

Information Report



Service Area	Public Services
Date	Friday, December 21, 2018
Subject	Urban Forest Management Plan – 2018 Implementation Report
Report Number	PS-2018-42

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To advise Council of cumulative progress in implementing Guelph’s Urban Forest Management Plan

Key Findings

Implementation of the Urban Forest Management Plan is on track and having the intended result of evolving Guelph’s municipal forestry work to an inclusive, progressive, and proactive program.

Financial Implications

None

Report

The 2012 approval of the strategic Urban Forest Management Plan marked the City of Guelph’s committed to a new era in urban forestry. Built on a strong tradition of arboricultural excellence in Guelph, this plan is an expression of the community’s recognition for a more comprehensive and strategic approach to the management of the urban forest. Continued leadership and support throughout the implementation of the plan has resulted in the significant and effective achievements to this point.

Guelph’s Urban Forest Management Plan is a 20-year renewable roadmap for understanding and improving the management of Guelph’s urban forest, particularly that owned by, or under management agreement with the City. The plan, which was implemented in 2013, is a long-term plan with nested short-term management and operating plans. The plan has 22 recommendations, which address gaps and opportunities in four key areas:

- Management and monitoring
- Planning

- Protection, enhancement and planting
- Outreach, stewardship and partnerships.

As reported in previous years, implementation in 2018 continued to progress, due in large part to Council's budget approvals supporting increased staffing capacity in Forestry and support from other corporate divisions.

This year, significant headway has been made on ten of the recommendations. Two recommendations are complete, and five recommendations slated for 2019 or beyond that have not been started. Significant achievements in 2018 are described below, with status briefly described for each recommendation.

Recommendation #3: Increase capacity to complete an inventory of municipal street and park trees. The street and park tree inventory is now substantially complete. The inventory includes a database which is available as open source data and a publicly available online map that shows tree locations, characteristics, and ownership status. The online map is an invaluable tool for use by City staff and the public. Staff continually update the inventory through ongoing monitoring, service requests and tree maintenance. Moving forward the complete inventory is necessary to direct management of trees, service levels and asset management.

Recommendation #4: Undertake targeted vegetation assessment and management of City parks and natural areas. This year, the partnership project with University of Toronto and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry established 104 permanent sample plots under the 'Vegetated Sampling Protocol', within City-owned forests during the 2018 field season in addition to the 103 plots established in 2016. These plots will form the basis for long-term monitoring of forest health within Guelph, helping to flag health trends related to climate change, invasive exotic organisms, and the impacts of urban intensification. The data from the plots will directly feed into the Natural Heritage Action Plan (NHAP), State of the Urban Forest Report (pending 2019) and Forest Management Plans (2020). Sample based inventory of privately owned trees is pending for 2019.

Recommendation #5: Expand the City's capacity for planting and maintenance of municipal trees. Replacement equipment purchased in 2018 specified upgraded features to allow for safer and more efficient removal of large caliper trees.

Recommendation #6: Undertake an urban tree cover study and potential plantable spaces analysis. The need to undertake an urban forest study is required to get a current canopy cover, identify potential plantable spaces, and assess the feasibility of 40% canopy cover. Staff have prepared the Terms of Reference for quantifying and qualifying the urban forest canopy.

Recommendation #7: Develop an Invasive Species and Pest Management Strategy. The fifth year of the ten-year emerald ash borer plan has been completed. The significant achievement in 2018 was again managing to handle the increased inspections and removals generated by the critical levels of mortality. This year, the estimated number of ash removals is 1,500 on streets and in parks,

and 3,800 in woodlands. An external contractor is carrying out woodland removals due to the large volume of trees required to be removed in a limited amount of time.

Increased efforts were made this year to remove significant amounts of invasive vegetation (Buckthorn, Japanese Knotweed, Poison Ivy) in various locations throughout the city. This includes projects ongoing since 2016 such as Crane Park and Silvercreek Park buckthorn removal to allow for establishment of natural forest elements in place of invasive species.

The broader Invasive Species and Pest Management Strategy has been deferred but is included as a future action in the Natural Heritage Action Plan. Planning is the lead on this initiative with Parks Operations and Forestry as implementation support.

Recommendation #8: Development of a tree risk management policy and training City Arborists in risk assessment. Removal of 3,800 hazard (ash) trees in seven wooded natural areas by a qualified contractor began in November. Parks Operations and Forestry responded to six major weather/storm events, which included ice accumulation, heavy rains and excessive winds, and received 20 claims for damage to property from trees.

A draft storm response protocol was developed for Parks Operations and Forestry. However, increased preventative and preparedness measures must be integrated into regular operations to address the current and anticipated increasing frequency and intensity of weather events. Additionally, a Risk Management Strategy for street and park trees as well as natural areas is to be drafted in late 2019.

Recommendation #10: Establishing a green infrastructure asset valuation. The significant development here is that trees are being included in the nascent 2019 corporate asset management plan and protocol. This is a substantial challenge, as trees are unlike most other assets: their initial installation value and service values are a tiny fraction of their eventual value, through growth, whereas most assets begin with maximum value and steadily decline.

Recommendation #14: Implement and assess use of the new Tree Technical Manual. The Draft Tree Technical Manual was presented to the community, open for comment in November/December 2018, and will be presented to Council in spring 2019. The manual will establish guidelines, standards and specifications for the preservation, protection and operational activities involving trees on public and private land. The manual's project scope does not include a review or revision of existing City policies, such as the Official Plan or the Private Tree Bylaw.

Five pending recommendations are as follows:

- #9 Complete a State of the Urban Forest report every five years;
- #10 Establish a green infrastructure asset valuation;
- #11 Assess the effectiveness of current tree-related policies and legislation;

- #13 Develop a public tree bylaw;
- #16 Develop a greening strategy.

Since the implementation of the Urban Forest Management Plan in 2013, our understanding of Guelph's urban forest has substantially improved and we have consistently transitioned towards proactive management. The tree inventory and monitoring of natural areas has significantly improved our knowledge of the City's urban forest structure, composition and value. Coordination of tree issues across the corporation and external stakeholders has increased through the formation of the tree team and urban forest working group and the addition of management, operational and technical staff. Substantial communication about urban forest initiatives have created a new awareness and engagement in urban forest issues within the community. New research partnerships include green infrastructure, climate change and forest health research on a provincial scale.

As Guelph prepares for the second, five-year plan (2019-2023) we will need to consider the current state of the urban forest and the changes that have occurred since the plan's inception, as well as aligning the plan with current federal and provincial policy and ensure connectivity to new corporate policies and directives. Re-aligning the plan will also require coordination with the needs other corporate divisions.

Financial Implications

None

Consultations

The Tree Team (internal stakeholders) and the Urban Forest Working Group (external stakeholders) meet three or four times per year, and are an important communication mechanism from stakeholders to the City, and from the City to the community of interest. Additionally, stakeholders from the community, including the general-public, development community, and other relevant experts, have been included for development of various new and ongoing initiatives in 2018.

Corporate Administrative Plan

Overarching Goals

Service Excellence

Service Area Operational Work Plans

Our Services - Municipal services that make lives better

Attachments

ATT-1 UFMP Recommendations Update 2018

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