



**The Corporation of the City of Cornwall**  
**Regular Meeting of Council**  
**Report**

Department: Planning, Development and Recreation  
Division: Parks and Recreation  
Report Number: 2019-223-Planning, Development and Recreation  
Prepared By: James Fawthrop, Manager of Recreation and Facilities  
Meeting Date: November 25, 2019  
Subject: Corporate Policy – Protection and Enhancement of Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation

**Purpose**

To provide Council a draft copy of a proposed Corporate Policy for the Protection and Enhancement of Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation for review, discussion, and direction.

**Recommendation**

That Council receive report 2019-223 and endorse the policy drafted by Administration.

**Financial Implications**

Should Council endorse the policy as drafted by Administration, there are no additional costs to the Municipal budget. Should Council decide to amend the draft policy as presented by Administration to include recommendations made by the environmental advocacy group, Transition Cornwall +, there will be increases to future Municipal budgets as described in the body of this report.

## Strategic Priority Implications

The Strategic Plan adopted by Council lists, “being leaders in sustainability and climate change impact” as a key priority. The protection and enhancement of the City’ tree canopy and natural vegetation is consistent with this priority, as a healthy tree canopy provides many benefits that help offset the impacts of climate change.

## Background/Discussion

Administration has engaged the local environmental advocacy group, Transition Cornwall +, to solicit input on the proposed Protection and Enhancement of Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation policy. Transition Cornwall +, has proposed a revised version of the draft policy that was presented to Council at the regular meeting of Council on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The draft policy presented to Council on March 25<sup>th</sup>, consolidated related existing procedures currently employed by various City Departments and therefore the proposed policy had no new budgetary implications.

A copy of the previously presented policy showing the specific revisions proposed by Transition Cornwall + is attached to this report for discussion.

Some of the proposed revisions to the draft policy have budgetary implications and/or operational limitations that Administration would like to identify in this report for Council discussion and direction.

The following are revisions proposed by Transition Cornwall + (shown in italics) that have budgetary implications and/or create operational limitations. Also included below is commentary from Administration regarding the implications of these proposed changes. Administration is requesting direction from Council with respect to the following items.

1. In the Municipal Role section of the revised policy....

*The City is committed to increasing the overall urban tree canopy coverage to at least the 30% recommended by Conservation Authorities and Environment Canada as needed to maintain a healthy ecological and hydrological function. This goal is recommended to be achieved within a ten year period, with monitoring on a regular basis to ensure the goal is achieved.*

With the ongoing removal of ash trees throughout the area on both municipal lands and private lands, and the lack of restrictions for tree removals on private property, Administration believes that achieving a 30% tree canopy within ten years is not likely achievable. Also, in order to assess the municipality's tree canopy, updated high resolution aerial photographs of the entire City would be required for analysis to determine the status of the tree canopy. The estimated cost to obtain the required aerial photographs and complete the analysis is approximately \$25,000 each time the canopy is assessed. Alternatively, Administration recommends that the policy language specify that we "endeavour" to achieve a 30% tree canopy coverage through its own planting initiatives on public property and through public advocacy to promote plantings on private property but not stipulate a timeframe to achieve the 30% goal.

2. In the Municipal Role section of the revised policy, under the heading Site Plan Development – Landscaping Requirements:

*Identify and ensure the preservation of high quality existing trees when City owned property is sold, with the sale process applying the appropriate plan of subdivision and/or site plan controls.*

In order to properly develop a site, the subject property typically requires extensive grading work to ensure proper drainage. In order to ensure the preservation of high quality existing trees, the existing grading in the areas of these "high quality existing trees" would have to be incorporated into the proposed development design such that the existing grades remain unchanged. Unfortunately, there are cases where the preservation of the existing grades is not achievable without compromising the drainage of the development. In these instances, this proposed restriction would render these portions of the site undevelopable. Administration recommends that the proposed wording be revised to include the phrase "when reasonably feasible" and that the City's site plan and subdivision review staff evaluate and determine the feasibility of preserving existing high quality trees as part of their normal site plan and subdivision review process. It is recommended that prior to listing any public property for sale, the City's Parks and Landscaping Dept. complete a review of the parcel to be sold and identify any "high quality existing trees" that warrant protection.

3. In the Municipal Role section under City Tree Management Operation Policies:

*The preservation of existing trees will be a key priority when undertaking City Public Works projects such as construction of new sidewalks and roadways or other public works.*

At times in order to maintain good design practices for municipal projects the removal of existing trees is required. Administration does not recommend compromising the design of public facilities, such as sidewalks, roads, underground services, etc., for the purpose a preserving existing trees. Administration recommends that this statement include the phrase, "when reasonably feasible."

4. In the Municipal Role section under the City Initiated Tree Removals and Replacement Plantings:

*Replace each removed street tree with two trees, to compensate for the loss of a mature tree canopy, preferably on the same block. In blocks and neighbourhoods where there are few street trees, plant three.*

Currently, it is City practice to plant replacement trees at a 1:1 ratio for each tree removed. For the duration of the Emerald Ash Borer project, the City removes approximately 300 trees per year and the estimated cost to plant a replacement tree is approximately \$400/tree. If the City were to plant two replacement trees for each tree removed the additional cost to the tree planting budget would be approximately \$120,000. Prior to the Emerald Ash Borer project the City removed approximately 60 trees per year, therefore the estimated budget increase after the Emerald Ash Borer is completed would be approximately \$24,000. (These figures do not include costs for additional plantings related to Infrastructure Planning Dept. capital projects). In addition, Administration currently faces challenges trying to find locations for new plantings on public property. Often, residents object to new boulevard plantings due to the increased yard maintenance (leaf collection and disposal) responsibilities associated with these tree plantings. Council may consider including a clause in the policy that specifies a minimum of one boulevard tree in front of every property (provided that the boulevard is capable of supporting a tree planting). A condition such as this would provide Administration the support required to proceed with new boulevard plantings despite the objections of residents.

5. In the Municipal Role section under the City Initiated Tree Removals and Replacement Plantings:

*Update species list to remove certain non-native species (particularly those that can become invasive, like Norway Maple) and include new native cultivars that have been bred for resistance to pests (such as Elm).*

Due to the lack of native species that can be planted under power lines, Administration recommends that the statement be revised to say “New tree plantings shall be native species whenever possible.” This proposed language would permit the use of non-native species plantings only when there isn’t a suitable native species option available. Transition Cornwall + has agreed to this proposed revised wording.

6. In the Municipal Role section under the City Initiated Tree Removals and Replacement Plantings:

*Identify and eradicate invasive species of trees and vegetation before spreading makes it too costly to take action.*

The city does not have a tree inventory other than our Ash tree inventory. This statement is counter productive of preserving our tree canopy as a large percentage of trees in the City of Cornwall are Non native trees which can be classed as invasive (ie. Norway Maple). Removing these trees would significantly reduce our tree canopy. In our naturalised areas (ie Guindon Park), European Buckthorn can take hold once an area has its mature trees removed. To remove invasive species takes manpower and equipment and with the pesticide ban in effect for Ontario, spraying invasive species is prohibited. This reasoning was discussed with Transition Cornwall +, and they were willing to limit the invasive species removals to European Buckthorn, Phragmites, and Japanese Knotweed. Administration still cautions, that currently the municipal budget does not include costs for the removal of invasive species on public property. The costs for removal of invasive species can be significant, even if only limited to City owned property.

Administration has amended the draft policy prepared by Transition Cornwall + to reflect the following recommendations listed above. Please find attached the revised policy drafted by Administration:

1. The policy language was revised such that the City shall “endeavour” to achieve a 30% tree canopy goal and no timeline is stipulated to achieve said goal.

2. The policy was revised such that the language “when reasonably feasible” was added regarding the preservation of high quality existing trees on City owned property listed for sale.
3. The policy was revised such that the language “when reasonably feasible” was added regarding the preservation of existing trees being a key priority when undertaking City construction projects.
4. A 1:1 replacement tree planting ratio has been included in the proposed policy along with a minimum criteria of one boulevard tree front of every property.
5. The tree planting species list continues to include non-native species, but specifies that native species will be used wherever possible.
6. The requirement to remove invasive species was removed from the draft policy.

The establishment of a Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy is a new requirement for all municipalities in Ontario. Most municipalities are in a similar position as Cornwall in that we are drafting our first formal policy for the protection and enhancement of the tree canopy and natural vegetation.

Administration views the City’s tree canopy and natural vegetation as a living asset, which is continually subject to changing pressures, therefore Administration believes that the policy be considered a “living document” that will require regular review and update. Administration recommends that the policy be reviewed after 3 years and updated if deemed necessary.

Administration would like take this opportunity to thank the members of the Tree Action Group of Transition Cornwall +, particularly John and Susan Towndrow, for their time and efforts spent researching and drafting a tree canopy and natural vegetation policy and for their collaboration with City staff.

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| Document Title:      | Tree Canopy Policy - 2019-223-Planning, Development and Recreation.docx   |
| Attachments:         | - DRAFT Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy_Recommended by Administration.docx<br>- DRAFT Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy John's revision Oct 15 2019.pdf |
| Final Approval Date: | Nov 21, 2019  |

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**Mark A. Boileau - Nov 20, 2019 - 5:33 PM**

**Maureen Adams - Nov 21, 2019 - 9:41 AM**