

How were the neighbourhoods chosen for the pilot program?

Neighbourhoods were selected based on the results of Phase One engagement. Neighbourhoods that met the specific thresholds for participation (20%) and support for the project (75%) were identified for inclusion in Phase Two of engagement. Details on the engagement process can be found at letstalkdelta.ca/treeprotection.

What other municipal approaches to tree protection have been reviewed, and how are they reflected in the proposed pilot program?

The amendments to the Tree Protection and Regulation Bylaw are informed by both community input and a review of best practices from other municipalities in the region. These approaches have been adapted by staff to ensure they are practical, enforceable, and feasible to implement within Delta's local context.

Why is this program being explored in Sunshine Hills and not across all of Delta?

Council directed staff to explore a neighbourhood-specific pilot program in the Sunshine Hills area in response to concerns raised by residents about the loss of mature trees.

Am I still able to remove dead, dying, or dangerous trees on my property?

Yes, property owners may apply to remove trees that are dead, dying, or in imminent danger of falling and causing injury to people or structures. The cutting of a tree is permitted if: all or part of that tree has been severely damaged by a natural cause, and if a written report by a qualified person establishing that the tree is unlikely to survive is provided to the General Manager of Engineering in advance of the cutting; photographs taken before the tree was cut and a written report by a qualified person together establish that the tree was a dangerous tree; or evidence is provided which the General Manager reasonably considers is sufficient to establish that the tree was or is a dangerous tree. If a tree is causing unavoidable damage to a home, driveway, or other infrastructure over time, standard fees and replacement requirements would apply. Removal will not be permitted for minor nuisances such as shade, or droppings of needles and cones.

Is the City considering rules and policies to minimize tree removal in new developments, on top of just increased fees and higher replacement requirements?

Under the provincial Community Charter, the City's power to protect trees on private property is limited if any development that is otherwise allowed is affected. Provincial legislation also requires municipalities to allow for more small-scale, multi-unit housing (e.g. 4-plex housing on all lots in residential neighbourhoods); however, the City works with developers to protect trees through reasonable design changes.

How will the City determine the success of the program?

During the second year of the program, staff will survey Sunshine Hills property owners for their views on the outcomes of the program and report back to Council for further direction.

What else is being done to advocate for greater authority in terms of tree protection and development?

On behalf of Council, Mayor Harvie wrote to the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs to request more flexibility in the Community Charter for municipalities to support the protection of mature trees, as this legislation currently limits a municipality's ability to protect trees on private property. The Minister responded by listing a number of established options for tree protection in municipalities, such as enhancing local tree bylaws and community education. While the City continues to advocate for more flexibility in the Community Charter, the current approach focuses on the bylaw amendments and education initiatives.

How is this program ensuring that homeowners aren't punished unfairly and that restrictions address the tree loss related to development activity (clear cutting)?

The proposed bylaw amendments are intended to respond to the main concern heard from residents which was reducing the loss of large, mature trees in the neighbourhood. Enhanced tree protection does come with trade-offs. In some cases, homeowners may face higher costs or additional requirements, particularly where larger or multiple trees are proposed for removal.

How does the City review tree removal requests as part of the development process?

All development applications require an arborist report to document trees on the property, prepared by a certified arborist. Applicants are encouraged to retain as many trees as possible through the design process and demolition and building permits will be issued only after tree protection measures have been fully inspected.

Once a development application has been reviewed, property owners are directed to apply for tree removal permits. These applications are reviewed by the Urban Forestry team within the Engineering Department in accordance with the Tree Protection and Regulation Bylaw, with consideration given to tree health, risk, and location. Arborist reports and building plans are reviewed to confirm that proposed protection, removal, and replanting recommendations are accurate and meet bylaw criteria. When tree removals are not approved, applicants may be required to adjust building plans. Within the limits of provincial legislation, staff also work with applicants to identify opportunities to retain trees such as adjusting the location of underground services, driveways, and sidewalks.

How will this change development pressures on other areas of North Delta; will there be bigger impacts from infill development in those areas?

This pilot program is not intended to shift development pressure to other neighbourhoods. Under provincial legislation, including the Community Charter, the City cannot use tree protection rules to limit development that is already permitted by zoning. The program does not change the development rights allowed under existing zoning in Sunshine Hills or elsewhere in North Delta.

How does the City monitor and confirm compliance with approved tree removal permits?

During development, trees to be retained—including those on adjacent streets or properties—must be clearly identified on plans submitted with permit applications. These trees must be protected with fencing that meets City standards before any demolition, servicing, or construction begins, and staff regularly monitor sites to ensure these protection measures are in place. If staff are alerted to potential infractions, including through calls from the public, they confirm whether the required permits were issued.

Does the City enforce the current Tree Protection and Regulation bylaw?

Yes. When the City receives a report of a potential violation, staff investigate and take enforcement action where warranted. Penalties can be significant, particularly in cases involving deliberate damage or the removal of multiple protected trees, and fines have been issued in the past to reflect the seriousness of these offences and help deter similar behaviour.

How does the City ensure arborist reports are accurate and meet professional standards?

Arborist reports are reviewed at multiple stages of the process, including during the building permit application and when tree removal permits are issued. Reviews are carried out by plans examiners, the Urban Forestry team, and permit staff. The City accepts a range of qualified professionals and verifies that arborists meet required professional accreditation standards. When there are reports that need further verification, staff conduct site visits to confirm information is accurate.

Does the city track how many trees are being removed per year and has it increased?

Yes. The City tracks tree removal permits issued each year. Since 2015, there has been an average of approximately 884 tree removals per year, though the number varies from year to year. The highest number of removals occurred in 2021 (1,181 permits), while the lowest was in 2022 (427 permits). More recently, 890 tree removal permits were issued in 2024 and 897 in 2025, which is generally consistent with the long-term average.

How will this pilot program address equity in canopy coverage through the city where there are fewer remaining significant matures trees and less canopy coverage?

This pilot program is focused on tree retention in Sunshine Hills, rather than city-wide canopy coverage or planting programs.

The City's Urban Forest Strategy includes a goal to increase the urban canopy to 40% coverage by 2050, particularly in neighbourhoods currently exhibiting low canopy cover.

Where can I find more information regarding the Sunshine Hills Neighbourhood Tree Protection Pilot Program, or regarding trees in general?

For inquiries about the Sunshine Hills Neighbourhood Tree Protection Pilot Program, please contact treeprotection@delta.ca. For general inquiries about trees in Delta, including the Tree Protection and Regulation Bylaw and tree removal permits, please contact trees@delta.ca. More information can also be found at delta.ca/trees.