Request for Decision

To: Peter de Verteil, CAO
Date: July 6, 2015
From: Abbas Farahbakhsh, Director of Public Works
Re: Dangerous Tree Maintenance and Removal Policy Amendment

RECOMMENDATION:

That the following recommendation be forwarded to Council for approval:

That Council amend the “Dangerous Tree Maintenance and Removal Policy” to include; “Notwithstanding the approved hierarchy for previously topped trees, should neighbouring property owners express residual concerns with previously topped trees that have the potential to fall or drop limbs on their property, after said trees have been evaluated by an arborist, the City may consider proactively reducing the trees canopy by structural pruning, or thinning, where deemed appropriate by the Director of public Works.”

BACKGROUND:

Over the last few years, the City of Duncan has been monitoring the health of trees that have been identified as a risk in City owned green spaces in consideration of the public safety of such green space users and the adjacent properties to such green spaces.

The City has adopted a policy that deals with previously topped trees in green spaces adjacent to residential developments such as the Centennial Heights neighbourhood. The intent of this amendment is to enhance this policy.

ANALYSIS:

The City has routinely retained qualified Arborists to assess publicly owned trees and provide recommendations with respect to the health of the trees, general safety concerns and property risk damage. Our response has historically been reactive, as with many other matters, tree safety is typically complaint driven.

With respect to previously topped trees, even though they are not identified as dangerous trees and they pose no risk to the green space users and/or the adjacent properties, the City still regularly receives requests and/or complaints to remove or re-top the previously topped trees.

Staff has engaged in discussion with Arborists and experts in this field and it has become apparent that none are in favor of the re-topping of previously topped trees for two main reasons. First, this practice can expose the trees to disease and second, it promotes the growth of multiple heads which can significantly increase the chance of the trees’ failure due to strong winds. One or both of these scenarios could potentially result in much larger future problems.
IMPLICATIONS:

Financial: Currently, $25,000 is allocated for tree maintenance in the Public Works Operational Budget.

Policy: Dangerous Tree Maintenance and Removal Policy.

Strategic Priorities: N/A

Sustainability: Maintain and sustain urban forests.

ALTERNATE RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Council not amend the Dangerous Tree Maintenance Removal Policy.

Attachment A: Dangerous Tree Maintenance and Removal Policy

Respectfully submitted,

Abbas Farahbakhsh, DPW

Reviewed by CAO