

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING COMMENTS

5. Urban Forest Strategy and Implementation Plan - Keeping the Forest in the Forest City

- Dean Sheppard, Executive Director, ReForest London – advising that ReForest London is pleased to see the Urban Forest Management Strategy; recognizing how important it is going forward for the City; indicating that there are many important steps that need to be taken by the Municipality in order to protect our urban forest and to make sure it grows; indicating that it is an important step to get Council endorsement of the Strategy so that Urban Forestry staff can make plans to implement and other City departments can align their processes so that we can achieve the goals that we are looking for; advising that, overall, they are very pleased to see this Strategy and they are looking forward to it moving forward; highlighting three areas of concern that ReForest London has with the wording as it stands; advising that the first concern is the lack of targets for woodland cover, which are not addressed by the current strategy; indicating that they feel that the city-wide canopy cover targets that are currently proposed are too low; advising that there is an urgent need for increased tree planting in the next three years; noting that staff have already alluded to the fact that they are already looking at the impacts in 20 years and our actions today affect that; relating to woodland cover, as to the Strategy itself, trees in natural areas, which are mostly woodlands plus trees in low density residential provide 80 percent of our existing canopy; outlining that there is a need to set a target for protecting and enhancing canopy in these two areas; indicating that there is a proposed target for residential areas but there is no plan to make a target for the woodlands for at least another five years; advising that they find that this is too long and it fails to support the natural heritage system; noting that they have good information on our natural heritage system as it plays a crucial role in canopy cover and waiting more than 5 years to set a target for woodland cover, when all the other land uses are being done in short order, seems untenable; establishing a woodland target should be part of the land use canopy target exercise, just like residential, industrial and commercial that is already planned in the strategy and is marked high priority to be done within the next one to two years; relating to canopy cover, there are, as staff explained, 20 year and 50 year proposed canopy targets; indicating that the 20 year targets are exactly the same as the cover was in 2008; advising that there is no difference between where we expect to be in 20 years than where we were in 2008; indicating that the 50 year targets are below those recommended by American Forests and, in some instances, are below the canopy levels we have today in some land use types; advising that ReForest London would urge the City to have more vision and more aspiration in setting these canopy targets; indicating that it seems doubtful that, through the extensive public consultation process for ReThink or this Strategy, that respondents would have expected no real gain in canopy cover in the next 20 years; assuring the Committee that Londoners tell them all the time that they want more trees and more of the benefits that go with the trees; indicating that if the City wants private citizens to do their part in building the urban forest, he would suggest that the City needs to be seen as having a strong vision for the Forest City; reiterating that currently the 20 year target is to end up where we were in 2008, which is not the kind of target they feel is fitting a Forest City and it is not the kind of plan that would inspire Londoners to do their own part; advising that, out of the almost 200,000 trees planted and registered so far in London's Million Tree Challenge, the City itself has planted about 5% of that total, which means that over 90 percent of the trees planted have been done by other organizations and many, many individuals; advising that inspiring and leading the public is critical to success and they are sorry to say that they do not believe that the proposed targets fulfill that role; providing an example, using Old North, Old North currently has a canopy cover of 39 percent and the proposed targets are lower than what we currently enjoy in Old North; enquiring as to why we would purposely plan to have less cover in 50 years; indicating that instead, Forestry staff is saying that, in 20 years we will have less than what we have now, actually, not even that because in 50 years, some of the targets are lower than what we have today in the neighbourhoods like this; enquiring if this is really the best we can do for targets; advising that ReForest London is hoping for more; according to the statistics in the Strategy, the 50 year target is based on the lowest end of our current range of potential and assumes there will not be any changes to current standards, practices and policies; pointing out that the Committee saw, on the graph, the same statistics show that, even without those policy changes, we do have the potential to do better than the proposed 32 percent in 50 years; advising that if you add that potential to actual policy changes, we can easily reach the potential and recommended 40 percent average across the City; advising that many other municipalities are showing

the kind of vision and eagerness to achieve a 40 percent canopy that the Forest City should also be showing; indicating that a quick survey of some other municipalities shows us quickly that the Forest City is currently not a leader in its aspirations or its plans; showing a quick comparison of several other municipalities, many of them in Southwestern Ontario; noting that he tried to group them by their target dates and there is a green line across the top which is the widely accepted target of 40 percent; advising that most municipalities are aiming for the 40 percent; noting that a few are even aiming higher; outlining that you can see what years they are hoping to do it for and London, unfortunately, does not compare well against its group of peers; indicating that, as the Forest City, our 20 and 50 year targets need to be higher than what is currently proposed because we want to be the Forest City, residents want more trees, not less, as the Forest City we do not want to be a lagger in our group and challenging goals bring us all to a higher level of performance and lackluster goals foster the status quo; hoping that the Committee will ask staff to return to this Committee with canopy targets that are more reflective of the public desire and more inspirational to those on whom we depend to for 90 percent of the tree planting in the City; indicating that the last issue is urgency and it is certainly less technical than canopy cover; advising that many of the trees that will affect our canopy cover in 20 years are already in the ground, but we do still have a great opportunity in the next three years or so to make some great progress but it is critical that we have some bold actions in the next few years to increase our canopy cover in the next 20 years; wishing that the Strategy would characterize the next three years with a strong sense of urgency to capitalize on the window of opportunity that we have; advising that, currently, under the Strategies directive of planting more, there are 27 planting actions listed; noting that, of those, only 8 are planned for the short term implementation and all 8 of those seem to be developing policies and plans; noting that there are no actions specifically to plant more trees in the immediate term; indicating that ReForest London feels that the Strategy needs to include a short term action that speaks to actually getting trees in the ground in each of the next three years; advising that it would be a terrible opportunity to miss and we will literally pay the price for the 50 years; and, providing a summary of the three points he tried to make regarding woodland cover, canopy cover and urgency. (See attached presentation).

- Gabor Sass, Chair, Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee – speaking to two of the principles, “Protect More” and “Plant More”; advising that there is a tool that has been overlooked, which Mr. Sheppard has already talked to, which is the focus on not just tree cover, which is very important, but also, the woodland cover, because when we are talking about woodlands we are actually talking about the forest as an integrated system, as an ecosystem; noting that the Urban Forest Effects study has looked at this; advising that we have woodland cover that is about 8 percent, which he believes is too low; indicating that, if you ask Ecologists what our landscape should have, in terms of forest cover and woodland cover, they say it should be about 30 percent; noting that we are in an urban area and even in 100 years we won’t be able to reach 30 percent, but we have to aim higher than the 8 percent where we are right now; recommending that next to tree cover, which is very important, we also need to have a woodland cover target because we do not want to lose more of the woodlands that we have on the land today; showing two pictures; advising that the picture on the right has approximately the same tree cover as the picture on the left, so we could still end up with a high tree cover but lose all of our woodlands; realizing that this is not going to happen, but we need more tools to be able to retain the woodlands that we have right now; looking at the strategic goals and the actions that emanate from them, there is a plan to look at this, but it is too far into the future; reiterating that we already have researched this, we have the Urban Forest Effects study, so I think this should read “established woodland canopy cover target” for the City which integrates with the regional natural heritage system; believing this should be a high priority; putting on his urban gardener hat because he likes to do that and has connections to that community, he would really like to thank staff for looking at this issue; advising that it came up at the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee meeting; indicating that the issue of food production was not in the initial report; noting that it has now made it into the report, but I think it needs more spelling out what it actually means and how we should act on it; indicating that there is a revolution, if you read the literature in terms of the focus on urban agriculture around the world, in Canada, in North America and he thinks this strategy needs to recognize that; reiterating that there is language in there now but he thinks it needs to be made stronger; providing the example of updating section 4 to have a paragraph in there about what this means; indicating that, right now there is a bullet but he thinks that it can be integrated; noting that that figure is actually from one of the Blackwell reports that they produced for Vancouver; advising that there is a nicely integrated bullet on food production so there is already an action item, item 3.4, which is looking at the community gardens and allowing these gardens to become bigger entities, allowing the planting of perennial species and he thinks this is a great thing to do this; pointing out that there are

other things, such as planting on our boulevards, putting in fruit and nut trees; indicating that he is unsure whether that would be allowed; requesting that this be included in this strategy and also put on the list of species of trees that can be planted; advising that there are a lot of homeowners right now that would like to engage in this, obviously they can do it in their backyards, but can they also plant fruit and nut trees in the boulevards and in the parks; and, indicating that he believes that this strategy has hit the note but thinks this could become a lot stronger. (See attached presentation).

- Teresa Rutten, 903 Trafalgar Street – indicating that she really appreciates that London has gone through some changing processes; noting that they have invited the public to participate in the Strengthening Neighbourhood process, the ReThink London process as well as this Strategy; advising that she would like to emphasize, similar to the Mr. Sass, how much including food production in your Plan would bring synergies; indicating that it would bring inexpensive volunteers and momentum to the tree canopy as well as support some of the desires of London; advising that the London Food Bank is wanting to shift away from just giving and receiving donations; advising that she believes that we need to engage the public in the process in a deeper way; showing an example in Ottawa that is just amazing, very motivational and hoping that London will put some thought, resources, time and effort towards this initiative; advising that, in Ottawa, they have a very collaborative approach, with a business model; noting that, initially, they had to put a lot of money into it and they had to bring various people to the table, but right now it is self-sustaining, noting that it drives on the momentum and the interest within the city; advising that it is integrated more from a seed to table perspective in that they map out existing food trees in the city; indicating that London has a lot of food trees; advising that the City of London, or the public, owns many orchards that are presently just going to waste; noting that there are food trees in the park system that private owners have planted; advising that, in many cities, the food bank, in combination with volunteers and homeowners, have a system where the homeowners donate their tree that they would not harvest and the volunteers come and pick it and 1/3 is donated to the food bank, 1/3 to the volunteers and 1/3 to the owners; noting that the volunteers are also involved in planting and maintaining food trees; believing that it is critical to have buy in from the public, from communities, from neighbours, because they will take ownership for the planting, care, harvest, education and generating excitement around it and that will be cost effective for the City of London; advising that the hidden harvest program in Ottawa has only been around for a few short years; but you can see from their website, that they are already calculating the benefits from the harvest in the pounds of food shared; advising that they also get into education very much like what ReForest London does; indicating that there are some roadblocks to making this happen; realizing that it is not always easy to have food trees planted in the City of London; indicating that there is resistance; indicating that, as much as I love Parks and Recreation and what they are doing on the whole, they have denied some of the planting; advising that Food Not Lawns put a request into the London Resource Centre to see if they would engage the membership to see the level interest in planting food trees, at no cost to the City; noting that they were asking if they could solicit interest and they would engage them and ensure that the trees were planted, cared for and harvested, that education was provided at no cost and this was denied; indicating that, in the short-term she would love to see the City move more quickly on allowing the planting of food trees in public parks, adjacent to community gardens; and, indicating that she believes that this is an inexpensive, low cost, no cost, measure to move forward on tree planting. (See website - <http://ottawa.hiddenharvest.ca/>).
- Tanya Park, President, SoHo Community Association – advising that she loves the merit behind this Plan; advising that it is going to get us back to being the Forest City and she really thinks that there are a lot of tools that the City can utilize, such as the work forces that we have working in our community, including, Food Not Lawns, etc., to get us on the right track; indicating that it is embarrassing that Hamilton and Burlington are going to lead, before us, in being a city that does not have the right logo behind them; and, recommending that it is worth reading this Plan if you have not already and let us become the Forest City once again.
- Amber Cantell, Trees and Forests Advisory Committee – see attached presentation.
- Nick Sauter, Argyle Community Association – indicating that having trees in the city is more important than anybody could ever imagine; advising that you could see from one of the pictures that was shown at the meeting, that Argyle suffers the most from a lack of trees; advising that the reason for this is that you cannot grow trees on a parking lot; noting that, in Argyle, they have a lot of parking lots in their industry; further noting that, industry is mostly located in their end of the city; advising that the plan that has been put forward has struck a good chord with everybody here because we all agree that trees are so important; indicating that one of the things that the Municipal Council can do, in his view, is admit that money does not grow on trees, so any initiative that is being undertaken by private citizens to plant trees or to make the city greener should not only

be approved by the Municipal Council, but should be encouraged; indicating that the Argyle Community Association has recommended that the small green spot around our beautiful roundabout be left as a green space or be converted into a parkette; noting that there is lots of room for many more trees; and, asking if anybody is interested in helping remove junk along the fence line on June 14, 2014.

- Robin Harvey, 21 Riverview Avenue – advising that the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority has most of the control in the section of the city that he lives in; indicating that the week that he moved into the house that he lives in now, there were three trees cut down from the property beside him; advising that he has a thermometer outside and it was so hot that it blew the top off of the thermometer; noting that the thermometer limit was 150°; indicating that this gives you an idea of what happens when you remove trees; advising that what he would like to see is that, where people are putting in large parking lots, they receive some sort of benefit from cooperating towards this tree initiative; indicating that he is unsure how it would work, but there should be some sort of incentive for them to move in this direction; advising that when he first moved to London in 1961, there were approximately 25 orchards that were either just inside or on the edge of the city limits; indicating that London had approximately 20 percent of all of its fruit coming from local orchards; requesting that this be made one of the targets, moving the orchards back up to 20 percent; advising that in Russia, it is considered to be 80 percent normal for food to come from the very town that people are consuming it from; advising that it is the same with nuts; suggesting that a target could be set that 40 percent of protein from nut trees within the city limits; indicating that it would also mean that people would want to establish businesses to do this; advising that you would have to have a business plan based around trees, which we do not have now; and, suggesting that you could have a farm that looks over 25 backyards, connected by pathways or entrances over the fence lines; indicating that this is the kind of direction that we need to move in to really change things; advising that what Mrs. Rutten was talking about earlier, about their being a difficulty in setting up things like fruit guilds and fruit and nut forests, these do exist; advising that he does not believe that it needs to exist, it is just that the experience of the city in dealing with these kinds of things means that they are going through an old rule system that probably worked great for what was going on before, but now we need to find a way to streamline this kind of building of forests so that neighbourhood associations can create a committee that does this and then they can work on projects like that without having to reinvent the wheel every time a new project comes up.