



# REPORT TO COUNCIL

To: **Mayor and Councillors**

Subject: Draft Urban Forest Management Strategy Report

File #: 5240.01

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From: Perry Browne  
Environmental and Sustainability Coordinator

Date: September 9, 2024

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## RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receive the Draft Urban Forest Management Strategy for information.

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## PURPOSE:

The purpose of the report is to introduce the Draft Urban Forest Management Strategy (UFMS) and seek input from Council before embarking on the second and final round of public engagement and stakeholder consultation after which the report will be finalized and brought forward for endorsement by Council.

## POLICY:

The Official Community Plan (OCP) aims to create an urban forest strategy “expand and strengthen the existing tree canopy”. The Strategic Plan 2023-2028 includes policies to:

- Cultivate an Inclusive Community
- Build Climate Resiliency

## COMMENTS/ANALYSIS:

### Background

The City’s Strategic Plan and OCP have outlined the need for protection of natural areas for residents and visitors, which involves creating a strategy for managing its urban forest.

In 2023, the City began developing the UFMS to achieve its goals relating to sustainability, climate resiliency, socio-economic prosperity, and community well-being. The UFMS is a high-level guide for future policies, projects, and programs, investments and other priorities.

The Draft UFMS supports the City's sustainability goals by focusing on the long-term health of urban forests and green spaces. It addresses urban encroachment, climate change, droughts, flooding, and pests. Working in conjunction with the OCP it aims to increase tree canopy cover, enhance forest health and resiliency, and proactively manage the urban forest for environmental health and community well-being.

The forest provides significant ecological, social, and economic benefits but faces pressures from climate change and urban development. The City's urban forest includes approximately 49,000 trees, with 17% canopy cover in 2021, down from 20% in 2017. Two-thirds of the City's land is privately owned, hosting 64% of the city's canopy cover, mainly south of the Nicomekl River. Public land, though only 33% of the area, has a slightly higher canopy cover (19% vs. 16% on private land). Successful implementation of the Strategy requires contributions from both the City and private landowners.

The Draft UFMS includes a Tree Equity Score which measures public accessibility to the benefits of trees and the urban forest in relation to local geography. Areas north of the Nicomekl River and downtown were identified as having the lowest equity, with the least canopy cover most impervious surfaces, and pronounced urban heat islands. This score guides tree planting to ensure fair distribution of benefits.

The intent of the UFMS is to prepare the City for future challenges with a multi-faceted approach to mitigate the many challenges facing the City including impacts of urbanization, climate change as well as drought and flooding. The Draft UFMS explores strengthening regulations and policies, integration of natural areas, forests, and street trees into asset management programs, supporting partnerships with community and monitoring progress of the Strategy over time.

### Community Engagement

The development of the Draft UFMS began in 2023. To date, one round of community engagement has been completed, including a survey to understand key concerns and priorities. The Environmental Sustainability Committee (ESC) provided valuable input into the finding of the initial issues analysis. Diamond Head Consulting Ltd, developed a range of proposed strategies, goals and actions that were initially presented to Council earlier in 2024 and that have now been incorporated into the Draft UFMS document.

Following the presentation and input from Council the Draft UFMS will be introduced to the ESC before commencing the second and final round of public engagement including a survey that will be conducted after which the UFMS will be finalized and brought to Council.

### Draft UFMS - Vision, Objectives and Goals

The Draft UFMS sets a 30-year plan to increase the City's canopy cover by 14% to meet Metro Vancouver's 2050 recommended targets. To achieve this, the Draft UFMS includes action items and strategies for four main goals:

1. Protect and enhance trees, forests, and soils to grow a healthy, diverse, and resilient urban forest.
2. Proactively manage the urban forest to improve its health and resiliency.
3. Support community partnerships for the stewardship of Langley City's urban forest.
4. Monitor progress and adapt to changing conditions.

Under each strategy there are a number of strategies and actions for consideration, ranging from short term to long term.

Langley City's vision for its urban forest, as outlined in the Draft UFMS, is to feature mature trees and a diverse mix of native and climate-adapted species that support a healthy, connected community and ecosystems, benefiting all residents.

### Draft UFMS - Key Outcomes and Recommendations

The Draft UFMS includes a detailed review of the current state of the City's Urban Forest and predicted and ongoing impacts. It provides guidance to address current and upcoming challenges and recommendations to steer investments and initiatives in the direction that aligns with overarching strategic policies and plans of the community. The key outcomes are summarized below:

- i. **Gaps and Opportunities:** The plan identifies gaps in urban forest management and highlights opportunities for improving asset management, policies, public outreach, and collaboration with local stewardship groups.
- ii. **Policy and Planning Directions:** The Draft UFMS offers recommendations to address community issues and align with innovative concepts, industry best practices, and technical advancements.
- iii. **Resource Investments:** The Draft UFMS covers activities from planning and design to construction and maintenance that identifies staffing and capital resources for service enhancements and asset renewals.
- iv. **Community Engagement and Collaboration:** The Draft UFMS recommends engaging to with residents, developers, indigenous groups, and local stewardship groups to participate and collaborate in the enhancement and protection of the urban forest through partnerships, public outreach, and education.

- v. Monitoring Performance:** The Draft UFMS recommends monitoring key performance indicators to identify gaps and opportunities adapt the Draft UFMS over time.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:**

The Draft UFMS plan sets out the significant level of investment required to complete the plan. An implementation plan will be developed upon finalization of the UFMS that will lay out recommendations and associated costs.

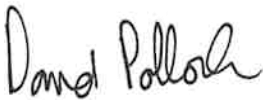
Respectfully Submitted,



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Perry Browne,  
Environmental and Sustainability Coordinator

Concurrence:



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David Pollock, P.Eng.  
Director, Engineering, Parks & Environment

Attachment:

1. Draft Urban Forest Management Strategy

**CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S COMMENTS:**

I support the recommendation.



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Francis Cheung, P. Eng.  
Chief Administrative Officer