

Subject: Tree Program Review - Early Actions

File Number: ACS2024-PWD-PMF-0002

Report to Environment and Climate Change Committee on 18 June 2024

and Council 26 June 2024

Submitted on June 7, 2024 by Allyson Downs, Director, Parks Maintenance and Forestry Services, Public Works Department

and Will McDonald, Interim Director, Climate Change and Resiliency, Strategic Initiatives Department

Contact Person: Tracey-Lee Schwets, Program Manager, Forest Management

613-580-2424 ext. 43202 / Tracey.Schwets@ottawa.ca

Ward: Citywide

Objet : Examen des programmes de plantation d'arbres – Mesures initiales

Numéro de dossier : ACS2024-PWD-PMF-0002

Rapport présenté au Comité de l'environnement du changement climatique

Rapport soumis le 18 juin 2024

et au Conseil le 26 juin 2024

Soumis le 2024-06-07 par Allyson Downs, Directrice, Services d'entretien des parcs et des forêts, Direction générale des travaux publics

et Will McDonald, Directeur par intérim, Services des changements climatiques et de la résilience, Direction générale des initiatives stratégiques

Personne ressource : Tracey-Lee Schwets, Gestionnaire de programme, Gestion forestière

613-580-2424 ext. 43202 / Tracey.Schwets@ottawa.ca

Quartier : À l'échelle de la ville

REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Environment and Climate Change Committee recommend that Council:

1. Approve the amendments to the Commemorative Tree Program (to be rebranded as the “Tree Dedication Program”) with the following 2025 fee structure:
 - a. Personal Dedications (with tag, no plaque): \$995 (+HST) per tree
 - b. Community Dedications (with plaque): \$1,750 (+HST) per tree
2. Approve the approach to proactive right-of-way tree replacements as outlined in this report; and,
3. Approve a new Private Land Tree Planting Program as outlined in this report.

RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité de l’environnement et du changement climatique recommande au Conseil :

1. d’approuver les modifications du Programme d’arbres commémoratifs (qui sera renommé « Programme d’arbres hommages ») concernant le barème de frais de 2025 ci-dessous :
 - a) Hommage personnel (étiquette, sans plaque) : 995 \$ (TVH en sus) par arbre;
 - b) Hommage communautaire (avec plaque) : 1 750 \$ (TVH en sus) par arbre;
2. d’approuver l’approche de remplacement proactif des arbres dans les emprises telle qu’elle est décrite dans le présent rapport; et
3. d’approuver un nouveau programme de plantation d’arbres pour le domaine privé tel qu’il est décrit dans le présent rapport.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Assumption and Analysis

The Tree Planting Strategy is a recommendation of the [Urban Forest Management Plan](#) (UFMP). It is the pathway to achieve the urban canopy cover target of 40 per cent and the recommendations of this report demonstrate quick action towards the Term of Council priority for a city that is green and resilient.

Three of the early actions of the Tree Planting Strategy are changes to the Commemorative Tree Program, a new approach to proactive right-of-way tree replacements, and a new Private Land Tree Planting program.

Commemorative Tree Program Review

The existing Commemorative Tree Program is for the planting of a tree in a City park in memory of a person who has passed away. The cost to the applicant is \$400 (+HST) which includes the supply and installation of the tree, as well as watering for three years. The applicant may purchase a plaque on their own (\$400-\$500) to be installed by the City at no charge. No significant changes have been made to the program framework or cost since amalgamation in 2001 and the current fee charged does not cover the cost to supply, install and water the trees. The program has seen an increased uptake in the past several years, exceeding current staff capacity and creating a waiting list. The administrative requirement of the current program was reviewed to determine more efficient ways to deliver the program.

Staff recommend rebranding the Commemorative Tree Planting Program to the “Tree Dedication Program”. The eligibility under the new program would be expanded with two categories and price points:

- Personal Dedications
 - Loss of an individual or a personally significant milestone, event, or accomplishment (i.e. birth of a child, graduation, anniversary etc.)
 - Dedication recognized by a “tag” on the tree and a new Tree Dedication layer on GeoOttawa
 - Cost to the applicant would be **\$995 + HST** (includes: tree, installation, watering [three years], private utility locates and tree tag with access to GeoOttawa)
- Community Dedications
 - Community leader, milestone, event, or accomplishment significant to the public at large
 - Dedication recognized by plaque and a new Tree Dedication layer on GeoOttawa
 - Dedications would need to be vetted following processes established with Recreation, Culture and Facility Services under the proposed Municipal

Commemoration policy (to be tabled at Community Services Committee on June 25, 2024)

- Cost to the applicant would be **\$1,750 +HST** (includes: tree, installation, watering [three years], private utility locates, plaque, and plaque installation)

The program would be administered within current staff complement in Forestry Services. Hard costs would be recovered through the updated program fees. The proposed program expects fewer plaque requests and satisfies the desire of the public and members of Council to expand eligibility while reducing the administrative work associated with coordination of plaques.

Approach to Right-of-Way Tree Planting

The City is primarily reactive in its approach to planting replacement trees on the right-of-way; meaning a resident or community group typically must request to have a tree(s) planted. Approximately 33 per cent of the trees removed by Forestry Services on the City right-of-way are currently being replaced. Transitioning to a proactive approach for tree replacements would ensure the replacement of lost canopy cover when a tree is removed.

In order to proactively replace trees lost on the City right-of-way, data shows that there is a need to increase caliper tree planting by approximately 2,000 trees per year; a 60 per cent increase to the current annual volume of caliper trees.

Staff recommend a shift in the approach to right-of-way replacements from reactive to proactive; meaning if a tree is removed, it is automatically replaced where space and conditions permit. This approach would be phased in over three-plus years. The estimated resources needed to ultimately achieve the target of approximately 2,000 additional replacement right-of-way trees per year is 1 FTE and approximately \$3 million dollars, recognizing this would be gradually implemented over time. Resources for implementation will be considered through the annual budget process and by leveraging other funding sources, such as Forestry's tree planting fund and external grants (i.e. FCM's Growing Canada's Community Canopies Fund).

Private Land Tree Planting Program

In August 2022, Council directed staff to report back on options to support tree planting on private property following the 2022 derecho. Private lands provide good opportunities to plant more trees while also enhancing public education and awareness of urban forest stewardship. A new Private Land Tree Planting program would include city wide

tree distributions and targeted full-service tree planting in priority areas. In keeping with principles of equity and inclusion, this program would be offered at no charge to the public to remove financial barriers to participation. The program would be administered by a third party, which would include costs of planting events, outreach activities and trees. The estimated cost per year of the program would start at \$234,000. Funding for implementation will be considered through the annual budget process and by leveraging other funding sources, such as Forestry's tree planting fund and external grants (i.e. FCM's Growing Canada's Community Canopies Fund).

Public Consultation/Input

On March 26, 2024, a memo was circulated to members of Council to launch the [Engage Ottawa site for the Tree Planting Strategy](#), which included a survey for residents of Ottawa to gather public feedback on existing tree planting programs and ideas for future programming, with detailed questions on the Commemorative Tree Program as an early action item under the strategy. The survey was open to the public for three weeks and gathered 1,284 responses.

Additionally, staff hosted small group consultation sessions with members of Council in April 2024 to seek their feedback on existing tree planting programs and ideas for future programming. Twenty offices were represented through these sessions either by Councillor's or members of their staff.

Staff attended the Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability (CAFES)-Forêt Capitale Forest (FCF) Tree and Greenspace Caucus in April 2024 to seek focused input on current planting program and ideas for new programming.

RÉSUMÉ

Hypothèses et analyse

La stratégie de plantation d'arbres est une recommandation du [Plan de gestion de la forêt urbaine](#) (PGFU). Il s'agit de la clé pour atteindre la cible de 40 pour cent pour le couvert forestier urbain. Les recommandations du présent rapport proposent des mesures qui permettront d'atteindre rapidement la priorité du mandat du Conseil « une ville verte et résiliente ».

Trois des mesures initiales de la stratégie de plantation d'arbres sont des modifications du Programme d'arbres commémoratifs, et les autres prévoient une nouvelle approche pour le remplacement proactif des arbres sur les emprises de même qu'un nouveau programme de plantation d'arbres pour le domaine privé.

Examen du Programme d'arbres commémoratifs

Le Programme d'arbres commémoratifs actuel vise la plantation d'arbres dans les parcs municipaux en souvenir de personnes décédées. Le coût pour les demandeurs est de 400 \$ (TVH en sus), ce qui comprend l'approvisionnement et la plantation de l'arbre ainsi que l'arrosage pendant trois ans. La Ville peut aussi installer gratuitement une plaque, qui est achetée directement par le demandeur (de 400 à 500 \$). Aucun changement majeur n'a été apporté au cadre ou aux coûts du programme depuis la fusion en 2001, et les frais facturés ne couvrent pas le coût de l'approvisionnement, de la plantation et de l'arrosage des arbres.

. L'intérêt porté au programme a augmenté ces dernières années, si bien que le personnel actuel ne suffit plus à l'administrer et qu'une liste d'attente s'est créée. Les exigences administratives du programme actuel ont été révisées afin de convenir d'un système d'administration plus efficace.

Le personnel recommande d'en changer le nom pour « Programme d'arbres hommages ». Le nouveau programme serait séparé en deux catégories d'admissibilité ayant leurs propres coûts :

- Hommages personnels :
 - Décès d'une personne ou jalon, événement ou succès important sur le plan personnel (naissance d'un enfant, obtention d'un diplôme, anniversaire, etc.).
 - Hommage indiqué par une « étiquette » sur l'arbre et une nouvelle couche sur geoOttawa.
 - Le coût pour le demandeur serait de **995 \$ (TVH en sus)** (approvisionnement et plantation de l'arbre, arrosage pendant trois ans, localisation des services privés et étiquette avec accès à geoOttawa).
- Hommages communautaires :
 - Leaders de la collectivité ou jalon, événement ou succès important pour le grand public.
 - Hommage indiqué par une plaque et une nouvelle couche sur geoOttawa.
 - Les hommages devront être vérifiés selon les processus établis par la Direction générale des loisirs, de la culture et des installations en vertu de la Politique de

commémoration municipale proposée (qui sera soumise au Comité des services communautaires le 25 juin 2024).

- Le coût pour le demandeur serait de **1 750 \$ (TVH en sus)** (approvisionnement et plantation de l'arbre, arrosage pendant trois ans, localisation des services privés, et approvisionnement et installation de la plaque).

Le programme serait administré par les effectifs actuels des Services forestiers. Les coûts essentiels seraient couverts par les nouveaux frais du programme. Il devrait y avoir moins de demandes de plaques, et le programme répondra au désir du public et des membres du Conseil d'élargir l'admissibilité tout en réduisant le travail administratif associé aux plaques.

Approche pour la plantation d'arbres sur les emprises

La Ville est principalement réactive en ce qui concerne le remplacement d'arbres situés sur les emprises, c'est-à-dire qu'il revient généralement aux résidentes et résidents ou aux groupes communautaires de demander qu'un nouvel arbre soit planté.

Actuellement, environ 33 pour cent des arbres abattus par les Services forestiers sur les emprises municipales sont remplacés. La transition vers une approche proactive garantirait le remplacement du couvert forestier perdu lorsqu'un arbre est abattu.

Les données indiquent que, pour remplacer proactivement les arbres abattus sur les emprises de la Ville, il faudrait accroître la plantation d'arbres de calibre d'environ 2 000 unités par année, soit une augmentation de 60 pour cent par rapport au nombre actuel de plantations annuelles, tous programmes réunis.

Le personnel recommande le passage d'une approche réactive à une approche proactive pour le remplacement d'arbres sur les emprises; ainsi, lorsqu'un arbre serait abattu, il serait automatiquement remplacé, pourvu que l'espace et les conditions le permettent. Cette approche serait échelonnée sur au moins trois ans. On estime que, pour atteindre la cible d'environ 2 000 arbres supplémentaires remplacés sur les emprises par année, il faudra un poste équivalent temps plein (ETP) et environ 3 millions de dollars, qui seront obtenus graduellement. Les ressources de mise en œuvre pourront être obtenues au moyen de cycles budgétaires ou d'autres sources de financement telles que le Fonds pour la plantation d'arbres des Services forestiers ou des subventions externes (comme l'initiative Croissance de la canopée des collectivités canadiennes de la Fédération canadienne des municipalités).

Programme de plantation d'arbres pour le domaine privé

En août 2022, le Conseil a demandé au personnel de lui présenter des options pour favoriser la plantation d'arbres sur les propriétés privées à la suite du derecho de cette même année. Les terrains privés offrent de belles occasions d'accroître la plantation d'arbres tout en sensibilisant le public à l'intendance de la forêt urbaine. Un programme de plantation d'arbres pour le domaine privé comprendrait des événements de distribution d'arbres partout dans la ville et un service complet de plantation ciblé dans des secteurs prioritaires. Conformément aux principes d'équité et d'inclusion, ce programme serait offert gratuitement à la population afin d'éliminer les obstacles financiers à la participation. L'administration, qui serait assurée par un tiers, comprendrait les coûts des événements de plantation, des activités de rayonnement et des arbres. Le coût pour chaque l'année est estimé à 234 000 \$. Le financement pour la mise en œuvre pourra être obtenu au moyen de cycles budgétaires ou d'autres sources de financement telles que le Fonds pour la plantation d'arbres des Services forestiers ou des subventions externes (comme l'initiative Croissance de la canopée des collectivités canadiennes de la Fédération canadienne des municipalités).

Consultation et commentaires du public

Le 26 mars 2024, une note de service a été transmise aux membres du Conseil concernant le lancement du [site Participons Ottawa de la stratégie de plantation d'arbres](#), où un sondage permettait aux résidentes et résidents de donner leur avis sur les programmes de plantation d'arbres actuels et leurs idées de nouveaux programmes. Il comprenait aussi des questions détaillées sur le Programme d'arbres commémoratifs en tant que mesure initiale de la stratégie. Le sondage a été en ligne pendant trois semaines, et 1 285 personnes y ont répondu.

En outre, en avril 2024, le personnel a tenu des séances de consultation en petits groupes avec les membres du Conseil afin de connaître leur avis sur les programmes de plantation d'arbres actuels et leurs idées de nouveaux programmes. Au total, 20 bureaux y ont pris part, représentés soit par la conseillère ou le conseiller, soit par des membres de leur personnel.

En avril 2024, le personnel a en outre participé au caucus sur les arbres et les espaces verts des Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability et de Forêt Capitale Forest pour obtenir des commentaires ciblés sur les programmes de plantation d'arbres actuels et des idées de nouveaux programmes.

BACKGROUND

[Putting Down Roots for the Future](#) is the City of Ottawa's 20-year strategic Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP), which was approved by Council in June 2017. It provides a comprehensive long-term vision and strategic direction for Ottawa's urban forest which includes all trees and their habitat on both public and private property. The UFMP is broken down into five four-year management periods. It is jointly implemented by the Forestry Management Branch of the Public Works Department (PW) and the Climate Mitigation Branch of the Strategic Initiatives Department (SI).

In June 2023, Council was provided with an update on the UFMP ([ACS2023-PRE-EDP-0025](#)) with details of work completed in the first management period (2018-2022). At that time, Council approved the workplan for the second management period (2023-2026) which focuses on themes of tree planting, tree maintenance, and community outreach and engagement. The development of a Tree Planting Strategy is the feature project of this management period.

Tree Planting Strategy

The Tree Planting Strategy is the pathway to achieving Ottawa's urban canopy cover target of 40 per cent over time. It will provide residents with equitable access to urban forest canopy cover, in part through a shift from reactive to proactive tree planting. This strategy will also prioritize tree planting efforts by applying an equity approach using socio-economic factors, public health data, and canopy cover data to prioritize tree planting where it is needed the most.

The elements of the Tree Planting Strategy will be developed and implemented incrementally to enable quick actions for change. These elements include:

- reviewing of the City's existing tree planting programs;
- exploring opportunities for new planting programs;
- completing a tree equity analysis to prioritize tree planting in the areas of the city where they are needed the most;
- leveraging funding opportunities for new and existing planting programs;
- developing tree planting guidelines;
- reviewing the tree species and developing recommended tree species lists; and,
- improving integration of tree planting considerations into City initiatives across the corporation.

The tree program review and new program work outlined in this report are part of a set of early actions for the first year of the Tree Planting Strategy.

Legislative Context

The Tree Planting Strategy, and in particular increasing canopy cover with an equity lens, aligns with a number of other City policies, priorities, plans and direction.

The Council-approved [Official Plan](#) gives direction to provide residents with equitable access to urban forest canopy and sets an urban tree canopy cover target of 40 per cent with equity as guiding principle. The Official Plan also states that the City's tree planting and stewardship programs shall prioritize those in support of social equity and health.

The [2023-2026 Term of Council Priority](#) for a city that is green and resilient, has an objective to plant, grow, and preserve the urban tree canopy in parks, and along roadways, with a focus on neighbourhoods with low tree canopy cover.

Several key actions of the draft [Climate Resiliency Strategy](#) link directly to tree planting efforts under the Tree Planting Strategy. In particular, under the pillar of Resilient Natural Environment and Parklands, a key action is to enhance tree canopy, increase shade in parklands, and to raise awareness about trees through public education and stewardship.

Lastly, on August 31, 2022, Council carried [motion no. 2022-81-13](#), directing staff to report back on options to support adding trees on private property to allow residents to replace trees on privately owned land that were lost due to the 2022 derecho. These options have been considered as an early action of the Tree Planting Strategy in this report.

Reviewing the tree planting programs and exploring opportunities for new planting programs will allow staff to build a suite of planting programs which align with the strategic directions as outlined above.

Current Tree Planting Programs

The City provides a variety of programs and projects for tree planting along residential streets, in parks, greenspaces and forested areas with approximately 85,000 to 100,000 trees planted through these programs annually. Most of these programs are offered city wide. A full description of the each of the programs is provided in Document 1, and they are listed below:

- Commemorative Tree Program
- Trees in Trust Program
- Parks and streetscape tree planting projects
- Schoolyard Tree Planting Grant Program
- Community volunteer tree planting projects
- Reforestation / afforestation projects
- Green Acres Rural Reforestation Program

Historically, the Trees for Tomorrow program provided trees to residents to plant on private property. This program was part of the four-year Trees, Reforestation, and Environmental Enhancement (TREE) initiative which ran from 2007-2010. The program provided trees through central and neighbourhood tree distributions and transitioned to direct delivery in the later years.

Public Engagement and Municipal Scan

On March 26, 2024, an [Engage Ottawa site for the Tree Planting Strategy](#) was launched, which included a survey for residents of Ottawa to give their feedback on existing tree planting programs and ideas for future programming. This survey also included detailed questions on the Commemorative Tree Program as an early action item under the Strategy. The survey was open to the public for three weeks and gathered 1,284 responses.

In April 2024, staff hosted small group consultation sessions with members of Council to seek their feedback on existing tree planting programs and ideas for future programming. Twenty offices were represented either by Councillors or members of their staff. Themes from these meetings included interest in increasing tree planting efforts along City streets and greenspaces, providing enhanced communications and outreach to residents, and support for shifting the approach to be more proactive in terms of tree replacements.

Staff attended the Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability (CAFES)-Forêt Capitale Forest (FCF) Tree and Greenspace Caucus in April 2024 to seek focused input on current planting program and ideas for new programming.

Decisions have also been informed by information collected from 29 municipalities and 11 organization across Canada on various aspects of this report including tree commemorations, the approach to right-of-way tree planting and operations, and private land tree planting programs.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this report is to provide recommendations for early actions under the Tree Planting Strategy. These include:

1. Changes to the Commemorative Tree Program
2. New proactive approach to right-of-way tree replacements
3. New Private Land Tree Planting program

Recommendations included in this report are early action items as part of the overall Strategy, and additional program reviews and actions will be brought forward incrementally. Updates will be provided to Council on an annual basis and approval for implementation will be sought as required.

Commemorative Tree Program Review

Commemorations provide a means for residents and the community to honour and celebrate public and personal connections. The inclusion of trees as part of the commemoration is a way to engage the public in the value of trees to the environment and our city. In the case of a deceased person, tree commemorations provide an alternative to cemeteries as a location for reflection. Many other Canadian municipalities have trees as part of their commemorations programming.

Current Program

The existing [Commemorative Tree Program](#) assists applicants who wish to have a tree planted in a City park to commemorate a person who has passed away. City staff support with the park selection and meet the applicants on site(s) to choose a location and tree species. The purchase of a plaque at the base of the tree is optional with approximately 70 per cent of applicants choosing to have a plaque. The program has seen an average of 100 trees planted annually. No significant changes have been made to the program framework or cost since amalgamation.

The cost of a commemorative tree under the existing program is \$400 (plus HST) and includes the supply, planting of a 50 mm caliper tree (two to three meters in height) and

watering for a three-year establishment period. Applicants may choose to receive a tax receipt for a charitable donation. The plaque is arranged and paid for by the applicant through a monument company of their choice. The plaque, in the range of \$400-\$500, is not included in the cost of the Commemorative Tree. It is installed by City staff at no charge to the applicant. Staff time to administer the program is not cost recovered under the current program.

The review of the Commemorative Tree Program has been identified as an early action of the Tree Planting Strategy because there is an opportunity to streamline the administrative processes and determine ways to make the program more efficient. The uptake to the program has increased in the past several years, exceeding current staff capacity and creating a waiting list. The administrative burden of the current program primarily linked to coordination of plaques as well as intake, communications with applicants, invoicing, and charitable donation tax receipts. Communications with current and past participants of the program include a large volume of correspondence and clarification on a case-by-case basis. This results in a high level of staff effort to plant a small number of trees relative to other planting programs. Improvements to the administration of the program aim to create capacity for Forestry staff to focus on tree planting through other programs where there is a greater potential to impact the volume of trees planted each year.

The intake for the Commemorative Tree program was paused in early January 2024 in order to review the program and minimize overlap between old and new program eligibility and costs. This information was shared with Council through a memorandum in December 2023. As more than 130 requests had already been received for the 2024 program, this temporary pause to intake will not impact the number of trees planted through the program in 2024.

Highlights from Consultation

Expanding the eligibility of the Commemorative Tree Program was supported by 61 per cent of survey respondents through the Engage Ottawa consultation and by many members of Council through consultation sessions held in April 2024. Followed by the loss of an individual at 40 per cent, commemorating life events such as the birth of a child and an anniversary were highly rated in the survey results at a combined 30 per cent. Respondents had many ideas for how dedications should be marked. These included tree tags, plaques, website, mobile app, QR codes, a map or marker at the entrance to the park, or no marker at all.

Feedback received through consultation with Councillors indicated positive experiences with the program and overall support to expand the program to include commemoration of additional milestones.

Recommended Updates to the Commemorative Tree Program

The review of the Commemorative Tree Program considered input from the public, members of Council, internal stakeholders and recent and past information from other municipalities across Canada with similar programs. Staff also analyzed the hard costs (trees, planting, plaque installation, etc.) as well as estimates of staff time for planning and administrative work. As a result of this review, the following section outlines the framework for a revised program.

Upon Council approval, the Commemorative Tree Program would be rebranded as the “Tree Dedication Program”, with a goal to contribute to the enhancement of the City’s urban forest while providing meaningful dedications to people and events. The purpose of the rebranding is to have a clear delineation for the public and staff between the old and new program eligibility and costs.

The eligibility under the new program would be expanded with two categories of dedications, two ways to mark dedications, and two price points.

- Personal Dedications
 - Loss of an individual or a personally significant milestone, event, or accomplishment (i.e. birth of a child, graduation, anniversary etc.)
 - Dedication recognized by a “tag” on the tree and a new Tree Dedication layer on GeoOttawa
 - **Cost to the applicant is \$995 (+HST)**
- Community Dedications
 - Community leader, milestone, event, or accomplishment that are significant to public at large
 - Dedication recognized by plaque in the ground and a new Tree Dedication layer on GeoOttawa
 - **Cost to the applicant is \$1,750 (+HST)**

This proposed framework satisfies both the desire to expand eligibility and significantly reduce the administrative work associated with the acquisition and installation of plaques. The cost to the applicant does not include recovery of staff time. Hard costs would be recovered through the cost to the applicant. These include the supply and installation of the tree, watering for three years, private utility locates, and a plaque or tree tag depending on the type of dedication. Replacement of plaques and translation or proof-reading costs for a third language on Community Dedication plaques would be charged to the applicant on a cost recovery basis.

Under the new program, plaques would be purchased by the City as opposed to the applicant. This would improve efficiency by ensuring one point of contact for the supplier and greater oversight over the final approved wording on the plaque. The plaque specifications would remain the same as under the current program (flat black granite). This style of plaque has proven to be durable over time with very little instances of vandalism.

With the new program, the applicant would have the opportunity to select the planting site from pre-determined locations for tree dedications available on GeoOttawa. This would improve efficiency during the planning process by allowing applicants to visit several locations on their own prior to selecting their preferred site. Where plaques are to be installed, the location of the tree would be accessible (ie. next to a pathway or sidewalk). As with the current program, a choice of species would be offered based on on-site conditions. Similar to the existing process, both streams of the Tree Dedication Program would have two cut-off dates per year to coincide with the planning for each planting season.

Dedications would align with the guiding principles, goals, and scope of the Municipal Commemoration Policy (to be tabled at the Community Services Committee on June 25, 2024). This policy would also guide considerations for contentious dedications which may require vetting.

To reduce administrative tasks associated historical projects, the proposed program would have a limit of seven years on updating client records and proactive communication with past clients when issues arise with the tree or plaque. The tree would remain in the City's GIS tree inventory, in SAP, and on GeoOttawa beyond seven years. This is in keeping with other municipalities that have warranty periods or a time limit to commemorations.

Although the Engage Ottawa survey results show pets as the fourth highest preference for dedications, staff recommend that the new Tree Dedication Program would not include dedications to pets at this time. Pet dedications may be considered in the future once the volume of dedications to persons and events is better known.

Implementation and Resources

As designed, the proposed Tree Dedication Program would not require additional staff resources for implementation. The changes to the program would be assessed following year one of implementation and regularly thereafter. Should the volume of requests exceed existing staff capacity, there may be a requirement to limit the number of requests per year. The costs charged to the client would be regularly reviewed and revised as required to ensure full cost recovery of hard costs associated with the program.

Proactive Approach to Right-of-Way Tree Planting

Street trees play an important role in the urban forest and provide valuable benefits to the community and the environment. In addition to the social, economic, and health benefits, the presence of street trees provide shade for cyclists and pedestrians, can reduce traffic speeds, and create connectivity between greenspaces.

Current Process

Forestry Services' current approach to tree planting in the City's right-of-way includes two streams which are primarily reactive in nature:

- Trees in Trust Program
 - New and replacement trees on residential streets
 - City plants the tree and the homeowner commits to watering
 - New trees are planted at the request of the homeowner and replacement trees either require the homeowner to request the tree or to consent to the replacement
- Streetscape projects
 - New and replacement trees on non-residential streets
 - The City plants and waters the trees

- Requests for new and replacement trees are received from residents or community groups
- Some replacement trees may also be actioned proactively by Forestry staff

There are several challenges associated with the current approach to planting trees in the right-of-way. Despite information on Ottawa.ca and occasional social media promotions, residents may be unaware that they need to request to participate in the program. In addition, the Trees in Trust program requires that the property owner return a form acknowledging their commitment to water and identifying their preferred tree species. Residents who do not return the form and properties that are not owner occupied contribute to approximately 15 per cent of forms not returned annually. This is a lost opportunity for tree planting. Furthermore, in response to weather events, replacement planting is a secondary action as staff's focus is primarily on attending hazardous trees and ensuring safe conditions. In these instances, staff rely on the homeowner to call back to request a replacement tree.

Current Tree Removal and Tree Planting Statistics

Staff estimates that approximately 10 per cent of locations where a tree is removed on the right-of-way may not be suitable for an immediate replacement or there may not be space for a replacement tree. Available data for the right-of-way shows that there is a gap between caliper tree replacements and removals on the right-of-way that are replaceable, as shown below in Table 1:

Table 1: Average volume of ROW tree replacements vs tree removals (2021-2023)

	Average volume
Total ROW Replacements	1,043
Total ROW Removals	3,160
Difference (Removals- Replacements)	2,117

Under the current approach and with existing resources, the data shows, approximately 33 per cent of removals on the right-of-way are being replaced, and the difference between removals and replacements on the right-of-way is on average approximately 2,000 trees.

Highlights from Consultation

In response to specific questions relating to tree planting on the City's right-of-way, approximately 84 per cent of respondents indicated that trees should be automatically replaced on the right-of-way, as opposed to the current reactive approach. In terms of gaps, or new tree locations, and approximately 73 per cent of respondents believe that these locations should receive automatic planting so long as site conditions and space permit. Through the survey, residents expressed the desire for the City to take agency by planting replacement or new trees automatically in the right-of-way however, this should be done with consent or collaborations with the property owner.

Following consultation with members of Council in April 2024, there was general support for moving to a proactive tree planting and replacement model.

Recommended Approach to Right-of-Way Tree Planting

Following public engagement, a municipal scan, and an internal review of processes, a new approach is recommended for how the City plants trees on the City's right-of-way. The goal of the recommended approach is to contribute to the enhancement of the City's urban forest by maximizing tree replacement and leveraging opportunities for new tree planting on the City's right-of way. This approach looks to simplify internal administration requirements and would be easy to understand from the public's perspective while increasing tree planting efforts.

There are two components to the new approach to right-of-way tree planting:

- Replacements
 - planting a tree on the right-of-way following removal by Forestry Services
 - all replacements would aim to be actioned proactively on residential and non-residential streets citywide
- Gaps (new trees)
 - planting a new tree where no tree was planted before
 - planting of gaps would be proactive in priority areas that are identified through the tree equity analysis

- planting of gaps in non-priority areas would continue to be implemented reactively at this time through the Trees in Trust program (residential) and streetscape projects (non-residential)

Proactive Replacements after Removal - Early Action

Shifting to a proactive approach to replacing trees on residential and non-residential rights-of-way is one of the early action items associated with the Tree Planting Strategy. Adopting a proactive approach to replacement trees ensures a greater number of trees are planted to replace lost canopy cover when a tree is removed by Forestry Services. Internal data collection, process changes, and staff training for the shift can happen relatively quickly. As well, beginning the shift with proactive replacement trees does not require a gap analysis to determine planting sites as the locations can be determined from tree removal data. Lastly, residents may be more receptive to the automatic replacement of the tree over the planting of a new tree on the right-of-way in front of their home, which was widely supported through discussions at Councillor consultation sessions.

Under the new approach, when a City tree is removed on the right-of-way, a replacement tree would be planted as space and conditions permit. No request would be required from the adjacent property owner. The species would be determined by City staff to ensure diversity in the area and that large growing trees are planted whenever possible. Under this proactive approach, watering responsibility and associated costs would shift to the City for residential properties. Residents would be informed of species and location, notified in advance of planting, and given the opportunity to contact the City with any questions or concerns.

Revising the approach from reactive to proactive would increase current caliper tree planting by an estimated 2,000 trees; an estimated 60 per cent increase to current caliper tree planting efforts.

Proactive Planting of Gaps – Future Action

Implementation of proactive planting of gaps will be the next approach to be developed after proactive right-of-way replacements. Planting of gaps will be rolled out in a phased approach beginning with priority areas identified through the tree equity analysis. The roll out would include targeted consultation in priority areas, a scan of the priority area to identify barriers and opportunities for tree planting, greater communication with property owners, determining the best method of identifying planting locations, including working

with community partners, and a resource/implementation plan. Staff will present this approach in a future report to committee and council.

The Trees in Trust program would continue to support planting trees in gaps city-wide as proactive replacements are rolled out. This program has the added benefit of the partnership with residents to water the tree that is a cost saving to the City. Requests from community groups or individual residents for gaps on non-residential right-of-way would continue to be received and actioned as appropriate.

Implementation and Resources for Proactive Replacements after Removal

Staff recommends to phase in the implementation of the proposed approach to ultimately achieve the target of approximately 2,000 additional replacement right-of-way trees per year. The additional planting is proposed to be phased in over three-plus years, with continued phase in of watering operations for an additional three years. Year 1 would be a transition year between replacements being planted through the existing Trees in Trust Program and the proactive right-of-way replacements through the proposed new approach.

To implement the phased in approach an additional FTE and approximately \$3 million would be required for site work, supply and installation of trees, and three years of watering for 2,000 new trees; approximately \$1,500 per tree. Subject to funding, staff are targeting planting an additional 500 trees in year 1 and increasing the number of trees thereafter to reach the goal an additional 2,000 trees in year 3 per year.

The new approach would be evaluated at the end of the first year and thereafter to reassess the approach, funding and determine adjustments if required. Resources for the phased in approach would be considered through budget cycles and/or by leveraging other funding sources such as Forestry's tree planting fund and/or external grants.

Private Land Tree Planting Program

The third early action item through the Tree Planting Strategy is a proposed private land tree planting program. Currently, the City does not have a program to support tree planting on private residential lands. The City retained the professional services of EnviroCentre to research, propose a framework, and estimate resources for a new program.

Given that 40 per cent of the urban area in Ottawa is private land, the introduction of a private property tree planting program presents a significant opportunity to enhance the

urban forest and to plant more trees while also enhancing public education and awareness among residents of urban forest stewardship. In a report on tree equity, Nature Canada identifies poor incentives for planting on private property and weak engagement with residents of low canopy neighbourhoods among the causes for inequitable distribution of tree canopy in cities across Canada¹. Trees established in residential areas can grow to become large, canopied specimens that provide an entire neighbourhood with valuable services such as clean air, shade, cooling, and more.

Highlights from Consultation and Research

The Engage Ottawa survey asked respondents to rank where they would like to see more trees planted in their neighbourhood, and private property was the third most highly ranked option, behind City streets and City greenspace. When asked where they believed the City should prioritize planting trees on private property, the top three ranked options were residential yards, townhome common areas, and condominium ground. The desire for planting programs designed for private property was a recurring theme in the survey results. Many comments focused on tree giveaways and expressed enjoyment of tree distributions offered in the past.

Through the development of program parameters for tree planting on private property, EnviroCentre conducted a review of eight Canadian municipalities to learn about existing models / programs and to identify best practices and opportunities for success in the Ottawa context. This review looked to determine their program structure, eligibility and application process, tree distribution and care, communications and engagement, as well as tree equity considerations. The key research findings and program considerations are detailed in Document 2.

Recommended Framework for a Private Land Tree Planting Program

Staff recommend a new program which would include city wide tree distributions running in parallel with full-service tree planting on private lands in areas identified as a priority for tree planting. This cycle of distributions and full-service planting would occur each year. In keeping with Tree Planting Strategy principles of equity and inclusion, these two components would be offered at no charge to residents in order to remove financial barriers to participation. The program would focus on high-quality planting and education, following best practices for site selection, tree type, and care.

¹ Nature Canada, (2022). *Canada's Urban Forests: Bringing the Canopy to All*. <https://naturecanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Nature-Canada-Report-Tree-Equity.pdf>.

The framework for the program is proposed to be as follows:

- City-wide tree distributions
 - Approximately 50 trees distributed within each Ward at a number of distribution events across the city; 1,200 trees total.
 - Community outreach and engagement to take place in fall each year with tree distributions to take place in spring the following year.
- Full-Service Tree Planting in priority areas
 - Full-service program to be launched in priority areas, as identified through the tree equity analysis; 50 trees total.
 - Program design: applications received from private property owners, site assessment, approval process, care / maintenance education, supply and install tree planting services.
 - Program outreach and engagement in spring of each year with tree planting in the fall of the same year.

Implementation and Resources

The proposed Private Land Tree Planting program would be funded by the City and administered by a third-party. Table 2 shows the estimated resources required for one year of the program. Uptake and resource needs would be evaluated to extend the program and potentially scale up the number trees available each year. Resources for implementation would be considered through budget cycles and/or by leveraging other funding sources such as Forestry's tree planting fund and/or external grants.

Table 2: Year 1 Private Land Tree Planting Program Costs

Program	Season	# trees	Costs*
City-Wide Tree Distribution	Spring	1,200	\$130,500
Full-Service Tree Planting in Priority Areas	Fall	50	\$103,500
TOTAL			\$234,000

*Please note these estimates reflect costs of events, outreach activities and trees. Year 1 costs also include third party program planning costs which may be lower in future years of the program.

Next Steps

If approved, the Tree Dedication program does not require additional resources. Staff can begin work immediately on the detailed implementation plan for the new program with a goal to open intake in late fall 2024 for planting in 2025.

The detailed implementation plan for the approach to proactive right-of-way replacement trees would begin once resources are in place for this approach. The implementation plan would include internal process changes, site inspections, securing of contracted services, and the development of communication materials for residents.

The detailed program design and implementation plan for the Private Land Tree Planting program would begin once resources are in place for this program. Community outreach and engagement would take place in the fall prior to the year 1 spring distribution events.

Forestry staff will work with colleagues in Public Information and Media Relations to develop comprehensive communications plans for each of the projects. This will ensure that residents are aware of these new and revised planting initiatives as they begin to roll out. The communication plans will include social media, content shared with members of Council, web updates, and 3-1-1 knowledge-based articles.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with the report recommendations for the Tree Dedication Program because it is a fully cost-recovered program. There are no financial implications in 2024 associated with the proactive Right-of-Way Tree Replacement and Private Land Tree Planting programs. The balance of the Tree Planting Fund will continue to be utilized to implement the start of these two programs and, upon completion of their funding strategy, any required budget increases in 2025 or later years will be submitted as part of the annual budget process for those years.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to approving the recommendations in this report.

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)

This is a City-wide report.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE(S) COMMENTS

There are no advisory committee comments for this report.

CONSULTATION

On March 26, 2024, a memo was circulated to members of Council to launch the [Engage Ottawa site for the Tree Planting Strategy](#), which included a survey for residents of Ottawa to gather public feedback on existing tree planting programs and ideas for future programming, with detailed questions on the Commemorative Tree Program as an early action item under the strategy. The survey was open to the public for three weeks and warranted 1,284 responses.

Additionally, staff hosted small group consultation sessions with members of Council in April 2024 to seek their feedback on existing tree planting programs and ideas for future programming. Twenty offices were represented through these sessions either by Councillor's or members of their staff.

Staff attended the Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability (CAFES)-Forêt Capitale Forest (FCF) Tree and Greenspace Caucus in April 2024 to seek focused input on current planting program and ideas for new programming.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

All actions that arise from the Tree Planting Strategy will adhere to accessibility legislative framework that includes *the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* and the City of Ottawa Accessibility Design Standards (ADS) to the greatest extent possible. Through its Accessibility Policy, the City of Ottawa is committed to providing equal treatment to people with disabilities with respect to the use and benefit of City services, programs and goods in a manner that respects their dignity and that is equitable in relation to the broader public. The City recognizes its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and City Policy, and is committed to exploring strategies that mitigate accessibility barriers.

Overall, the Tree Planting Strategy has various positive accessibility-related benefits to people with disabilities. Research has linked exposure to trees to benefit both physical and mental health, and exposure to urban forests generally reduces mental and physical stress, anxiety, and depression, and that they improve moods.

However, staff must also ensure that any newly planted trees don't create any physical barriers to Ottawa's residents with disabilities. The City's ADS state that, where possible, the City shall provide a clear width of 2,000 mm for exterior paths of travel,

with a minimum clear width of 1,800 mm. Any newly planted tree locations will ensure these minimum clear widths are met.

ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations documented in this report are consistent with the City's Comprehensive Asset Management (CAM) Program objectives. The implementation of the Comprehensive Asset Management program enables the City to effectively manage existing and new infrastructure to maximize benefits, reduce risk, and provide safe and reliable levels of service to community users. This is done in a socially, culturally, environmentally, and economically conscious manner.

As discussed within the report, when the City commits to the addition of new assets, including living assets such as trees, consideration must also be given to the City's commitment to fund future operations, maintenance, and replacement costs. If approved, the outcome of the proposed tree planting strategies would be reflected in the inventory of assets and financial forecasts included under the Greenspace & Forest Services Asset Management Plan.

CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

Tree planting initiatives under the UFMP are key instruments to implement the ecosystem services goals of the Climate Change Master Plan.

The Climate Change and Vulnerability Risk Assessment (2022) identified several risks requiring attention in the next 1-3 years related to the urban tree canopy. These include risks to community health and well-being from increased heat, including less outdoor recreation and active transportation, and increased demand for shaded areas to offset heat. They also include risks to tree health from extreme heat and drought, wildfire, invasive species and pests, additional road salts, and extreme weather such as freezing rain and extreme winds. These negative effects of climate change on the existing and future tree canopy are likely to have a greater impact on equity deserving groups.

Several key actions of the draft Climate Resiliency Strategy (2024) link directly to tree planting efforts under the Tree Planting Strategy. In particular, under the pillar of Resilient Natural Environment and Parklands, a key action is to enhance tree canopy, increase shade in parklands, and to raise awareness about trees through public education and stewardship.

The proposed tree planting programs will enhance climate change resiliency through increased shade and reduced public health risks related to urban heat island effects, as

well as improved stormwater infiltration and reduction of flood risk. Tree planting in areas informed by the tree equity analysis will enhance climate change resiliency for low canopy and equity deserving neighbourhoods.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The urban forest is a vital part of the City of Ottawa's green infrastructure, and it provides numerous benefits and services to residents. Such benefits and services include shade, mitigation of urban heat island effects, reduced urban run-off, and many physical and mental health benefits. The benefits and services provided by the urban canopy are often inequitably distributed throughout the city. The recommendations of this report will grow and replace canopy city wide and will seek to address the inequitable distribution of canopy cover for residents in identified priority areas through targeted full-service planting on private lands.

INDIGENOUS, GENDER AND EQUITY IMPLICATIONS

Equity is a guiding principle for the Official Plan's tree canopy cover target and the Tree Planting Strategy.

To ensure equity is a key component of the Tree Planting Strategy, once approved, staff would leverage the Council approved tree equity analysis using American Forests' Tree Equity Score to prioritize locations for tree planting. The proposed method is rooted in equity considerations; the theory, rationale, and methodology all support the goal of equitable access and distribution of tree canopy cover. In practical applications, the use of this method aims to lessen disparities by incorporating demographic information into tree planting prioritization.

The Tree Equity Score uses a combined index to of socioeconomic factors to identify communities at the greatest risk of not receiving urban forest benefits. These factors include race, age, income, employment, and health. By using the index in this method, staff are ensuring that socioeconomic dimensions of equity will be considered when implementing the Tree Planting Strategy.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

Tree planting programs offered by the City are available to all residents in the City of Ottawa, including those in rural areas.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Approving the implementation of the Tree Dedication Program, the approaches to proactive tree planting in the City's right-of-way and a private land tree planting program aligns with the [2022-2026 Term of Council](#) priority: a city that is green and resilient. These programs will impact Strategic Objective 18 of the City of Ottawa Strategic Plan 2023-2026: "Plant, grow and preserve the urban tree canopy in parks and along roadways, with a focus on neighbourhoods with low tree canopy cover".

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 – Current Tree Planting Programs

Document 2 - Private Land Tree Planting: Key Findings and Program Considerations

DISPOSITION

If approved by Environment and Climate Change Committee and Council, Public Works (PW) and Strategic Initiatives (SI), in conjunction with any other relevant Departments, would begin work on the detailed implementation plan for the new Tree Dedication Program with a goal to open intake in late fall 2024 for planting in 2025. The detailed implementation plan for the approach to proactive right-of-way replacement trees would begin once resources are secured and approved for this project. Work would begin to retain a third party to develop the detailed implementation plan for the Private Land Tree Planting Program.

Forestry staff will work with colleagues in Public Information and Media Relations to develop comprehensive communications plans for each of the projects. This will ensure that residents are aware of these new and revised planting initiatives as they begin to roll out. The communication plans will include social media, content shared with members of Council, web updates, and 3-1-1 knowledge-based articles.