



Report Number: EC2024-0374

Meeting: Executive Committee

Meeting Date: 2024 March 12

NOTICE OF MOTION

RE: Conservation of Trees on Private Properties

Sponsoring Member(s) of Council: Councillor Wong, Councillor Chabot

WHEREAS a strong tree canopy improves quality of life, psychological wellbeing and community pride;

AND WHEREAS the *Municipal Development Plan* identified tree canopy coverage as a core indicator of the Plan's success, with a 60-year target of 14-20 per cent coverage;

AND WHEREAS the Urban Forestry Plan 2017-2022 sought to increase the tree canopy to at least 9.2 per cent by 2026;

AND WHEREAS, due to a combination of age, increasingly severe weather, development and funding constraints that required a focus on tree replacement rather than new plantings, Calgary lost net tree canopy from 2012-2022, decreasing from 8.51 per cent to 8.22 per cent;

AND WHEREAS the types of development seeing the highest net tree canopy loss from 2012-2022 were:

- Mixed Use Development – 3.39 per cent
- Residential – High Density – 1.72 per cent
- Residential – Medium Density – 0.88 per cent
- Residential – Low Density – 0.74 per cent;

AND WHEREAS Local Area Plans (LAPs) state that development should:

- retain existing, healthy public trees and landscaping on, or adjacent to, development sites
- retain existing, healthy private trees and landscaping on development sites, particularly in street facing setback areas
- design and locate infrastructure in a manner that minimizes disturbances to existing public trees
- incorporate existing, healthy trees and landscaping, where possible;

AND WHEREAS the City Building Program is currently updating The City's land use policies, land use regulations and street design guidelines through the Calgary Plan, Zoning Bylaw and Street Manual respectively, which will affect The City's requirements for public and private trees;

AND WHEREAS, through PUD2021-0030, Council raised concerns about tree canopy loss and directed Administration to "review policy options, legal considerations, engagement considerations, and resource requirements to support the retention/replacement of trees on private lands";

AND WHEREAS Administration responded to the above direction on 2022 December 1, through a Private Tree Protection Briefing (CD2022-1300), noting that "a status-quo approach to public and private tree protection will result in a sustained loss of tree canopy over time";

AND WHEREAS public engagement conducted to support CD2022-1300 found that:

- Calgarians overwhelmingly agree with the environmental, financial and social benefits of a strong tree canopy
- 82 per cent of those surveyed want to see the tree canopy increase, with only 1 per cent wanting to see it decrease
- 56 per cent of those surveyed support introducing restrictions on removing trees on private property, while 42 per cent oppose;

AND WHEREAS CD2022-1300 noted that, while private trees can be removed at any time regardless of development, “one of the biggest challenges to canopy growth on private land is that communities across Calgary continue to lose private tree canopy through re-development and there is currently no requirement to replace what is lost”;

AND WHEREAS internal engagement conducted to support CD2022-1300 noted various approaches used by other municipalities to support private tree protection, with the most preferred options as follows:

- Incentives such as grants and tax credits to maintain or add private trees
- Tree bonds paid by developers that are forfeited if private trees are damaged
- Community engagement and education
- Required permits to remove private trees depending upon circumstance
- Fines for developers who do not maintain planted private trees;

AND WHEREAS CD2022-1300 concluded that, with 66% of the existing canopy on private land, “we need to be able to enforce here if we are to increase/maintain the canopy”;

AND WHEREAS CD2022-1300 advised that The City of Calgary should not move forward with any form of private tree regulations without significantly increased staffing support including administrative, bylaw, urban forestry technicians and development inspectors;

AND WHEREAS Council declared a Climate Emergency on 2021 November 15 through EC2021-1525;

AND WHEREAS a strong tree canopy plays a key role in mitigating climate change and adapting to its consequences, particularly by absorbing carbon dioxide, supporting air quality, preventing soil erosion, improving water quality, enabling biodiversity and providing shade;

AND WHEREAS Council approved the Calgary *Climate Strategy – Pathways to 2050* on 2022 July 5 through CD2022-0465, which set a goal of 10 per cent tree canopy coverage by 2030 and 16 per cent tree canopy coverage by 2050;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Administration prepare options for how private tree conservation tools and incentives could be applied in Calgary, including options for a private tree protection bylaw, based on similar practices across Canada and which are suitable for the Calgary context;

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that Administration report with recommendations, budget estimates and public education and engagement needs on the above through the Community Development Committee no later than 2025 Q1.

Attachment(s):

1. Notice of Motion Checklist