

Updating Guelph's Private Tree Protection By-law: What we heard during the Phase 1 engagement

Executive Summary

What is this report?	This report shares a summary of what was heard during the first round (i.e., Phase 1) of community engagement on Guelph's Private Tree Protection By-law update.
When was the Phase 1 engagement?	Phase 1 engagement took place between March 6 and April 14, 2023.
Who was engaged and by whom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants included Council, City staff, Indigenous Nations and a diverse range of individuals and organizations from across the community.• Grounded Solutions and Kennedy Consulting jointly led the Phase 1 engagement planning, delivery and reporting.• The engagement and communications materials were created and delivered with support from the City project team (which includes staff from the Parks division, Planning and Building Services, and Strategic Communications and Community Engagement).
Why is Guelph's private tree by-law being updated?	<p>Guelph's private tree by-law was last updated in 2010. Updating this by-law was identified as a priority because a lot has changed since then, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guelph is growing and the City is placing a greater focus on more compact development and redevelopment, putting more pressure on established trees on lots of all sizes;• climate change is an even bigger issue than in the past, and trees are important to help manage the effects of climate change;• the City has updated several policies and guidelines that relate to tree protection and replacement, and the private tree by-law needs to be aligned with these policies and guidelines; and• the City's Urban Forest Management Plan recommended a review and update of the City's private tree by-law as planning in the city evolves.
How were participants engaged?	<p>Participants were able to provide feedback through an online survey, available on Have Your Say Guelph, and/or by attending a variety of in-person and virtual engagement sessions, listed below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pop-up at the West End Rec Centre, 21 Imperial Road South on March 17, 9 to 11 a.m.• Pop-up at the Guelph Library, Main Branch, 100 Norfolk Street on March 25, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.• Pop-up at Dublin United Church "Resilience Festival", 68 Suffolk Street West on March 25, 11 a.m. to noon



Guelph's Private Tree Protection By-law Update: Phase 1 Engagement Summary (July 2023)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Hall at Kortright Presbyterian Church on April 5, 7 to 8 p.m. • Community information session at Sir Isaac Brock Public School, 111 Colonial Drive on March 30, 6:30 to 8 p.m. • Virtual community information session on April 11, 6:30 to 8 p.m.
What did we hear?	<p>Key themes heard from participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is critical to protect and expand Guelph's tree canopy cover. • Mature trees should be a priority for protection. • Many residents are not aware of and/or do not fully understand the current private tree by-law; more outreach and education is needed. • It is understood sometimes trees must be removed to accommodate development, but this loss of canopy cover must be replaced. • Guelph is starting to feel the impacts of climate change and trees can help the community adapt (e.g., by providing cooling, filtering the air, etc.). • The effectiveness of the current private tree by-law is not being tracked. <p>We also heard a variety of opinions about the scope of the private tree by-law including support for keeping the current scope, expanding the scope a little, and expanding the scope a lot. In general, the survey responses were divided on if and how the scope of Guelph's Private Tree Protection By-law should be expanded. Notably, the community will have another opportunity to provide feedback on at least three specific options for updating the by law during the next phase of engagement for this process.</p>
What are we doing?	We are planning on updating Guelph's current private tree by-law and are still in the process of deciding the extent and types of updates.
What are we not doing?	This process is focused on the regulation of trees on private lands in Guelph; a separate by-law for trees on City lands will be developed in the near future.
Next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City will present at least three specific options for updating the current private tree by-law based on the findings of background research and analysis, community feedback, and evaluation of a range of feasible alternatives for Guelph. • Members of the community will be encouraged to share their thoughts on these options later in 2023 during the Phase 2 engagement for this update. • Following the Phase 2 engagement, a preferred direction for the private tree by-law update will be selected with consideration for feedback from the community and Council, the key issues identified through the background research and analysis, and input from City staff. • An updated private tree by-law will be developed and is expected to go to Council for decision later in 2024.
Contact	Please direct all questions and comments about the update process and this report to Timea Filer, Urban Forestry Field Technologist, City of Guelph, timea.filer@guelph.ca .



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Councillor Dominique O'Rourke (Ward 6) and the lead engagement specialist Amanda Kennedy from the consulting team at the in-person information session on March 30, 2023



Why is Guelph's private tree by-law being updated?

Guelph values its trees and the many benefits and services they provide. Guelph's Private Tree Protection By-law is one of several tools the City uses to encourage the retention of trees and, when trees are approved for removal, ensure replacement trees are planted.

The by-law currently applies to trees with a diameter of at least 10 centimetres (cm) on privately-owned lots greater than 0.2 hectares (ha) (0.5 acres). More than half of Guelph's tree canopy cover is on private lands, so private landowners play a key role in protecting and enhancing it.

Guelph's Private Tree Protection By-law has been in place since 1986. Key changes since it was last updated in 2010 are as follows.

- **Shift towards intensification.** Guelph's current population of about 150,000 is forecast to exceed 200,000 by 2051 based on provincial targets. As the city continues to grow within its established boundaries, there will need to be more compact development, as well as intensification and redevelopment in areas that are already developed. This will put more pressure on trees established on lots of all sizes.
- **Addressing climate change.** Maintaining and increasing Guelph's tree canopy cover is one of the simplest and most cost-effective actions that can be done to (a) help mitigate climate change (by sequestering carbon in tree branches, trunks and roots) and (b) help the community adapt to climate change (e.g., by providing cooling in the summer, filtering the air, helping to manage stormwater quantity and quality, etc.).
- **Evolving planning context.** Since 2010 the City has updated several policies and guidelines directly related to protecting and replacing trees. The City's private tree by-law needs to be updated to align with the current planning context.

Reviewing the private tree by-law was also recommended by the City's [Urban Forest Management Plan 2013-2032](#).

The reasons listed above made updating Guelph's Private Tree Protection By-law a priority. An updated by-law is expected to help the City accommodate the required growth while still protecting and enhancing Guelph's tree canopy cover. Gathering and considering community input is an essential part of the by-law update process. This report summarizes what we heard during the first of two phases of engagement planned for Guelph's private tree by-law update process.

When was the Phase 1 engagement?

The first round (i.e., Phase 1) of community engagement took place between March 6 and April 14, 2023. During this period, the City asked the community:

- Were you previously aware that Guelph has a private tree by-law?
- What do you think about the current by-law?
- How do you think the by-law can be improved?

The intent of Phase 1 was to listen to the community's feedback to help inform the identification of options for updating the private tree by-law.



Who was engaged?

As part of this process, we sought feedback from the following:

- City Councillors and Mayor
- City staff from all divisions who work with or must consider the private tree by-law
- Indigenous Nations and councils (see below)
- Council-appointed Advisory Committees (i.e., Heritage Guelph and Natural Heritage Advisory Committee)
- private property owners
- local developers and builders
- tree care professionals who work in Guelph
- community organizations with an interest in trees
- local agencies and institutions, including those specifically noted in the current by-law
- a range of individuals from across the community

Indigenous engagement

In advance of the Phase 1 engagement, letters were sent by the City to the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN), the Six Nations of the Grand River (SNGR) Elected Council and the Métis Nation of Ontario – Grand River Métis Council (MNO-GRMC). The letter included information about the reasons for the update, the key tasks and anticipated timing for the update process, and an offer to meet to discuss Guelph's private tree by-law.

Both the MCFN and SNGR requested copies of the Phase 1 project summary (which the City sent following the Phase 1 engagement) but did not request a meeting at this time. No response was received from the MNO-GRMC. The City will undertake another round of outreach to these Nations and councils as part of the second phase of engagement for the private tree by-law update process.



City staff speaking with a resident at the pop-up held March 17 at the west End Community Rec Centre



How did we engage the community?

Most of the feedback was collected through an online survey available on [Have Your Say Guelph](#) for the duration of the engagement period. This survey was promoted on the City's website and social media, at Phase 1 in-person and virtual engagement sessions, through a public notice and digital news articles, and in emails to persons and organizations on file at the City with an expressed interest in tree-related matters.

Through the Phase 1 engagement process, a total of 296 surveys were completed and a total of 84 people participated in virtual and/or in-person engagement sessions (i.e., 20 at pop-ups, 32 at focus groups, and another 32 at the community information sessions and Town Hall).

Meetings with the Mayor and all interested Councillors were also held as part of the Phase 1 engagement.

City staff who help implement or who must have regard for the private tree by-law as part of their regular duties were engaged through interviews and a workshop prior to the Phase 1 public engagement.

The Phase 1 engagement included a variety of in-person and virtual engagement opportunities which the City promoted via its website and social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter), via newsletters to residents signed up to the City's engagement platform, direct email to those registered with the City as having an interest in tree issues, on screens and posters in public City-owned facilities, and through a public notice, City news article and coverage in the local media.

Overview of Phase 1 engagement in-person and virtual sessions

Three community pop-ups:

- West End Rec Centre, 21 Imperial Road South on March 17, 9 to 11 a.m.
- Guelph Library, Main Branch, 100 Norfolk Street on March 25, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- Dublin United Church "Resilience Festival", 68 Suffolk Street West on March 25, 11 a.m. to noon

Two community information sessions and a Town Hall:

- In-person information session at Sir Isaac Brock Public School, 111 Colonial Drive on March 30, 6:30 to 8 p.m.
- Virtual information session on April 11, 6:30 to 8 p.m.
- Town Hall at Kortright Presbyterian Church on April 5, 7 to 8 p.m.

Nine focus groups:

- Four (4) small group hybrid meetings with Councillors and the Mayor at City Hall (March 20 and 21)
- Three (3) virtual focus groups with: developers, large landowners and tree care experts (March 27); community groups and residents (March 29); and local institutions, agencies and utilities (March 30)
- One (1) focus group with Heritage Guelph, the City's heritage advisory committee (April 11)
- One (1) focus group with the City's Natural Heritage Advisory Committee (April 12)

Those unable to attend these sessions could share their thoughts by completing a survey, commenting on the project web page and/or sending an email to the City's project manager.



What did we hear?

This report summarizes the key messages we heard from the first round of community engagement for the private tree by-law update. The ideas and comments shared have been grouped under the following six topic areas:

1. Awareness and understanding of the current private tree by-law
2. Purpose of a private tree by-law
3. Scope of Guelph's private tree by-law
4. Challenges with the current private tree by-law
5. Tree replacement and compensation
6. Other comments and concerns related to the private tree by-law

1. Awareness and understanding of the current private tree by-law

Survey participants were asked if they were already aware that Guelph had a private tree by-law prior to the launch of the update process in February 2023:

- seventy-two (72) per cent of respondents were already aware of the by-law
- twenty-eight (28) per cent indicated they had no prior knowledge

However, feedback from the focus groups, pop-ups and survey comments suggests that the results above may not be applicable to the community-at-large and that there is a much broader gap in knowledge of the City's private tree by-law than the survey results suggest. For example, we heard from most of the focus groups that many residents are not aware of the current by-law, or how it does (and does not) apply.

"I suspect most citizens are unaware of the current by-law. If citizens don't know it and don't comply with the current by-law, making stricter conditions won't improve the current situation." – Survey respondent

Survey participants were also asked how well they understood the existing by-law prior to engaging in the update process. As shown in **Figure 1**:

- seventy-nine (79) per cent knew that the by-law applies to trees on private properties
- seventy (70) per cent knew that a permit is required to damage or remove regulated trees
- fifty-eight (58) per cent knew that the by-law specifies situations in which a permit is not required
- fifty (50) per cent knew that the by-law regulates trees on private lots greater than zero-point-two (0.2) ha
- fifty (50) per cent knew that the by-law regulates trees of at least ten (10) cm in diameter
- forty-five (45) per cent knew that tree permit holders are typically required to compensate for trees removed by planting replacement trees on site or paying the City to plant them elsewhere in Guelph

In looking at the survey responses as a whole, it is apparent that even though most respondents knew the City had a private tree by-law, about half did not understand the specifics of where or how the by-law applies.



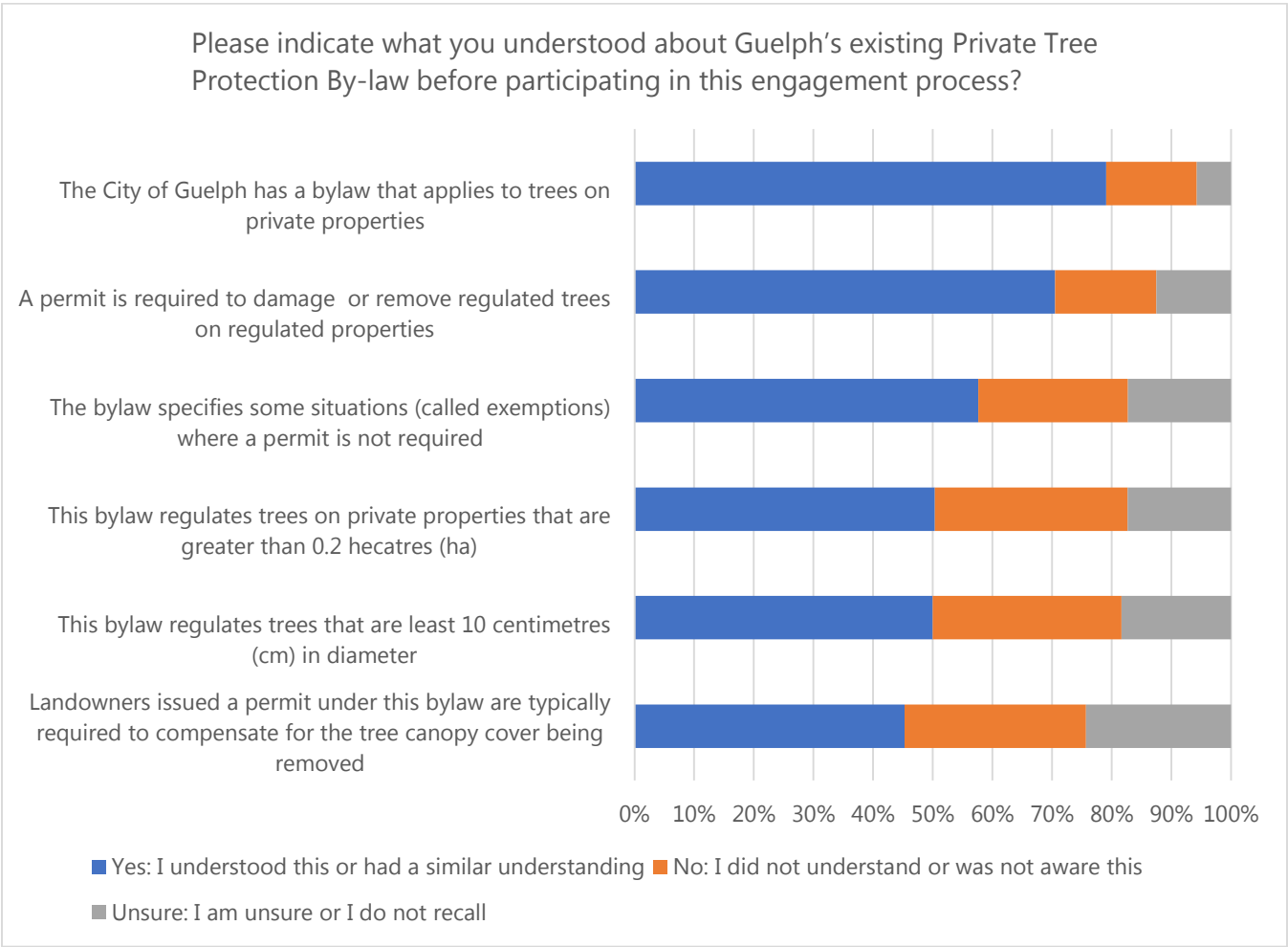


Figure 1. Results from the surveys question about what participants understood about Guelph's private tree by-law before participating in the engagement process

One of the most common themes from the surveys, focus groups and pop-ups was that more outreach and education related to the private tree by-law is needed. Some of the specific suggestions are to:

- Find creative ways to communicate with residents, such as distributing doorknockers/hangers or hosting pop-up sessions at plant nurseries, dog parks and schools.
- Consider an online tool where residents can check their lot size so they can figure out if trees on their property may be regulated.
- Have an online system for notifying the community about permit exempt tree works (e.g., hydro line clearing) as well as approved tree removal permits.
- Provide guidance on species selection as well as how and where to plant replacement trees.

"If the city wants to protect its tree canopy, the best way to do this is via programs like the tree planting one, where subsidized planting of native species occurs with advice on care." – Survey respondent

"In addition to the private tree protection by-law itself, it would be beneficial for there to be avenues and staff to support residents with questions and concerns." – Survey respondent



2. Purpose of a private tree by-law

Survey participants were asked about their level of support for different purposes of private tree by-laws. As shown in **Figure 2**:

- ninety-one (91) per cent agreed that Guelph's by-law should be used to ensure tree removals are done in controlled situations and in ways that don't harm other trees or natural areas
- eighty-three (83) per cent agreed it should be used to avoid unnecessary tree removals
- eighty-one (81) per cent agreed it should be used to educate people about trees
- seventy-nine (79) per cent agreed it should be used to collect information related to regulated trees
- seventy-two (72) per cent agreed it should be used to require compensation for trees that are removed

Overall, the majority of respondents were supportive of implementing the full range of potential functions of a private tree by-law. There was, however, a notable minority (i.e., 28 per cent) not supportive of the City requiring compensation (i.e., money) for trees that cannot be replaced on site.

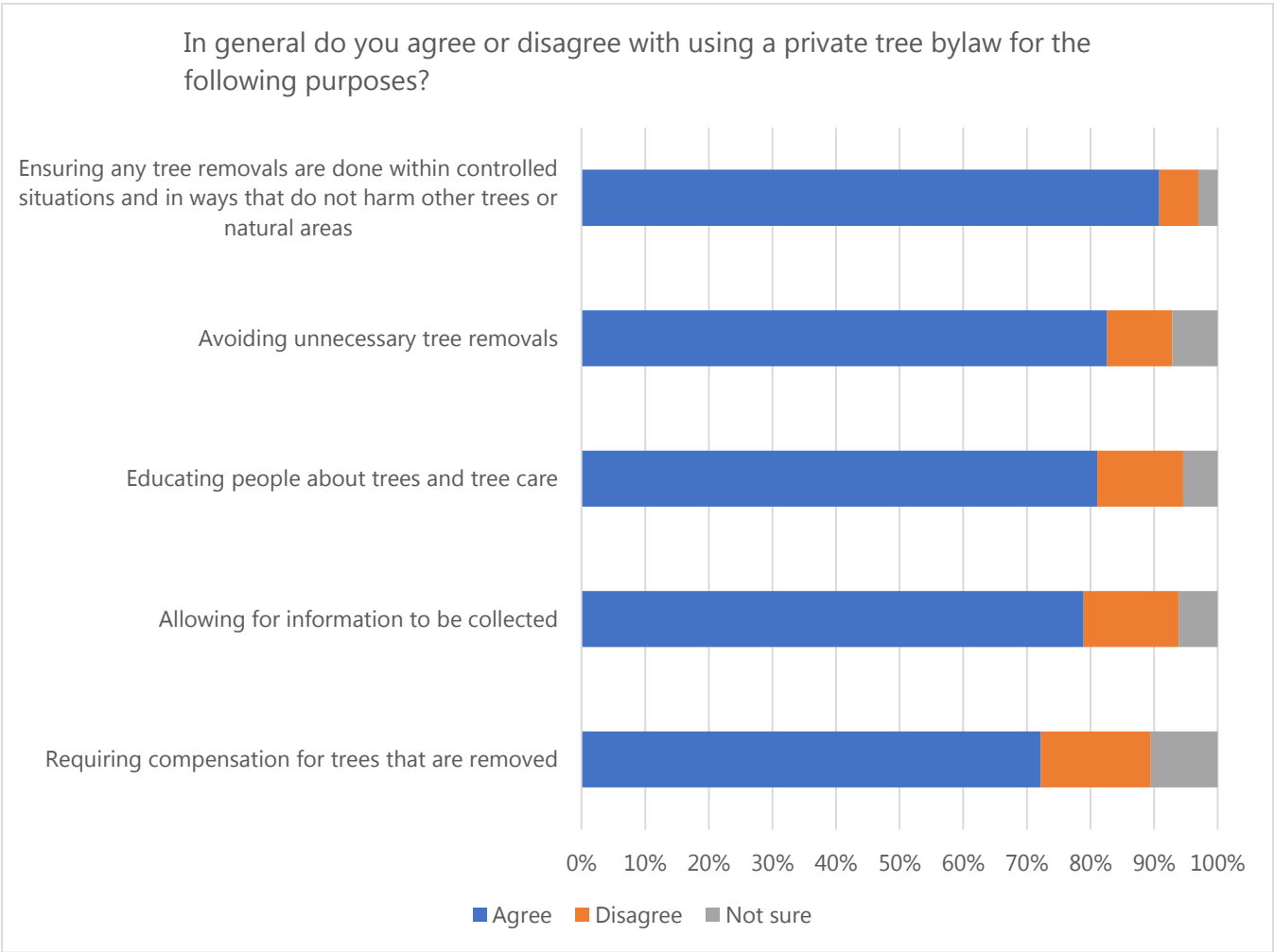


Figure 2. Results of the survey question about support (or lack thereof) for the different potential functions of private tree by-laws



3. Scope of Guelph's private tree by-law

Survey participants were asked to indicate to what extent, if any, they would support expanding the scope of the current private tree by-law. As shown in **Figure 3**:

- fifty-eight (58) per cent agreed with expanding the by-law scope to certain areas, while thirty-five (35) per cent disagreed
- forty-one (41) per cent agreed with expanding the by-law scope to smaller private lots, while fifty-five (55) per cent disagreed
- fifty-three (53) per cent agreed with leaving the by-law scope as-is, while thirty-seven (37) per cent disagreed
- sixty (60) per cent agreed with expanding the by-law scope to larger, more mature trees, while thirty-three (33) per cent disagreed

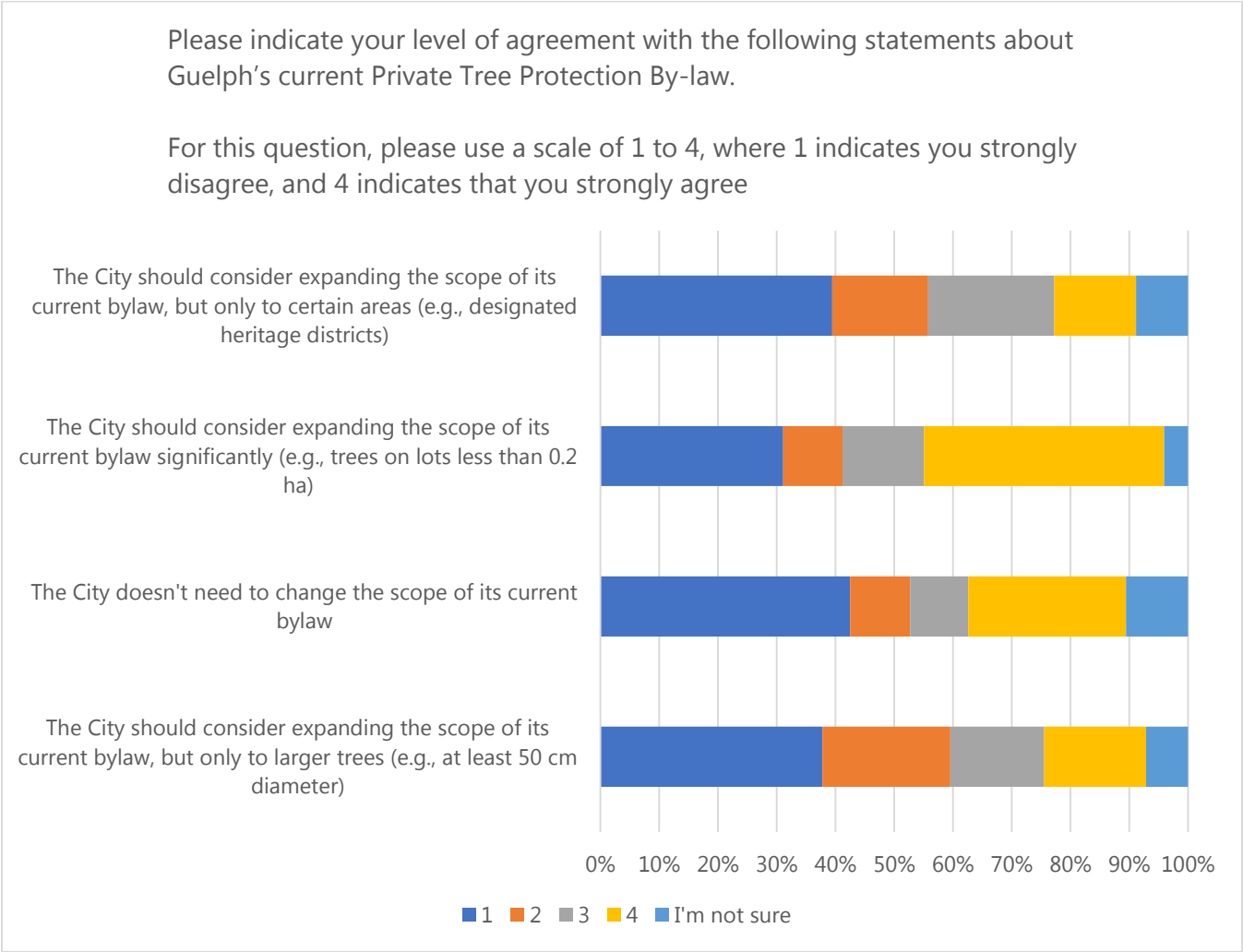


Figure 3. Results of the survey questions about levels of support for expanding the by-law scope

In general, the survey responses were divided on if and how the scope of Guelph's Private Tree Protection By-law should be expanded. Notably, the community will have another opportunity to provide feedback on at least three specific options for updating the by law during the next phase of engagement for this process.



The feedback from the survey comments, focus groups and pop-ups indicated that more than half of the participants felt that the by-law is due (or overdue) for an update. However, opinions on whether to and how to expand the scope of the current by-law were quite varied, as in the survey responses. Nonetheless, most of the focus group participants were supportive of expanding the scope of the by-law in some way, while some indicated they are generally satisfied with the scope of the current by-law and expressed concern about the added resourcing requirements and costs associated with expanding the by-law scope.

Among those supportive of expanding the scope of the by-law options put forward, from most to least frequently suggested, included covering:

- trees on smaller lots (i.e., less than 0.2 ha) or on all private lots;
- trees on smaller or all private lots, but focusing on larger diameter trees;
- smaller trees (i.e., smaller than ten (10) cm diameter); and
- replacement trees planted as part of the by-law, in addition to the trees already regulated.

Additional suggestions related to changing the by-law scope included:

- using a phased implementation approach;
- implementing the updated private tree by-law with proactive outreach and education;
- allowing commonly occurring invasive species to continue to be removed without a permit and considering updating the current list of invasive species exemptions;
- revisiting the current tree permit exemptions, such as trees with edible fruits/nuts;
- ensuring heritage trees and trees on heritage properties are regulated; and
- using Guelph's current tree canopy cover data to help inform how the by-law should be expanded.

What we heard in favour of expanding the by-law scope

"We feel that the current Private Tree Protection By-law does not adequately cover the majority of properties in the City. By including smaller sized properties, the City will be able to effectively preserve the tree canopy." – Survey respondent

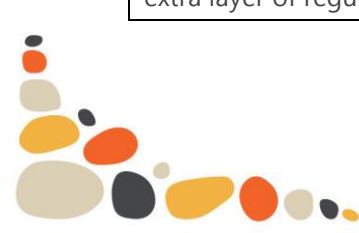
"Expanding the private tree [protection] by-law is important given the decreasing size of a typical private lot." – Survey respondent

"I believe Guelph's current by-law is weak compared to other cities. I believe the size of lot by-law should be removed completely. I think requiring a permit for a tree to be removed between 20-30cm or larger is a great start." – Survey respondent

What we heard against expanding the by-law scope

"Tree protection is important, but the City of Guelph in general is over-regulated with permits for everything. There's no need to regulate tree removal for smaller properties. The existing by-law is a good balance and doesn't need to be changed." – Survey respondent

"Homeowners of lots smaller than 0.2 ha are the best judges of how to enjoy their yard and their trees. Adding an extra layer of regulation and bureaucracy is horribly frustrating and time consuming." – Survey respondent



4. Challenges with the current private tree by-law

Participants identified various challenges related to the current private tree by-law as well as some opportunities for addressing those challenges. These have been grouped under the topics of dealing with high-risk trees (note the current by-law uses the outdated term "hazard trees"), private tree by-law permit process-related challenges, and enforcement and monitoring challenges, summarized below.

Dealing with high-risk trees

Under Guelph's current Private Tree Protection By-law, a tree confirmed by an arborist to be high-risk can be removed without paying permit fees, replacing the tree or paying any financial compensation for the removal, although tree replacement is encouraged where feasible.

Participants had different perspectives on this process. Some thought that an arborist report should continue to be required to confirm if a tree is dead and/or high-risk. By contrast, others felt the additional cost of obtaining an Arborist report for this purpose was excessive and unnecessary.

"I'm fine with the need to replace trees, but I have very old very large trees that could quite possibly fall on my house causing damage or bodily harm. It should be easy for me to remove these even if I need to plant new trees further away from my dwelling." – Survey respondent

"I... believe if a tree can be maintained and in healthy condition a permit should be denied, unless that tree is causing damage to a structure... I also believe exemptions should be confirmed by an inspector if a tree is dead or hazardous." – Survey respondent

Application process

Several participants, including tree care experts who work in Guelph, indicated the current application process could be simplified (i.e., application forms are available digitally, but the process is not online) and that the by-law permitting process could be better explained on the City's website.

Suggestions provided for improving processes related to the by-law included:

- Digitize and streamline the application process (e.g., create an online permit application portal).
- Have more plain language information about where the by-law applies and how the by-law process works (including the application, conditions of permit approval, requirements for posting permits, appeal process if needed, etc.).
- Clarify how the by-law applies to boundary trees (i.e., trees whose trunks are shared between two different landowners).

"It would be helpful to City staff if there were a requirement for signage attached to the by-law informing the community when trees are being cut down... It would probably save some phone calls, emails and grief." – Survey respondent

"If the City decides to make the by-law more stringent (i.e., smaller lot size or smaller tree size regulated), consider making the application process streamlined (i.e., online portal). The City's building permit application portal is a good starting reference, although it does have some room for improvement." – Survey respondent



By-law enforcement and monitoring

Another topic that emerged from the engagement, particularly from the focus group participants and City staff, was the lack of proactive enforcement and monitoring of the current private tree by-law.

While it was generally understood that greater enforcement and monitoring would require some additional resources, those who identified these issues considered both elements key to effective implementation. Specific suggestions included enabling City staff to:

- practice proactive, rather than reactive, enforcement (e.g., random site inspections);
- complete targeted verification of replacement trees (to ensure they are surviving and thriving); and
- require greater fines and/or penalties for serious and/or repeated violations.

"More protection for trees is needed as is more meaningful compliance procedures and penalties for the destruction of healthy trees." – Survey respondent

"Increase fines, please plant more trees, and audit regularly. We love trees :)" – Survey participant

"I believe that more needs to be done to protect trees on private property. I also believe that fines need to be enforced when developers as an example have gone in and taken trees down without permission on lots that currently meet the by-law." – Survey participant



A tree stump being measured as part of evidence collection for a Private Tree Protection By-law violation in Guelph



5. Tree replacement and compensation

Guelph's current Private Tree Protection By-law requires one or more replacement trees be planted for each regulated tree damaged or removed. The by-law also states that if replanting is not achievable on site that payment of cash-in-lieu in the amount of \$500 per regulated tree damaged or removed (i.e., financial compensation) is to be provided to the City instead. (Notably, these funds are kept in an account used for tree planting and care of newly planted trees elsewhere in the city).

The topic of tree replacement and compensation was raised at most of the focus groups and was the most frequent topic in the survey comments. Comments that came up more than once included the following:

- It is understood that tree removals are sometimes required and seeking tree replacements and/or financial compensation is a good tool to maintain and possibly expand tree canopy cover in Guelph over the long term.
- Concern that replacing trees on a 1:1 basis (i.e., planting one replacement tree for a regulated tree removed, irrespective of its size) will lead to an immediate and possibly a long-term decline in tree canopy cover, especially if the replacement tree does not grow to maturity. Ratios including 2:1, 5:1 and 10:1 were suggested.
- More needs to be done to protect mature trees because of the time it takes young saplings to fully replace mature trees, and because older trees tend to provide greater habitat for wildlife, as well as much greater ecosystem services (e.g., cooling, air filtration, etc.).

Although not directly related to the private tree by-law, several participants noted there are various opportunities to plant more trees on both private and public lands in the city with specific suggestions including schools, hospitals, industrial lands, and natural areas such as Hanlon Creek and Guelph Lake.

There seemed to be a sense of urgency around expanding tree canopy cover in Guelph. Specific suggestions about how best to do this in a context of climate change are:

- using fast-growing species for replacement plantings
- using planting techniques that support rapid establishment and growth
- creating "mini-forests" (e.g., the Miyawaki Method) in addition to individual tree plantings
- diversifying the types of trees that are planted (e.g., to improve the resilience of Guelph's urban forest to species-specific pests and diseases)

We also heard from multiple participants that paying \$500 per tree should be reviewed.

- Tree care professionals noted that it currently costs significantly more than \$500 to purchase and install a caliper-sized replacement tree (i.e., five (5) or six (6) cm in diameter) and so if the intent of the cash-in-lieu is to cover the replacement cost of a removed tree, then this amount should be increased.
- A few participants suggested the financial compensation should be based on the estimated value of the ecological services provided by the tree(s) removed (e.g., cooling, carbon storage, air purification).
- Some suggested that financial compensation should be scaled based on the size of the tree removed.
- Several participants expressed concern about social equity and the fact that paying even \$500 per tree may not be manageable for some residents.



"If a tree is removed, compensation has to include fines that represent the loss of environmental and health services provided by tree as well as replacement trees." – Survey respondent

"Where is the balance? I guess I'm concerned about people not being able to make changes that they need to their properties, or if they do they have the extra expense of offsetting by paying cash or extra fees. What happens if they can't afford to offset?" – Survey respondent

6. Other issues and concerns related to the private tree by-law

Participants also shared other ideas and concerns related to the private tree by-law. Concerns shared by multiple participants fell under the topics of climate change, urban intensification and social equity, as summarized below.

Climate change

Many participants recognized retaining existing and planting additional trees as a critical tool in adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change. Participants commented on the many benefits that trees provide, such as improving residents' mental health and physical well-being, providing habitat for wildlife, shade and cooling, and helping Guelph respond to climate change stressors. Some participants suggested that the updated by-law should factor in the impacts of more frequent and more severe weather events.

Participants from the City and local agencies acknowledged the greater importance of planting a diversity of species, taking good care of newly planted trees, and managing high risk trees in a context of climate change.

"Tree protection and expansion of the city's canopy are important tools in our efforts to mitigate climate change. Education on these issues, and context for the proposed changes, are critical to us moving forward in a positive manner." – Survey respondent

"Trees take years and years to grow and provide the ecological services that we as humans, rely on them for. It is important to maintain and strengthen tree protection as compensation for impacts to ensure that these services are not taken for granted and are maintained." – Survey respondent

Urban intensification

The potential impact of urban intensification on tree canopy cover was raised by several participants. Although the need to accommodate more housing in the city was generally understood, many participants also recognized that shrinking lot sizes, more infill development, and reduced setbacks for larger multi-unit buildings make it harder to retain existing trees and establish new trees.

"Living in the Old University area we are seeing far too many trees of all sizes on private properties being cut down due to infill and not being replaced..." – Survey respondent

"This kind of thing sounds good, and I love trees and appreciate them being part of my city and neighborhood. However, this is a classic way to create hurdles to increasing density and adding housing to Guelph. Adding housing has to be the priority until we are no longer in a housing crisis." – Survey respondent



Equity

The topic of equity in relation to the private tree by-law was raised by various participants. The costs associated with permit fees, retaining an Arborist and providing tree replacement and/or financial compensation for trees approved for removal were identified as potentially prohibitive for some residents, and would be of particular concern if the by-law is expanded to smaller or all privately-owned lots.

Suggestions for integrating equity considerations into the process included the following:

- Have a tiered system for permit fees (e.g., scaled based on the number of trees proposed for injury and/or removal).
- Reduce or eliminate permit fees for some types of properties and/or applicants.
- Consider different tiers of compensation (e.g., less financial compensation required for single tree removals on small residential lots than for multi-tree removals on larger lots).
- Offer subsidized or free replacement trees.

"I think it's important to protect and expand the tree canopy and the by-law is a good idea. However, the cost of replacing trees should not fall on homeowners who cannot afford it. There should be exemptions for low-income homeowners who are already struggling to make ends meet." – Survey respondent

"Coming up with ways to fill low-income areas with adequate tree canopy to help during heat waves and improve wellbeing should be top priority." – Survey respondent

"The cost of permits should be low. If you want property owners to participate, they should be encouraged to participate by not making the process cost prohibitive. Save the trees!" – Survey respondent



An example of intensification with tree preservation and planting, as well as outreach, in Guelph



What are we doing?

We are gathering input and information to inform Guelph’s private tree by-law update process.

What are we not doing?

The City is not currently looking at regulating trees on public lands. The current process is focused on the regulation of trees on private lands in Guelph. A separate by-law for trees on public lands will be explored in the near future.

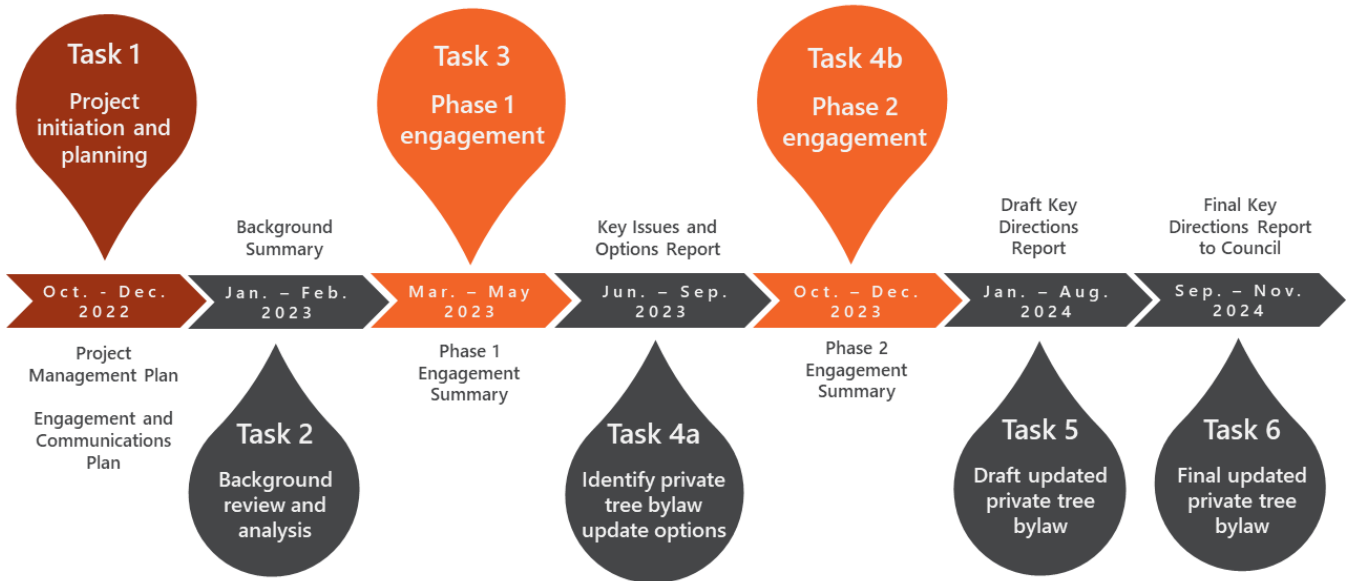
Next steps and timeline

During the next phase of this process, we will identify options for updating Guelph’s Private Tree Protection By-law in consultation with the City. Options will be identified with consideration for:

- the key findings of research and analysis;
- the local context and issues; and
- feedback gathered in Phase 1.

This background and these options will be outlined in a Key Issues and Options Report which will be available later in 2023. Members of the community will have an opportunity to share their thoughts on the options identified during a second round of engagement (Phase 2) scheduled to take place in late 2023.

Feedback from the Phase 2 engagement will be considered, along with the findings of background research and local context, to identify a preferred option for updating Guelph’s private tree by-law. Following the Phase 2 engagement, an updated by-law will be developed based on the preferred options in consultation with City staff over 2024. An updated private tree by-law is expected to go to Council for decision in late 2024.



Timeline and key tasks for the Guelph Private Tree Protection By-law update process



Want to know more?

For additional information on the by-law and the update process, please see the [update summary](#) (i.e., Updating Guelph's Private Tree Protection By-law: What you need to know available online at bit.ly/TreeBylaw-info).

Comments or questions? Contact:

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Acknowledgements

The City and the consulting team wish to sincerely thank everyone who participated in the first round of engagement. The time, expertise, creativity and valuable insights that you shared are truly appreciated.

A multi-disciplinary consulting team being led by Grounded Solutions including Kennedy Consulting, Terrastory Environmental and Urban Forest Innovations was hired by the City to lead the private tree bylaw update process. Guidance and support are being provided by a multi-departmental City project team including staff from the Parks division, Planning and Building Services, and Strategic Communications and Community Engagement.

This summary was developed by Grounded Solutions and Kennedy Consulting and approved by City staff.

Accessibility of this document

Alternate formats are available as per the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act by contacting Tracy Suerich at 519-822-1260 extension 2679.



A tree-lined street and park in Guelph

