

Staff Report

Presented By: Kristen Sears, Planning Policy Coordinator

Meeting Date: December 16th, 2024

Subject: Urban Tree Canopy Plan

Attachment(s): Saugeen Shores Urban Tree Canopy Plan
Urban Tree Canopy Plan Discussion Paper
Environmental Ad Hoc Committee Final Report

Recommendation

That Council approve the Urban Tree Canopy Plan.

Report Summary

This report summarizes the main comments received on the Urban Tree Canopy Plan Discussion Paper and how they were incorporated into the Plan. The recommendations of the Plan are included in this report and the Plan is attached.

Background/Analysis

This report builds on the Urban Tree Canopy Plan Discussion Paper (attached) that was:

- presented and discussed at Committee of the Whole on October 15, 2024,
- posted for community input on Engage Saugeen Shores from October 21, 2024, until November 8, 2024, and
- reviewed and commented on by the Environmental Ad Hoc Committee in its Final Report (attached).

The next section highlights the main comments and how they were addressed in the final drafting of the Plan.

1. Education

An emphasis on education needs to be considered in the Plan.

Response:

The Plan has been revised to better express the importance of education and educational opportunities in recommendations 7 and 17. A section of the Plan now outlines awareness and

education as an important component of the Plan with the identified recommendations also provided. This was a recommendation of Council and the Environmental Ad Hoc Committee and Council.

2. Avoid duplication

Council raised the need to prevent the duplication of policies regarding trees and ensure considered policies are cohesive and streamlined.

Response:

Policy Recommendations regarding trees have been reviewed and will not duplicate or complicate existing policies. Recommendations regarding policies in the Plan address policies that are not already outlined in Town documents, or policies that exist but not to the recommended level of detail or clarity.

3. Funding of tree planting:

A comment at Council was that the Town not only develop plans to plant trees on municipal lands but also ensure that the Town fund the planting of trees on municipal lands.

Response:

Recommendation 7 of the Plan has been revised to include direction to continue to fund planting of trees on municipal lands. It is also noted in the Plan that a “10,000 Tree Planting Initiative” was included in the 2025 Business Plan as a Public Works Future Year Highlight for 2026-2033.

4. Asset Management aspects

Council suggested that the Town review implications of the proposed plan on the Asset Management Plan.

Response:

The Town Asset Management Plan and the Urban Tree Canopy Plan are aligned in their recognition that trees are assets.

As the Recommendations of the Urban Tree Canopy Plan that are relevant to natural assets are implemented, the Asset Management Plan will be updated accordingly.

5. Keeping and maintaining existing trees:

Emphasize and ensure the continued maintenance of the Towns, municipally owned trees.

Response:

Feedback received from public engagement expressed the importance of tree maintenance, tracking and enforcement and in consultation with Williams & Associates, this language has been further noted in the Plan as part of the rationale for an Urban Tree Conservation By-law, as well as maintenance and monitoring of tree canopy health.

6. Urban Tree Conservation By-law

The Environmental Ad Hoc Committee Final Report provided comments on the Urban Tree Conservation By-law.

Response:

The comments formed the basis of Recommendation 21 in the Recommendations table presented further down in this report.

7. Lands outside of the Settlement Area

Introduce a clause in the Plan addressing all other land not contained in the Settlement Area Boundary as identified in Schedule 'C' of the Town Official Plan.

Response:

A clause addressing all other land not contained in the Settlement Area Boundary as identified in Schedule 'C' of the Towns Official Plan has been included to encourage consideration for the recommended strategies and guidelines outlined in the Plan, as per Council's discussion.

8. Community tree planting:

The Town should expand community tree planting programs (i.e., Subsidized tree programs, 10,000 trees, volunteer tracking tree inventory) and identify these within the Plan.

Response:

Additional language has been included in the Plan to address the continued exploration and support of community tree planting programs. It is also worth noting that a "10,000 Tree Planting Initiative" was included in the 2025 Business Plan as a Public Works Future Year Highlight in 2026-2033.

9. Tree Sale diversity:

That the Town incorporate the recommended tree species lists into the Towns Annual Tree Sale Day and diversify the size and profile of trees available for purchase.

Response:

The Town will share the recommended tree species lists identified in Appendix D of this Plan with affiliated coordinators and organizations integral to the Town's Annual Tree Sale Day. Diversification of sizes and profiles will also be considered, allowing greater variation in costs per tree. Updates including educational opportunities through this program will also be further explored.

Summary:

The Urban Tree Canopy Plan project has provided the Town with an opportunity to better understand the current health and condition of tree canopy in Saugeen Shores. It has focused on how existing practices, policies and regulations affect the Urban Tree Canopy while determining what procedures and policies to maintain canopy cover over in the future.

Engagement on The Urban Tree Canopy Plan included community consultation through Engage Saugeen Shores website as well as conversations with interested community groups and a public open house/meeting. Alternative consultation opportunities were also provided to agencies and organizations. Input and feedback received from community engagement opportunities, Town staff, the Environmental Ad Hoc Committee and Council have been considered in the final drafting of the attached Plan.

For convenient reference, the Recommendations are set out in the table and are categorized into short, medium and long term. Short Term means recommendations that can be carried out within the next one (1) to two (2) years. Medium term means recommendations which can be carried out over the next three (3) to five (5) years. Long term means recommendations which can be carried out over the next six (6) to ten (10) years or which require on-going implementation to achieve.

Next Steps:

Once the Urban Tree Canopy Plan is adopted by Council, the recommendations will be incorporated into the Town's infrastructure, asset management, land use, and business planning as well as operating procedures, where applicable.

A draft Urban Tree Conservation By-law will be presented to Council for consideration in early 2025.

Measures to implement the Plan that would entail initiatives, budget expenditures or staffing resources that are not contained in the 2025 Budget will be brought forward to Council for consideration and approval before activated.

Recommendation	Time frame	Priority
Tree Maintenance		
Recommendation 1: Continue to perform corrective pruning on younger trees (and older trees) in Saugeen Shores, particularly in removing codominant stems on younger trees.	Ongoing	High
Recommendation 2: Replace Town-owned Manitoba maple and ash trees with native species.	Long-term	Moderate
Recommendation 3: Update the Town-owned Tree inventory to provide a database that can be updated in live time to support tree management and inclusion of trees as green infrastructure in the Town Asset Management Plan.	Short-term	High
Recommendation 4: Maintain and update, as best practices change, its tree management practices to guide tree establishment, maintenance and removal per ANSI A300 Standards.	Mid-term	Moderate
<p>Recommendation 5: Along trails and in natural areas on Town-owned land:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Control invasive plants such as buckthorn, garlic mustard and Manitoba maple - Plant additional trees and shrubs to occupy the open areas created by invasive species control, and replace the ash trees killed by the Ash Borer. - Shade tolerant trees should be planted in the understory of areas dominated by poplar to diversify the future forest. 	Long-term	Moderate
Tree Planting		
Recommendation 6: Continue to diversify the urban forest by planting less common species of trees including, for example, oaks, sycamore, and hackberry where appropriate.	Long-term	Moderate
Recommendation 7: Continue to develop plans including funding to plant trees on municipal properties, such as road allowances, parks, and facilities where appropriate.	Long-term	High
Recommendation 8: Develop a plan to plant and/or reforest, including consideration of planting small high-density patches (i.e. Miyawaki or micro forests) on Town-owned lands, including the closed landfill in Port Elgin.	Mid-term	Moderate
Recommendation 9: Diversify the tree age and size profile of the Annual Tree Sale.	Short-term	Moderate
Recommendation 10: Limit purchases for the Town's Annual Tree Sale program to native trees and selected non-invasive exotic species as outlined in Appendix C and guide residents to plant trees according to the specifications in Appendix B.	Short-term	Moderate

Development Review		
Recommendation 11: Revise the Development Guide to increase the number of replacement trees to be planted as the size of the tree to be removed increases.	Short-term	High
Recommendation 12: Add policy to Section 2.6 Environmental Features of the Town Official Plan that would increase the number of replacement trees to be planted as the size of the tree to be removed increases	Short-term	Moderate
Recommendation 15: The Town should amend its Official Plan to recognize the public tree (i.e., Town-owned trees) as green infrastructure and inclusion in the Asset Management Policy as non-core, biologic assets.	Short-term	Moderate
Recommendation 14: Expand requirements for compensation of tree removals in planning documents beyond special policy areas to include all of the Settlement Area such that the ratio of planted trees to removed trees should increase with tree diameter.	Short-term	High
Recommendation 13: Align tools that are intended to ensure tree cover is maintained at each step of the development process, particularly the woodlands/heavily treed areas along the shores of Lake Huron and Saugeen River.	Short-term	High
Recommendation 16: The Town should continue to confirm the qualifications for professionals who author or approve Tree Protection Plans, Tree Retention Plans and Hazard Tree Assessment reports.	Short-term	Moderate
Awareness and Education		
Recommendation 17: Engage with and support private and commercial landowners to plant trees on their properties through communications and education campaigns, logistical/technical support.	Short-term	Moderate
Recommendation 18: Consider forming a staff working group that includes representatives from all teams that are involved with the Urban Tree Canopy to harmonize planning for trees in developments/construction, planting, tending, protecting, replacing and benefitting from trees.	Mid-term	Moderate
Recommendation 19: Designate a staff person as the Town Urban Forest Manager to review and coordinate urban forest management activities and staff working group that foster communication among departments, the community and Council.	Long-term	Moderate
Recommendation 20: If the Town forms a citizen-based environmental committee, consider including promotion of Town tree canopy initiatives in the Committee's mandate.	Short-term	Moderate

By-laws		
<p>Recommendation 21: The Town develop a Tree Conservation By-law built on the following objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Active enforcement to protect municipal trees and plants from illegal interference. 2. On privately owned lands: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. protection at the woodlot level by focusing on stands of trees as defined by a Town policy such as woodlots and significant woodlands; and b. for individual trees on smaller lots, focus on preservation education and incentivization through expanding existing subsidized tree planting programs that address public and private lands 	Short-term	High
<p>Recommendation 22: Consider amending the Property Standards By-law (or Clean Yards By-law) to include hazardous trees in Treed Areas.</p>	Short-term	Moderate

Linkages

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Pillar 4: Fostering a Vibrant Place to Live and Visit
- Business Plan Alignment: Development Services Division Highlight

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding

No costs or revenue is associated with this report.

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