



November 15, 2018

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners
FROM : Howard Normann, Director of Parks
SUBJECT : **Elm Trees on East 6th Avenue - Community Engagement**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to update you on the community engagement we plan to undertake early in the New Year with residents of East 6th Avenue regarding the elm trees which line their street between Woodland Drive and Nanaimo Street.

Due to the recent removal by staff of seven elms on their street, a group of residents were critical of the lack of Siberian elms re-planted since 2012. They are advocating for quick replacement of the trees with the same species. This has generated media interest by a local Globe and Mail reporter who plans to report on the issue in the coming days.

Park Board Urban Forestry staff will be delivering a letter to all residents on East 6th Avenue between Woodland Drive and Nanaimo Street tomorrow (Friday, November 16). The letter will inform them that sourcing new Siberian elms is no longer possible for the following reasons:

- Lack of supply -- staff contacted 62 nurseries in BC and Alberta this year seeking Siberian elms, with no success;
- Dutch elm disease -- eliminates ability to import from other Canadian provinces or the United States;
- Tree mortality -- staff attempted to grow elm trees at the Langley Tree Farm without success.

Residents will be invited to a community discussion facilitated by Howard Normann, Director of Parks, to seek their input on a tree planting plan that includes different species and that does not compromise the look and feel of the street. The meeting will take place early in the New Year at Trout Lake Community Centre.

Background

Elm trees line East 6th Avenue between Woodland Drive and Nanaimo Street and are cherished by local residents for their stature and canopy. Over the years, staff have periodically removed and replaced elms following storm damage and tree failure.

In 2011, Urban Forestry planned to remove thirty-one (31) elm trees between Woodland Drive and Nanaimo Street along East 6th Ave. At the time, local residents opposed these removals. In response:

- Park Board staff organized venues for open meetings in which the conflicting ideas were aired; staff pledged to work with residents to find a strategy that protected and enhanced the streetscape while meeting the Park Board's due diligence requirement;



- The East 6th Elms Joint Working Group was forged, composed of committed volunteers from the neighbourhood, Park Board arborists, senior leadership, and a facilitator; meetings were held during which a mutually accepted strategy for canopy preservation was developed;
- It was agreed that in order to best ensure the continuation of the East 6th Avenue canopy character, trees within the elm family (Ulmaceae) would be planted whenever new sites became available; Siberian elms were the preferred selection, with American elms being acceptably planted when Siberian elms were not available.

Following this consultation work, five trees were removed in 2011, with several others significantly pruned back.

In the years since 2011, fifteen (15) elm trees were removed due to storm damage or tree failure. Staff planted fifty-three (53) replacement trees along the street, which also filled gaps from prior removals. Thirty-eight (38) of these trees were Siberian elms.

Park Board staff will continue to provide updates to the Commissioners on this issue and on outcomes for our engagement early in the New Year with the neighbourhood.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Howard Normann".

Howard Normann
Director of Parks
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

/gt/clc

Copy to: PB Senior Leadership Team
PB Communications
City Arborist