



The Corporation of the Town of Tecumseh

Public Works & Engineering Services

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Phil Bartnik, Director Public Works & Engineering Services

Date to Council: July 23, 2024

Report Number: PWES-2024-38

Subject: Amendment to the 2024-2028 PWES Capital Works Plan
Urban Forestry and Naturalization Master Plan

Recommendations

It is recommended:

That Report No. PWES-2024-38 Amendment to the 2024-2028 PWES Capital Works Plan, Urban Forestry and Naturalization Master Plan **be received;**

And that The Urban Forestry and Naturalization Master Plan study, with project expenditures of \$200,000, **be approved and funded** from the Infrastructure Reserve.

Background

Benefits of an Urban Tree Canopy

Well-maintained and healthy trees act as our “green infrastructure.” Trees and (urban) forests reduce stormwater runoff by capturing and storing rainfall in the canopy and releasing water into the atmosphere through evapotranspiration. Other benefits include cleaner air, cooler temperatures, increased property values, and energy savings. In an urban context, street trees define the space of the street, and when mature, provide canopy. They demarcate the pedestrian space, calm traffic and help protect the pedestrian from motor vehicles. When laid out with consistent sizes and alignment, street trees bring order to the street, visually soften the streetscape, and reintroduce nature to the urban street.

Current Tecumseh Tree Canopy Inventory/Funding

Administration currently maintains inventory of all trees within Town rights-of-way. The database inventory for trees includes the GPS location, municipal address, species, diameter at breast height, number of stems, and a health condition rating with the date collected. The inventory was last updated in 2022. The Town currently has approximately 6,139 trees within the rights-of-way, which does not include trees located in Town parks. Tree conditions range from dead/dying, poor, fair, good and excellent. Of the existing 6,139 trees, 29 are classified as dead/dying and 109 in poor condition.

Historically, the Town has allocated annual funding through the Community & Recreation Services Department Operational budget in the amount of \$30,000 for new tree plantings. This value equates to approximately 55 new trees being planted throughout the municipality each year within municipal rights-of-ways and parks.

Ontario Bill 68

Bill 68, entitled Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Act, 2016 received royal assent on May 30, 2017. This bill introduced a series of reforms to the *Municipal Act*, the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* and the *Municipal Elections Act*.

Of the different updates introduced, an amendment to Section 270 of the *Municipal Act* introduced a requirement for all municipalities to adopt and maintain policies related to the protection and enhancement of the tree canopy and natural vegetation within a municipality.

Section 270(1) requires that:

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

1. The manner in which the municipality will protect and enhance the tree canopy and vegetation in the municipality.

The purpose of this Report is to recommend the preparation of an Urban Forestry and Naturalization Master Plan, which will form the basis for the Town to meet the preceding obligations under the *Municipal Act*.

Comments

Climate Change Emergency Declaration – 2019

At the December 10, 2019 Regular Council Meeting, through the adoption of report [CAO-2019-12](#), Council declared a Climate Emergency (Motion: RCM-390/19) to

recognize the need to reduce overall emissions and identify action items, implementation measures and cost requirements to urgently work towards climate change mitigation.

The declaration was in keeping with Council's strategic priorities to make Tecumseh a better place to live, work and invest, and to:

- i. ensure that the Town's current and future growth is built upon the principles of sustainability;
- ii. integrate the principles of health and wellness into all of the Town's plans and priorities; and
- iii. demonstrate a leadership role in the community.

Through the declaration, Administration was directed to identify priority action items, implementation measures and costs to accelerate efforts to prepare for our climate future.

Tree Maintenance and Removal Policy 108 – 2020

At the time Bill 68 was passed, the Town's lone policy related to trees was Policy No. 40/2002 Tree Trimming Policy, which was adopted by Council in 2001. This Policy was updated at the December 8, 2020, Policies and Priorities Committee Meeting under Report [PWES-2020-20](#) along with the Tree Maintenance and Removal Policy 108 (Motion: PPC-14/20). While Policy 108 satisfies a portion of the requirements introduced in Bill 68 regarding "protection of the tree canopy within the municipal rights-of-way and parks," it does not address the requirement for enhancement of the tree canopy and natural vegetation throughout the municipality.

Town Official Plan – 2021

Section 3.14 of the Town's Official Plan discusses the need to reduce the impacts of climate change and air pollution through sustainable, effective and efficient land use. Furthermore, Section 3.14.1 identifies mitigation strategies that the Town will undertake to improve air quality and energy efficiency to reduce the effects of climate change. These include the protection, enhancement and expansion of the urban forest, inclusive of street trees on municipally owned land or as part of new development. Section 3.14.2 recognizes adaptation strategies for new and existing development within the Town, part of which includes the promotion of tree planting in order to minimize the Town's vulnerability to climate change impacts.

Section 7.3 of the Official Plan outlines the policies of Urban Design that the Town will strive to fulfill. One of the components highlights how the Town shall enhance the

character of valued streetscapes and community areas by providing shade through natural means to provide comfortable outdoor environments.

Increased Tree Plantings – 2024

At the February 13, 2024 Council Meeting, Council approved report [PWES-2024-07](#) for the 2024-2028 PWES Five-Year Capital Works Plan which included the Boulevard Street Tree Enhancement Program (Motion: RCM-21/24). With an allocation of \$125,000 this program will install approximately 250 boulevard trees in 2024, in addition to the 55 trees that are planted annually by Community & Recreation Services (CRS). Report PWES-2024-07 also projected to continue the program throughout the 5-year capital works plan, with an allocation of \$125,000 each year.

Grant Funding Opportunities for Tree Plantings

On May 15, 2024, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and Government of Canada announced a new \$291M initiative under the Green Municipal Fund (GMF) called Growing Canada's Community Canopies (GCCC). The GCCC is funded through the Government of Canada's **2 Billion Trees Program**. This initiative intends to support the timely planting of trees in communities across Canada and help them grow, manage, and protect tree canopies. It aims to address commonly faced barriers when local governments and communities pursue tree canopy expansion projects, including lack of funding and operational support.

Tree planting funding is specific to new tree planting projects that support communities grow, manage and protect their tree canopies. The maximum award of funding for this initiative is up to 50% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of \$10M in project funding (specific to trees) and \$1M in infrastructure activity funding (specific to infrastructure replacement due to tree plantings, i.e. sidewalk replacement). There are a number of intakes for the GCCC, with two intakes in 2024 and subsequent intakes in 2025 and beyond.

Administration reviewed the pre-application and application forms for the GCCC Tree Fund and noted the high-level detail required to be considered for funding. Submission of a detailed planting plan or equivalent is required as a supporting document, which is to include detailed specifications such as site selection, site analysis, stock selection, species selection, soil preparation and planting techniques. The application also seeks details on a tree maintenance plan and plans for monitoring to ensure that recipients of the fund have strategies in place for post-planting monitoring and management to promote longevity. Other details related to the recipients' tree planting project are requested within the application, including engagement strategies, risk management, anticipated community benefits, planting areas (i.e., integrating trees into farmland, contributing to afforestation or reforestation, etc.), and an overall budget and work plan.

With Bill 68 and the recent grant funding opportunities, several proactive municipalities within Ontario have started to complete Urban Forestry and Naturalization Master Plans to ensure they have strategic plans to enhance and protect tree canopies, natural corridors, and position themselves to meet criteria for grant funding programs.

Urban Forestry and Naturalization Master Plan

Completion of an Urban Forestry and Naturalization Master Plan will provide goals and policies to guide Council towards achieving and maintaining an increased urban forestry canopy coverage. The Master Plan is intended to:

- document the benefits of enhanced urban forestry in reducing the impacts of climate change;
- review and document a comprehensive inventory of the Town's existing canopy coverage, while determining a target urban forestry canopy coverage;
- identify key areas for potential urban forestry expansion, including integration within new developments;
- identify key areas for naturalization to support vegetation requirements and community interests in public spaces and parks;
- provide planning recommendations and objectives to achieve the Town's goals to reduce the impacts of climate change through successful tree planting programs and forest restoration on Town-owned properties;
- outline best management practices and techniques for enhancing and maintaining the urban forestry, including protection, replacement, monitoring and communication/engagement strategies with the public and indigenous communities; and
- provide an urban forest cost-benefit analysis to emphasize the benefit communities receive from investing in urban forestry;

The Urban Forestry and Naturalization Master Plan will complement the Town's existing Tree Maintenance and Removal Policy 108, address the gaps that the Town currently has in the areas listed above, and provide a high-level strategic plan to implement sustainable urban design within the Town's urbanized areas.

The Master Plan would also be a key element in meeting criteria in securing future intakes of the Green Municipal Fund's (GMF) Growing Canada's Community Canopies (GCCC) fund.

Consultations

Chief Administrative Officer
Community & Recreation Services
Development Services
Financial Services

Financial Implications

A budgetary estimate of \$200,000 has been proposed for the Urban Forestry and Naturalization Master Plan from the Infrastructure Reserve.

Once the Request for Proposals have been received and evaluated, a subsequent report to Council will be brought forward to award the study, authorize execution of the agreement, and to adjust the budget allocations.

Link to Strategic Priorities

Applicable	2023-2026 Strategic Priorities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sustainable Growth: Achieve prosperity and a livable community through sustainable growth.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Health and Inclusion: Integrate community health and inclusion into our places and spaces and everything we do.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Service Experience: Enhance the experience of Team Tecumseh and our citizens through responsive and respectful service.

Communications

Not applicable ☒

Website ☐ Social Media ☐ News Release ☐ Local Newspaper ☐

This report has been reviewed by Senior Administration as indicated below and recommended for submission by the Chief Administrative Officer.

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Recommended by:

Brian Hillman, MA, MCIP, RPP
Director Development Services and Acting Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment Number	Attachment Name
None	None