

Richmond/Knob Hill Community Association
Presentation to Calgary City Council re CPC2010-133
Textual Amendments to Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 & Bylaw 37P2010
(Proposed Rules for Contextual Semi-Detached Dwellings)
December 6, 2010

Good [Morning/Afternoon/Evening] Your Worship, Aldermen and Staff

My name is Doug Roberts (D-o-u-g R-o-b-e-r-t-s), and I represent the Richmond/Knob Hill Community Association.

Richmond/Knob Hill is a small inner-city residential community which straddles Crowchild Trail between 17th Avenue and 33rd Avenue SW, and is currently on the “front lines” of residential redevelopment activity, having been the subject of over 60 development permit applications since January of this year. The Community Association welcomes this redevelopment activity, and the resulting reinvigoration and renewal of our community.

However, one disturbing trend that the Community Association has noticed is that developers often propose to cut down more existing trees on parcels than necessary to accommodate their projects, in many cases proposing to “clear-cut” the parcel completely, and often fail to provide for adequate new replacement trees to be planted. The residents of Richmond/Knob Hill love its mature trees, and often tell us that the trees are one of the primary reasons that they chose to live in this community.

It is important to note, however, that approximately 90% of Richmond/Knob Hill’s trees are on private property, and that many parcels in our community no public tree on the boulevard. The reason for Richmond/Knob Hill’s lack of public trees is not entirely clear, but appears to be at least partly due to boulevards having been planted many years ago with birch trees which have since died and were never replaced.

As a result, the Community Association has made the preservation and enhancement of our community’s urban forest canopy one of its top priorities, and to this end:

1. Went door-to-door last spring to let residents know that our community had been designated as one of the communities eligible to receive free boulevard trees under the City’s Neighbourwoods program, which resulted in Richmond/Knob Hill setting a record by planting 140 new public trees, more than any other community had previously planted in the history of that program;
2. Pitched in over the summer to help promote the Neighbourwoods program in our neighbouring community of Killarney/Glengarry, which we were pleased to see contributed to them breaking Richmond/Knob Hill’s record by planting 160 new public trees; and
3. Addressed the retention and planting of trees in our comments on virtually every development permit application that we reviewed over the course of the year, and appealed approved applications to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board in those cases where we felt the retention and planting of trees had not been adequately addressed.

Unfortunately, our community has received minimal support over the past year from either Development and Building Approvals or the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board in our efforts to preserve and enhance our urban forest canopy, which we find very puzzling given that:

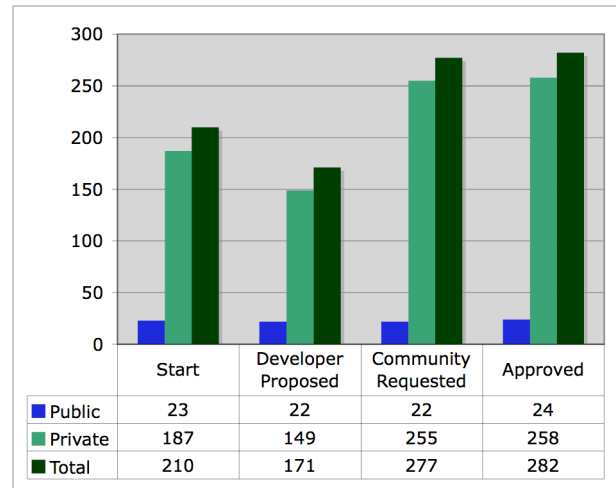
1. The applicable policy documents, including the Richmond Area Redevelopment Plan, the City’s Infill Guidelines and the City’s new Municipal Development Plan, all support the preservation of mature trees whenever possible, and in the case of the Infill Guidelines, the planting of new trees of equal value to replace any mature trees that cannot be preserved; and
2. Section 35 of the Land Use Bylaw states that the Development Authority must take these policy documents into account when considering development permit applications.

Despite this lack of support, the community’s efforts over the past year to promote the retention and planting of trees have been quite successful, as can be demonstrated by the following charts, copies of which have been provided to you.

These charts summarize tree-related statistics gathered from a total of 37 completed development permit applications for residential redevelopment projects in the community of Richmond/Knob Hill (RKH) which were approved by the Development Authority during the period from January to November, 2010 (of which 26, or 70%, were for new semi-detached dwellings):

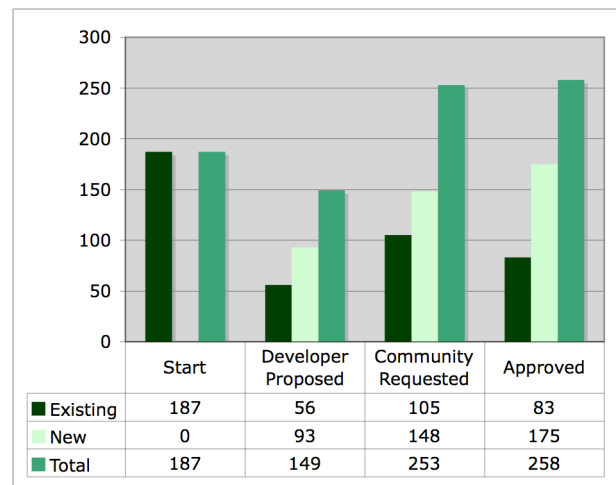
RKH Total Tree Count

- Public tree count stays relatively constant pre-development through to DP approval but **public trees only represent 11% of the total tree count**. Some at-risk trees have been removed but the community has also had some success in having new public trees planted through the NeighbourWoods program. (140 trees in 2010)
- **Without community intervention, the total number of private trees would have declined 20% based on original DP applications.**



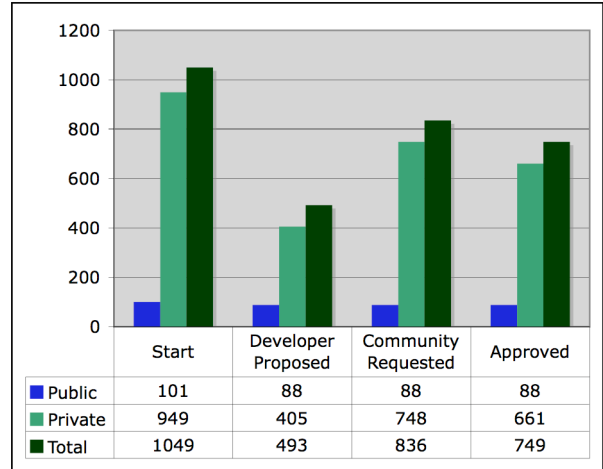
RKH Private Tree Count

- Based on original DP application, **70% of existing private trees would have been removed** and only partially offset by new and younger trees, resulting in an overall **20% reduction in the number of private trees**.
- Community efforts were successful in increasing the overall number of private trees. **27 additional existing private trees were saved and almost twice as many new private trees were planted.**



RKH Tree Canopy

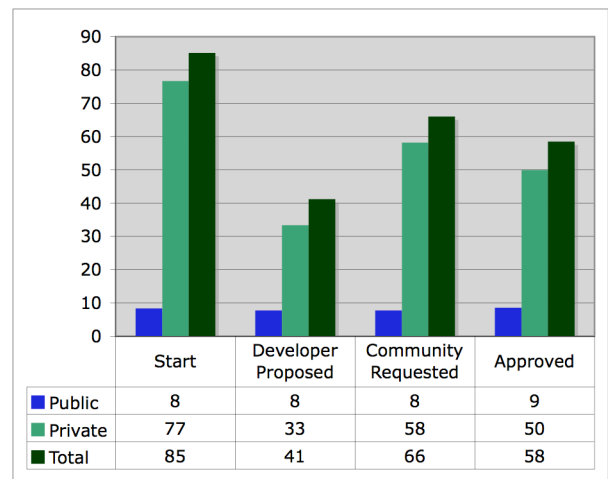
- Through its efforts to encourage the retention and planting of trees, **the community has been successful in holding the initial decline in tree canopy to 29% versus the 53% decline proposed in the original DP applications.**
- **This still falls short of the initial community request that would have held the decline to 20% of the overall tree canopy.** It should be noted that the community only asks to preserve trees that appear to be healthy and outside of the building envelope.



Tree canopy measured in metres.

RKH Tree Caliper

- **Community intervention has been successful in holding the initial decline in total tree caliper to 32% compared to the 52% decline proposed in the original DP applications.**
- While community involvement has been successful in reducing the impact of inner city development on our overall tree canopy/caliper through the planting of new trees, we believe much more can be done to preserve existing healthy trees with the assistance of the City Planning and Parks Departments.



Tree caliper measured in metres.

Community Concern

The Community Association’s primary concern with the proposed rules for contextual semi-detached dwellings (like the recently introduced rules for contextual single detached dwellings) contain nothing to require or even encourage developers to retain existing trees or plant new trees, and therefore provide absolutely no protection for 90% of our community’s urban forest canopy.

If the proposed rules are implemented in their current form, then a much greater proportion of the development permit applications for residential redevelopment projects in Richmond/Knob Hill will bypass the community completely, leaving up to 90% of our residential tree population without a champion, or any other form of protection at all.

Our requests to this point for these proposed rules to include at least something to address the tree issue have been rejected for 2 primary reasons:

1. It would make these proposed rules different than the existing rules for contextual single detached dwellings, which were introduced last year and are not due for review until 2011; and

2. The City's legal department is concerned that Alberta's Municipal Government Act does not clearly give the City the authority to enact a tree protection bylaw that applies to private trees.

Our view is that both of these "stumbling blocks" could be easily addressed by:

1. Delaying the implementation of these proposed rules until after the existing rules for contextual single detached dwellings have been reviewed; and
2. In addition to any other recommended changes that may arise from the review of the existing rules for contextual single detached dwellings, incorporating into either:
 - a. both sets of contextual rules; or
 - b. better yet, all low density residential portions of the Land Use Bylaw;a landscaping requirement that would require adequate new trees to be planted unless sufficient existing trees are preserved.

As a longer term solution, we would also like Council to direct City Administration to work with the Government of Alberta to make whatever amendments to the Municipal Government Act are considered necessary in order to allow the City to implement a Tree Protection Bylaw that applies to private trees.