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## For the Love of Trees

by Mayor Bill Beamish

We're taught from a young age about the immeasurable value trees provide. They clean our air, provide wildlife habitat, reduce erosion, and deliver a wealth of mental and physical health benefits through a simple walk in the woods. They're also a key tool in the fight against climate change, as the ultimate carbon capture and storage machines.

In Gibsons, trees have been top-of-mind lately, with several arboreal initiatives coming forward for Council's discussion and consideration.

First, the Town is developing an Urban Forest Plan (UFP), to help guide the long-term preservation and management of this critical natural asset. It defines Gibsons' Urban Forest as every tree within Town boundaries (not just the larger tracts of forest such as White Tower Park or the Charman Lands) and seeks, among other goals, to change our response to tree-related issues from a reactive position to a proactive position.

The UFP also calls for the development of a Tree Preservation Bylaw, which was drafted and presented to Council in July. The bylaw, which received first and second reading, has three key objectives, including:

1. Identifying tree species that are to be protected within the Town of Gibsons;
2. Recognizing the importance of the tree canopy and the many environmental, economic and social benefits of Urban Forests; and
3. Establishing procedures to preserve the Town's tree canopy.

Before formal adoption of the proposed bylaw, Council is inviting Gibsons' residents to provide feedback via a Virtual Public Hearing scheduled for Monday, September 14th at 5:30pm. More information is available at [gibsons.ca/virtual-public-hearings](https://gibsons.ca/virtual-public-hearings).

In the interim, we ask any Gibsons' property owners who are considering the removal of a tree to please first visit [gibsons.ca/tree-removal](https://gibsons.ca/tree-removal) or call Town Hall at 604.886.2274 to learn whether a tree removal permit is required.

Finally, we are working to establish a "Healing Forest", within White Tower Park and the Charman Creek Ravine. Councillor Croal is spearheading this project, which would see our community dedicate green space as a place for healing, learning, sharing, and reflection about Canada's history and the legacy of Indian residential schools. First imagined in 2015, in response to the Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Report, Healing Forests already exist in six provinces. A Healing Forest in Gibsons, however, would be BC's first – and certainly a worthy precedent.

To comment on this, or any other topic, please feel free to email me at [mayor@gibsons.ca](mailto:mayor@gibsons.ca).

