

MEMO

TO: City Council
FROM: Derek McCaughan
DEPARTMENT: Operations
DATE: December 9th, 2008
SUBJECT: Strategic Urban Forest Management Plan – Status Report

Jim Riddell and I have been made aware of some dissatisfaction regarding progress being made to implement the recommendations contained in the report *Framework for the Strategic Urban Forest Management Plan – final Report 2007*. Staff have prepared the attached table which outlines the recommendations made in the report and a brief status statement on each where possible.

Page 7 of the Executive Summary of the Report states: “Assuming this framework is adopted, the first step will be to develop a Guelph-specific vision...” During Council’s 2008 priority setting exercise, recommendation no. 9, the development of a community vision and goals for the urban forest was targeted to commence in the fourth quarter of this year. While we await the commencement of that initiative, the attached table clearly indicates staff from both Operations and Community Design & Development have been progressing independently and jointly on a number of other recommendations contained within this report.

It is our hope that with the community vision in hand, the 20 year strategic management plan with its four (4) nested five (5) year management/operating plans can be developed. Staff acknowledge the success of this initiative is dependant on public engagement and support. We look forward to the anticipated and pending public process.

Regards,



Derek J. McCaughan
Director

DJM:

Attachment

Cc: Jim Riddell, Director
Community Design & Development Services

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Strategic Urban Forest Management Plan Recommendations – Status Report

Priority	Reference Sections	Recommendation	Current Status & Planned Activity by Department
			CDDS Operations

POLICY & GUIDELINE RECOMMENDATIONS (SECTION 3)			
1	3,7	<p>1. The City should ensure that all policy revisions and updates define the urban forest, identify it as a high priority for protection, and describe it as "green infrastructure" which needs to be actively managed.</p> <p>2. The City should develop comprehensive City-wide policies and guidelines for tree preservation, replacement and enhancement on both public and private lands (see Section 7).</p>	<p>The Natural Heritage Strategy -- Primary Criteria for protection of woodlots 1ha or greater and linkages for protection.</p>
1	3,7	<p>3. The City should commit to protecting and, where feasible, enhancing the natural linkages within the City and to the County Identified through the City's Natural Heritage Strategy (see Section 8).</p>	<p>The Tree Protection Policy & Guidelines (Draft 2008) to be completed in 2009.</p>
2	3,8	<p>4. The City's tree by-law should be reviewed and updated to be consistent with the Municipal Act.</p>	<p>The Natural Heritage Strategy as specified in 1.</p>
3	3,5	<p>5. The City should evaluate if existing staffing is adequate to review and enforce tree protection on development sites once more comprehensive policies are put in place. Should a new Tree Preservation By-law be passed, additional staffing (e.g., an arborist also trained in by-law enforcement) may also need to be considered.</p>	<p>Tree By-law is identified in Capital budget PL0020 Environmental Initiatives for 2009-2010 development. 2nd Environmental Planner has been hired to develop, implement and enforce policies and guidelines</p>

STRATEGIC PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS (SECTION 4)

1	4	6. The City should develop at Strategic Urban Forest Management Plan and adopt a 20-year strategic planning approach with 5-year management plans and annual operating plans nested within the 20-year plan.	Funding identified in PL0030 Urban Forest Management in Capital Budget 2009-2014
1	4	7. The City should adopt the principle of adaptive management to ensure that management approaches and priorities can be adjusted as new information is obtained.	Funding identified in PL0030 Urban Forest Management in Capital Budget 2009-2014
1	4	8. The City should develop and use a series of criteria and indicators to track progress towards short and long-term objectives.	Funding identified in PL0030 Urban Forest Management in Capital Budget 2009-2014

COMMUNICATION RECOMMENDATIONS (SECTION 5)

1	5,4	9. The City should host workshops or public meetings to get community input into the vision and goals for the Strategic Urban Forest Management Plan (SUFMP).	Funding identified in PL0030 Urban Forest Management in Capital Budget 2009-2014
1	5,4,3	10. The City should explore options for providing support and coordination of ongoing and potential volunteer activities related to tree planting in the City.	Facilitation of annual volunteer planting events are on-going. 2008 Tree Plantings: 2000 by Rotary Club, 3500 by OPIRG. Other initiatives include woodlot clean-up and woodchip trails installation at Norm Jary Park in conjunction with Onward Willow.
2	5,4	11. The City should support, and provide the resources for, the creation of an Urban Forestry Management Plan Technical Steering Committee to review and evaluate the status of the SUFMP.	
2	5,3	12. The City should explore mechanisms for more inter-departmental coordination regarding	On-going discussions with Environmental Planners, Park Planners and Engineering staff re: tree protection and retention

		proper protection and management of the City's green infrastructure (i.e., its trees) and educate about tree protection guidelines, policies and best practices.		
1	5,3	13. The City should expand its public education initiatives by (a) updating and enhancing its on-line urban forestry resources, (b) consider offering urban forestry workshops for residents, and (c) exploring other educational opportunities with other partners (e.g., the University of Guelph).		Forestry display and informational brochures on tree health care as part of annual Operations Department open house,

INVENTORY RECOMMENDATIONS (SECTION 6)

1	6,4	14. The City should determine specific goals for a tree inventory and develop a system of data collection and asset management in the SUFMP.	Funding identified in PL0030 Urban Forest Management in Capital Budget 2009-2014	Forestry has worked with Info. Tech. to develop a tree inventory and analysis system using a hand-held GPS unit that downloads and links field data to electronic work orders. In service since June 2007. Trees inventoried to date: 4339.
1	6	15. The City should complete a tree inventory for all trees on City lands outside of natural areas as part of the first 5-year management plan (refer to Section 4).	Funding identified in PL0030 Urban Forest Management in Capital Budget 2009-2014	
2	6,7,3	16. The City should collect the tree inventory based on SYNERGEN and use the UTC GIS Toolbox to monitor overall tree canopy cover in the City, and help identify potential planting locations.	Funding identified in PL0030 Urban Forest Management in Capital Budget 2009-2014	Operations in conjunction with IT have commenced this process.
2	6	17. The City should explore options for administering and maintaining their forestry asset management system (e.g., tree inventory software, database, etc.) as it develops.	Funding identified in PL0030 Urban Forest Management in Capital Budget 2009-2014	
3	6,3	18. The City should complete a tree inventory for all municipal woodlands based on accepted forest stand inventory protocols as part of the second 5-year management plan (refer to Section 3).	Funding identified in PL0030 Urban Forest Management in Capital Budget 2009-2014	

URBAN FOREST STRATEGY & SUSTAINABILITY RECOMMENDATIONS (SECTION 7)

1	7,3,4	<p>19. Comprehensive specifications for tree preservation that can be consistently applied to all projects across the City should be developed and implemented. These should include: (1) requirements for newly planted trees that maximize their growth and lifespan potential, (2) requirements for protecting existing trees, and (3) progressive tree cabling practices, integrated with an inspection cycle, to support the preservation of large canopied trees.</p>	<p>The Tree Protection Policy & Guidelines (Draft 2008) to be completed in 2009.</p>	<p>Staff introduced in 2008 a student tree watering /mulching crew---a first to the operation.</p>
1	7,6	<p>20. The City should coordinate an inventory of City trees with a risk assessment of this resource, and commit to implementing corrective measures for identified high risk or hazard trees as a high priority item.</p>	<p>Funding identified in PL0030 Urban Forest Management in Capital Budget 2009-2014</p>	<p>Tree risk assessments are currently completed as part of every service request. Prioritized work orders are then generated electronically based on the tree hazard assessment rating.</p> <p>The draft report for the Royal City Park Plant Material Management Plan has been received by Park Planning. Recommendations are to provide a long term vision for the park's main "soft" landscaping: trees and ground level plant material. The management plan is intended to function as the guide for short term and long term plant maintenance, and for species, timing and locations of removals and new plantings in the park.</p>
2	7	<p>21. The City should establish a pruning cycle and a grid pruning program for street and park trees to shift from a reactive to a proactive maintenance mode.</p>		<p>Staff initiated a 2 week period of street tree grid pruning during the winter of 2007/2008, as a start to preventative maintenance by addressing the branching structure of the trees while their still small ~planted approx. 5 yrs. Forestry staff, along with Horticulture staff also performed dormant pruning in city parks to address tree structure, and sightline and equipment access issues.</p>

2	7,6	22. Once a preliminary City-wide risk assessment has been conducted, the City should implement an inspection protocol for trees that have been identified as having some level of risk possibly in conjunction with pruning activities.	Funding identified in PL0030 Urban Forest Management in Capital Budget 2009-2014	
1	7,6	23. The City should hire additional qualified staff members to support current operations activities, or consider sub-contracting out to (1) catch up on the back-log of tree pruning / maintenance work, (2) undertake an assessment of risk trees on all City lands and, where required, undertake mitigative measures or removals, and (3) increase the tree replacement ratio.		One additional FTE has been requested in the 2009 Operating Budget. Additional resources will be identified following the approval of the Strategic Plan developed in recommendation number 6.
3	7,3,6	24. The City should develop a strategy for the monitoring and control of alien invasive species. Where appropriate the City should coordinate its efforts with agencies such as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Canadian Forest Service, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Grand River Conservation Authority and other area municipalities.	Funding identified in PL0030 Urban Forest Management in Capital Budget 2009-2014	Operations has been monitoring both the Long-horned Asian Beetle's and the Emerald Ash Borer's activities in southern Ontario. In all jurisdictions affected by these parasites, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has provided a leadership role in addressing the infestation.

LANDSCAPE CONNECTIVITY RECOMMENDATIONS (SECTION 8)

3	8,6	25. Once a municipal tree inventory has been undertaken, the City should conduct a study (using GIS) to identify opportunities for reforestation within the City's urban matrix, and work with the County of Wellington and the GRCA to support linkages to natural areas extending outside the City.	Funding identified in PL0030 Urban Forest Management in Capital Budget 2009-2014	
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