Trees and Forests Advisory Committee

Report

The 6th Meeting of the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee
July 28, 2021
Advisory Committee Virtual Meeting - during the COVID-19 Emergency

Attendance   PRESENT: A. Morrison (Chair), A. Cantell, M. Demand, J. Kogelheide, P. Nicholson, and A. Valastro; A. Pascual (Committee Clerk).

ABSENT: A. Hames and S. Thapa.

ALSO PRESENT: T. Arnos, M. Brown, K. Hodgins, A. Macpherson, L. McDougall, P. McKague, K. Scherr, and M. Schulthess.

The meeting was called to order at 12:15 PM; it being noted that the following Members were in remote attendance: A. Cantell, M. Demand, J. Kogelheide, A. Morrison, P. Nicholson, and A. Valastro.

1. Call to Order

1.1 Disclosures of Pecuniary Interest

That it BE NOTED that no pecuniary interests were disclosed.

2. Consent

2.1 5th Report of the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee

That it BE NOTED that the 5th Report of the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee, from its meeting held on June 23, 2021, was received.

2.2 Letter of Resignation - R. Mannella

That the letter of resignation from R. Mannella BE RECEIVED.

3. Sub-Committees and Working Groups

3.1 Education and Outreach Sub-Committee Update

That the following actions be taken with respect to the Education and Outreach Sub-Committee Update:

a) the attached documents from the Education and Outreach Sub-Committee BE FORWARDED to Civic Administration for consideration; and,

b) the above-noted documents BE RECEIVED.

4. Items for Discussion

4.1 Urban Forestry Communications Strategy - Update - RESUBMITTED

That it BE NOTED that the attached presentation from M. Brown, Communications Specialist and P. McKague, Director, Strategic Communications and Government Relations, with respect to the Urban Forestry communications strategy, was received.

4.2   City's Tree Watering Strategy - Update - RESUBMITTED

That it BE NOTED that the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee held a general discussion with respect to the City's tree watering strategy.

4.3   Creating Ecosystems - Update - RESUBMITTED

That it BE NOTED that the presentation as appended to the agenda from L. McDougall, Landscape Architect, Parks Planning and Design and A. Macpherson, Division Manager, Parks Planning and Operation, was received.

4.4   London Hydro Tree Planting Guidelines

That it BE NOTED that the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee held a general discussion with respect to London Hydro Tree Planting Guidelines; it being noted that T. Arnos, Environmental Supervisor provided an overview of the guidelines.

5.   Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 PM.

URBAN FOREST STRATEGY COMMUNICATION STRATEGY
QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION ITEMS FROM THE TFAC EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE

Date: July 19, 2021

OVERVIEW

The creation of a communication strategy is an important strategic action under the "Engage the Community" strategic direction within the Urban Forest Strategy (UFS):

17.5 Develop and implement a comprehensive communication strategy. Ensure that the strategy is coordinated by Corporate Communications and all City departments participate in its development so that initiatives are coordinated and can be rolled out smoothly in the appropriate season (e.g., green-waste recycling in the fall, water conservation during the summer months, tree cutting permit to avoid the bird nesting season, etc.).

The TFAC Education & Outreach Sub-Committee has been leading the TFAC effort to contribute to education and outreach activities under the UFS. At our committee's July meeting, we hope to gain a better understanding of the current state of the Communications Strategy, the process for its development, and how TFAC can best contribute to that process.

To that end, the sub-committee has prepared the following questions in advance for the presenters:

1. **General Questions**

   1.1 What staff/how many are going to be working on the Communications Plan for the Urban Forest Strategy, and from which departments?

   1.2 What budget has been allocated to the Communications Plan, so that our recommendations are at the right scale?

   1.3 What is the project timeline?

   1.4 How does info move from "content" to "design"? (Does Forestry provide the info and then Communications turn into a communications piece?)

2. **TFAC Participation in the Communications Plan Development Process**

   2.1 As TFAC, how can we be most useful in contributing to the Communications Strategy development process? Are there specific sections Communications would like to see TFAC contribute towards?

   The Education & Outreach Sub-Committee so far has on our radar:

   - Scan of successful communication and marketing strategies being used for urban forestry in other communities
   - Developing ideas for messaging
   - Developing a list of proposed promotional pieces
   - Proposing partnership, event, and other opportunities specific to London

   2.2 What is the message and graphic design development process like at the City? Is there a way for TFAC to be involved in that?

WEBSITE FEEDBACK

In the same vein, the TFAC Education & Outreach Sub-Committee have been providing detailed but piecemeal feedback on the Trees section of the City website on a monthly basis for the last couple of months. This has been done in support of strategic action 17.6:

"Make the City website and staff directory more accessible/navigable to make it easier for the public to contact staff with questions or concerns about the urban forest."

As members of the broader public, we see TFAC as having much to offer as a fresh set of eyes reviewing the website content. However, we would like to ask staff:

1. Is there a better way to do this? Is there someone specific our feedback should be directed to?

   Noting that we've found so far that we value having ability to provide a mix of detailed, "big picture", and technical feedback, which may to go to different people or departments depending.

Thus far, some of our overarching / "big picture" feedback includes:

1) Context is needed

Many sections of the website seem to provide information without context, which makes it much harder for the general public to understand. A good example is the "Private Trees" page:

https://london.ca/living-london/water-environment/trees/privately-owned-trees

The first paragraph of that page reads:

The City of London Municipal Council approved the new **City of London Tree Protection By-law C.P.-1555-252** at it's November 24, 2020 meeting with it going into effect March 1, 2021. Residents, industry experts, prior users of the permitting system and the Trees & Forests Advisory Committee were consulted as part of the crafting of the by-law.

It provides no overview for Londoners before getting into the by-law, even a simple statement like "Many privately owned trees in London are protected under the new City of London Tree Protection By-Law".

Text on the website tends to go straight into technical detail without context. Our sub-committee would recommend that copy on the website should be written with the general public in mind, and recognize that they may not have as much technical expertise as the City or as much starting familiarity with these topics. Generally speaking, a lot of the City's website language is more reminiscent of staff reports submitted to council or the standing committees than copy that has been written specifically *for* the general public.

2) Pictures are needed

The combination of a lack of pictures and technical language makes the City of London website very cold and unfriendly looking. Is there a reason for this? It is particularly surprising to us in light of the lens used for the creation of the London Plan, which was very much focused on being "general public" friendly.

3) Lack of cross-linking makes information hard to find

Many people might ask a question about a topic coming from two different directions. For example, some people wanting to get a memorial tree planted in a park might first think of them in terms of "trees", while others might think of them in terms of "parks".

Currently, memorial trees on the City website are located under "Parks" instead of "Trees". This makes it hard for folks looking under "Trees" to find them.

More importantly, when a person sees that there is no information on the topic they care about on the section of the website they think it should be, they might just give up. The impulse is to assume that if what they are looking for was something the City had content on, it would be mentioned. So things like memorial trees (called commemorative trees on the website) should really be linked from both listing pages ("Parks" and "Trees").

See:

Trees Listing Page (no commemorative trees mentioned): https://london.ca/living-london/water-environment/trees

Parks & Facilities Listing Page (commemorative trees mentioned): https://london.ca/living-london/parks-facilities

Tree-based funding programs are another good example of this. The City has a section of its website for funding programs, and a section for Trees. Which one should it appear under? People might look for it under either. If we look at the community funding program page and do not see funding programs for trees (e.g. TreeMe) listed, we may not think the program exists at all. That's a missed opportunity to promote it.

But if you house is under the funding page alone, folks visiting the "Trees" section of the website – those who are probably most likely to have a tree-related project in mind – will never hear about it! (And more importantly – be likely to assume it simply does not exist).

So it really needs to be mentioned under both.

See:
Trees Listing Page (TreeMe mentioned): https://london.ca/living-london/water-environment/trees

Community Funding Listing Page (no mention of funding programs for trees): https://london.ca/living-london/community-services/community-funding

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TFAC Education and Outreach Sub-committee
Website Feedback Regarding Reporting a Tree Issue
July 20, 2021

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Comments on the "Report a problem with a tree" page (form)
https://service.london.ca/service-requests/report-forestry-issue/

Comments on Context and Applications:

- There is no context when the "Report a Tree Issue" form is first opened, and it is not clear what all it can do.
    - In particular, it is not immediately clear that a tree can be requested, based on the heading being "Report a Tree Issue". Londoners may not look so far as the drop-down menu upon reading the title – they would just assume it's the wrong spot to request a tree be planted.
    - Requesting a tree to be planted should probably be an entirely separate form for clarity's sake.

- When you open the "Report a Tree Issue" page, the map doesn't specify that the dots on the map are city-owned trees, and there is no text explaining that only city-owned trees are included on the map.
    - There needs to be text explaining how will a person know if a tree is City-owned. This is another example of a City page lacking context.

- Only after selecting an option in the drop-down menu "Issue Details" is some context given. It is not obvious to a new user to the site that the context needed won't appear until they try entering data into the form. The form needs to be more user friendly for the general public, most of whom will have never used it before.

Potential Map-Related Issues:
- The map has no legend! This makes it very hard for the general public to know what to do with it. What are the yellow boxes with tree icon inside? What are the purple lines? Purple dots?

- What if someone has a tree they think is the City's but it does not appear on this map? Who do they contact with questions?

- Unclear whether City accepts reports of issues *on* public property arising from privately-owned trees (e.g. tree has fallen on sidewalk, etc.).

- Dots (trees) are not linked to the GIS information, only to the address, making it hard to tell if it's the right tree (e.g. species is missing, which would be helpful for a lot of folks).

  - The City's tree inventory is on a completely separate part of the website, but it provides information on the species, size, etc. therefore this information isn't at hand even though it exists elsewhere (See the City's tree inventory at: https://london.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ee42a0053fc84b6198fb95dc80cbfff7).

Additional Concerns:
- If you select "Request a Tree to be Planted" under the "Tree Issue" drop down, it directs the user to the page on tree maintenance and watering page, which then directs the user back to the report a tree issue page (circular reference!)
  - Consequently, it appears there is currently no way to request a tree to be planted on the City of London website?
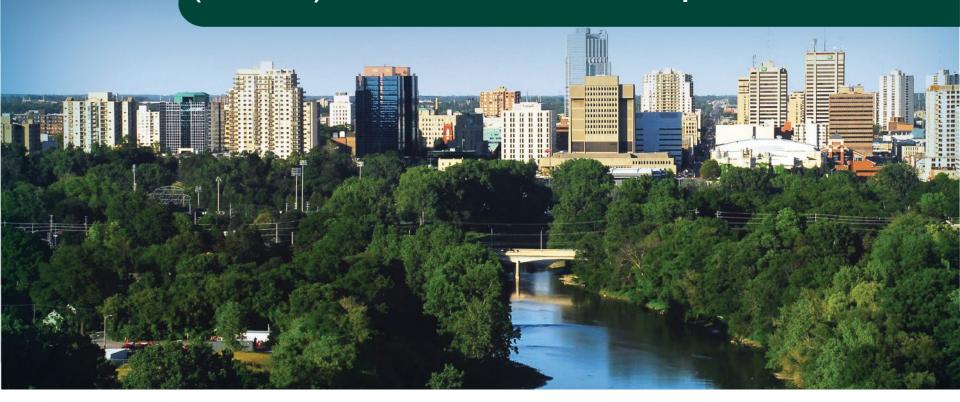
SUGGESTIONS:

1) Add context, legends and instructions for the user on both map pages (https://service.london.ca/service-requests/report-forestry-issue/ and the tree inventory, https://london.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ee42a0053fc84b6198fb95dc80cbfff7)

2) To make requesting a tree more accessible, create a different tree request form or change the name of the existing page (e.g. to "Report a Tree Issue or Request a Tree")

3) Clarify on map that dots only reflect city-owned trees, and what to do if the tree isn't found
  - E.g. if the user thinks a tree is the City's but it does not appear on map, or a privately-owned tree has fallen onto City property

4) It would be beneficial to have an ID number (such as the Object ID that ArcMap requires for each object/point in the main Tree Inventory shape file) so people can indicate which tree the issue pertains to, since some properties have multiple trees
  - Use the data in the tree inventory so that clicking on green dots will yield more information
  - also import existing information basics about each Commemorative Tree (they are pink)

5) Eliminate circular reference (under "Request a tree" drop-down option) by creating a separate form for tree requests

6) Add the tree inventory to the Trees and Forest webpage for people who are interested in learning more about the city's trees

Trees and Forests Advisory Committee (TFAC) communications update

July 28, 2021

Engaging the community

The Educational Initiatives and Outreach Subcommittee (EIOS) of the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee (TFAC) has provided suggestions to assist the City in engaging the community.

- These suggestions were designed to aid the City in addressing two of its strategic goals:

- Strategic Goal 15: Consult and cooperate with citizens at the neighbourhood level to **embrace citywide urban forest goals** and objectives

- Strategic Goal 17: **Facilitate public understanding** of urban forest management

2014 City of London Urban Forest Strategy (UFS)

Before we get to the more recent EIOS suggestions, there were three action items from the 2014 Urban Forest Strategy to address:

- 15.2 **Prepare tree care or tree information cards** for species-specific practices like tree watering and species identification, and identifications of their locations using the tree inventory.

- *Given that the City's ability to reach residents digitally through our website and various social media platforms has grown significantly since 2014, the Communications team feels that there are more cost effective, efficient and environmentally sound ways to share this information with residents.*

2014 City of London Urban Forest Strategy (UFS)

- 17.6 **Make the City website and staff directory more accessible**/navigable to make it easier for the public to contact staff with questions or concerns about the urban forest.

- *When the new website was rolled out in 2020, the decision was made to eliminate the staff directory to improve cyber security. That said, the new website is also much easier to navigate and all of the main pages under the "Trees" heading have easy-to-identity contact information listed.*

- 17.5 **Develop and implement a comprehensive communication strategy**. Ensure that the strategy is coordinated by Corporate Communications.

- *Communications has worked with Urban Forestry staff to develop ongoing communications that **embrace citywide urban forest goals** and **facilitate public understanding**.*

Suggestions from the Educational Initiatives and Outreach Subcommittee

In 2020, the EIOS provided a list of suggestions to help residents **embrace citywide urban forest goals** and **facilitate public understanding**.

From that list of suggestions, there has been progress made toward some **successes**, decisions made that can lead to **alternative solutions**, and **opportunities for further collaboration**.

Successes

- The main landing page for all content related to trees at london.ca/trees has been revised.

- Note that the treeME grant program and Veteran Tree Incentive Program areas are much easier to find.

- Matthew Brown is working with Jill-Anne Spence and Andy Beaton to implement suggestions and address comments from the May 2021 TFAC EIOS website document.

Privately owned trees

Learn more about the private Tree Protection By-law, apply for a tree permit and find helpful tips for taking care of your trees.

City trees

Learn how City owned trees are taken care of and report issues with City trees in your neighbourhood.

Report a problem with a tree

Report tree issues such as a fallen branch or dead tree. Request a tree planting or tree inspection.

Tree planting and watering

Learn how to request a tree for the City boulevard in front of your residence and how to properly water your trees.

Maintenance and trimming

Learn about how the City maintains trees in London, how trees may be effected by construction and how to protect tree roots.

Pests and diseases

Learn more about pests and diseases that could be a risk to trees in our community and how to protect your trees from them.

treeME grant program

Learn more about treeME, a community grant program that provides London residents with the funds to plant trees on private property in their neighbourhoods.

Veteran Tree Incentive Program (VTIP)

The City is helping Londoners maintain their large veteran trees for longer with a one-year pilot program.
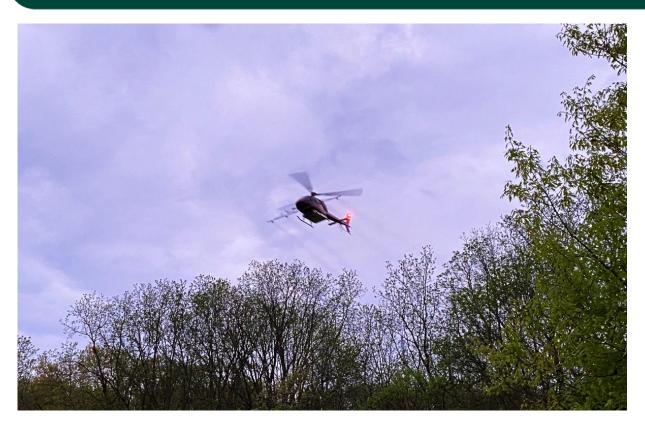
Successes cont.

- The Communications team has worked with Forestry Operations on social media campaigns and electronic billboard content encouraging residents to care for their trees in summer months.

Successes cont.

- The Communications team continues to work with Jill-Anne Spence and the Urban Forestry team to educate residents about L.D.D. (Lymantria dispar dispar, formerly known as the gypsy moth) in an effort to protect urban forests.

Alternative solutions

- Original suggestion: Produce fact sheets and/or tri-fold pamphlets with information on a range of tree care topics.

- *As noted previously, the City's digital reach is quite broad and the Communications team feels that a digital campaign would be cost effective, efficient and environmentally sound.*

- Original suggestion: Determine if the London Free Press (LFP) would be willing to collaborate to publish a series of articles.

- *The City of London does not have in-kind advertising available from the LFP for this topic, but we can leverage our relationships with groups such as London Environmental Network, Green Economy London, etc. to engage with the community.*

Opportunities for further collaboration

- The TFAC EIOS made the following additional suggestions that warrant further discussion:

- For the City of London to develop an annual program with clear budget for educational activities.

- Undertake a "roving tree tag" initiative to temporarily place oversized information tags on trees in parks across London.

- *The City doesn't currently have the budget for these broad initiatives, but Urban Forestry continues to educate on L.D.D.*

- Hold an annual information session for landscapers and other related contractors.

- Hold an annual information session on tree care for the public.

- *While the City hasn't held in-person public information sessions due to COVID-19, it is something we can consider moving forward.*

Questions and next steps

- Any questions?

- The Communications team will continue to implement suggestions and address comments from the May 2021 TFAC EIOS website document and will report back at the next TFAC meeting.