



# REPORT TO COUNCIL

To: **Mayor and Councillors**

Subject: Urban Forest Management Strategy Final Report

File #: 5240-01

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From: Perry Browne  
Environmental and Sustainability Coordinator

Date: December 9, 2024

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## RECOMMENDATION:

THAT City Council endorse the Urban Forest Management Strategy.

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## PURPOSE:

The purpose of the report is to seek endorsement from City Council on the Urban Forest Management Strategy (UFMS) report before implementation of the strategy. The UFMS is a high-level plan that will guide future policies, projects, programs, investments, and other priorities. Once developed, these items will be brought before Council as required in the form of bylaws, bylaw amendments, new policies, budget requests as dictated by the required initiative.

## POLICY:

The Official Community Plan (OCP) states a goal to “expand and strengthen the existing tree canopy.”

Additionally, The Strategic Plan 2023-2028 includes policies which aim to:

- Cultivate an Inclusive Community
- Build Climate Resiliency

## COMMENTS/ANALYSIS:

### Background

The City’s 2023 – 2028 Strategic Plan and the Official Community Plan (OCP) emphasize the importance of protecting natural areas for both residents and visitors.

This includes developing a strategy for managing the urban forest. In 2023, the City initiated the development of the UFMS to meet its objectives related to sustainability, climate resilience, environmental protection, socio-economic prosperity, and community well-being.

The development of the UFMS began in 2023 and underwent two phases which guided the development of the strategy. Phase 1 involved conducting background research and mapping the City's urban forest. Input from Council, the City's Environmental Sustainability Committee (ESC), and public engagement through public events and online surveys, helped develop the overall vision and values of the UFMS.

Phase 2 involved developing the draft strategy. Feedback on the overall draft strategy, particularly the implementation plans, involved input from Council, the ESC, multiple neighbourhood open houses, and a second engagement strategy all contributed to the finalization of the strategy.

### Proposed Goals, Strategies and Action Items

This strategy features four overarching goals, 10 strategies, and 33 action items to achieve a target of increasing the City's tree canopy cover from 17% to 20%, with an aspirational goal of 31%. Those four goals are outlined below with sample key strategies and actions noted:

#### **Goal 1: Protect and enhance trees, forests, and soils.**

Strategy 1: Improve policies and regulations to achieve better integration of the urban forest within the built environment.

*Action #1 – Consider adopting a tree bylaw.*

Strategy 2: Enhance ecosystems to support biodiversity and access to nature.

*Action #7 – Consider developing a natural area management framework to manage and enhance natural areas.*

#### **Goal 2: Manage the urban forest for its health and resiliency.**

Strategy 4: Acquire and integrate tree asset information to the City's asset management system.

*Action #14 – Explore opportunities to inventory all street and planted park trees.*

Strategy 5: Transition to a more proactive urban forest management program.

*Action #18 – Consider defining service levels for natural areas to help prioritize restoration and other management activities.*

### **Goal 3: Support community partnership.**

Strategy 7: Create opportunities to build relationships and work on reconciliation with local First Nations through urban forest management.

*Action #23 - Consider how urban forest initiatives can support the City's relationship building with local First Nations and consider opportunities to coordinate with First Nations regarding the incorporation of traditional knowledge and practices related to native species, forest, and natural areas.*

Strategy 8: Support and expand initiatives to involve community members, landowners in urban forest stewardship.

*Action #25 – Explore partnership opportunities with school districts, not-for-profit organizations, and other institutional landowners to increase canopy coverage through tree planning programs.*

### **Goal 4: Monitor progress and adapt to changing circumstances.**

Strategy 9: Regular monitor and report on urban forest change

*Action #30 – Consider updating the urban forest report card annually and the action plan every five years.*

Strategy 10: Continuously explore options to collect information and adapt practices to changing conditions.

*Action #33 – Review implementation progress and update the Implementation Plan after 10 years.*

### **Community Engagement**

Phase 2 of engagement occurred in the spring and fall of 2024, focusing on the proposed vision, big ideas, objectives, and actions. Phase 2 engagement included an online survey and presentations, and promoting the strategy at Langley City Connects Open Houses. The feedback collected during this phase has helped finalize the UFMS.

The draft UFMS was reviewed by Langley City's Environmental Sustainability Committee on April 11 and September 12, 2024. The Committee highlighted that the proposed baseline canopy cover target of 20% by 2046 (a 3% increase) may be overambitious; however, it is much lower than Metro Vancouver's recommended target of 35% (an increase of 18%) by 2050. Staff and the consultant developed the baseline target as a realistic and achievable goal while still noting an aspirational goal of 31% by 2050. Committee members also raised the issue around significant tree and canopy cover loss due to redevelopment emphasized the need to address urban heat impacts on low-equity neighborhoods and noted Langley's lack of a tree

protection bylaw. The report contains a number of strategies to address these concerns as touched on under the Proposed Goals, Strategies and Action items above. Additional suggestions included promoting reconciliation, enhancing urban forest education, planting more fruit trees and community gardens, and focusing on soil-related stormwater management actions.

The Phase 2 online engagement survey was available from September 10 to October 31, 2024. Overall, 64 participants completed the survey. Most respondents (84%) lived in Langley, while 19% worked in Langley and 14% had visited Langley. Feedback from Phase 2 engagement survey indicates overall satisfaction with the draft's vision, targets, and key actions.

### Survey Results

Survey results are summarized as follows:

#### **Support for General UFMS Content**

- 87% or more of respondents agreed that the content, data, and metrics were clearly communicated, that they learned something new about the urban forest, and that the proposed vision, goals, and targets provided good urban forest management direction.

#### **Community Alignment with UFMS' Vision**

- 88% of survey respondents agreed that the urban forest vision captured the essential elements of an urban forest vision statement for Langley City.

#### **Endorsement of the UFMS' Canopy Cover Target**

- 48% support the proposed target, while 36% would like it to be higher.

#### **Agreement with the UFMS' Action Plan**

- 98% or more of respondents somewhat or strongly supported the UFMS's proposed goals.
- 85% or more of respondents somewhat or strongly supported the three proposed actions that would be most impactful in achieving the strategy's vision and canopy cover target.


## **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:**

An implementation plan has been developed as part of the UFMS that will lay out recommendations and associated costs to achieve the goals of the strategy. A significant level of investment is required to complete the plan.

## **SUMMARY:**

The UFMS aligns with the City's sustainability goals by prioritizing the long-term health of urban forests and green spaces. It tackles issues like urban encroachment, climate change, droughts, flooding, and pests. In collaboration with the OCP, it aims to increase tree canopy cover, enhance forest health and resilience, and proactively manage the urban forest to promote environmental health and community well-being.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Perry Browne,  
Environmental and Sustainability Coordinator, Engineering, Parks & Environment

Concurrence:



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Rachel Ollenberger, ASCT  
Manager, Engineering Services

Attachment:

1. Final Urban Forest Management Strategy

## **CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S COMMENTS:**

I support the recommendation.



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Francis Cheung, P. Eng.  
Chief Administrative Officer