

S. Rowland

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| TO: | CHAIR AND MEMBERS PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING ON NOVEMBER 6, 2017 |
| FROM: | JOHN M. FLEMING MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER |
| SUBJECT: | TREE PLANTING STRATEGY 2017 - 2021 |
| RECOMMENDATION | |

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Planning and City Planner, the following actions BE TAKEN regarding the City of London’s Tree Planting Strategy:

- (a) The Tree Planting Strategy, attached as Appendix A, **BE ENDORSED**; and,
- (b) The five-year action plan included within this strategy **BE ENDORSED**, with the expectation that this action plan will be revised and updated as necessary within the next five years.

IT BEING NOTED that the funding to implement the Tree Planting Strategy is included in the approved 2016-2019 Multi Year Budget and the 2020-2025 capital budget forecast, subject to annual budget approval.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER

Sept. 2, 2014 Planning & Environment Committee - Urban Forest Strategy & Implementation Plan

PURPOSE

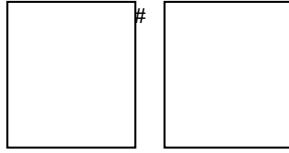
The Planting Strategy - “Plant More” provides the framework for the City of London to achieve Council’s tree canopy cover goal of 34% by 2065. The Strategy includes specific action items that will direct how the plan will be implemented over the next 5 years. The Planting Strategy is a living document that will be reviewed and updated every 5 years until 2065. This will provide the opportunity to reflect on implementation progress, new technical information, changing environmental conditions and other factors that may affect the Strategy. The overarching goal is to reaffirm London as The Forest City.

A broader Planting Strategy will deliver improvements on existing tree planting efforts across the public and private sectors. The Planting Strategy is a long term, proactive approach to achieving goals and targets. Efforts include replacing existing canopy in a timely manner, as well as increasing canopy cover through planting in new areas.

BACKGROUND

In 2014 Council approved London’s first Urban Forest Strategy that described new initiatives and enhancements to existing programs to achieve new canopy cover goals. Council recognized that the trees that form our urban forest provide numerous benefits that help keep our city livable and healthy, defining neighbourhoods with a sense of place, and contribute to the mental, social and physical well-being of our communities. In a major step towards reaching our tree canopy cover goal, Council adopted “The City of London Tree Protection By-Law C.P.1515-228” in 2016. This By-Law expanded the preservation of certain types of trees located on private property and supports the Urban Forestry Strategy to “Protect More”.

Since 2015 – the year after the Urban Forest Strategy was adopted by Council – a number of “Plant More” initiatives have been implemented. These include:



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- Increased street tree planting from 2,500 to 5,000 trees per annum, from 2015 to 2017 inclusive. The 2015 increase was made possible by savings from other budgets, and lowest-bid tendering. The increased planting since 2016 has been possible through an additional \$1.8 million approved by Council for tree planting in the current multi-year budget (2016-2019 Multi Year Budget Strategic Investment Business Case #3).
- Creating a new TreeMe grant for planting trees on private lands, \$30,000 per year.
- A second round of TreeMe grant applications submitted August 2017, made possible by the approval of the 2016-2019 Multi Year Budget Strategic Investment.
- Support for a \$94,000 feasibility study led by ReForest London (\$75,000 provided as a grant from an external source) primarily to determine if the Wellington County Green Legacy tree growing program is an appropriate model for the City to ensure the supply of appropriate numbers and species of trees in the future.
- Enhanced watering program for newly planted trees starting in 2016
- “Tree Blitz” where a sector of the City each year is targeted for tree planting in available spaces on streets, in Parks and other City lands to maximize the impact of new trees.

Plus a “Maintain Better” initiative:

- New tree maintenance funding of \$200,000/year approved through 2016-2019 Multi Year Budget Strategic Investment Business Case #3.

In 2015, a leaf-on aerial survey of the City analyzed our tree canopy cover within the Urban Growth Boundary. As a result of the survey it was noted that tree canopy covered 23.7% of the land, a 1% decrease since 2008 when the last canopy cover survey was completed. This was a loss of approximately 236 ha of tree canopy cover largely attributed to the devastation of ash due to the migration of the Emerald Ash Borer to London.

The 2035 goal of 28% was investigated by staff and it was determined that it is not feasible. The main limiting factor to achieving the canopy cover target is the estimated number of trees required to be planted each year (128,000 trees/year) to meet the target. Availability of quality nursery stock from current suppliers cannot be sourced at these large numbers. In addition, it is extremely expensive, and logistically cannot be managed by private or public distribution and planting. Many Cities across Canada have announced they are increasing their rate of tree planting which has made it difficult to find trees in recent years. Tree costs are rising and may continue to climb, and to plant this number of trees each year would be extremely expensive. For example, the City of Toronto from 2015 – 2023 will spend about 80 million dollars on tree planting, an average \$9 million each year. The private sector in Toronto is encouraged to plant almost half a million trees each year. Stability of demand and supply with green industries will be key to the long term success of the Planting Strategy. The City will have to secure long-term contracts if it is to get the quantity and quality of trees, and the species it needs, at a price it can afford.

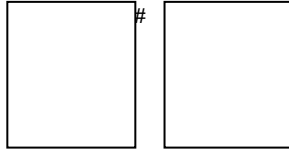
PLANTING MORE

In order to reach our goal of 34% by 2065, canopy cover must increase city-wide by 10.3% over this time period. This means that the rate of tree planting must increase substantially, as soon as possible. From a tree planting perspective, that means each year approximately 50,000 additional trees must be planted. As 89% of the land in London is owned privately, the City recognizes that this cannot be accomplished by itself and it will need the support of community partners. Many of the action items in the Strategy include collaborating with community partners. Approximately 6,000 of these trees are planned to be planted by the City, and the balance of about 44,000 trees planted by community partners on private (non-City) land. The Strategy recommends that incentives provided by the City to community partners must increase significantly to sustain this level of tree planting over time.

“Planting More” aligns with numerous Council and City priorities:

1. The Council’s Strategic Plan 2015 - 2019 states in its key commitments for Building a Sustainable City:

Plant more trees and better protect them from deforestation, invasive species, and other threats.



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2. The London Plan (Official Plan) for the first time contains a chapter on the Urban Forest that contains policies to support and require more tree planting in both the municipal and private sectors to achieve tree canopy cover targets approved by Council.
3. The development and implementation of a Planting Strategy was highlighted as a specific action required under the City's Urban Forest Strategy (2014) with the goal to "Plant More" and, in its implementation, to "Plant Better".
4. Middlesex Natural Heritage Strategy recommends that the City and other stakeholders move beyond identifying significant remnant natural heritage features, to protecting and restoring the natural heritage system.
5. The Council-approved Emerald Ash Borer Strategy (2011) required two replacement (non-ash) trees to be planted for every one ash tree removed, on streets. In 2013 that was amended by Council to 1: 1 replacement as soon as practicable, aiming to plant the rest of the required trees at 2:1 at some future date. There was approximately a 6-year wait time for replacement tree planting in 2013 and efforts have been made since then to increase the number of trees planted annually and reduce the wait time.

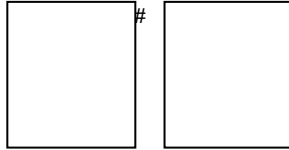
The City currently has approximately 42% tree canopy cover on municipally-owned lands and is exceeding the 34% goal. Proportionally, the City will contribute 11% of the new tree canopy cover target and encourage community partners and the private sector to provide the remaining 89%. Limiting and competing factors for plantable public space include: line of sight to road signs and traffic management systems; urban design considerations; residential and commercial boulevard parking permits; line of sight for radio and satellite receiving; line of sight to solar panels; encroachments; line of sight to parking entrances; business signs, advertising boards and billboards; on street parking; sidewalks and retro-fitted sidewalks; sports and play spaces; trails and other recreational features; street lighting; community mail boxes; transit stops and transit corridors; construction and infrastructure renewal; road widening, and servicing by utilities. Although current sub-division developments now place servicing infrastructure underground, this was not previously common practice. In older developed areas, overhead telecommunication and electricity cables may be found, often on both sides of a street. Designed streets with trees may mean placing trees close to the curb if that maximizes the number of trees that could be planted, creating 'bump outs', or else placing trees in private yard setbacks behind other infrastructure.

The City must actively strengthen relationships with internal Divisions and community partners to help deliver ambitious tree planting programs in an adaptive and timely manner. Community partners can include Conservation Authorities, ReForest London, School Boards, the development community, Provincial/Federal Ministries, company headquarters and significant London offices, landlords, First Nations, residents, special interest groups, community programs, industry and commercial enterprises (e.g. Chamber of Commerce; Downtown London, Business Improvement Areas).

Average temperatures in the City are projected to increase by 5^oC within the next 50 years, and by 2040 London is expected to experience 35 days each year where the temperature will exceed 30 degrees^a. That will challenge human health and well-being, and the City's ability to maintain critical infrastructure. The local effect of trees providing shade and cooling of air through evapotranspiration, as well as in taking and releasing storm water over a greater length of time, can greatly influence the 'livability' of urban spaces and places that may be otherwise too uncomfortable for humans, at low operating cost, with numerous other benefits that add to quality and length of life, and without adding to greenhouse gas emissions. In future, consideration should be given to planting tree species that are adapted to the climate and the environment in which they will grow.

Another concern that can contribute to making tree planting more difficult over time is urban intensification. It is expected that infill development will impact existing tree canopy in older parts of the City and private yard dimensions will continue to decrease. Changes to the Zoning By-law

^a 2011: Health Canada - Communicating the Health Risks of Extreme Heat Events: Toolkit for Public Health and Emergency Management Officials



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and other by-laws may be necessary to ensure sufficient landscaped area remains that is suited for, and planted with, trees.

The Planting Strategy has taken into consideration that in any year, one or a combination of factors may result in the loss of trees either through nature or manmade activities. If a devastating event happens City-wide, such as major weather events or the introduction of a new forest pest, the long term tree canopy cover targets are unlikely to be met. A City-wide devastating event would traditionally trigger additional funding and resources from other levels of government to be made available to replace infrastructure, which includes trees. The Planting Strategy, being a living document, will be adapted as and when that occurs to provide the best path forward to meet our goal.

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| FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS |
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Historically, approximately \$1.05 million/year has been spent on tree planting. In 2016, Council embarked on its first multi-year (4-year) budget which approved an additional \$1.8 million for tree planting through 2016-2019 Multi Year Budget Strategic Investment Business Case #3. This amounts to \$450,000 a year, increasing the annual total to \$1.5 million for tree planting until 2019. The 2020 capital budget forecast includes \$1.2 million dedicated to planting, increasing to \$1.4 million in 2021 and \$1.6 million/year thereafter (all figures subject to annual budget approval), in addition to the “base budget” amount for tree planting of \$1.05 million/year.

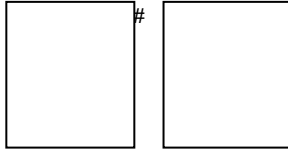
The approved 2016-2019 Multi Year Budget Strategic Investment Business Case #3 also includes ongoing operating funding of \$200,000/year for enhanced tree maintenance activities.

The funding currently included in the 2016-19 Multi Year Budget and associated 2020-2025 capital budget forecast is considered sufficient to implement the Tree Planting Strategy in the near term. Should additional funding be required, a business case would be prepared and the request would be considered for funding through a future Multi Year Budget process.

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| CONCLUSION |
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This Planting Strategy provides clear direction for the first five years of a 50-year plan to achieve our tree canopy cover goals of 34% by 2065. Good progress has already been made by the community in increasing tree planting in the City since 2015, and the City plans to capitalize on that early success by expanding and adding a number of tree planting initiatives and improved tree maintenance. More work needs to be done to reduce tree mortality and extend average tree life expectancy to minimize the number of trees required to be planted over time, so that our goal may be achieved sooner, and at much less cost. More work also needs to be done to secure a sustainable supply of trees in the number and species we require for our future City planting. Funding to implement the Tree Planting Strategy is included in the approved 2016-2019 Multi Year Budget and associated 2020-2025 capital budget forecast, subject to annual budget approval. Should additional funding be required in the future, a business case would be prepared for consideration through a future multi-year budget process.

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| PREPARED BY: | SUBMITTED BY: |
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2017/10/27

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