

SER-009-037

Strathcona County
Municipal Policy Handbook

Heritage Tree Retention

Date of Approval by Council: 06/28/2011

Resolution No: 456/2011

Lead Role: Chief Commissioner

Last Review Date: June 28, 2011

Next Review Date: 06/2014

Administrative Responsibility: Planning and Development Services

Special Notes: Cross reference with policies: SER-009-032, Biophysical Assessment;
SER-009-034, Tree Conservation; SER-009-035, Tree Management

Policy Statement

Strathcona County shall ensure the retention of Heritage Trees during and following land development, building construction and infrastructure installation. The purpose of the Heritage Tree Retention Policy is to identify and protect specific trees that have been planted and cultivated by people, but may also include naturally occurring trees possessing exceptional qualities, that are of community interest for commemoration on both public and private land.

Strathcona County will develop a Heritage Tree Program which will include a process for the nomination, assessment, inventory control, recognition, maintenance, and legal protection of specified trees on public and private land

Definitions

“Heritage Trees” refers to trees of particular interest by virtue of such qualities as age, size, shape, special interest, location and/or history whether planted by people or naturally occurring and may include individual trees, clumps, groves, shelterbelts, tree gardens, arboretums and sites of botanical or ecological interest.

“Sustainability” means developing in a manner that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, while striking a balance between economic prosperity, social responsibility and environmental stewardship.

Guidelines

Trees are recognized as having tangible value from both the intrinsic and financial perspective. People increasingly recognize the environmental, aesthetic, and economic benefits trees bring to them. Strathcona County recognizes economic, environmental and social values as the three foundations for the sustainability of the municipality. Trees, whether planted by people or naturally occurring, are valuable resources that have helped to shape the character of Strathcona County.

This policy is consistent with Strathcona County's Strategic Plan as supported by the: Community Heritage Legacy Framework, Social Sustainability Framework, Environmental Sustainability Framework, and Economic Sustainability Framework. All development and subdivision activities shall be subject to this policy, including those initiated by Strathcona County.

- 1. Economic Sustainability.** Trees contribute to the physical health and mental well-being of the people in a community thereby reducing healthcare costs (e.g. clean air, reduced noise, aesthetics). Trees contribute to water quality improvements which reduce treatment costs of potable water. Trees help reduce utility costs, (e.g. shade decreases electrical demands and costs for cooling, shelter from wind decreases the fuel demand and cost of heating). Trees are a landscaping investment and increase property values for both the owner and surrounding community. Tree value continues to accumulate with age.
- 2. Environmental Sustainability.** Trees are a critical element of the natural and man-made environment by performing numerous functions that contribute to the improvement of global environmental conditions (e.g. wind protection, rain capture, slope stability, wildlife habitat, temperature moderation/reduction, air purification, nutrient recycling, oxygen production, CO₂ gas consumption, carbon capture and storage).
- 3. Social Sustainability.** Trees provide a tangible historical evidence of the people who planted or protected them, improve the aesthetics of the community, and their value extends to the current and future generations. Trees also provide a record of natural events that have occurred within the community such as fire, drought, rain, and temperature cycles.

Roles and Responsibilities

The directors of Planning and Development Services (PDS); Recreation, Parks and Culture (RPC); Information Technology Services (ITS); Legislative and Legal Services (LLS) and Communications will implement the program as it specifically applies to their department.

Program Components:

1. Nomination - Voluntary (property owner)
2. Assessment - Certified Arborist (RPC/PDS)
3. Inventory - Description, picture, legal location, mapping (RPC/ITS)
4. Recognition/commemoration - Plaque/sign (RPC/PDS/Communications)
5. Maintenance - Inspection, health assessment and pruning (RPC)
6. Protection Mechanism - Restrictive caveat (PDS/LLS)

PDS is responsible to:

- review Tree Conservation Reports, Heritage Tree Inventory, and perform predevelopment inspections during the subdivision and development process to determine the presence of designated heritage trees for retention
- ensure heritage trees that are identified for retention are carried through the Area Structure Plan, Area Concept Plan, Development Agreement and Subdivision Approval processes
- determine the appropriate legal instrument (e.g. caveat) for registration on title to protect heritage trees under voluntary dedication by property owners wishing to protect trees beyond the time they own a property

RPC is responsible to:

- manage the on-going health and maintenance of trees on public land, provide a consultation service for trees on private lands (RPC)

LLS is responsible to:

- determine the appropriate legal instrument (e.g. caveat) for registration on title to protect heritage trees under voluntary dedication by property owners wishing to protect trees beyond the time they own a property

ITS is responsible to:

- assist with the database of heritage trees registered on public and private land

Communications is responsible to:

- assist with plaque/sign development for recognition/commemoration of heritage trees on public and private land
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Procedures

A Guideline has been developed that outlines a set of criteria with which to assess trees for heritage tree status (Doc. #: EEP.Environmental and Open Space Planning.5910.13571).

Procedures have been developed to ensure effective implementation of the policy (Doc #: EEP.Environmental and Open Space Planning.5910.13571 and 13599 and 13600).