



COUNCIL REPORT

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Contact: Steve Jackson
Contact No.: 604-257-8448
RTS No.: 18529
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: May 20, 2026
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TO: Standing Committee on City Finance and Services
FROM: General Manager, Vancouver Park Board
SUBJECT: Tree Inspection Policy

Recommendations

THAT Council receive this report and adopt the new Tree Inspection Policy as outlined in this report and attached as Appendix D.

Purpose and Executive Summary

This report provides the rationale for, and seeks Council approval of, a new Tree Inspection Policy and summarizes the key changes from the current policy approved in 1993.

The updated policy modernizes and consolidates how the City manages tree risk on public lands, aligns with contemporary arboricultural best practices, and advances Goal #1 (Manage trees for health and safety) of the Council and Park Board–approved *Urban Forest Strategy – 2025*.

The proposed policy establishes a single, citywide framework for tree inspection and risk mitigation, administered by Urban Forestry as the subject-matter expert for all City-owned trees. It expands the policy’s scope beyond street and park trees to include civic lands, laneways, forested areas, shared trees, and inaccessible trees—addressing long-standing gaps and inconsistencies across departments.

Key updates include replacing dated inspection terminology with the International Society of Arboriculture’s Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) methodology; introducing clear, quantitative timelines for mitigating identified risks; and shifting from prescriptive pruning cycles to risk-based inspection and response standards. For most stand-alone trees, the policy adopts a 10-year detailed inspection cycle supplemented by annual visual inspections, balancing public safety, operational feasibility, and responsible use of public funds.

The new policy does not request new funding and is designed to be implemented through a phased transition beginning January 1, 2027, supported by ongoing tree inventories, asset

management system enhancements, and staff training. Overall, adoption of the proposed Tree Inspection Policy provides a consistent, defensible, and achievable approach to managing tree-related risk across the City while supporting the long-term health and sustainability of Vancouver’s urban forest.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- The Park Board adopted the current Tree Inspection Policy on June 7, 1993 (“1993 Policy”) – see Appendix C.
- More recently, City Council adopted the [Urban Forest Strategy – 2025](#) on May 21, 2025. Goal #1 of five goals defined in the Urban Forest Strategy is focused on health and safety and includes actions such as updating the Tree Inspection Policy (1993).
- City Council adopted the [Street Tree By-Law No. 5985](#) on April 8, 1986. The by-law grants responsibility for boulevard trees to the Park Board.
- City Council adopted [Protection of Trees By-Law No. 9958](#) on December 1st, 2009. The by-law regulates tree removal, protection, and replacement on private land.

City Manager’s Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

Tree Inventory

Vancouver’s urban forest consists of all trees on public and private land across the 115 km² of land within the City of Vancouver. The City currently has approximately 25% canopy cover. Per the existing 1993 Policy, the Park Board’s Urban Forestry Department (“Urban Forestry”) is responsible for stewardship and risk management of street and park trees, including street trees, park / golf course trees, and parkland forest areas.

The proposed policy would also incorporate trees on other City-owned lands (referred to as “Civic” and “Lane” trees below), representing approximately 1.25% of the city’s canopy cover. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of canopy cover by land ownership.

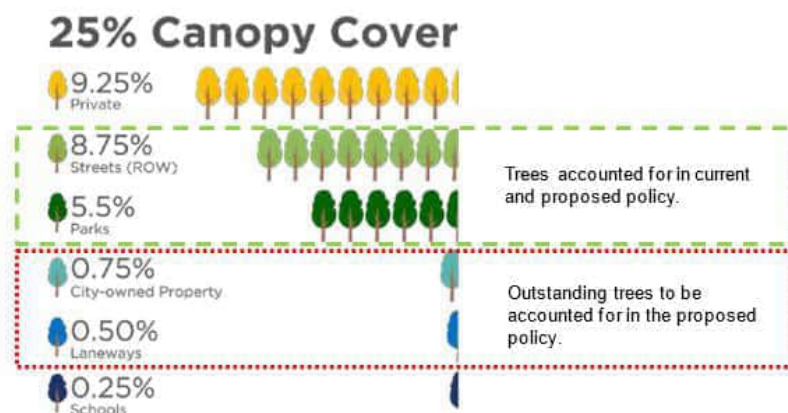


Figure 1: City of Vancouver urban forest canopy cover by land-type and ownership. Trees on private property and school property are the responsibility of others

Although all public trees are owned by the City of Vancouver, responsibility for managing them is currently distributed across several internal departments, each with its own operational protocols and risk-management practices. These can be grouped into the following categories, using the same terminology used in the new proposed Policy:

- **Street Trees (150,000)** – individual trees located in boulevards on City streets
 - Currently managed by Park Board;
- **Park Trees (38,000)** – individual trees located in Parks
 - Currently managed by Park Board;
- **Civic Trees (approximately 5000 trees)** – individual trees located in City property that is not streets or parks (examples: City Hall Campus; Mountain View Cemetery)
 - Currently managed by Real Estate, Environment, and Facilities Management (REFM) and Arts, Culture and Community Services (ACCS); not covered by current 1993 Policy;
- **Lane Trees (approximately 2000 trees)** – individual trees located in constructed or unconstructed lane right of way
 - Currently managed by Engineering; not covered by current 1993 Policy
- **Forest Area Trees (approx. 1 Million)** – trees located in densely-forested areas of parks, street right of way or other City property
 - Currently managed by the “owner” department; not covered by current 1993 Policy
- **Shared Trees** – trees that fall into any of the above categories, where the trunk grows across the City property line
 - Not covered by current 1993 Policy;
- **Inaccessible Trees** – trees that fall into any of the above categories, but where its location has been enclosed or occupied by neighbouring occupants
 - Not covered by current 1993 Policy

Current Status and the 1993 Policy

Staff have identified substantial areas for improvement and change from the current status under the 1993 Policy. In summary:

Scope/completeness: The 1993 Policy only applies to Street Trees and Park Trees under the care, custody and control of the Park Board.

The new Policy establishes a city-wide, one-budget, consolidated approach to tree risk management, assigning Urban Forestry as the subject-matter expert and implementation authority for all City lands.

Clarity and Service Level: The 1993 Policy requires that all Street Trees must be pruned and undergo a detailed inspection once every seven years, and also undergo an annual visual inspection. The combined requirement to prune and inspect, rather than to inspect first and undertake risk-based mitigation as needed is problematic, as it prescribes a fixed volume of mitigation work regardless of the findings of an individual inspection.

In addition, staff have encountered challenges achieving this service level, while also meeting other operational requirements. It equates to an obligation to prune over 21,000 street trees

annually, while also attempting to address park and golf course trees, storm-related tree work, service requests, emerging priorities and conventional stewardship practices such as tree planting and watering. In recent years, challenges encountered by Urban Forestry have included climate change impacts, an expanding asset base, development-related impacts such as new and replacement underground infrastructure, and constrained resources. To illustrate, Urban Forestry responded to 920 storm-related tree failures in 2025, accounting for approximately 20% of Urban Forestry’s operational work-flow, and in recent years has responded to over 10,000 service requests annually – a reflection on an increasingly engaged community. As a result, some trees have not been inspected and/or pruned every 7 years as required by the 1993 Policy.

Key Changes Under the New Policy

The new Policy introduces five key changes:

1) Complete Scope for Individual Trees: the new Policy expands the categories of individually managed trees beyond Street Trees and Park Trees to include Civic Trees and Lane Trees.

- **Street Trees, Park Trees and Civic Trees** will undergo a detailed inspection every 10 years (not 7), and continue to undergo a visual inspection every year as currently provided under the 1993 Policy; and
- **Lane Trees** will be inspected on a reactive basis as described further below.

2) Complete Scope for Forest Area Trees: the new Policy would introduce Forest Area Trees as a new category, to be proactively inspected via a visual inspection from adjacent roadways and all sanctioned pathways every 3 years;

3) Replace dated risk assessment terminology and methodology with the International Society of Arboriculture’s Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (“TRAQ”), which sets out defined inspection/assessment methods, a defined qualification for conducting such inspections, and defined levels of risk based on the likelihood and consequences of tree failure.

4) Update the timeframes for completion of risk mitigation work from qualitative language in the 1993 Policy (i.e. “prioritized”, “as soon as practical”) **with clear, quantitative timeframes** based on the identified TRAQ risk category (i.e. within 5 business days).

5) Introduce standard response processes for Shared Trees and Inaccessible Trees.

The chart below summarizes the updates to the policy:

<i>Tree Category</i>	Tree Inspection Policy (1993)	Tree Inspection Policy (2026)	Inspection level (2026)
Park Trees	✓	✓	Level 1 annually, Level 2 every 10-years
Street Trees	✓	✓	
Civic Trees	✗	✓	
Forest Area Trees	✓ *	✓	Level 1 every 3-years
Lane Trees	✗	✓	Reactive followed by Level 1 or 2 as needed

Inaccessible Trees	×	✓	Reactive provided access / safety granted, followed by level 1 or level 2 as needed
Shared Trees	×	✓	Depends on location (>50% City: as per tree category, <50%: reactive – level 1 or 2)

* Only Forest Area Trees in Parks, not on other lands

Rationale for the New Policy

The new Policy addresses the scope and service-level limitations of the 1993 Policy by establishing a single, city-wide framework administered by Urban Forestry.

The move towards standardized inspections, as opposed to dictating the volume of work that must occur (i.e. “pruning” every 7 years) is a more appropriate commitment of staff resources. The introduction of quantitative risk mitigation deadlines for each risk profile sets a clear level of service which is beneficial to staff and the public; in contrast, the 1993 Policy uses qualitative language (i.e. “prioritized”, “as soon as practical”).

For Street Trees and other categories of proactively-managed individual trees, the change for detailed inspection frequency from 7 years to 10 years is intended to balance effective risk management with responsible use of public funds, while also setting a clear level of service that can be achieved while delivering on other commitments as described above.

The adoption of TRAQ represents the contemporary risk assessment method that evolved from its precursor program referred to as Tree Risk Assessment Course and Exam (TRACE). In summary, TRAQ categorizes inspections/assessments into three defined levels and methods of inspection, and four defined risk categories (Low; Moderate; High; Extreme) based on the likelihood, and consequences, of tree failure in that tree’s location. A summary of the inspection levels is set out below. For further detail, please see the attached Appendix B.

- **Level 1** (visual inspection, conducted from a particular vantage point (i.e. walking a pathway or driving a road), often used for expansive populations;
- **Level 2** (basic assessment, a 360-degree ground-based inspection often using simple tools for individual trees);
- **Level 3** (advanced assessment, sometimes using invasive testing methods, reserved for unique circumstances/high-value specimens)

Appendix B contains more details on TRAQ as well as a detailed summary of changes to the 1993 policy and ‘*Tree Inspection Requirements by Land Type*’.

The new categorization and management of Forest Area trees, Lane Trees, Shared Trees and Inaccessible Trees improve on existing practices, which currently are mainly reactive and ad hoc in nature. In summary:

- Areas containing Forest Area Trees will be inspected via Level 1 visual assessment once every three years conducted from adjacent roadways and sanctioned pathways;
- Lane Trees will initially be inspected on a reactive basis (i.e. in response to complaints); individual trees identified by complaint and inspected will then be subject to a Level 2 inspection once every 10 years;

- Shared Trees that are verified to be 50% or more located on City property will remain inspected as otherwise provided by the Policy, and Shared Trees that are less than 50% located on City property will be downgraded to reactive inspection only; and
- Inaccessible Trees will be inspected and responded to on a reactive basis only, and only where conditions for required access and worksite safety are provided by the adjacent owner.

A more detailed discussion of these categories and the rationale for the recommended service level under the new Policy is attached as Appendix A.

Discussion

Steps Towards Implementation:

Successful implementation of the new policy will be dependent on the following:

- **Inventory:** Complete an inventory of outstanding tree and forest asset classes;
- **Software Upgrades:** Upgrade UFO asset management software to allow task prioritization;
- **Tree Risk Assessment:** Update risk assessment process and response times; and
- **Blended Services:** Integrate blended services for enhanced service levels.

Details on these aspects of implementation can be examined in detail within Appendix B.

Transition

In General

The new Policy would take effect January 1, 2027, consistent with Urban Forestry's calendar-year operational planning, and allowing time for inventorying, training, and software upgrades.

10 Year Inspection Cycle

The new policy will change the current detailed inspection commitment from every 7-years for some individually inventoried trees (i.e. Street Trees), to every 10-years, for all stand-alone trees (i.e. not forest areas, and not laneways).

Effectively, this would increase the pre-existing inspection interval for Street Trees, define a time-frame for Park Trees, and impose a new proactive inspection regime on a "new" category of stand-alone trees (Civic Trees), which to date have mainly been inspected on a reactive basis only. Inventorying of the "new" Civic trees category is expected to be completed Q1 2027.

Staff recommend that the new policy expressly "reset the clock" for all detailed Level 2 inspections, including trees currently subject to the 7-year inspection interval. This would give the City 10-years from the effective date of the new policy in which to complete a detailed Level 2 inspection of all stand-alone trees on a systematic, area / neighbourhood basis (see Appendix B).

The practical implication is that some trees will go up to 10-years before they undergo a detailed Level 2 inspection, however these same trees will receive a Level 1 inspection annually to identify emerging issues on an ongoing basis. In addition, as discussed above under the heading "Current Status and the 1993 Policy", some have not been pruned and inspected every 7 years where required under that policy.

Staff have considered alternatives to the proposed area-based approach, including organizing detailed Level 2 inspections by last inspection date rather than by area, to leverage recent and ongoing one-time inventory work of some trees (Civic Trees: Q1 2027; and Park Trees: completed 2023) as a “head-start” on detailed inspections for those categories. Ultimately, staff recommend the “resetting the clock”, area-based approach. Arranging inspections by neighbourhood area will reduce travel time and increase efficiencies. A “resetting the clock”, area approach is simple, is consistent with the overall integration achieved by the new policy and increases likelihood of successful implementation over time through inevitable staffing turn-over.

In contrast, attempting to arrange an inspection regime based on a variety of past inspection dates for mixed asset categories in scattered geographic locations across the City of Vancouver would be complicated, comparatively inefficient and increase the risk of omissions leading to incomplete implementation and non-compliance. Staff estimate the increased cost from this approach to be at least double the annual costs of an area-based approach due to increased travel time, additional in-office planning and logistics, increased service requests due to establishment of unclear expectations and an increased likelihood of non-compliance leading to costly claims.

Financial Implications

This report does not request new funding. However, as net new trees beyond those being inventoried in the short-term are added to Urban Forestry’s management inventory, any associated operating impacts will be considered through the City’s annual Operating budget process. As part of this process, estimated operating costs are reviewed and updated annually to reflect changes in inflation, material costs, and collective agreement provisions. Based on current lifecycle cost assumptions, the estimated annual operating costs for a ten-year inspection cycle are \$54 per street tree, \$44 per park tree, and \$9 per tree in forested areas.

Legal Implications

The adoption of the proposed new Policy is authorized by the *Vancouver Charter* and the Street Tree By-law No. 5895.

Conclusion and next steps

In the short-term, staff will advance the inventory of outstanding tree assets; upgrade the asset management software; update risk assessment processes and response; seek resourcing once the inventory is complete and continue the use of the blended services delivery model. Staff will continue providing progress updates on the ongoing work program.

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APPENDIX A

Lane Trees, Forest Area Trees, Shared Trees and Inaccessible Trees

Lane Trees

Context

There are approximately 700 km of lanes in the City of Vancouver. Many of these are constructed and open for vehicular traffic, but some consist only of unconstructed right of way. In some cases, portions of the latter can be used and sometimes enclosed by neighbouring adjacent owners essentially as an extension to the owner's backyard. In many cases, these trees will often present difficult questions of determining responsibility depending on where the actual property line lies (discussed further below under "Shared Trees").

In any case, these areas contain trees that were, to staff's knowledge, never planted by the City or Park Board, and so either were the result of natural growth or planted by private owners. Historically, these were managed on a reactive and ad hoc basis only.

In 2023, Engineering staff conducted a desktop exercise to quantify the approximate scale of Lane Trees. Based on a detailed review of Vanmap and Google Streetview data and imagery, staff identified approximately 1366 "open" Lane Trees, and 555 "landlocked" Lane Trees. These are order of magnitude estimates only, as the criteria for "landlocked" was based solely on number of adjacent land parcels to the tree, and only trees estimated to be 6 meters tall and/or 10 centimeters in diameter were included.

Recommended Approach and Rationale

Lane Trees generally present a lower risk exposure than Street Trees or Park Trees due to comparatively lower pedestrian and vehicle volumes, and irregular use patterns. Given the lower risk profile, and that these trees were not planted by the City or Park Board, staff recommend that this category be inspected on a reactive basis only to start; any trees identified and inspected on that basis would then be added to the inventory of trees to be inspected on the same 10 year/Level 2 proactive cycle as Street Trees.

Staff do not recommend adding such Lane Trees to the 1 year/Level 1 visual inspection currently imposed on Street Trees. Adding individual Lane Trees on a spot basis to the current 1 year/Level 1 "drive by" visual inspection commitment would not be feasible, as such inspections are by definition conducted on a bulk basis guided by fairly high-level instructions (i.e. street maps) in order to achieve the efficiency/cost savings intended by the Level 1 inspection method, rather than the granular data (GIS coordinates) used to call out particular trees for a Level 2 inspection cycle. Identifying a particular Lane Tree as part of a 1 year/Level 1 visual inspection would significantly increase the cost of that inspection cycle and render it non-cost effective.

Finally, staff do not recommend that Lane Trees undergo an up-front full inventory process intended to be completed for Civic Trees. An up-front inventorying of Lane Trees would represent a significant additional cost given the scale of asset (700 km of lanes), access issues due to encroachments, existing separate maintenance commitments for some trees by BC Hydro or other parties, and in some cases the need for a land survey for a "final answer". This cost would achieve limited additional value, given that the existing desktop exercise data provides an approximate scale sufficient for the City and Park Board to set an appropriate inspection and maintenance service level for these trees.

Forest Area Trees

The City includes many densely forested areas, mostly in parks (e.g. Stanley Park), but also in other areas historically or currently managed by REFM or Engineering (e.g. Champlain Heights).

Staff believe that these forested areas of the City in parks and elsewhere would benefit from a proactive inspection regime targeting areas that are accessed and used by the public. The new Policy would require these areas to be inspected by a Level 1 visual assessment once every three years, such inspection to be conducted from all adjacent roadways (i.e. a “drive by” inspection) and adjacent or internal sanctioned pathways.

“Sanctioned” is defined in the new Policy to mean pathways constructed or approved by the City/Park Board and included as official in the Park Board’s GIS database.

Staff believe this would represent an appropriate service level balancing responsible use of City resources with maintaining an appropriate level of risk management, and not allowing unapproved footpaths in parks and elsewhere to increase the City’s scope of responsibility without notice to the City.

Shared Trees

Staff occasionally become aware of trees whose trunks are, or may be, located partly on City property and partly on adjacent non-City property. Where a tree’s trunk is located on both properties, that tree is co-owned by the City and the neighbouring property owner. To date, these situations have been responded to on an ad hoc basis.

The new Policy introduces a new standard measurement and inspection/maintenance process for potential shared trees.

The trunk will be measured as close to ground level as possible, but just above the “root flare” (i.e. where the visible roots of a tree may cause the tree base to swell or flare).

For purposes of this policy, staff recommend against adopting other possible measurement methods, such as the “diameter at chest height” (1.4 m) method, as that method is typically used to determine size/significance rather than ownership, can yield arbitrary results for slanted or multiple-trunked trees, and over time will tend to increase City responsibility while decreasing adjacent owners’ responsibility, notwithstanding the fact that such trees were often originally planted by those owners or were formerly located solely on their property.

Trees located 50% or more located on City property will remain inspected per their categorization under the Policy, trees located 49% or less on City property will be inspected on a reactive basis only, and trees that are not located on City property at all will not be inspected or maintained by staff going forward.

For both proactively and reactively inspected shared trees, risks will be mitigated on the same timing as any other tree in the Policy, with the exception that the shortest timeframe (“Extreme Risk”) is extended from 5 business days to 10 business days, to provide staff with time to contact and potentially work with the co-owner regarding the required work before it occurs if feasible. In this way, the new Policy attempts to balance the City’s commitments to public safety, the interests and perspectives of co-owners of trees, and the responsible allocation of resources, including for situations in which the City is not the majority owner of the shared tree.

Inaccessible Trees

Staff occasionally become aware of trees that are hidden and/or enclosed by hedges, fences, or other encroachments installed by an adjacent owner, but are eventually verified to be located partly or wholly on City property. This has been most common in lanes, but has also occurred in other contexts. To date, these situations have been responded to on an ad hoc basis.

The new Policy introduces a new standard response that attempts to balance the City's responsibility for maintaining these assets and its responsibility to ensure staff and contractors are provided with a workplace that complies with work safety regulations. In summary, these inaccessible trees will only be inspected on a reactive basis, and only inspected and maintained where the adjacent owner provides the necessary access and safe workplace environment. Staff will take no steps to inspect or maintain when these requirements are not met.

An alternative to this approach would be to create the necessary access by unilaterally removing the encroachments under the City's Encroachment By-law. Staff do not recommend adopting this approach as it is high conflict and resource intensive in comparison to the above recommended approach.

APPENDIX B

Urban Forestry and Tree Inspection Requirements by Land Type

Urban Forestry maintains in-house staff who are appropriately trained to manage the urban forest - this includes Registered Professional Foresters, ISA Certified Arborists, Certified Utility Arborists, Tree Risk Assessors, Landscape Architects, and Integrated Pest Management specialists. Urban Forestry is currently working with Engineering Services, REFM, and ACCS to inventory tree assets on parcels not currently included under the 1993 Policy. These outstanding trees are incorporated into the updated policy and will be added to Urban Forestry's asset inventory for ongoing management.

Inventoried trees are accounted for in Urban Forestry's new ESRI-based Urban Forest Operations (UFO) asset management software. The UFO geo-referenced database supports the work-flow for all tree stewardship operations throughout the lifecycle of city-owned trees, including:

- Planting;
- Watering;
- Pruning;
- Removal;
- Stump Removal;
- Re-Planting;
- Storm Response;
- Pest and Pathogen Response;
- Development and Infrastructure-related Management; and
- Service Requests.

Proactive stewardship of the urban forest supports a resilient, healthy community and environment, while also managing the risks associated with trees. Trees may impact people, property and infrastructure with negative outcomes if they structurally fail or outgrow their environments.

Priority tasks to ensure successful implementation of the new policy will require obtaining a complete inventory of applicable tree assets; upgrading the asset management software; updating risk assessment processes and response; and the deployment of contractors when necessary for compliance. Adopting the updated policy and management of additional tree assets into Urban Forestry's operational procedures will take some time and the key next steps in the short-term are as follows:

- **Inventory: Complete an inventory of applicable tree and forest asset classes.**
 - Street trees have been inventoried for decades and trees in parks and golf courses were inventoried in 2023.
 - An inventory is in-process for unaccounted trees on city-owned lands managed by:
 - REFM (e.g. Champlain Heights, City Hall, etc)
 - ENG (e.g. some R.O.W.s, not including accessible and inaccessible laneways); and
 - ACCS (e.g. Civic Lands such as the Mountain View Cemetery).
 - This inventory work is being led by Urban Forestry and is expected to be completed in Q1 2027.
 - Trees will be defined as 'stand-alone' trees or 'forest area' trees.
 - Stand-Alone trees are spatially distinct when viewed from an aerial image and don't form an indistinct cohort with adjacent trees – they will be defined as a GIS 'point'. These will be inventoried and managed on an individual basis.

- Forest Area trees are composed of aggregations of trees and defined as a 'polygon'. Unaccounted forest areas, beyond previously inventoried polygons identified in parks and golf courses, will be mapped and followed-up with on-the-ground inspections to identify potential hazard trees adjacent to roadways and formal paths – these will be inspected proactively with a Level 1 inspection to identify risk levels and follow-up timelines.
 - Lane Trees are not being pursued in the current inventory for the following reasons:
 - o Significant cost with limited added value for the approximately 700 km of laneways and <2000 trees;
 - o Challenging access due to encroaching fences and structures;
 - o The City and Park Board has not historically planted trees in laneways;
 - o Many trees are already maintained by BC Hydro and other parties;
 - o They will be addressed on a reactive basis through notifications from service requests, but may be inventoried and managed proactively following receipt of service requests that flag issues of concern; and
 - o Each inventoried tree may require a land survey to confirm ownership.
 - Potential Shared Trees will be addressed on a reactive basis through notifications from service requests. These trees may be inventoried and managed proactively following receipt of service requests that flag issues of concern in accordance with the new Policy.
- **Software Upgrades: Upgrade UFO (Urban Forest Operations) asset management software to allow task prioritization.**
 - GIS professionals on the Urban Forestry team will support software sustainment, data management, task optimization, work-flow and metrics dashboards and ongoing risk prioritization. A priority task is the development of a 'time-stamp' function to inform when assets are identified to be of risk. This will support compliance to mitigate risks within the timeframes stated in the new Tree Inspection Policy. It is estimated that the 'time-stamp' function will be developed and integrated by Q1-2027.
- **Tree Risk Assessment: Update risk assessment process and response times.**
 - The updated policy will incorporate risk assessment methods as defined by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) manual (currently the 'Third Edition – 2025'). The TRAQ framework categorizes assessments into three distinct levels, these allow arborists to choose the method best-suited to the inventory size, available timelines and available budgets. The three assessment levels are as follows:
- **Level 1: Limited Visual Assessment**
 - Goal: To identify trees with an "imminent" or "probable" likelihood of failure that require mitigation or a more detailed Level 2 assessment. This is the most basic and rapid form of assessment, often used for large populations of trees (e.g. city-wide inventories, golf courses, parks, forest areas, etc.).
 - Method: A "walk-through" or "drive-by" survey is used and the arborist looks for obvious defects from a specified distance or perspective (e.g. only from the street or from a trail).
 - Limitation: Because it is limited to one visual perspective and often conducted relatively quickly, subtle or hidden physiological defects may be missed.
- **Level 2: Basic Assessment**
 - Goal: To identify and evaluate specific defects and determine a risk rating based on the likelihood of failure and the potential impact on a target (e.g. a house, person, or

infrastructure). This is the standard assessment for individual trees and much more comprehensive than Level 1.

- Method: A 360-degree ground-based visual inspection of the tree. The arborist examines the crown, trunk, and root flare. It will often involve simple tools such as a mallet (for "sounding" the trunk to find hollows), a probe (for checking cracks or soft wood), and binoculars.

- **Level 3: Advanced Assessment**

- Goal: To provide quantifiable data on internal conditions that are not visible from Level 1 or 2 inspection methods - a Level 3 assessment may be performed if timelines and budgets allow.
- Method: This method is reserved for unique and occasional circumstances (i.e. high-value specimen trees) and utilizes specialized diagnostic equipment and techniques such as:
 - Resistance Drilling: Measuring wood density to identify decay.
 - Sonic Tomography: Using sound waves to map the trunk's interior.
 - Aerial Inspection: Ascending the tree to inspect the upper crown.
 - Root Excavation: Using an air spade or hand shovel for non-destructive inspection of tree roots and root health.
- Under the existing policy, staff undertake a Level 1 – Limited Visual Assessment for all street trees on an annual basis. Under the new policy, staff will undertake an annual Level 2 – Basic Assessment of 1/10th of the street, park and new stand-alone tree inventory. This will be undertaken on an area-basis with 2-3 neighbourhoods being assessed annually (see Figure A1). As is currently the practice, Level 1 – Limited Visual Assessments will continue being conducted annually on the street and park trees and expanded to other categories of trees outlined in the policy to identify emerging risks.
- The response times for each risk class are as follows:
 - **Extreme Risk** – mitigate risks within 5 business days (10 for shared trees)
 - **High Risk** – mitigate risks within 90 days
 - **Moderate Risk** – re-inspect and/or mitigate risks within 1 year
 - **Low Risk** – within 10 years if necessary



Figure A1: Level 2 – Basic assessment schedule noting that it will take 10-years to complete the first round of Level 2 assessments on the entire inventory.

- **Blended Services: Integrate blended services for enhanced service levels.**

- To protect public safety and ensure the continued delivery of essential services, Urban Forestry employs a blended service delivery model. While in-house professionals provide core services, staff vacancies and short or long-term absences may limit available capacity. As high-risk work cannot be deferred and established service timelines must be met, operating funds may be used, when necessary, to engage external contractors. This approach is widely recognized as a best practice across Canadian municipalities and used by peer jurisdictions, that combines in-house professional expertise with the strategic engagement of qualified external contractors when required.

Tree Inspection Requirements by Land Type

Definition					Inspection Method				Counts		Risk Exposure	
Land Type	Location/Context	Type	Accessible	Ownership	Current		Future		Inventory	# of Assets	Level	Rationale
					Frequency	Type	Frequency	Type				
Park System	Designated Park	Tree	Yes	Civic	Annual	Level 1	Annual; 10-year	Level 1; Level 2	Complete	38,000	High	High levels of public use within park areas.
Park System	Designated Park	Tree	No	Civic	Reactive	N/A	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	None	Unknown	Low	Limited number of trees in Parks that are inaccessible.
Park System	Designated Park	Tree	Yes	Shared >50%	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	10-year	Level 2	As required	Unknown	Low	Limited number of trees with uncertain or shared ownership
Park System	Designated Park	Tree	Yes	Shared <50%	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	As required	Unknown	Low	Limited number of trees with uncertain or shared ownership
Park System	Designated Park	Forest	Yes	Civic	Annual	Level 1	3-year	Level 1	Complete	444 Hectares	High	High levels of public use within park areas.
Park System	Designated Park	Forest	No	Civic	Reactive	N/A	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	As required	Unknown	Low	May interface with buildings or informal paths. Area-based inspection appropriate given moderate exposure.
Engineering	Street Right of Way	Tree	Yes	Civic	Annual	Level 1	Annual; 10-year	Level 1; Level 2	Complete	149,000	High	High pedestrian and vehicle activity; exposure varies by site context.
Engineering	Street Right of Way	Forest	Yes	Civic	Annual	Level 1	3-year	Level 1	To be inventoried	Unknown	Moderate	Low pedestrian and vehicle volumes with irregular use patterns.
Engineering	Laneway	Tree	Yes	Civic	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	10-year	Level 2	As required	1400 (estimated)	Low	Low pedestrian and vehicle volumes with irregular use patterns.
Engineering	Laneway	Tree	Yes	Shared >50%	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	10-year	Level 2	As required		Low	Low pedestrian and vehicle volumes with irregular use patterns.
Engineering	Laneway	Tree	Yes	Shared <50%	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	As required		Low	Low vehicle and pedestrian volume. Irregular use patterns.
Engineering	Laneway	Tree	No	Shared	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	None		550 (estimated)	Low
Engineering	Laneway	Tree	No	Civic	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	None	Low		Limited number of trees with uncertain or shared ownership
Engineering	Laneway	Forest	Yes	Civic	Reactive	N/A	3-year	Level 1	To be inventoried	Unknown	Low	Limited pedestrian exposure. Area-based forest conditions with informal use patterns.
Civic	City Owned Property	Tree	Yes	Civic	Reactive	N/A	Annual; 10-year	Level 1; Level 2	To be inventoried	5000 (estimated)	Moderate	Limited pedestrian exposure; area-based forest conditions with informal use patterns.
Civic	City Owned Property	Forest	Yes	Civic	Reactive	N/A	3-year	Level 1	To be inventoried	Unknown	Moderate	May interface with buildings or informal paths. Area-based inspection appropriate given moderate exposure.
Civic	City Owned Property	Tree	Yes	Shared >50%	Reactive	N/A	10-year	Level 2	As required	Unknown	Low	Limited number of trees with uncertain or shared ownership
Civic	City Owned Property	Tree	Yes	Shared <50%	Reactive	N/A	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	As required	Unknown	Low	Limited number of trees with uncertain or shared ownership
Civic	City Owned Property	Tree	No	Civic	Reactive	N/A	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	None	Unknown	Low	Limited or no public access. Low exposure due to restricted use and reduced likelihood of public interaction. Limited number of "nuisance properties"
Civic	City Owned Property	Forest	No	Civic	Reactive	N/A	Reactive	Level 1; Level 2	To be inventoried	Unknown	Low	Minimal public access and low use. Forested conditions further reduce likelihood of interaction and consequence of failure.

APPENDIX C

Schedule "A"

THE VANCOUVER BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION

NO.: T-3
PAGE: 1 OF 2
DATE: June 7, 1993

SUBJECT: Tree Inspection Policy

DISTRIBUTION: Policy and Procedure Manual

APPROVED BY PARK BOARD: *June 7, 1993.*

POLICY

1. Street tree hazards are identified and remediated through the street tree maintenance program that provides for pruning, inspecting and revising the inventory at least once every seven years. Street trees are also visually inspected annually, when one-seventh of the trees in each neighbourhood are pruned. Those trees that are declining or are dead are prioritized for correction. As well, street trees for which service requests are received from citizens, are inspected and prioritized for corrective work.
2. Park trees in high usage areas (e.g. facilities, trails, roads) are inspected annually for signs of defects which could result in their failure. Trees that are evaluated as hazardous are prioritized and scheduled for corrective action.

PROCEDURE

1. Street Trees

- Trees in each of the neighbourhoods are pruned on a seven year cycle as per the Street Tree Management Plan.
- The street tree inventory is updated as the work is completed.
- As the annual pruning work plan is carried out in each neighbourhood, all of the trees are inspected for hazards and prioritized for corrective action.
- Tree service requests from citizens are inspected by a Tree Inspector. Any corrective work is prioritized and carried out as required.

2. Park Trees

- Trees in or adjacent to high usage areas in parks are inspected annually for signs of defects by the area foreman, the forestry crew leader or other trained staff.

APPENDIX C

THE VANCOUVER BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION

NO.: T-3

SUBJECT: Tree Inspection Policy

PAGE: 2 OF 2

DATE: June 7, 1993

-
- Trees with detectable defects are mapped on a park plan, photographed and rated on the International Society of Arboriculture Tree Hazard Evaluation Form (attached).
 - The trees that are rated the highest on the Evaluation Form are corrected first and as soon as practical within work scheduling limits.

AWB:tet

APPENDIX D Tree Inspection Policy

Effective Date: _____

Generally

1. The City of Vancouver (“City”) and the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation (“Park Board”) collectively maintain over one million trees throughout the city.
2. This policy categorizes these trees, establishes inspection frequencies and methods for each category, and sets out requirements for responding to identified hazards in order to provide a reasonable and consistent level of service to the public.
3. Tree maintenance operations within the context of tree risk management include, but are not limited to, tree risk inspections, pruning, tree removal, and stump removal.
4. This policy has been developed to guide tree maintenance operations in a manner that reflects prudent planning, prioritization, and the effective allocation of available resources. In doing so, it considers multiple operational factors, including staffing and equipment capacity, tree location and classification, terrain, pedestrian, cyclist, and vehicular traffic volumes, historical and current weather conditions, and practices of comparable municipal government entities.
5. Recognizing that the complete elimination of all tree-related risk or the achievement of perfect conditions is not reasonably attainable across an inventory of more than one million trees, this policy establishes a rational framework that balances public safety objectives with appropriate timelines and operational capacity.

Scope

6. This policy applies to all trees located on property owned by the City and/or located on “Park Lands”, as divided into the categories “Street Trees”, “Park Trees”, “Civic Trees”, “Lane Trees”, and “Forest Area Trees”, all as defined in the below section “Terms Referenced in Policy”.
7. Tree maintenance operations will not be undertaken for any trees other than as categorized and specified in this Policy.

Terms Referenced in Policy

A. Land Categories

“**Boulevard**” means: the same meaning as defined in the City’s Street Tree By-Law 5895 and Street and Traffic By-law No. 2849.

“**Civic Lands**” means: titled property owned by the City that is not a street or Park Lands, and responsibility for which has not been allocated to a third party under a

contract (including but not limited to development management agreement, license or lease), statutory right of way, or other instrument or agreement, or by by-law.

“Park Lands” means: (1) parks, as that term is defined in s. 488 of the *Vancouver Charter*, and (2) lands used as parks, and/or for the purpose of public recreation, and which are actively maintained and cared for by the Park Board.

“Lane” means: the same meaning as defined in the City’s Street and Traffic By-law No. 2849, and for purposes of this Policy, includes constructed and unconstructed Lane right-of-way.

B. Tree Categories

“Civic Trees” means: trees located on Civic Lands and which are “stand-alone trees” and identified as points within the City of Vancouver Park Board’s asset inventory of tree and forest assets (UFO Database).

“Lane Trees” means: trees located on a Lane that is readily accessible by City staff and the public, and which are “stand-alone trees” and are not Forest Area Trees as defined below in this Policy.

“Park Trees” means: trees located on Park Lands and which are “stand-alone trees” and identified as points within the City of Vancouver Park Board’s asset inventory of tree and forest assets (UFO Database).

“Street Trees” means: trees located in any boulevard of the City, as defined in the City’s Street Tree By-Law No. 5985. and which are “stand-alone trees” and identified as points within the Park Board’s asset inventory of tree and forest assets (UFO Database).

“Forest Area Trees” means: trees located on densely forested areas of Civic Lands, Park Lands, Lanes, or other street right-of-way, and identified as polygons within the Park Board’s asset inventory of tree and forest assets (UFO database), and are not individually inventoried, inspected or maintained except as expressly provided in this Policy.

“Inaccessible Tree” means: a Civic Tree, Lane Tree, Park Tree, Street Tree or Forest Area Tree located in an area that has been enclosed or occupied by neighbouring occupants, or are otherwise not readily accessible by City staff or the public.

“Shared Tree” means: a Civic Tree, Lane Tree, Park Tree, Street Tree or Forest Area Tree with a trunk growing across one or more property lines, as determined by the section “Shared Trees” below in this Policy.

C. Technical/Operational

“Business Day” means: any day which is not a Saturday, Sunday, Statutory Holiday, Easter Monday or Boxing Day.

“ISA” means: International **S**ociety of **A**rboriculture.

“Level 1 Inspection” means: a limited visual assessment as defined by the ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) Framework.

“Level 2 Inspection” means: a basic risk assessment as defined by the ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) Framework.

“TRAQ” means: the ISA’s **T**ree **R**isk **A**ssessment **Q**ualification.

“UFO Database” means: the **U**rban **F**orest **O**perations geo-referenced asset management software.

Street Trees

8. Every Street Tree will undergo a Level 1 Inspection once a year.
9. Every Street Tree will undergo a Level 2 Inspection once every ten years.
10. ISA Certified Arborists with TRAQ endorsement will undertake all inspections.
11. If a potential risk involving a Street Tree is reported to staff outside of a regular scheduled inspection, the tree will undergo a Level 1 or Level 2 Inspection as necessary and when available resources and priorities allow.
12. Response times for completing tree maintenance operations required by the above proactive and reactive inspections are based on the below risk levels (as defined by TRAQ), level of risk, storm response, workdays and crew availability. Based on this, the following response time applies:

Extreme Risk – mitigate risks within 5 business days

High Risk – mitigate risks within 90 days

Moderate – re-inspect and/or mitigate risks within 1 year

Low – within 10 years if necessary

Park Trees

13. Every Park Tree will undergo a Level 1 Inspection once a year.
14. Every Park Tree will undergo a Level 2 Inspection once every ten years.
15. ISA Certified Arborists with TRAQ endorsement will undertake all inspections.

16. If a potential risk involving a Park Tree is reported to staff outside of a regular scheduled inspection, the tree will undergo a Level 1 or Level 2 Inspection as necessary and when available resources and priorities allow.
17. Response times for completing tree maintenance operations required by the above proactive and reactive inspections are based on the below risk levels (as defined by TRAQ), storm response, workdays and crew availability. Based on this, the following response time applies:
 - Extreme Risk – mitigate risks within 5 business days
 - High Risk – mitigate risks within 90 days
 - Moderate – re-inspect and/or mitigate risks within 1 year
 - Low – within 10 years if necessary

Lane Trees

18. All Lane Trees will be inspected on a reactive basis only (i.e. when a potential risk involving a tree is reported to staff), except as expressly provided below in this Policy.
19. Any such reactive inspection will be a Level 1 or Level 2 Inspection as necessary and when available resources and priorities allow.
20. ISA Certified Arborists with TRAQ endorsement will undertake all inspections.
21. Response times for completing tree maintenance operations required by the above inspections are based on the below risk levels (as defined by TRAQ), storm response, workdays and crew availability. Based on this, the following response time applies:
 - Extreme Risk – mitigate risks within 5 business days
 - High Risk – mitigate risks within 90 days
 - Moderate – re-inspect and/or mitigate risks within 1 year
 - Low – within 10 years if necessary
22. Upon completion of a reactive inspection for a Lane Tree, that Lane Tree will be inventoried and identified as a point within the Park Board's asset inventory of tree and forest assets (UFO Database), and will undergo a Level 2 Inspection once every 10 years going forward.

Civic Trees

23. Every Civic Tree will undergo a Level 1 Inspection once a year.
24. Every Civic Tree will undergo a Level 2 Inspection once every ten years.
25. ISA Certified Arborists with TRAQ endorsement will undertake all inspections.
26. If a potential risk involving a Civic Tree is reported to staff outside of a regular

scheduled inspection, the tree will undergo a Level 1 or Level 2 Inspection as necessary and when available resources and priorities allow.

27. Response times for completing tree maintenance operations required by the above proactive and reactive inspections are based on the below risk levels (as defined by TRAQ), storm response, workdays and crew availability. Based on this, the following response time applies:

Extreme Risk – mitigate risks within 5 business days

High Risk – mitigate risks within 90 days

Moderate – re-inspect and/or mitigate risks within 1 year

Low – within 10 years if necessary

Forest Area Trees

28. Forest Area Trees will undergo a Level 1 Inspection once every three years as follows:
 - a. Staff will conduct a “drive-by” Level 1 Inspection from a motor vehicle driving on constructed streets intended for motor vehicle traffic located adjacent to Forest Area Trees;
 - b. Staff will conduct a “drive-by” Level 1 Inspection from a motor vehicle driving on constructed sanctioned pathways suitable and intended for motor vehicle traffic located within areas containing Forest Area Trees;
 - c. Staff will conduct a “walk-by” Level 1 Inspection on foot on all sanctioned pathways/sidewalks etc. located within or adjacent to areas containing Forest Area Trees;
29. For clarity, "sanctioned" means pathways denoted on the Park Board maintained GIS Layer "Pathway", and does not include pathways that exist without the prior formal approval and knowledge of the City and Park Board, and/or are designated as “unofficial”.
30. ISA Certified Arborists with TRAQ endorsement will undertake all inspections.
31. If a potential risk involving a Forest Area Tree is reported to staff outside of a regular scheduled inspection, the tree will undergo a Level 1 or Level 2 Inspection as necessary and when available resources and priorities allow.
32. Response times for completing tree maintenance operations required by the above proactive and reactive inspections are based on the below risk levels (as defined by TRAQ), storm response, workdays and crew availability. Based on this, the following response time applies:

Extreme Risk – mitigate risks within 5 business days

High Risk – mitigate risks within 90 days

Moderate – re-inspect and/or mitigate risks within 1 year
Low – within 10 years if necessary

Inaccessible Trees

33. All Inaccessible Trees will be inspected and maintained on a reactive basis only (i.e. when a potential risk involving a tree is reported to staff), and only when neighbouring occupants provide staff with all of the following:
 - a. Sufficient and reasonable access for all required equipment;
 - b. Sufficient and reasonable access allowing for the removal of the tree or parts of the tree as necessary; and
 - c. A workplace that meets all applicable worksite safety laws and regulations, including the requirement for a workplace free of obstructions.
34. If any of the access or safe workplace requirements are not provided to staff as provided above, the City will discontinue any tree inspection and/or maintenance operations with respect to the subject tree and will mail notifications of that fact to all neighbouring occupant(s).
35. Any such reactive inspection will be a Level 1 or Level 2 Inspection as necessary.
36. ISA Certified Arborists with TRAQ endorsement will undertake all inspections.
37. Response times for completing tree maintenance operations required by the above inspections are based on the below risk levels (as defined by TRAQ), storm response, workdays, and crew availability. Based on this, the following response time applies:

Extreme Risk – mitigate risks within 5 business days
High Risk – mitigate risks within 90 days
Moderate – re-inspect and/or mitigate risks within 1 year
Low – within 10 years if necessary
38. For clarity, the above response times begin running, and remain running, only when all access and safe worksite requirements are provided to staff as set out in the above paragraph 33.

Shared Trees

39. When staff become aware that any tree discussed in this Policy may be located partly on private property and partly on City property, staff will conduct, or cause to be conducted, a survey and measurement to verify the location of that tree, by determining the percentage of the tree trunk's diameter (if any) that is located on the City's side of the property line, such trunk diameter is to be measured as close to ground level as possible, but above the root flare.

40. If the tree is located 50% or more on the City's side of the property line, then that tree will remain inspected as otherwise provided in this Policy depending on that tree's categorization in this Policy.
41. If that tree is located less than 50% on the City's side of the property line, then that tree will be inspected on a reactive basis only, and the City will mail notification of that determination to all adjacent occupants.
42. If that tree is located entirely on the private owner(s)' property and not the City's, then the City will discontinue any tree maintenance operations regarding that tree and will mail notifications of this change to all adjacent occupants.
43. The above determination of location and responsibility is subject to any contract, statutory right of way, or other agreement or instrument determining the ownership of such tree.
44. ISA Certified Arborists with TRAQ endorsement will undertake all inspections.
45. Any reactive inspection of a Shared Tree will be a Level 1 or Level 2 Inspection as necessary.
46. Response times for completing tree maintenance operations required by the above inspections for Shared Trees are based on the below risk levels (as defined by TRAQ), storm response, workdays, crew availability and access being provided by the neighbouring occupant(s). Based on this, the following response time applies:

Extreme Risk – mitigate risks within 10 business days
High Risk – mitigate risks within 90 days
Moderate – re-inspect and/or mitigate risks within 1 year
Low – within 10 years if necessary

Effective Date and Transition Period

47. This Policy will take effect on January 1, 2027 ("Effective Date").
48. Upon taking effect on the Effective Date, this Policy supersedes and replaces all previous policies of the Park Board and/or City regarding tree inspection and maintenance, including the Park Board's tree inspection policy approved June 7, 1993.
49. For Level 2 inspections of Street Trees, Park Trees, and Civic Trees set out in this Policy, the first cycle of such inspections after the Effective Date will be completed within 10 years of the Effective Date. For further clarity, compliance with this Policy for that first cycle of such inspections, and any given tree to be inspected under that first cycle, may be achieved by completing such first cycle within 10 years of the Effective Date, regardless of such tree's inspection and maintenance history prior to

the Effective Date.

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Departure from Policy

50. Conditions may be so unusual or unexpected that departure from this policy may be required. In such circumstances, the General Manager of the Park Board (or designate), in consultation with the City Manager (or designate), may order a departure from this policy.
51. The order to depart from this policy may include, but is not limited to:
 - a. temporarily changing the inspection methods, frequencies or risk mitigation response deadlines set out in this Policy;
 - b. temporarily suspending part or all tree maintenance operations;
 - c. temporarily conducting tree maintenance operations in locations that are not on an inspection schedule.
52. In circumstances where an order to depart from this policy is made, staff will begin acting on such an order within 48 hours.

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