



RCRS Secondary:	GOV-02	Effective Date:	2026-JUL-20
Policy Number:	COU-257	Amendment Date/s:	
Title:	Tree Risk Management & Maintenance	Repeal Date:	
Department:	Parks, Recreation and Culture	Approval Date:	2026-JUL-20

PURPOSE

To establish a consistent framework for the inspection, assessment, maintenance, and management of City-owned trees that balances public safety with the responsible use of municipal resources. This policy reflects industry best practices, established procedures, and a risk-based approach to tree management.

DEFINITIONS:

City-Owned Trees	Means trees located on City property, including parks, trails, road rights-of-way, boulevards, and other municipally owned lands. The City of Nanaimo is responsible for managing risks associated with City-owned trees.
Formal Planting	Means a tree intentionally planted by the City of Nanaimo or an authorized agent as part of a landscape, streetscape, park, or urban forest planting program.
High-Risk Tree	Means a tree that has been identified by a qualified tree risk assessor to be in a condition that has a likelihood to fail <u>and</u> create a risk for personal injury or property damage.
Natural Area	Means lands characterized by naturally occurring or naturalized vegetation and ecological features, including forests, riparian areas, and environmentally sensitive areas owned and managed by the City.
Qualified Tree Risk Assessor	Means an individual with training, knowledge, and experience in tree risk assessment, including City employees or external professionals who hold recognized tree risk assessment credentials acceptable to the City of Nanaimo.
Removal	Means to cut down and remove a tree.
Target	Means a person, structure, vehicle, utility, trail, roadway, or other asset that could be impacted by the failure of a tree or tree part.
Tree Concern	Means a reported or observed tree condition that may require inspection, assessment, maintenance, monitoring, or risk mitigation.
Tree Failure	Means the breaking, uprooting, or structural collapse of a tree or any of its parts.
Tree Risk	Means the likelihood of a tree or tree part failing and the potential consequences associated with that failure.
Volunteer Tree	Means a tree growing on City-owned property that was not intentionally planted by the City of Nanaimo or its authorized agent. This may include naturally regenerated trees and unauthorized plantings.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all City-Owned Trees located on lands owned, managed, or maintained by the City of Nanaimo, including parks, trails, boulevards, road rights-of-way, civic properties, and natural areas. It applies to both Formal Plantings and Volunteer Trees.

This policy establishes the framework for:

- The identification, assessment, and prioritization of Tree Concerns;
- Tree Risk assessment and mitigation;
- The maintenance, modification, and removal of City-Owned Trees; and
- The management of Tree Failure risks to people, property, infrastructure, and other Targets.

This policy does not apply to:

- Trees located on private property;
- Trees owned or maintained by other agencies, utilities, or levels of government.

POLICY:

General Management of Trees

The City of Nanaimo will manage City-Owned Trees using a risk-based approach that emphasizes the identification, assessment, prioritization, documentation, and mitigation of Tree Concerns. Tree management decisions will balance public safety with the responsible use of municipal resources while recognizing the environmental, ecological, aesthetic, and community benefits provided by trees.

Tree Risk assessments and recommendations for mitigation will be completed by, or under the direction of, qualified staff or designates with appropriate training and expertise in arboriculture and tree risk assessment.

The City will undertake reasonable efforts to identify and manage foreseeable tree-related risks through inspections, maintenance activities, and responses to reported Tree Concerns. Priority will be given to High-Risk Trees and locations where there is an increased likelihood of impacts to people, property, infrastructure, or other Targets.

The City recognizes that trees are living organisms and that Tree Failure cannot be predicted or prevented in all circumstances. While reasonable efforts will be made to manage known risks, the City cannot guarantee that all trees will remain free from failure, particularly during severe weather events or other unforeseen conditions.

Reporting of Tree Concerns by Staff

City staff who observe a Tree Concern while performing their duties are expected to report the concern as soon as reasonably practicable through established City reporting procedures. Reported concerns may be identified through formal inspections, limited informal inspections, scheduled maintenance activities, project work, or casual observation.

All reported Tree Concerns will be documented and prioritized based on the potential risk to public safety, property, infrastructure, and other Targets. Reported concerns will be reviewed and assessed by a Qualified Tree Risk Assessor and addressed in accordance with the City's tree risk management procedures and available resources.

Reporting of Tree Concerns by the Public

Members of the public are encouraged to report Tree Concerns involving City-Owned Trees through established City reporting channels. Reported concerns may include suspected tree hazards,

damaged trees, fallen branches, obstructed pathways, or other conditions that may impact public safety or City assets.

All reported Tree Concerns will be documented and reviewed by the City. Concerns will be prioritized based on the potential risk to public safety, property, infrastructure, and other Targets, and will be assessed by a Qualified Tree Risk Assessor as resources and operational priorities permit.

Risk Mitigation

Where a tree has been assessed and deemed as having risk requiring action, modification or removal will be undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of a Qualified Tree Risk Assessor and in accordance with ISA and arboricultural best practices and available City resources. Mitigation measures will be prioritized based on the assessed level of risk and implemented as soon as practicable, having regard for public safety, operational considerations, and resource availability. Mitigation measures will be implemented to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Reduce or remove risk to the City, Staff and the public;
- 2) Protect public and private property, infrastructure and assets; and
- 3) Enhance and maintain healthy forested habitats and ecosystems.

The following process will be followed to address reported tree concerns to the City of Nanaimo:

<u>Tree Concern Type</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
High risk of damage or harm	Assessment and prioritization by Qualified Tree Risk Assessor	Inspected 72 hours after initial report Mitigation within one week
Low risk of damage of harm	Assessment and prioritization by Qualified Tree Risk Assessor	Assessment within 30 days Mitigation work to begin within 90 days

Formal Plantings

Trees formally planted in a park, boulevard, or other City property, by the City of Nanaimo or an agent of the City, are entered into the tree inventory database and proactively managed by the City of Nanaimo at appropriate levels.

The City will undertake reasonable efforts to inspect and maintain Formal Plantings in accordance with industry best practices, available resources, and operational priorities. Proactive maintenance and regular inspections of these trees are completed by the City or designate. Maintenance activities may include pruning, modification, pest and disease management, irrigation, and Removal where necessary.

Where a Formal Planting presents a Tree Concern, the tree will be assessed and prioritized in accordance with this policy and appropriate mitigation measures will be undertaken.

If parts of these trees encroach into a resident's domestic utility lines (phone, cable and electrical lines that connect to the dwelling and are considered property of the homeowner) or block a private driveway or walkway, the City will be responsible for completing the pruning required to reasonably remedy the situation.

Natural Areas

Trees growing within Natural Areas provide important ecological, environmental, and habitat benefits and are generally managed differently than Formal Plantings. Due to the scale and natural character

of these areas, trees are not routinely inspected on an individual basis. Instead, the City employs a risk-based approach that focuses on areas where Tree Failure could reasonably impact public safety, infrastructure, or other Targets.

Natural Areas may be inspected through scheduled risk assessments, limited annual inspections, targeted inspections of high-use areas, or in response to reported Tree Concerns. Inspection efforts may focus on trails, roads, park amenities, buildings, utilities, and other locations where people or property may be affected by Tree Failure.

The City recognizes that tree defects, dead standing trees, fallen trees, and other natural forest conditions are a normal part of a functioning ecosystem and do not, on their own, require mitigation unless they present an unacceptable risk to people, property, infrastructure, or other Targets.

Volunteer Trees

Trees growing naturally on City owned property including in road right of ways, and trees unofficially planted on City property by residents and not by the City of Nanaimo, are only managed for risk by the City of Nanaimo.

Volunteer Trees will be inspected in response to reported Tree Concerns. A Qualified Tree Risk Assessor representing the City will determine the level of risk and recommend appropriate mitigation measures. Where mitigation is required, actions may include monitoring, modification, or Removal. Mitigation measures will be prioritized based on the assessed level of risk and implemented as soon as practicable, having regard for public safety, operational considerations and resource availability.

Property Boundary Encroachment

Property owners may prune roots or branches from City-Owned trees that encroach onto private property provided that the pruning is done in accordance with The Management and Protection of Trees Bylaw 7126 and proper arboricultural standards. Where pruning is likely to significantly impact the health, appearance, or stability of a City-Owned Tree, property owners are encouraged to consult with the City prior to undertaking the work.

The City is not responsible for pruning roots or branches solely because they encroach onto adjacent private property unless the tree presents a Tree Concern requiring mitigation under this policy.

Debris Management

Fallen branches, leaves or other debris, from City trees onto private property, is not the responsibility of the City to remove.

RELATED DOCUMENTS:

City of Nanaimo Bylaw 7126-Management and Protection of Trees

REPEAL:

NA