

May 31, 2023

Good morning Chair Nisan, Mayor Meed Ward and Members of Council

BurlingtonGreen is pleased to provide input for a number of agenda items for the June 1st Environment, Infrastructure and Community Services Committee meeting. I hope you find the information provided to be helpful for your discussions and consideration. It is presented in the order of agenda listed items:

1. **Community Gardens -RCC-06-23:**

Some background: BurlingtonGreen was pleased to leverage Provincial funding to partner with the City to establish the first public community garden (at Central Park) back in 2012. We initiated this 2-year pilot project, responsive to significant community interest, recognizing the environmental benefits of providing educational and hands-on opportunities to grow local, healthy, organic, close-to-home food. The reason(s) our organization opted to decline continued leadership of this popular service was twofold; we recognized the City could more quickly scale the opportunity city-wide; and our belief that local food security should be a core service provided by the City vs a not-for-profit led program. We continued to host the associated Grow to Give food donation program (donating more than 8600 lbs of produce), for many years, while the City (through the leadership of Michelle Bennett) did a tremendous job adding and managing more community gardens throughout Burlington.

Input: The combination of reduced suitable land available for home gardens due to increasing urban density, the escalating costs of food, and the growing implications of climate change, (and thus importance of local food security), warrants further investment of funding thereby providing the capacity to operate and sustain this important community and environment benefitting service.

2. **Public Tree By-law amendment - RPF-06-23:**

Question: if the decision is made to amend the tree bylaw by eliminating the Council approval requirement, will there be ongoing postings on the city website of all trees approved for removal in advance of them being removed, including a brief description of the supporting rationale?

3. **Tree Planting Initiatives - RPF-05-23:**

Some background: BurlingtonGreen has been pleased to collaborate with many different City Forestry Department Managers and staff over the years to plant and care for thousands of trees throughout Burlington. The first *Green Up* event took place at Lasalle park in 2012, and has gone on to become an established annual event that the community looks forward to each year. We also visioned and established an annual TLC (Tree Loving Care) fall stewardship event to educate the community and

leverage their volunteer time to learn about and care for the trees previously planted at Green Up events, thereby supporting some of the City Forestry Dept capacity issues for tree project maintenance.

Our annual Tree Photo Contest spreads positive awareness about the beauty and importance of local trees in Burlington, and our popular educational webinars/guided hikes with knowledgeable and enthusiastic City Forestry staff guest presenters continue to provide valued engagement offerings that the community embraces, and benefits from.

Input: An effective tree protection bylaw **and** scaled tree planting **and** ongoing tree care/maintenance **and** effective community engagement, are essential to grow and sustain a healthy urban forest, and achieve the City's ambitious goal of 35% canopy cover by 2040.

Therefore, we concur that the current by-law wording should be revised ' to encompass a greater range of tree establishment and enhancement activities, such as pre- and post-planting activities in the interest of improving long-term tree survivorship as well as fixed cost maintenance subsidies to support significant tree retention'.

Additionally, we offer the following suggestions for your awareness and consideration:

a/In addition to provincial and federal grant funding opportunities BurlingtonGreen (and the City) are able to leverage, our organization is regularly approached by private sector representatives keen to fund and participate in community tree planting initiatives. We welcome further discussions with City Forestry staff to potentially establish a longer-term coordinated framework with identified planting locations, project scope, and costs, so the annual opportunity can be more cost-efficient and sustainably funded via corporate and grants support, thereby reducing tax payer costs.

b/Our understanding is that the current format of the City's Tree Giveaway opportunity can benefit from enhancements in the areas of tree recipient and broader community education, the measurement of successful tree establishment/survival in Burlington, and thus, accountability of the program's contribution to the City's urban forest canopy growth target. Best practice research combined with direct experience in supporting and promoting prior tree giveaways, has resulted in some helpful (and efficiency factored) recommendations we have been pleased to offer to City Forestry staff. One example includes recipient tree location mapping and reporting, similar to the city-wide clean up locations managed by BurlingtonGreen - easy to do, accountable and very popular with the community.

c/ Community members love to see government and ENGO's collaborating, welcoming residents to learn about and actively participate in taking visible action to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss, locally. BurlingtonGreen's proven expertise in effective community outreach engagement, along with our profile headquarters located at the popular beach, provide the opportunity to freely share helpful forestry information, and we continue to welcome City Forestry staff to leverage our engagement expertise and location to provide /display forestry resources.

4. **Mind Your Plastics delegation:** *'to inform committee members, staff and the public about plastic waste issues surrounding large events and to receive recommendations on how we can reduce plastic waste at large events.'*

Awareness: We look forward to learning of these recommendations to reduce plastic waste at local events. And it may be helpful for you to know that BurlingtonGreen provides a series of [free event greening guides](#) and eco-friendly dishware sources, to help community members and event organizers minimize their environmental footprint when hosting small gatherings to large scale festivals. Included in the Guides are alternatives to single-use plastics, compliant with Halton Region waste management requirements and recycling technology limitations.

Sidebar: We have guided the City's Event's Department in establishing environmentally-responsible vendor agreements, and we provide audit/accountability report cards for all the events we provide consultation and services for. We have provided our services for 79 events(so far), resulting in an estimated 80,000+ kg (80+ tonnes) of waste diverted from the landfill.

5. **Private Tree Bylaw Program Update- RPF-04-23 :**

Question: BurlingtonGreen periodically receives community inquiries about the value and effectiveness of the private property tree by-law. With the repeal and replacement of the private tree by-law on April 19, 2022 to streamline the process, do results thus far indicate that the changes to the by-law have improved the effectiveness of the original intent (tree protection), ..or is it too early in the process to determine this?

Recommendation: Congratulations to the City Forestry Dept for creating the helpful Guide to Tree Protection. So that more of the community can become aware of and benefit from this user-friendly resource, it is suggested that a postcard-sized tree information card (on earth-friendly paper stock), with a QR code to the online Guide be produced. BurlingtonGreen would be pleased to share these cards with the community we engage with and are confident that it will be a welcomed promotional tool that will make it easier for people to find tree protection, planting and care resources on the City website.

6. **Better Homes Burlington Program- EICS-04-23:**

Some background: BurlingtonGreen experienced first-hand the negative impact of the Province of Ontario's 2018 decision to eliminate the Green Ontario Fund, leaving community members who were keen to advance home energy conservation measures and retrofits, stranded, often asking our team members questions about alternative opportunities and the sourcing of local suppliers. This was a major setback for the green economy and for timely community action on growing climate change implications. Municipalities such as Burlington have stepped up, recognizing the essential role they provide in proactively leading the community to successfully transition off fossil fuels. With the residential sector responsible for approximately 26% of GHG emissions across the community, the implementation of a user-friendly home energy efficiency retrofit program is an important priority action as identified in the city's Climate Action Plan.

Input: The Better Homes Burlington pilot program attains the key ingredients to achieve successful homeowner adoption of residential decarbonization. Through an accessible, helpful, locally-focused concierge service and the provision of loans to accelerate the adoption of air source heat pumps, the city's established Climate Action Plan goals will be further advanced while reinforcing the important message to all Burlington residents that government and community must come together with the private sector service and product suppliers to prioritize and act on climate action solutions. Starting with a small scale program will provide staff with the experience and knowledge required to work on scaling up a program to engage more homeowners going forward. BurlingtonGreen looks forward to supporting the City with this new program by promoting it widely to the Burlington community.

Thank you for your time in reviewing and considering the above information and input.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Schnurr".

Amy Schnurr
Executive Director
BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association