

Urban Forestry Management Plan

ISSUE

The City of Saskatoon does not have a unified document that examines the current state of the urban forest and outlines a strategy to plan, grow, manage, and protect the trees and tree canopy. The Urban Forestry Management Plan fills that need by laying out the strategic and structured approach to protecting and enhancing the environmental, social, and economic services provided by the urban forest now and in the future.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities, and Corporate Services recommend to City Council that the Urban Forestry Management Plan be approved, in principle.

BACKGROUND

Saskatoon's urban forest, including trees on public and private land, is of great environmental, social, and economic value. The trees sequester over 708,000 tonnes of carbon annually, provide a sense of community, and can contribute to quality of life. Since 2005, the forest canopy has increased by more than 25%. According to recent estimates, the economic value of public trees (excluding shelterbelts and afforestation areas) is more than \$530 million.

At the same time, climate change, limited diversity, insects, diseases, and difficult growing environments are ongoing threats to the urban forest. Tree protection policies and specifications must be improved to address these challenges. The Urban Forestry Management Plan (UFMP) is a key step, providing improved regulations and coordination to support tree protection and tree growth for the next ten years and beyond.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The Urban Forestry Management Plan is included in Appendix 1 and presents a detailed overview of the current state of the urban forest, the threats and risks, as well as specific recommendations with anticipated timeframes, Key Performance Indicators, and lead accountability within the Parks Department. Overall the 10 year plan includes a total of 20 recommended actions identified across the four high level areas of focus, namely: i) Planning for Trees; ii) Growing the Urban Forest; iii) Managing the Urban Forest; and iv) Protecting the Urban Forest.

Consultants were engaged in significant background work, including detailed analysis of changes in Saskatoon's tree canopy, strategies to mitigate risks and threats, and best practices from other municipalities. The UFMP was also developed with input and

feedback from the public and key stakeholders, such as SOS Trees, the Business Improvement Districts, and the Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association.

At its foundation, the UFMP provides the opportunity to articulate the strategic intent of the Urban Forestry team in their commitment to:

- creating plans that meet long-term recommended targets and objectives
- increasing forest canopy and diversity of tree species
- managing the urban forest with an eye to meeting long-term goals
- protecting mature trees on public property; and
- partnering with other organizations and educating the public so that all Saskatoon residents are working together toward the common goal of a healthy, growing, and resilient urban forest.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications resulting from the adoption of the UFMP. Urban forestry-related projects requiring additional resources will continue to be brought forward for funding approval through the regular budgetary process.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Privacy, legal, social, and environmental implications for projects identified as part of the UFMP will be reviewed and addressed in the project implementation plan. The UFMP scored favourably as part of the required Triple Bottom Line review.

NEXT STEPS

Pending approval, Administration will begin the process of prioritizing and implementing the UFMP recommendations, beginning with those identified for 2021.

APPENDIX

1. Urban Forestry Management Plan

Report Approval

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