

3. TREES SEMINAR – 6 DECEMBER 2000

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Corporate Plan Output: Policy Advice	

The Council, at its meeting of 8 February 2001, resolved to refer the report back to the Committee for further consideration.

The purpose of this report is to advise of the outcomes from a seminar on trees, and to recommend further action arising from the discussions.

BACKGROUND

The idea originated from a recommendation by the Fendalton/Waimairi Community Board, which was later adopted by the Environment Committee.

The well attended seminar for elected members was hosted by the Community Board at the Council's Fendalton offices, and engendered a great deal of discussion.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

The summary of outcomes is set out on pages 4 and 5 of the detailed report, but the opportunity has been taken to capture these with a series of recommendations for further action, as follows:

OUTCOMES	COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Consider and amend the rules relating to the protection of vegetation when subdivision is undertaken.	To be referred to the Resource Management Committee.
2. Community Boards to fund and identify trees for a register to provide: (a) a tree data base (b) a Plan change following the City Plan becoming operative.	Two Boards (Fendalton/Waimairi and Spreydon/Heathcote?) have already made this commitment. There is a danger that any list(s) will become inaccurate by the time any suggested variation becomes operative. To be reconsidered by the Resource Management Committee, and the Annual Plan Working Party to be requested to supplement the funding to enable the earliest conclusion to the City Plan process.
3. A review of the pruning laws for notable trees.	To be referred to the Resource Management Committee.
4. Tree cages for protection or the planting of more mature trees.	To be referred to the Parks and Recreation Committee.
5. Two trees to be planted for every tree being removed.	To be referred to the Resource Management Committee.
6. Trees should be a top priority for the Council and resources found accordingly.	To be referred to the Parks and Recreation Committee, and the Annual Plan Working Party.
7. On development sites, trees destined for clearance should be removed to other sites, rather than the scorched earth policy.	To be referred to the Resource Management Committee (in conjunction with outcome 5 above).
8. A city wide tree planting strategy be developed and its accompanying policy preparation be hastened including that of delegations to Community Boards.	To be referred to the Parks and Recreation Committee. The authors note that some extensive work was carried out in 1997 on a draft policy for the central city area. It is also recommended that this report be updated, as a priority, and be considered by the Committee. The matter of delegation should be referred to the Director of Policy for the triennial review process.

OUTCOMES	COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS
9. Resource consents: (a) Ten metre setback from building to be provided for in certain situations eg: Riccarton Bush (b) Staff vigilance required on landscaping plans to ensure provision of appropriate planting intention.	(a) to be referred to the Resource Management Committee. (b) To be referred to the Environmental Services Manager.
10. The City Council to lead by example to the private sector	Opportunities for promotion of the value/importance of trees to be considered by the Environment Committee.
11. A tree day to be commemorated with appropriate education to encourage better tree protection and planting.	Arbor Day is already allocated for this purpose (?). A report on this was submitted to all Community Boards in October 2000. It is recommended that this report be updated and presented to the Environment Committee.
12. Measures to counteract the undergrounding of services damage to trees.	To be referred to the City Services Committee.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

There is a widely-held view, shared by the Resource Management Committee, that the retention of large specimen trees is important for the character of the city. In addition to those listed in the City Plan, the Fendalton/Waimairi Community Board had identified a large number of trees it believes worthy of protection. I understand similar work is being undertaken in the Spreydon/Heathcote area.

The City Plan and Tree Protection

Listing is not the only way in which the City Plan promotes tree retention. The zoning of peripheral land for urban purposes, together with the increase in minimum size of section required in the L1 and L2 zones, have limited both the demand and the opportunities for infill. By limiting one of the greatest drivers of tree removal, these measures have arguably done more than listing to promote tree retention.

Listing of additional trees

Additions can only be made to the number of trees listed by variation or change to the City Plan. Each listing can be challenged at both the Council hearing and ultimately in the Environment Court. Listing is therefore potentially a lengthy and costly process and, if possible, best avoided before the plan becomes operative. Some of the difficulties with listing can be obviated if the owner's consent can be obtained. Having identified the trees it wishes to protect, the most advantageous thing a Community Board can do now is to talk to the owners with the aim of obtaining their agreement. This will ultimately ease the process of a plan change.

Incentives and disincentives

At present the pruning of listed trees requires a resource consent. The Council does not charge for this, but the system is both cumbersome for owners, and an administrative cost to the Council. I have wondered whether a better result could be achieved and resistance to listing reduced if the requirement for a resource consent were removed, and some of the money saved given as an incentive grant to owners who produced receipts for pruning performed by approved tree surgeons or other suitably qualified people. The Environmental Services Manager might be asked to comment on such a proposal. I also note that in assessing reserve contribution payable under the retained provisions of the Local Government Act, panels have been prepared to give credit for notable trees retained.

**Chairman's
Recommendation:**

1. That Community Boards consult owners with a view to gaining consent for protection of trees.
2. That the Environmental Services Manager report on alternatives to the requirement for a resource consent for routine pruning of protected trees.
3. That a Section 32 assessment on a plan change be prepared to be promulgated after the scheme becomes operative.