are with existing tree protection rules and tools
- Gauge interest in a neighbourhood-wide pilot program
- Gather feedback on potential options for strengthening tree protection
- Identify issues and opportunities the City should consider as the pilot program is developed

What's Next

Once community feedback has been gathered, staff will seek direction from Council on next steps. Depending on the feedback received, this may include further consultation prior to implementation.

Step 1:
Gauge Interest and
Identify Options

Step 2:
Council
Direction

Step 3:
Confirm Pilot
Program

Step 4:
Implement
Pilot Program

Step 5:
Council
Update



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