



SUBJECT: Proposed Corporate Tree Protection and Enhancement Policy

TO: Environment, Infrastructure & Community Services Cttee.

FROM: Roads, Parks and Forestry Department

Report Number: RPF-01-22

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 100-02

Date to Committee: February 3, 2022

Date to Council: February 15, 2022

Recommendation:

Approve the Corporate Tree Protection and Enhancement Policy, attached in Appendix A to roads, parks, and forestry department report RPF-01-22.

PURPOSE:

Vision to Focus Alignment:

- Increase economic prosperity and community responsive city growth
- Support sustainable infrastructure and a resilient environment
- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture

Background and Discussion:

The importance of trees and the value they provide to municipalities, specifically as it relates to climate change mitigation has been the focus of municipal discourse over the last several years across Ontario and Canada. It is clear now more than ever, urban, and peri-urban regions need trees, as they provide a great deal of social, environmental and economic benefit to a community.

The development of a corporate-wide tree protection and enhancement policy provides a framework for the improvement of several bylaws, policies, guidelines, and city-wide programs, so they are clear and consistent in their approach and aligned with the City's strategic direction as it pertains to the Urban Forest.

The policy also satisfies a legislated requirement of the Municipal Act. Section 270 (1) which states:

"A municipality shall adopt and maintain policies with respect to the following matters:

7. The manner in which the municipality will protect and enhance the tree canopy and natural vegetation in the municipality."

The Corporate Tree Protection and Enhancement Policy is organized into 4 categories with corresponding policy statements which inform each category:

1. Preserve and Protect
2. Maintain and Monitor
3. Establish, Replace and Enhance
4. Engage and Collaborate

Strategic and sustained investment will be key to the appropriate management of tree-related opportunities and challenges as they arise and evolve. Urban forests have tremendous capacity to provide increasing benefits and services to the community as they mature. This policy will help to enrich the City's urban forest and support the 25-year Strategic Plan goal of achieving 35% canopy cover by 2041.

Strategy/process

The Forest Protection branch which administers both public and private tree bylaws, has been actively engaged with internal and external stakeholders as it relates to tree preservation, as well as providing inter-departmental support with respect to construction related impacts to trees from private developments and public projects.

Staff have identified the need to establish a corporate wide policy for tree preservation and enhancement, that will help to inform the future refinement and alignment of corporate programs and guidelines which impact the city's tree canopy. This alignment will ensure that no matter the scale or context of designs, construction, or planning, the management of the City's urban forest and natural assets is done so in a consistent manner.

For example, it is important to ensure consistency with respect to compensation requirements for tree loss through the development process, which is governed by the Planning Act, whereby tree bylaws do not have authority (Municipal Act). Rather, compensation criteria for tree loss and replacement is captured under site plan guidelines administered through the Planning Department.

The City currently has a corporate tree management policy which addresses the need to protect City-owned trees and compensate for those requiring removal. Given the urban forest is comprised of both public- and privately-owned trees, the establishment

of a city-wide protection and enhancement policy establishes a clearly defined Corporate position as it relates to the value of trees and the urban forest as a whole. This is policy will directly benefit the administration of both tree bylaws with that clearly defined position.

Additionally, the Tree Preservation and Enhancement policy will provide clarity with respect to the incorporation of natural assets into the City's Asset Management Program and Plan. It also is directly aligned with the City's Official Plan and supports Urban Forestry goals established within Vision to Focus.

Options Considered

With the legislative requirement under section 270 (1)(7) of the Municipal Act, staff have conducted a municipal scan and found that some municipalities had satisfied this requirement through their respective Official Plan updates. The City has included verbiage within the new Official Plan that is specific to Urban Forestry. However, this information is specific to the planning process, and the inclusion of specific policy statements that can be applied to other corporate programs also, would be considered out of scope. This policy addresses that gap with supplemental information to the Official Plan which provides a clearly defined framework for future program refinement.

Financial Matters:

The establishment of this policy may introduce indirect costs to future programs as related guideline documents are refined and aligned, which may increase construction costs for projects both internally and externally in order to enhance the health of the tree canopy. However, through appropriate management programs and the implementation of best practices, the long-term lifecycle replacements for both hard and soft assets have the potential to be extended, which will result in associated life cycle cost savings.

Climate Implications

By establishing a tree protection and enhancement policy that can be applied to all projects, the City will have a framework to more effectively manage the urban forest. This will directly support the increase of the City's tree canopy cover, which provides direct benefits to climate mitigation through stormwater absorption, carbon sequestration, filtering air particulates, and reducing heating and cooling costs.

Engagement Matters:

Internal and external stakeholders were consulted throughout the policy development process. A virtual public information centre (PIC) was also held in October 2021, which introduced the policy and guiding principles. In addition, a dedicated page has been established on the Get Involved Burlington webpage with additional information for residents to access. Feedback from the PIC was integrated into a Council workshop that was launched at the end of November 2021. Concurrently, Forestry staff consulted with other departments on the policy on several occasions with the most recent being a facilitated discussion. The feedback received throughout this consultation process has been incorporated into the policy document.

Conclusion:

The establishment of a corporate wide tree protection and enhancement policy will provide a framework for the consistent management of the City's Urban Forest. Long term, this will support the City's Vision to Focus goal of achieving 35% canopy cover by 2041, and in doing so, will directly benefit the City's efforts toward fighting the effects of climate change.

Respectfully submitted,



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Appendices: (if none delete section)

A. Tree Protection and Enhancement Policy

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.