Suggestions for the City of London's Website Relating to Trees and Forests
(DRAFT)

1) User Stories to Assist with Development of Content and Navigation

We recommend for the City of London to consider user stories when assessing the design, content and navigation of the City's website. These questions may be asked by residents, business owners, contractors, builders and developers, community groups, schools, or charities, among others.

User stories are helpful in putting oneself "in a user's shoes" when assessing how well a site works and how easy key information is to find. We've identified a number below: city staff may wish to add their own to this list if they see some we are missing.

Upon completion of the updated website and then annually, we strongly recommend someone from Forestry be assigned the task for testing these user stories. This will help ensure information is still easy to find and has been updated as needed.

TFAC may also be able to help with such testing in the future, if there was a sub-committee wishing to take on that responsibility.

Resident User Stories:

"I am a resident, and I would like to know…"

Tree Protection:
- What trees are protected in London, and under which by-law?
  - Is _my_ tree protected under the tree protection by-laws
  - What are the penalties for by-law violations?
- When do I need a permit?
  - Do I need a permit to prune or perform maintenance on my tree?
  - What can I do with the wood after pruning my tree? (e.g. don't move firewood)
- What do I do if I suspect there is a violation of a tree protection by-law?
  - Neighbour cutting down a tree
  - Clearcutting of a property or woodlot
  - Who can I call if it is after hours, or on a weekend or holiday?
- Does my tree belong to me, or to the city? (Homeowners may not be aware of the width of road allowances and thus not know which trees belong to them versus the city)
- What kind of protections there are for forests and natural heritage in the city
- How must trees be protected during construction projects (including roadwork)?
- How are trees protected (or aren't) through the development process?
- What are the expectations around tree protection, replacement, and planting during the development of a new subdivision or infill property?
- How will residents be informed if trees are scheduled to come down in their neighbourhood
- How the City's tree replacement policy works
- How is the City adapting its planting strategies to climate change?
- Is it okay to move firewood?
- How are tree species at risk protected in London?
  - How to identify tree species at risk that are found here

Natural Heritage & Recreation:
- If there are any accessible forests or natural areas they could visit
- How they are impacted if they are adjacent to a natural area or ESA (if there are things they should not plant, etc.)
- If there are any arboretums in or near the city
- Are there any hiking, bird-watching, or other nature-related programs available that I could partake in?
- What are the expected impacts of climate change on London's urban forest?
- Information on food tree programs, food forests, food trees in community gardens, etc.

Planning London's Urban Forest:
- What plans does the City of London have? (e.g. Urban Forest Strategy and Implementation Plan, Tree Planting Strategy)
- What is the state of the City's urban forest? (both in detail and at-a-glance)
    - What goals does the City has for it?
- Can I view a map of the City's trees?
- What is the Million Tree Challenge, and what is the City's roll in it?
- How is the City planning for climate change?
    - Is the City adapting it's planting strategies?
    - What are the expected impacts of climate change on London's urban forest?
- How can I access information on strategies, reports, and by-laws related trees and forests?
- What important council or standing committee meetings related to forestry are coming up?
- How can I participate in public consultation processes related to trees, forests, or natural heritage?

Tree Planting:
- How does the City support tree planting in general?
- What kind of programs are available to support tree planting on their property (whether that is urban or rural)
- How can I request a free street tree if I don't have one?
    - How long will it take? Will it take longer if I'm in a new subdivision?
- If there is anywhere in the city they could get free mulch or compost for their trees
- Does the City do memorial tree plantings?
- What is the Million Tree Challenge, and how do I participate?
- How can they volunteer to help plant or care for trees
- Does it matter what type of tree I plant?
    - What kind of trees are recommended for planting in London?
    - How they are impacted if they are adjacent to a natural area or ESA (if there are things they should not plant, etc.)

Forestry Operations:
- A tree was removed by the City. Will I get a replacement?
    - How does the City's tree replacement policy work?
- How street trees are maintained?
    - How frequently are they maintained?
- A city tree needs pruning, care or maintenance, who can I contact?

Tree Care:
- How should I care for my trees?
  - E.g. Mulching, watering, tree collars, staking or no staking, etc.
- Do I need to water or otherwise maintain the tree in front of my house?
  - Who is responsible for which trees (homeowner versus city)?
  - How are street trees are maintained (and how frequently)
- When/how does the City issue a watering alert?
- What important pests or diseases they should I be watching out for (e.g. Asian long-horned beetle, oak wilt)?
  - What should I do if they are spotted or suspected?
- Is there is anywhere in the city where I could get free mulch or compost for my trees?
- I've had my tree pruned. What can I do with the wood? (E.g. don't move firewood!)

Business User Stories:

"I am a business owner or employee, and I would like to know…"

- If there are programs available to help them plant trees on their property
- What is the Million Tree Challenge, and how could they participate
- If/how they are impacted by city by-laws, including the Tree Protection By-Law
- If there are ways they could help support tree planting or care in London (e.g., Adopt-a-Park, tree planting event sponsorship, etc.)

(Note: Arborists, landscapers, and nurseries likely warrant their own set of user stories, and the sub-committee would especially welcome suggestions for that section)

Contractor, Builder, or Developer User Stories:

"I am a contractor, builder, or developer, and I would like to…."

- What the requirements are (or are typically) around tree protection during the different stages of a construction, infill, or subdivision project
- Are replacement trees required in all cases?
  - Who pays for the replacement trees?
  - Who plants the replacement trees?
  - Where do the replacement trees get planted?

- If they are required to water trees during a construction project
- What the penalties are for failing to protect trees correctly
  - Who to contact if there is concern that trees aren't being protected correctly (we'd suggest this be made readily available in case there was a situation where an employee felt the need to report an employer)

- How to apply for a tree cutting permit
- What is the Million Tree Challenge, and do the trees planted in e.g. new subdivisions count towards it? (If so, what is the process? Do they get credit for those plantings in some way?)
- What are the Tree Planting Standards?
    - What are the penalties if they are not followed?

School, Community Group or Charity User Stories:

- What sort of funding there is available to support tree planting in London?
- Does the City offer any educational programs or activities around urban forestry that schools or community groups might be able to tap into?
- If there are ways they might be able to access free trees for their property?
- How they might volunteer?
- What is the Million Tree Challenge, and how could they get involved?

2) Possible Search Terms

It would be good if the City could assign what page certain search terms direct to, so you don't, for example, end up with the most recent Planning & Environment Committee minutes as your first result for a query like "urban forestry".

Search terms that the City may wish to assign specific results for include:

- Forestry, Urban Forestry
- Trees
- Tree Cutting, Tree Clearing, Clear-cutting
- Tree Planting
- Tree Protection
- Tree Care, Tree Maintenance
- Million Tree Challenge
- Tree Grants or Funding
- Free Trees, Tree Giveaways
- Seedlings
- Memorial Trees
- Woodlands
- National Forest Week

Additional Suggestions and Concerns with the City of London Website

Generally speaking, we found a lot of confusion and inconsistency around navigation around urban forestry topics on the City's website. It is clear there needs to be a more regular process for reviewing and updating links and content, and that doing so should be assigned to an annual work plan for a member of the Urban Forestry staff.

We also found that the City's "big button" approach to content on upper-tier pages made it feel like there was no particular thought or system to how information was being presented, but rather that it was just being added in a piece-meal fashion. It made it hard for a user to understand the big picture for any given page.

The below suggestions mark some short-term improvements we'd recommend to navigation and content, however, in the redevelopment of the City's website, the user stories mentioned above will likely be the better tool to help ensure that all necessary content is present. (I.e., we felt it did not make sense to go through making suggestions for all the additions that may need to be made to these specific pages if these pages may not exist after the impending redesign).

Navigation from "City Hall A-Z" (under "City Hall" tab) to Information on Trees and Forests:
(http://www.london.ca/city-hall/A-Z/Pages/default.aspx)

- "Trees – City Inventory" does not link to the inventory (Maintaining Tree Inventory), but rather to Urban Forestry (note: not the same page as Trees and Forests)
- There is currently no link to the Trees and Forests page
    - May be beneficial to add "Forests" link as well (direct to "Trees and Forests" page)
    - Million Tree Challenge could also show up here
- "Trees, Lawns and Gardens" links to Lawns and Gardens
    - This page has no information on trees and does not even mention "trees" in the title when you get there, so the link should be renamed to reflect this

"Grants" Page
(http://www.london.ca/city-hall/funding-grants/Pages/default.aspx)

- The grants page currently only provides two buttons at top level: "Arts & Heritage" and "Community Funding". There is no mention of "Trees" at the top level, and it is needed, as most people won't think of "trees" as "community funding".
    - Could be listed as "Funding for Trees" or "Funding for Environment"
    - Alternatively, it may be helpful to divide funding opportunities into those open to residents, those for organizations, businesses, etc. This would aid in informing residents that they have access to the TreeMe program, for example
    - To help businesses know they can access this kind of funding, please add information on TreeMe to the Financial Incentives page (*Home/Business/Planning and Development/Fees and Incentives or* http://www.london.ca/business/Planning-Development/fees-incentives/Pages/Financial-Incentives.aspx

- The eligibility criteria for TreeMe should state "Charities", rather than "Not-for-Profits" (assuming the requirement is to be a registered charity and not a not-for-profit, which is a designation CRA uses for things such as sports teams and specifically excludes registered charities)
- May be helpful to indicate the types of groups or projects previously funded as examples
- The description noting that small groups of neighbors can access up to $3,000 from TreeMe make it appear that $3,000 is the upper limit. This should be expanded to note that registered charities can receive up to $50,000

Trees and Forests Page:
Home/Residents/Environment/Trees and Forests, https://www.london.ca/residents/Environment/Trees-Forests/Pages/default.aspx
- By-law information is currently separated and in different locations on the website, so it is not clear that there are multiple by-laws that apply to different trees
  - Would be beneficial to have a flow chart or table showing which trees are protected by which by-law (Boulevard Tree Protection By-law, Tree Protection By-Law, and the Tree Protection Plan information included in the "Design Specifications & Requirements Manual")

Lawns and Gardens Page:
Home/Residents/Property Matters and Taxes/Lawns and Gardens, http://www.london.ca/residents/Property-Matters/Lawns-Gardens/Pages/default.aspx
- Add information on getting a street tree and/or a free tree for your yard on here
- Could also add information on when to water your street tree

Community Projects Page:
Home/Residents/Parks/Community Projects, http://www.london.ca/residents/Parks/Community-Projects/Pages/default.aspx
- Link to information on the Million Tree Challenge
- Link to the Native Edible Trees page (currently located at https://www.london.ca/residents/Environment/Trees-Forests/Pages/EdibleTree.aspx)

Business page:
Home/Business, http://www.london.ca/business/Pages/default.aspx
- Should include information on Tree Permits and the Tree Protection By-law under "Permits and Licenses")

Participating in the Planning Process page:
Home/Business/Planning and Development/Participating in the Planning Process, https://www.london.ca/business/Planning-Development/participating/Pages/default.aspx
- This page links to the pages "Having your Say: Public Participation Meetings" and "Citizen's Guide to Land Use Planning", both of which should be accessible thorough the "Residents" tab: it was very surprising to see that this resource had only been made available on the business section of the website!