

Information Report



Service Area	Public Services
Date	Thursday, February 16, 2023
Subject	Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) 2022 Implementation Update

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To advise Council of cumulative progress in implementing Guelph's Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP).

Key Findings

The implementation of the UFMP is on-track and having the intended result of evolving Guelph's municipal forestry work to a wholistic, progressive, and proactive program.

Strategic Plan Alignment

The UFMP is linked to the Strategic Plan through multiple pillars: sustaining our future, powering our future, and building our future. The UFMP supports investment in sustainable green infrastructure to prepare for the effects of climate change and increase the social, economic, and environmental benefits provided by trees. The UFMP guides the effective management of Guelph's tree canopy cover, building resilience in the urban forest to support population and economic growth.

The implementation of the UFMP is intended to improve the sustainability of Guelph's urban forest which includes increasing canopy cover to 40 per cent of total land area in the city. Current reported key performance indicator for urban forest sustainability is tree canopy cover at 23.3 per cent.

Financial Implications

None.

Report

Details

Guelph's strategic Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) is a 20-year renewable roadmap for understanding and improving the management of Guelph's urban forest, particularly that which is owned by or under management agreement with the City. Approved in 2012, the UFMP is a long-term plan with nested short-term management and operating plans (phases). 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

The plan is currently in the second phase of implementation (2019 – 2023) and is aligned with multiple pillars of the Strategic Plan. This year, as expected, progress continued to be made on the majority of the 22 recommendations, but most significantly on eight of the recommendations. These achievements are due to continued leadership and support throughout the implementation of the plan in tandem with external partnerships and grants.

Five recommendations were completed between 2012 and 2021, 14 have been initiated and will continue to be ongoing into future phases of the UFMP, two are partially complete and one is pending. A complete table of recommendations, including description and status is shown in Attachment 1 of this report.

Priorities for 2022 as noted in the 2020 UFMP Implementation and Second Phase Update, included initiating review of the Private Tree By-law and hiring second of two Arborists to support tree planting and maintenance program.

Significant achievements in 2022:

Recommendation 4: Recovery/restoration of natural areas impacted by the emerald ash borer (EAB) continued from 2021 focusing on the treatment of buckthorn and other invasives in preparation for planting of trees and shrubs in 2024 and beyond. However, other ecological restoration projects continued in City parks, open spaces, and natural areas through the work of the Ecological Restoration Internal Committee (ERIC), full-time staff, seasonal planting crews, and community volunteers.

Recommendation 5: Hired second of two arborists recommended for increased capacity for tree planting and maintenance. Expanded third party contracting (e.g., stump grinding) to support Forestry operations work beyond current capacity or where there were opportunities to use internal resources more effectively.

Recommendation 7: The ninth year of the 10-year EAB Plan was completed. Work included ash tree removals, tree planting, and risk assessments for street and park trees as well as natural areas. Ash and hazard tree removals in ash dominated wooded areas was completed December 2021 through March 2022 concluding the bulk of ash removals in natural areas.

Spongy Moth intervention was not required as moth egg mass surveys carried out in November 2021 predicted impact to canopy to be low 2022. Since then, spongy moth populations in Guelph have almost disappeared.

Once again, increased efforts were made this year to treat and/or remove and map significant amounts of invasive vegetation in various locations throughout the city.

Specifically:

- Completed treatment of approximately 40 hectares (ha) invasive European buckthorn control at 12 locations
- Treated 24 locations with Japanese knotweed with three sites treated in 2021 considered eradicated

- Dog-strangling vine treated at 12 locations
- Completed Phragmites Demonstration Project with Invasive Phragmites Control Centre (IPCC) at four sites August 2022 and City crew treated three small sites.
- Removed all 88 giant hogweed plants found at last two locations

Forestry and Sustainable Landscapes will continue to monitor for threats from pests and diseases as part of our ongoing inspection and maintenance programs.

Recommendation 8: Forestry continued to respond to weather events with heavy rains, ice storms, and excessive winds. Cleanup for these events is an expected burden on resources, fortunately, there was minimal damage to property or structures.

Recommendation 11: Initiated Private Tree By-law Review and Update with projected completion in Q3 of 2024. The purpose of this project is to review and update the by-law so that it can be implemented effectively with other tree-related planning tools to help the City meet its urban forest targets and objectives, supports a healthy and climate resilient community by maximizing opportunities for tree retention on private lands, and ensuring tree replacement through regulation and education.

Recommendation 16: Developed the One Canopy Tree Planting Strategy which builds on the plantable spaces analysis completed as part of the Urban Forest Study in 2020. The purpose of this strategy is to evaluate and achieve our canopy cover targets. This strategy is pending approval from Council in March 2023.

Recommendation 17: 16,400 trees and shrubs were planted by staff and community volunteers at 70 sites this year. Of these, Forestry crews planted 750 street and park trees (large stock) and Natural Areas crews planted 7,600 smaller native trees and shrubs. Volunteers supported by the City including Trees for Guelph and other community groups planted 8,050 smaller native trees and shrubs.

Recommendation 22: The 750 large caliper street and park trees that were planted this year were funded by \$147,500 Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream tree planting initiative (project number 2020-12-1-1472397800).

A partnership for a backyard tree planting program pilot with Forests Ontario Partnership called "Take Root" will start up in spring 2023.

Approximately 8,800 volunteer hours were provided by the community in 2022 across various City and non-City led projects and events.

The stormwater rebate residential tree planting program implemented by Engineering and Transportation Services with partners at REEP Green Solutions to increase the City's tree canopy and divert runoff stormwater continued with 51 trees planted on private residential properties in 2022, bringing the total to 90 trees planted since the program began in 2021.

Next steps:

Priorities for 2023 include continued review of the Private Tree By-law, initiation of a risk management strategy (deferred from 2022), approval and implementation of the One Canopy Tree Planting Strategy, hiring of an Urban Forest Technician to support administration/implementation of Private Tree By-law and undertake tree-

related plan review and inspections, and ongoing review of tree related standards, guidelines, and policies.

Upcoming initiatives include:

- An adopt-a-space program modelled after similar programs from other jurisdictions, Guelph's successful Community Gardens Program, and existing pilot projects
- Take Root: Backyard Tree Program in partnership with Forests Ontario
- Thirty proposed planting sites for 2023 as part of restoration and new naturalization projects
- Increase capacity for tree maintenance and tree planting using third party contractors
- Increase capacity for invasive vegetation management

Financial Implications

None.

Consultations

Not applicable.

Attachments

Attachment-1: Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) Recommendations Update 2022

Departmental Approval

Dave Beaton, Program Manager Forestry and Sustainable Landscapes

Report Author

Timea Filer, R.P.F., Urban Forestry Field Technologist

This report was approved by:

Gene Matthews
General Manager, Parks
Public Services
519-822-1260 extension 3337
gene.matthews@guelph.ca

This report was recommended by:

Colleen Clack-Bush
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Public Services
519-822-1260 extension 2588
colleen.clack-bush@guelph.ca