

August 25, 2014

Re: Need for Aspirational Tree Cover Targets



Dear Council Members,

Do we want to aspire to be the best we can be, or settle for the status quo? This is the question being posed with the current urban forest targets.

We all know trees are excellent economic investments:

- Quality of life factors are critical in attracting and retaining business and talent to our city
- A shade tree provides \$162,000 in services over its life, including cooling, energy savings and water control: money in the pockets of the City and residents.
- Our local environment is cleaner, cooler, and more beautiful.
- Human health is improved through cleaner air, creating walkable streets and yards worth playing in, and respite from urban stress.

So where are we headed? What will we achieve? As Council previously agreed, **we need strong, aspirational tree cover targets**. We need them to drive action, drive collaboration, drive innovation.

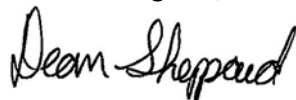
If we adopt targets that are essentially what we have now, we will get what we have now. We can do so much better. Working together (including the recommended cross-divisional City team) we will certainly find many ways to achieve higher results within existing processes and with new ways of doing things. Without high goals there is little impetus for innovation, little impetus for multiple City departments to collaborate in achieving our healthiest city and little impetus for community action.

The higher targets currently offered by staff are still well below what other cities are aiming for (see attached). I don't believe any of those cities have a detailed 50 year plan. Rather, they are working hard every year to do better and achieve higher – driven by aspirational targets for their community. Aiming for the status quo does not inspire or activate the kind of focus and innovation we need.

As new ideas and options are created, they will come to Council and the budget process for honest evaluation of their cost/benefit. That will be the time to make individual financial decisions on tactics. Now is the time to **make a powerful visionary statement** for our community and set us on a path of great accomplishment.

ReForest London is one of the City's major partners in improving our brand as the Forest City, in engaging residents in the value of trees, in improving our local environmental health, in protecting and improving human health, and in enhancing our collective quality of life. As founding partners in the Million Tree Challenge, the City of London and ReForest London are leading 160 Partners toward this community goal. We ask Council to continue to set our community vision on the horizon – set our sights high – inspire us to achieve.

With best regards,



Dean Sheppard
Executive Director, ReForest London

attachment:

London's Canopy Target is the **LOWEST** and the **SLOWEST**

