

Considered at October 12, 2022 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting



**Bert Flinn Park
Forest Decorating
Management & Recommendations**

City of Port Moody Environment, October 12, 2022



Background & Issues Identified

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Background

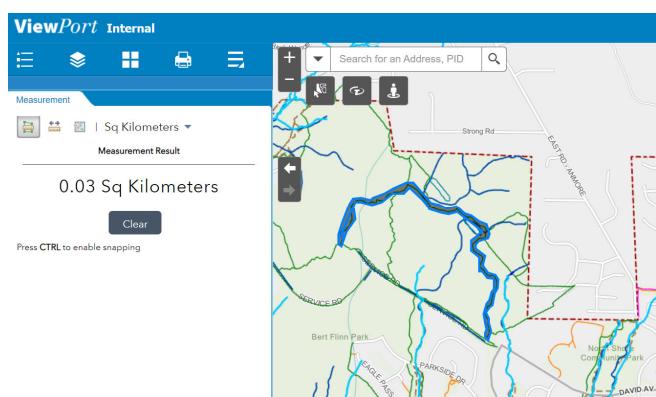


- Residents decorating trees/shrubs along nature trail in Bert Flinn Park for +5 years (~2016)
- Does not appear to be organized initiative; engagement is at individual or family level
- Involvement increasing over time (+70 trees)
- Important tradition for some local families
- Most materials cleaned up by mid-January
- Broken/forgotten ornaments pose threat to wildlife and dogs
- Polarized topic on Facebook
- ~10 vocal players (decorating advocates)

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Extent



- Concentrated on main forest trail
- +70 trees in 2021 (Urban Forestry)
- Shrubs
- Wetland areas
- 0.03 km² (main forest trail)

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Environmental Issues Identified

Audubon

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Bird-Friendly Communities

How Bird-Friendly Are Your Holiday Decorations?

Artificial plants, string, and netting can harm birds. Here's how to make your decor safe for them—and, with a bit of effort, even welcoming.

By Natalie Wallington
Reporter, Audubon Magazine

December 04, 2020



- Encourages off-trail traffic (to install, remove, and observe decorations)
 - Sensitive riparian and wetland habitats
 - Erosion
 - Trampling of vegetation
- Risks to wildlife (entanglement by tinsel, harm by broken glass, small ornaments/plastic fragments mistaken as food source)
- Risks to dogs (broken glass, food décor)
- Candy canes/food décor as potential wildlife attractants

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Environmental Issues Identified

Tinsel can lead to an obstructed digestive tract, severe vomiting and dehydration
– ASPCA

Wire hooks can easily fall off ornaments and puncture an animal's digestive tract
– PETA

There is potential for old ornaments to contain high levels of lead
– HealthLine

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Environmental Issues Identified (General Outdoor Decorating)



Fake spiderwebs used for Halloween decorations outdoors can be detrimental to birds and other wildlife.

Staff Issues Identified

- Projected increase over time for staff cleanup and effort (Parks)
- Complaints from public (Environment, Operations)
- Litter, Garbage (Solid Waste)
- Not compatible with Environment's restoration and conservation efforts in park spaces



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Facebook Comments

Public Opinions (Cons) – Facebook Comments – 2019 to 2021

- TM (2020) “It is **not the City's responsibility** to clean up after us”
- TG (2020) “There were **shattered ornaments on the ground**, decorations in our riparian (wetland) areas and even a few dogs grabbing Styrofoam Christmas balls off a tree.”
- DL (2020) “Last year someone put up **candy canes which made some dogs sick** and likely other forest animals”
- CC (2020) “Forest graffiti is getting to be an **issue for the wildlife**.”
- KH (2020) “better suited to **decorate their own private spaces**, regardless of how long they've been doing it or how they plan to clean up”
- LW (2020) “the forest is **no place for plastics** and Styrofoam”
- GW (2021) “It's **not your personal backyard**”
- SW (2021) “People should decorate trees on their own property. It's **against City bylaws** to leave things in a park”

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Public Opinions (Cons) – Facebook Comments – 2019 to 2021

I am not trying to be a grinch. And I am not usually one for 'enforcement', I just honestly believe that our beautiful natural spaces deserve to be left pristine.

Update: after almost two hours tonight, I have cleaned up three garbage bags of litter. It includes decorations broken and whole, candy wrappers and masks, dog bags, diapers, an enormous amount of pins and tinsel that riddled the forest floor. I'm not finished and will be back tomorrow to collect the rest.

I also want to say that since it has frozen and thawed, most of the decorations were so brittle that as soon as I touched them lightly they literally broke apart in my hand. The tinsel especially.

11 likes 49

60 comments

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Public Opinions (Pros) – Facebook Comments – 2019 to 2021

- LWM (2020) "I think you're worried about nothing. . . To imply that we need someone to step in as forest steward and force people to be responsible is overstepping"
- PW (2020) "Bunch of grinches can't enjoy Christmas"
- LA (2020) "It brings me so much joy as I walk through! Thank you!"
- NA (2020) "Spread some joy!"
- CJ (2020) "I think this is awesome! We need some extra cheer this year."
- BB (2021) "When I see random trees decorated it makes me smile"
- BP (2021) "We don't need you to be policing this – our kids love this – please don't be a grinch"
- DS (2021) "Decorations typically set up until the first weekend in January . . . I was sure to use non-shattering, non-glitter bulbs and everything."

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Public Opinions (Pros) – Facebook Comments – 2019 to 2021

This discussion is ridiculous. I have put decorations up for 5 years and I have taken them down the first week of January for 5 years.

We all love the forest and we're all respectful adults.

I started decorating trees because I loved seeing the decorations as I ran through the woods 6 years ago.

To imply that we need someone to step in as forest steward and force people to be responsible is overstepping.

Thank you to the person who took our decorations off our tree in Bert Flinn 😊. I went to collect them and they were gone. The only thing now is they were probably chucked into the garbage and I reuse them every year so now will have to buy more which is wasteful 😞. Decorations typically are up until the first weekend in January and there are still other trees within the park decorated so I am a little baffled. I was sure to use non shattering non glitter bulbs and everything.🎄

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22 comments 1 share

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Decorating Rationale – Facebook Comments – 2019 to 2021

- LT (2021) “Calling Christmas decorations a “litter” which have emotional and religious value for people is so insensitive and rude”
- CW (2020) “If it were a big issue, [the City] would have stopped it a long time ago.”
- LM (2020) “Several classes at the high school decorate the trail”
- AR (2020) “Natural and biodegradable decorations are best . . . Most cultures that decorate woodland areas at Yule do that.”
- LWM (2020) “I started decorating trees because I loved seeing the decorations as I ran through the woods 6 years ago.”
- DL (2020) “This tradition has been going on for many years”
- BP (2021) “It is a beautiful annual tradition that families enjoy tremendously”
- (General discussion) “Memorializing a loved one”

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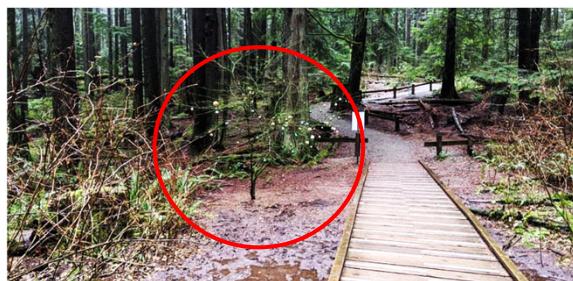
Public Suggestions – Facebook Comments – 2019 to 2021

- TH (2020) "I wish the city would step in with a sign at the entrance"
- AR (2020) "I make [my outdoor decorations] from pinecones and paper."
- DL (2020) "The area is in much need of some TLC"
- WM (2020) "better suited to more urban park areas."
- AD (2020) "Teach people when they go into a park they take out everything they took in"
- GW (2021) "If you decorated a tree in Bert Flinn, you should be going back daily to clean up the broken ones."
- BP (2021) "A better approach might be to do a helpful post educating people on the damage [or] organizing cleanup days after Christmas"
- TCS (2021) "People should use non-toxic non-breakable [ornaments] for a couple of weeks then remove"
- TLM (2021) "They should put up a sign on the board not to decorate the trees"

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Facebook Photos – 2020



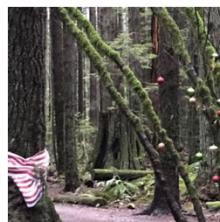
Decorations observed in sensitive wetland habitats (off-trail).

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Facebook Photos – 2021



Broken glass bulbs on
and off the forest trail.

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Options & Opportunities



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Options for Minimizing Environmental Impacts

1. Restrict or prohibit off-trail foot traffic into wetland or ecologically sensitive areas through signage or fencing
2. Prohibit decorating in Bert Flinn Park
3. Prohibit decorating in all City Parks
4. Prohibit the use of certain decoration materials (e.g., glass, tinsel, food/candy, single-use plastics) and encourage the use of 'eco-friendly' decoration alternatives
5. Provide alternative decorating mediums for residents in more open, urbanized areas of Bert Flinn Park (e.g., installing potted fir trees along the off-leash/gravel trail)

City-Led Engagement Opportunities



- Wildlife, forest, and habitat education (Environment, Urban Forestry)
- Leave-no-trace education (Environment, Parks)
- Microplastics and single-use-plastics education (Environment, Parks, Solid Waste)
- Attractant management education (Environment, Solid Waste)
- Promotion of alternative 'eco-friendly' decorations/crafts, including weekend craft events for children, seniors, youth, and families (Environment, Parks, Arts Centre, Library, Recreation)
- Post-holiday tree planting event (Urban Forestry)
- Post-holiday cleanup of Bert Flinn Park (Environment, Parks, Solid Waste)

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Considerations



- Vandalism (removal of decorations, signage, fencing, or City-provided decorating mediums)
- Pre-scheduled or City-led cleanup dates
- Decorating medium (real trees vs existing natural vegetation)
- Providing an initiative in Bert Flinn Park but not other parks in the City
- Scale of advertising and intended event size (evolving into 'Lights at Lafarge')

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Option 1: Do Nothing

PROS:

- No additional planning, effort needed by staff

CONS:

- Encroachment into sensitive areas will continue
- Initiative will likely continue to grow
- Staff time, effort needed for cleanup as needed

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Community tensions may increase over issue
- Residents will intervene and manage the issue (both decorating and removing others' decorations)
- City does not take a stance either way

COSTS:

- Low (staff time for cleanup)

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Option 1: Do Nothing looks like...



Facebook Photos – 2019

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Option 2: Prohibit Decorating in all City Parks (Signage, Social Media Policy)

PROS:

- City takes a clear stance and uses opportunity for education
- Can extend to include outdoor Halloween decorations

CONS:

- May be too administrative to stop the issue at hand
- City 'hates Christmas' perception

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Signage or temporary fencing may be removed by residents
- Residents may start decorating elsewhere
- Look to Metro Vancouver's prohibitive park decorating policy

COSTS:

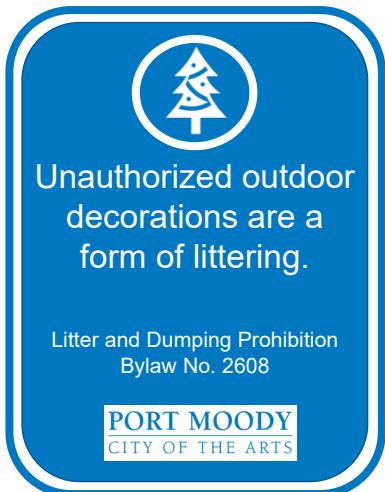
- Low to Medium (sign development, installation, maintenance)
- Communications messaging

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Option 2: Prohibit Decorating in all City Parks looks like...



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Option 2: Prohibit Decorating in all City Parks looks like...

Corporate Policy

100 Newport Drive, Port Moody, BC, V3H 5C3, Canada
Tel 604.469.4500 • Fax 604.469.4550 • www.portmoody.ca

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Section: | Parks | 00 |
| Sub-Section: | Parks Procedures | 1234 |
| Title: | Decorating in Parks (Holiday Décor) | 2022-01 |

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Option 3: Provide Guidelines for Decoration Materials

| | | |
|--------|--|---|
| HIGH | \$ \$\$ > \$5,000 |  > 3 Depts. |
| MEDIUM | \$ \$ \$500 - \$2,000 |  2 – 3 Depts. |
| LOW | \$ \$0 - \$500 |  0 – 1 Depts. |
| |  COST |  EFFORT |

PROS:

- Discourages single-use plastics, glass, attractants
- Encourages biodegradable materials (less impact on wildlife)
- Educational and fun opportunity
- Arts Centre, Rec, or Library craft activity and engagement opportunity

CONS:

- Shows that City supports decorating in Parks in some way
- Off-trail encroachment into sensitive areas may still occur

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Decorating with non-recommended materials may still occur

COSTS:

- Low to Medium (developing guidelines document and signage)
- Can also host craft making through Rec or Arts Centre

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Option 3: Provide Guidelines for Decoration Materials looks like...



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Option 4: Provide Alternative Mediums for Decorating in Parks

| | | |
|--------|--------------------------|--------------|
| HIGH | \$\$\$\$ \$ > \$5,000 | 3 Dept. |
| MEDIUM | \$\$ \$500 - \$2,000 | 2 – 3 Depts. |
| LOW | \$ \$0 - \$500 | 0 – 1 Depts. |
| | COST | EFFORT |

PROS:

- Diverts decorating activities away from natural/sensitive areas
- City has more control over decorated areas
- Potential Urban Forestry objectives met (replanting)

CONS:

- Shows that City supports decorating in Parks

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Decorating in Bert Flinn is likely done by local residents who may not travel to other parks (convenience)
- Cleanup date

COSTS:

- Medium to High (multi-departmental coordination needed)
- **Can purchase 50 fir trees at \$70 for \$3,500**

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Option 4: Provide Alternative Mediums looks like...



Dundarave Festival of Miracles (West Vancouver)
Trees are decorated by sponsors with proceeds going to charity

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Questions & Discussion