

On April 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of 2017, the project team for development of an urban forest management plan for the Town of Cobourg met with community members and stakeholders with an interest in how Cobourg's urban forest is managed. Discussions on what is working well, areas for improvement, the desired state of the future urban forest and how to achieve it occurred through meetings with Town staff in public works, parks, planning and by-laws, the Town CAO, Mayor, Council and Advisory Committee members and with utility companies, the County, Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority, community groups and residents. Paper and online surveys were also available for residents to provide input upon how best to manage the Town's urban forest.

The following presents a summary of the input offered on the future state or vision for Cobourg's urban forest and suggested goals and initiatives to consider for ongoing urban forest management.

## **1. Input to the Vision and Overall Management Approach**

### **Urban Forest Characteristics**

- The view across the Town would be a sea of trees, have the look of a forest, lush and fresh
- More areas of a cathedral effect, such as along Walton Street
- Large, healthy trees that comprise 40% cover for the Town
- From Victoria Hall, it would be great to see an extensive canopy across the Town. When viewed from the air, this tree canopy should be consistent and continuous; you would see a lot of green.
- An enhanced tree canopy is desired. Perhaps the Town could compete with London as the city of trees. Accomplish this enhanced canopy through more resources dedicated to tree management and enhance site development guidelines
- Tree-lined streets
- More trees, more native trees, less buckthorn; connected to the natural heritage system of the County, and beyond
- A healthy, sustainable, thriving urban forest
- More trees on public & private lands
- Valued
- Praised by visitors
- Limited conflicts with other infrastructure
- Food-bearing trees and shrubs on Town lands and connector spaces to enhance Town food security
- The future urban forest should be healthy, biodiverse and resilient so as to be able to well adapt to the challenges of the future, able to adapt to withstand the effects of climate change
- Establish a far-reaching canopy cover target for the Town with a specific timeframe for its achievement. Consider 30-35% (or more) by 2037-2047.
- Cobourg will be a welcoming natural environment, a place where people wish to live, where families feel connected, which provides a 'go-to' destination for visitors and is a place to experience nature. The Town entrance/gateways will be enhanced by placement of more trees. Natural landscapes and streams will be enhanced and healthy.
- In the future, I will be able to walk downtown along streets shaded by trees for the entire distance. The walk will be peaceful, not hectic.
- Victoria Park will be a passive use park with lots of grass and trees, home to smaller rather than large events so as to protect park resources for future generations.

- There will be more trees everywhere – along streets (when driving), along paths and trails (when walking, cycling), in neighbourhoods, by the Boardwalk - providing ecological corridors for wildlife (east-west, north-south) and connections for humans to destinations across Town. Establishment of more trees will be accomplished in the short term and this establishment and the required maintenance of these trees will be supported by adequate funding.
- A Town full of large, healthy trees that are climbed by children with a book for reading. Trees will be a place to escape technology.
- Town residents will have a strong environmental ethic and understanding due to education started now.
- Kerr Street will have a naturalized streetscape.
- More urban forest along the Lake Ontario shoreline
- Trees are essential for the Town and its streets to look attractive
- Contributes to the Town’s economic, social and environmental vitality
- Contributes shade, helps homes and businesses save energy

### Time Period

- Look forward 50, 100, 150 years because of long life of trees;
- With this year as Canada’s 150<sup>th</sup> birthday, look forward to 150 years from now
- A much longer-term vision, of ~100 years for trees, is a good approach. This longer term view fits with sustainability.

### Connections

- The Town was once a **forested landscape**. It would be a benefit to all if the number and canopy coverage of trees increased from the current state
- Setting a vision for the Town’s urban forest could benefit from a view of Cobourg’s history. A natural forest, such as what existed before settlement, is one for which there is a strong preference. Large, majestic trees would be desirable. For example, College Street was described as being full of large maples when one of the Councillors was young. Also, Henry Street was previously known to be “thick with trees”. To see such landscapes again would be desirable.
- Link to Cobourg’s past history of numerous apple orchards
- Integrate County vision of **People-Partnerships-Possibilities**
- The urban forest is an **ecosystem**, connected to natural areas and providing important wildlife habitat

### Forest Goals / Management Approach

- Have all dead limbs removed from trees promptly in the future
- Focus upon planting more trees on private rather than public lands
- The downtown area was noted as the greatest challenge. Some boulevards are easy to work with for tree planting. With a sidewalk on one side only, it is possible to place trees on the other side. It would be good to see more planting /a planting program in the Big Box Store and parking lot areas. It was noted that the stormwater collected from parking lots could be used to water trees
- When a landowner is proposing to remove trees, they must pay compensation for the determined tree value and the funds would be directed to the Town for tree planting; amount to be paid is based on tree value (remaining tree life and its contributions per year)
- Increase compensation ratio for removed trees in the by-law from 2:1 to 6:1
- The County CAO and 7 Municipal CAOs work together on a shared services initiative. Collaboration on urban forest management could be an added topic for this group. They are already working together well to manage emerald ash borer.

- Establish a baseline and regularly monitor progress at a neighbourhood and Town level
- Accomplish as much progress as possible in the short term so that in 50 years, the main urban forest work of the Town would be a maintenance program
- Manage the urban forest as habitat, to attract wildlife, support bats and migratory birds
- Residents and businesses know and understand their urban forest and are actively involved in its care;
- Cost effectively & proactively managed

### **From the Surveys:**

Of the 48 surveys completed, the majority of residents wish to see an urban forest in 2038 that provides a source of community pride, takes good advantage of trees' ability to add to quality of life (through benefits of stormwater use, improvement of air quality, shade, storing of carbon), consists of more tree-lined paths that connect to natural areas, is able to stay healthy in responding to challenges and is valued as an essential community asset. Specific comments provided on aspects of the current urban forest that the Community enjoys most include:

- The beauty, trees are beautiful, aesthetics, greenery is aesthetically pleasing, the beauty and variety of trees; tree silhouettes are visually beautiful in winter, visual appeal, attractiveness
- Sustainability of us and the environment
- Tree tunnels
- The green space for recreation – cycling; relaxing; walking to enjoy the trees, shrubs and gardens; listening to birds; being one with nature
- Wildlife; homes/shelters/sanctuary for wildlife; habitat
- Ecological services – oxygen, erosion control, cooling in summer, improved air quality, carbon sink, maintenance of soil, increased property value
- Benefits to the local environment
- Shade, enjoy walking on the “shady side of the street”
- Health benefits of cleaning the air
- Trees soften the concrete structures of our town; trees hide things that are not nice to see
- Without trees, public places look like ugly strip malls without character nor warmth; without trees the Town would be barren and sterile
- Streets lined with trees
- Areas of vibrant tree canopy
- Perspective that humans are fitting into the natural world, rather than the other way around
- Colour, spring blossoms, fall colours
- Peace and quiet, trees dampen the town and highway/road noise; trees make the Town feel more rural and peaceful
- Big trees and canopied public spaces make it a pleasure to be outside in places like streets and parks
- Urban forest helps Cobourg feel like a healthy community
- Environmental value
- Psychological calming effect that trees have on resident; benefit to residents' mental state; calming effect of vegetation and greenery
- That there are trees on the streets
- The tree-enshrouded King Street
- Adds to my quality of life; I just love trees
- The sound of leaves rustling
- Let us be known for the best urban

Vision features suggested by stakeholders and the community:

- Take advantage of the community benefits provided by trees
- More canopy cover
- Continuous and connected tree cover
- Tree-lined streets and ecological linkages
- Healthy and resilient (to climate change, pests, disease)
- Coburg is a beautiful tourist Town, let us be known for best urban forested town with connected tree canopy
- More larger sized trees
- Greater mix of tree species
- Valued as an essential community asset
- Community shares responsibility for care of the urban forest
- Trees at the entrance to the turn off from Highway 401
- Trees that flower in spring and are attractive all year round
- The whole community works together in stewardship/care of the Town's urban forest

## 2. Input to the Urban Forest Goals and Workplan

### Tree Planting

- Establish a **tree nursery**, transplant beds on public lands
- Suggestions for **improvement /enhancement of the view and numbers of trees and shrubs along boulevards**; consider success of Charles Wilson Parkway plantings
- Would like to see identified **"hubs" for planting** and consideration of a **levy to allow for replacement plantings**, as part of the development process. Potential hubs include school yards, community mail boxes, other public lands that do not have conflicting future land uses.
- Continue to expand and strengthen **tree species diversity**; native tree species will likely predominate but also use appropriate non-native species that thrive in Cobourg, that thrive in more hostile locations (such as along streets) and apply "assisted migration", i.e. introduce Carolinian forest trees (i.e. blue beech, Kentucky coffee tree, hickories) that will be able to establish here well as the climate changes – the climate could be quite different in the next 50 to 100 years.
- Provision of a **planting procedure** will be helpful.
- Recommend a strategy for **infill** areas.
- Some areas of Town do not have enough trees
- **Increase in the number of trees on private lands** could be a good way to enhance the Town's tree canopy; it is expected that ~60% of the existing urban forest is likely on private property.
- Provide plan **directions for tree planting and replacement**:
  1. encouraging tree planting on private property (for streets where trees are removed or where there is not room for tree planting on Town property - streets can look very bare);
  2. Replacement of removed trees;
  3. Planting of more trees (i.e. Victoria Park);
  4. Placement of the right tree in the right place/guidance on what trees to place where;
  5. Provide detailed guidance for homeowners
  6. Tree replacement/planting plan for Victoria Park
- Anything to recommend **for rural roads** (large setbacks required, difficult to establish trees(?))
- Other considerations for a Town tree planting plan include:
  - Provide tree species specific policies, as appropriate – Scots pine, Norway maple
  - Request for Town to continue planting of nut and berry trees as part of annual planting plan.
  - Consider planting of trees along the waterfront, begin replacement of cottonwoods.
  - Establish programs and incentives to encourage private landowners to plant more trees
  - Promote and provide incentives for establishment of tree oases in parking lots

- Plant trees in: neighbourhoods that have lost trees (due to disease, age, beavers), Victoria Park.
- Plant more shrubs around the hospital.
- Provide direction for adequate space for trees, particularly in consideration of intensification / smart growth practices.
- Consider establishment of an easement for trees in the front yards/land of private property where trees could be established and cared for by the Town, provided there are adequate resources to do so.

### Tree Protection and Care

- Provide recommendations for updating of the Town's **Tree Preservation By-Law**
- **Risk management:** Recommend a comprehensive risk management program such as charts specific to the Town to assist staff with: 1. schedule of tree visits and 2. assessment of long term tree health.
- **Insects and Diseases** – Emerald Ash Borer, Beech Disease – address promptly as issues arrive
- **Heritage trees:** Clarify the important Heritage trees on Town lands and consider what can or should be done to protect these trees. Also consider what can be done to assist landowners with Heritage trees on their land. Provide direction on identification and preservation of heritage trees that complements the Heritage Master Plan – i.e. trees, streetscapes, cultural landscapes on public and private lands. Apply tools in the Heritage master Plan for identification of heritage trees and cultural landscapes; these could be on public and private lands. On private lands, trees may be identified as a “character defining elements” and this provision could be used for designation of heritage trees. Review the Heritage Master Plan and the **Heritage Act** to identify the legislative supports available for heritage tree designation and protection. Build on the Heritage Master Plan directions to build community capacity (through fact sheets, social media and workshops) to assist the Town in urban forest and natural areas’ stewardship
- Consider appropriateness of a **private trees by-law**, pros and cons for establishment within the **context for the Town;**
- Provide strategies for planting, protection of trees in **heavy traffic areas** such as Victoria Park, streets
- Public education is key; the education program should include keeping and not raking up the **leaves**, an emphasis on the **soils** and their needs to well support tree health, plus an overall approach to tree care
- Have rules for development that are watershed based; require compensation for removed trees
- **Address conflict of utilities with trees;** recommend underground placement of utilities, where possible; replace excessively pruned trees; place smaller growing trees under existing utility lines. Maintenance of trees is very important for reduction of conflict with utilities.
- Provide direction for **tree establishment and care on private property** – include a plan section
- Identify the variety of **actions needed now to work towards an increased and healthier urban forest.** If there is not additional focus practiced now, the future urban forest will not be the one (healthy, diverse, increased canopy) that the Town and community would wish to see
- Review the **practices of other municipalities** how they fund tree management, i.e. City of London
- Consider where trees may need to be planted for stabilization around ponds, i.e. Sinclair & Peace Parks
- Consider if special direction is needed for **retention of larger, mature trees** (with increase in severe storm events)
- Use the **development review process to establish more trees**, particularly around commercial buildings.
- Address conflict between impact of large events and the trees and landscape within **Victoria Park**

### Management Approach

- **Define the urban forest** – be clear on how encompassing it will be
- **Respective Roles and Responsibilities** – ensure they are clear, avoid gaps and overlap
- Establish directions and guiding concepts and procedures for overall urban forest management, recommended pruning cycles, clear direction on tree planting and pruning;
- **Consider Climate Change Effects** in the urban forest management approach – climate change effects include changes in microclimates, local site conditions, timing of biological activity, potential change in conditions to favour invasive species and severe weather events

- **Provide a strategy to manage Urban Intensification** because of its potential for tree removal and/or limited areas available for trees
- Build upon existing directions and draft **urban forest management procedures and guidance** developed by the Town, such as: Design Guidelines for new developments, Preferred Species List, Tree Preservation Guidelines, Emerald Ash Borer management plan, Tree Preservation By-Law
- Identify any updates or additions recommended for the **development review process**
- Confirm tree inventory fields to use for tree data, complete the Town inventory of publicly owned trees
- Implement more **proactive** urban forest management
- Ensure **adequate resourcing (funds and staff)** is available to accomplish all urban forest management that is needed to achieve the desired future Town urban forest; include an accounting of additional maintenance required in parks and along boulevards in general. Consider naturalized management approach for some parks and/or replacement of annuals and perennials in some areas with flowering shrubs and trees. Also, recommend which tasks are appropriate to be completed internally by Town staff and which tasks are best contracted out
- Explore full range of **options to fund urban forest management**, such as: seek funding from businesses; establish a committee to obtain funding, establish a “green funerals/bequest” program; use cost-effective sources/Town nursery for trees that are planted; a carbon offset program available to businesses and residents whereby donations could be made to the Town for tree planting in lieu of carbon emissions from home use, car and air travel, recreation; engage volunteers for an urban forest stewardship program;
- **Recommend an appropriate budget**, and budget split (in-house vs. contracted resources) for urban forestry; define actions attainable in the existing budget, indicate additional budget needed for full set of recommended actions; Recommend funding solutions and ensure Town is taking advantage of all available funding sources (private, public), recommended approaches to maximize. Provide an estimate (average) of the annual and lifecycle maintenance costs, on a per tree basis
- Recommend best placement of urban forestry in municipal organization – Parks, Public Works, Planning?
- **Establish a tree canopy target (%)**
- There is support for 5 year tree operational plans and for a formal risk management program
- Should a by-law be desired for **private trees protection**, the resources must be provided to ensure its enforcement
- Recommend direction on appropriate utilities location, from the perspective of trees – integrate directions into Town **engineering standards**
- Recommend **tree care standards** and urban design standards for accommodation of trees
- Maintain current approach whereby the Town Arborist approves all tree removals and planting plans
- **Establish the right tree in the right place** – power lines (smaller trees), shallower rooted trees in some areas, match trees appropriate to the soil and air space available along sidewalks, trails, maintain safe driver sight lines – provide guidelines for this in the plan (to reduce interference and conflict between trees, road and sidewalk users)
- **Preserve and enhance natural areas** (to attract wildlife)
- **Take an ecosystem and permaculture approach** to management of the Town’s urban forest, treating the forest as a diverse network of plants, shrubs and trees that provide habitat and a supportive environment for pollinators, wildlife and birds. Create a web of life with the Town in the forest. The forest should be resilient to climate change and should maximize provision of ecological goods and services.
- **Consider including private trees in the Town’s inventory**, once the public tree inventory is up-to-date.

### Community Engagement

- Implement a **public education program** to raise awareness and understanding of the community value of trees and how to care for them. Information to consider for inclusion:

- Information in the **public education program** regarding when trees must be removed, describe how the Town is managing trees, describe that the comprehensive urban forest program; provide direction to residents on the importance of ONECALL locates before planting of trees on private property
- Consider a checklist and guidelines of how existing trees should be retained and protected and new trees established, as part of public education process
- Have **up-to-date information on the Town's urban forest** available to residents, **on the Town website**
- Include benefits of natural areas and Town trees
- Advice to homeowners on care and pruning of trees on their property. Note that there are many private trees in poor health, present a risk.
- Identification (tags) of tree species for existing trees in parks and along streets.
- Include a spatial map of Town trees – their location and associated data - on the Town website. Have the Town website be an overall urban forest resource for all aspects of tree care, tree management activities, guidance to private landowners on tree care, planting, recommended species list and pest/invasive species updates (such as current emerald ash borer management status)
- Direction to residents on activities they are allowed to do in regard to tree care, planting, natural areas stewardship; basic tree care; impact of weed trimmers on trees; the importance and value of tree pruning, when and under what conditions, how to conduct and/or arrange, the resulting benefits (such as no loss of limbs from a pruned tree during recent ice storm); the importance of watering trees and suggestions for how to do so, such as redirecting storm water runoff from paved areas to trees; suggestions for improving tree health and the ability of trees to better adapt to effects of climate change;
- Create a Celebration of Trees! initiative for sharing of significant tree stories;
- Engage the **community to help with urban forest care**
- Consider a volunteer program to gain assistance for the Town in urban forest management. Relevant training should be provided to volunteers, to match the duties requested. The County is developing a **volunteer database** that could be helpful to the Town for completing some aspects of Town tree care
- Continue the **subsidy for trees provided to residents** whereby they pay a portion of the tree cost
- **Peace Park**: Peace Park has 6-7 trees with bronze plaques as memorials. This program could be enhanced as a tree policy in the Plan whereby technology is used to describe establishment of a real tribute in real time, as trees with plaques or benches that can be added to enhance the park landscape.
- **Community-Supported Projects**: It was requested that the plan identify projects that the community can support. The Kerr Street Parkway was provided as an example.
- **Consider allocating some public land for planting of trees in fields or under glass** (greenhouse). Work with schools to teach students how to plant and care for trees would be a sustainable approach, comparable to the success of introducing recycling through schools in the 90's. The young generations would be taught the value of trees, and this would grow and be passed on to subsequent generations
- Find a way to provide **advice** to companies, residents **on the best trees to plant** on their properties
- Issue a **Business Challenge** to encourage Town businesses to plant trees on their properties. Incentives could also be considered, maybe a property tax reduction? It worked well 100 years ago when Canada paid farmers to plant trees, and later encouraged to plant sugar maples
- Provide direction for **increasing the number of trees on private property** and consider incentive program to encourage private landowners to plant trees, particularly in areas where the space available on public lands is inadequate. Private sector companies could be approached to donate money and land to help with increasing Town tree cover. Dedicated resources, maybe summer students, should be in place to help with fund raising for tree planting and management
- Encourage **homeowners to care for trees on Town land** in front of their homes.
- Initiate a **school naturalization project**

- Create an **incentive program for use of rainwater to water trees and plants**
- **Celebrate the urban forest management plan as part of the 150 year celebrations**
- Potential to establish a **second Arboretum on public lands**

#### **Connection of Urban Forest Management to Other Initiatives**

- Connect urban forestry to a broader green roofs, walls infrastructure Town policy; can be part of **ecological connectivity**, with natural areas and creeks forming the backbone. Provide direction on connecting the urban forest across Town, linked to public trails and natural heritage systems, providing corridors (particularly more east-west corridors) for wildlife, parklands and active transportation. View the urban forest as an ecosystem, a community of trees and shrubs and that the Town is in the forest
- Ensure **UFMP directions are aligned** with other Town Plans and policies
- Consider **ecological goods and services of the urban forest**
- The upcoming **Tannery site** master plan can be a demonstration project to accomplish public education on sustainable practices, including those relevant to trees and the urban forest. The Tannery Master Plan can be a way to demonstrate establishment of the desired urban forest
- **Town, GRCA and County could work together on ecological restoration**
- Maintain **healthy stream riparian areas**, protection of stream quality and headwater areas for the local and visiting tourists interested in fishing
- **Provide ecological guidance and management directions for natural areas** (i.e. Nickerson's Woods), streamsides, Lake Ontario shoreline habitat and overall wildlife habitat
- Integrate consideration of the Iroquois lakeshore and its importance
- **Asset Management**: Directions on urban forest management could fit within the Town's Asset Management Strategy. The Asset Management Strategy is a 10 year plan; conditions change quickly so that looking forward 10-15 years is appropriate, with a 5-year plan review cycle.
- Integrate **sustainability directions** into the UFMP to build upon the low impact design and green infrastructure approach being promoted through the development review process and Council decision-making
- Provide direction on updating of the **Tree Protection By-Law**; build in public education to ease in changes that may be controversial
- Coordinate UFMP directions with those being developed for the Waterfront Plan

#### **From the Surveys:**

Residents note that the greatest challenges to managing the urban forest is replacement of trees, a need for more planting and management of unforeseen circumstances such as storms, pests and diseases. Most residents describe the urban forest condition as fair. The most popular recommendations for improvement include more replacement planting and more tree planting. Residents expressed interest in participating in many tree care initiatives, with the most common activities of planting trees in public places, watering Town trees in front of their homes and planting trees and shrubs on their own property.

Other specific actions recommended by the Community through the survey responses included:

- More tree planting; consider planting more trees in open areas of the waterfront
- Consider connectivity, habitat for birds and animals
- Stick to native species, no more Norway maples
- Training for staff and management involved in caring for trees
- Remove beavers that are destroying trees (i.e. woods between Prince of Wales and Wilkins Gate, New Amherst, south of Kerr Street to the railroad tracks)
- More coordination between Town departments and agencies
- Public education on old trees – how much longer lived they can be than humans
- Healthy big trees are very valuable and should not be lightly considered for routine replacement
- Connect urban forest to natural areas, consider part of overall system

- Consider value of trees in creating safe streets – traffic calming, as nice places for people to be (more eyes on the street)
- Design streets to support growing trees to their optimum maturity – this would help reduce urban forest maintenance costs in the long term
- Routine watering is essential – have seen many new trees along boulevards die; use a watering truck or subsidize residents who wish to water boulevard trees; maybe a volunteer group could water municipal trees in boulevards
- Choose carefully the tree species for planting, considering those with the best chance to be healthy for the long-term, large, beneficial to the local ecosystem
- Keep doing what you are doing
- Properly care for aging trees and plan for the future by planting young trees to replace those that have been removed
- Care for greenspaces, such as removing dog strangling vine along creek, replace trees, do not allow encroachment by businesses without obtaining neighbourhood input
- Better plan green space to prevent landscapes such as the Division Street entrance to Town which has become ugly due to business expansion
- Reinstate the program of about 25 years ago through which the Town gave and planted trees on private property
- Make people aware of the value of trees
- Ensure residents know the respective responsibilities of the Town and GRCA
- Consider making simple boulevard tree maintenance, such as watering and pruning of younger trees, the responsibility of the householder
- Share with residents the process for requesting trees for planting on boulevards and in green spaces
- Listen to residents when they phone to voice concerns, and return their calls
- Consider planting of shorter growing trees along street sides with utility lines
- Plant more fruit and nut trees in suitable areas, offering people the opportunity to supplement their food source
- Use social media to gather community ideas on helping to keep our parks beautiful
- Get hiker and cycling groups involved in the plan
- Glad to see the priority placed on trees with work on the urban forestry plan. Keep this plan in the forefront and educate and involve residents.