TFAC - Tree Planting Strategy Survey

Good afternoon everyone,

Attached please find a copy of the results from Rick's survey for us into what we think the relative priorities should be for different possible planting areas and trees in the upcoming Tree Planting Strategy for City-owned lands.

I had originally planned to do a survey monkey survey for it, but going through the papers I was given it seemed like we already had a pretty complete set of data, and I figured anyone else who wanted to weigh in could just add a new column to the attached Excel file and fire it back to me - I felt that made more sense time-wise than redoing the entire survey. I hope that's okay! (Please see attached).

Personally, I still feel pretty strongly that it should not be up to TFAC to develop the weights for prioritizing plantings, as as a group, we are really not representative of the London community (especially demographically), and there are groups not at the table (such as poverty groups, schools, and the business community outside of developers) who should probably be consulted in developing those weights.

As well, the odds are good that our perceptions around the table vary, and in some cases may not reflect the truth of a situation. For example, one member could rate "industrial" low because they don't think there's a lot of industrial land in the city (so impact would be small); another might rate it "high" because they think there's a lot of space available. Neither happens to work in industrial areas. Just averaging those results doesn't make for a "correct" answer: the reality could be high, low, or anywhere in between.

Consequently, I think the actual selection of sites should be data driven. Where I think we can be particularly helpful is in figuring out what the guiding principles should or could be to help maximize tree canopy cover and the benefits Londoners receive from trees. So basically, I would recommend using:

TFAC to help develop a robust list of possible principles -> public and stakeholders to determine how we should weight them -> a GIS to assign priority for the order in which plantings will occur, based on the priorities identified

And then on our end, that might look something like this:

Example Goal: To develop a tree planting strategy which will allow London to achieve the canopy cover targets set out in the Urban Forest Strategy, in an efficient manner while working to maximize the benefits citizens receive from trees.

Example Principles for Prioritizing Plantings:

1) Maximize canopy cover:
- Large trees have a much bigger canopy impact over the long run than ornamental trees, so we should be planting up all our large tree planting spaces first. Then mediums, and then only worry about ornamentals when that is all done.

2) Reduce costs in order to plant more trees (of any given height class):
- Identifying places where it would be safe to plant large potted stock rather than caliper trees will *dramatically* increase the number of trees that the City could plant in a year. Two obvious locations for this would be with a program to plant trees in front yards where there is not enough space in the boulevard for a "large" or "medium" sized tree, or to allow them in industrial areas where the risk of vandalism is absolutely minimal.

- Don't prioritize any trees that would have a high cost relative to canopy cover and health benefits. Develop a cut-off for this - for example, "we won't plant any trees that have a cost 4x greater than the typical planting until the less expensive ones are done" or "we will only allow 5% of our budget to go to plantings that are unusually expensive on a per tree basis, because we still want to be able to do at least *some* planting in the downtown core", etc.

- Support naturalization efforts by community groups which will increase canopy cover at very low cost to the city, especially where groups can bring in their own funding or substantial leveraging.

3) Plant to maximize the health benefits:
- Prioritize plantings in areas where people are most likely to suffer negative health effects that could be ameliorated by planting trees. For example, you could prioritize communities with a high proportion of youth (because most of the solar exposure that contributes to skin cancer actually occurs when people are young), areas with high heat islands, areas with a high proportion of elderly, areas around hospitals, etc.

4) Plant trees which are most likely to survive to maturity:
- De-prioritize trees that have a high likelihood of dying, whether that is due to road salt, poor soil, etc. You could use a similar "cut-off" method to what was described for cost, above.

- Prioritize trees on undevelopable lands and in parks, because there will be little chance of them being cut down for future development.

5) Plant in areas which have the greatest need first:
- Plant the prioritized trees (e.g. "large, low cost, high survival") in the poorest areas first, and the wealthiest areas last. Once all the "top priority trees" are planted across the entire city, repeat the cycle with all the "medium priority" trees, again going back to the low income areas and planting up those trees first. (If you didn't want to use income as an equity measure, you could also look at areas which have the least park space relative to population, or areas with lowest canopy cover relative to population, etc.).

And then it would be up to the public through some sort of public consultation process to decide how important these different principles should be. Thoughts? (I know most folks are done now, but if you have any comments, I'd be happy to share them with the next TFAC as we continue along in the process).

Cheers,
Amber