

Hello,

We are residents of Guelph and live on Starwood Drive in the east end. As a newish resident of Guelph these past 30 years I have seen a lot of trees cut down for new developments. We were lucky that the original farmers tree line remained in our backyard, which we love. Most of those trees still survive, plus the many new ones we have planted over the years.

I have reached out to Councillor Gibson in the past about trees in general and my concerns specifically about what I see as a lack of action about trees in Guelph. Please see below for that email I sent to Dan on April 23, 2022. I did have some further correspondence with someone at the city regarding this. My current email letter continues below the line of stars.

Hi Dan,

Thank you again for responding so quickly to the message I had left you yesterday. We have spoken before about my love of trees and my concerns for how they are treated in Guelph and how not enough are being planted. I have some points to raise.

1. Not enough trees are being planted in Guelph in general. And not enough in my neighbourhood. I realize there are costs involved in planting a tree, and that we have finite budgets. However, I feel more needs to be done by the City. As an example, we knew 10 years out that the Emerald Ash borer was going to devastate our tree canopy, but nothing was done to try and reduce the damage back then. Personally, we had 2 ash trees in our backyard, purchased from nurseries. We started treating them with the help of a tree specialist about 2 years after they were planted, as I became aware of the pending pest damage. We treated them faithfully for 8 years, until they both died within 1 year of each other. I am not saying that the City should have done the same. But it was common knowledge even 5 years ago, what was happening and still no preemptive tree planting was done by the City to try and start to minimize the effects of an approximate 40% loss of tree canopy, that is now occurring. I make this point as I feel the City needs to do better and get ahead of the curve in tree planting. There are only going to be more pests and weather damage going forward with our changing climate. The more we can plant, the more will survive. I would like the City to make firm plans to plant more trees, involve businesses in getting on board to sponsor tree plantings and generally look after what we have in a more responsible manner.

2. We need to engage those members of our City that care about trees by encouraging them to care for the ones they have. We need to empower them with knowledge about how to look after the trees they have, or plant, or have on their boulevards. We need to encourage our citizens to take more responsibility for those boulevard trees. I am not sure what budget the City has for such items, but I think there would be a net benefit to the City to do this.

3. When the City plants a tree in a park, or boulevard, median bed there needs to be a plan to care for that tree. The stakes should remain in areas prone to strong winds, so that the trees have a chance to grow straight. Or if that is not an option, then a City employee needs to check on newly planted trees, once the stakes are removed and take action on any that are leaning. We have a few trees on Starwood that are hopelessly leaning. And that is because our street is a wind tunnel. And no action was taken the year after the stakes were removed. I would like to hear your thoughts on this and if there is any way for the City to take this action going forward. There is one leaning tree at the corner of Starwood and Chesterton that will eventually become a danger. '

4. Eastview Road between Starwood and Summit Ridge, on the east side, overlooking the large walled area. There are a number of trees that were planted in the past and died. No replanting was ever done. I realize it is a high point in our area and exposed to higher winds and the sun, so it is a tough spot for a tree to survive. However, it is a dead zone now and would benefit from more plantings. The many walkers in our area would appreciate future tree canopy coverage. And it would help with climate change cooling to have many more trees there. But those newly planted trees would need better soil and perhaps some watering during very dry periods. And protection from peeing pets. Many of the low rise condo residents across the street use that boulevard as a bathroom for their dogs. (as an aside, I do wish the City would remind pet owners to be respectful of their neighbours!! Clean up after your dog signs should be set up more frequently, even on residential streets to remind dog owners of this.)

5. A tree needs good soil to survive. If we are going to insist on stripping off all the good soil in new subdivisions, then we need to ensure better quality soil and enough soil is returned to all the areas where trees will be planted. I think that is why so many trees do not survive in our neighbourhood. Plus not everyone is a gardener and therefore they are not fertilizing or watering their trees enough. Many areas within the GTA use a green water sac on newly planted trees to help them survive. Why can't we do this?

6. The huge boulevards on Starwood Drive, Grange Road. And anywhere else in the City too!! I strongly support the City planting a huge amount of trees on these streets to take advantage of all that space that is currently filled with mostly weeds. And having way more trees on those boulevards would have at least 3 positive results. Firstly, improve our tree canopy and therefore help mitigate climate change. (Being a newer area, so many very large trees have been removed for new homes, so we need to plant more in large grassy areas to combat the loss). Secondly, beautify the neighbourhood. Thirdly, reduce traffic speeding (see separate email sent to Dan Gibson today) by reducing site lines on the ridiculously wide roads we have in our area.

7. Variety of plantings. It does appear to my gardeners eye that we are planting a limited variety of species. If we were to introduce more species, the overall City tree canopy would be richer, more resilient and more interesting. Also, more variety would mean more foods for native animals and insects. The City only appears to plant deciduous trees. How about more coniferous trees? And native species like Serviceberry. And How about some shrubs?

8. Starwood Drive above Clythe Creek. On the south side just before Chesterton. About 5 or 6 Lindens were planted there 15 years ago. They died. Could we replant them, and support them with a watering program until they survive?

Thank you so much for your time. I would be happy to speak to anyone that will listen to me on my concerns.

Iris and Mark McQueen

████ Starwood Drive (lived here since 1996)

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I feel that many of my concerns still apply 2 years later. Although I was pleased to see that some trees were planted along the very wide boulevards on Grange Road. It is a start, but I would like to see more trees planted in those areas. And I sure hope that some good soil was added to the planting holes, before those trees were planted.

I would like to add another comment about development. Developers must be made to keep more of the trees that are already there on the land. We need to do more to keep what we have. More creative work arounds so that some trees remain rather than all of them being obliterated. I am not some radical that says no to development. I realize we need more homes and all that goes with that. My home is on former farmland.

What about planting on my boulevard space? I did enquire of the city and was told no. But I don't understand why not. The city planted trees on the Grange Road boulevard....so why can't I on my boulevard, and elsewhere. It would really do a lot to expand our tree canopy if the city allowed this to be done. And more trees, would reduce sitelines and therefore hopefully speeding, which is problem everywhere. How about adding a centre boulevard to Eastview Road (between Victoria Rd and Starwood Dr) and filling it with trees. There is absolutely no reason to have that street so wide. It is a waste of asphalt.

With respect to the recent online news article referenced in the subject line, I am not happy about the timelines proposed. Our tree canopy is a laughable 23%. In fact, that is an appalling statistic. And pushing the goal timeline to 2070 is not a feasible answer. More needs to be done now. It takes a long time for a tree to grow. It does not matter what your political colour is.... or what the facts are that you believe....the world around us is changing. I can see that in my short 60 years....and the photos of what winter looked like when I was a child etc. And what my parents experienced weather wise when they were young. And as a gardener, I can see the new weed and bug species that are now in my garden, that were not there 20 years ago.

The planet will survive until the sun goes supernova in a billion or so years. And so will Mother Nature. And hopefully humans. But, if we don't look after our own backyard, what will the future look like in terms of the natural world? We are a part of it, no matter how many people try to ignore that reality.

So, in summary, I VERY STRONGLY OBJECT to delaying the tree canopy increase, decades down the road. I want to see the city do everything it can to increase the tree canopy and the natural plantings in our parks and buffer areas now.

Thanks for your time.

Regards, Iris (contact info already included above)

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