

## CORPORATE POLICY



<b>Name of Policy:</b>	Tree Canopy Protection and Enhancement Policy
<b>Policy Number:</b>	COMS-014
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Community Services Division
<b>Approval:</b>	Sarnia City Council
<b>Approval Date:</b>	April 19, 2021
<b>Date of Next Review:</b>	

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### 1. PURPOSE

This policy describes how the Corporation of the City of Sarnia fulfills its responsibilities as required by section 270(1)7. of the Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 25 to adopt and maintain a policy setting out the manner in which the Municipality will protect and enhance the tree canopy and native vegetation.

The purpose of this policy is to protect and enhance the quality and quantity of tree canopy cover and native vegetation within the City of Sarnia in accordance with the Council approved by-laws, policies, procedures, plans and programs noted within this policy. The Municipality recognizes the importance of contributions and partnerships with community organizations and residents to meet this goal. The proposed Urban Forestry Management Plan will serve as a key overarching document that will guide the monitoring, management, sustainability and protection, and community engagement and education of the City's urban forest.

### 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all municipally owned trees and natural areas within the City Sarnia.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

- **Native vegetation:** Plants that are indigenous to a given area in geologic time. This includes plants that have developed, occur naturally, or existed for many years in an area.
- **Tree canopy:** the layer of tree leaves, branches, and stems that cover the ground when viewed from above
- **Maintenance:** includes all work or operations related to trimming, pruning, spraying, injecting, fertilizing, watering, treating, cabling and bracing a tree in accordance with Good Arboricultural Practices
- **Dead, Dying, or Diseased:** in reference to a tree, means a tree with no living tissue, a tree where seventy (70) percent or more of its crown is dead, or a tree infected by a lethal pathogen as certified by a Qualified Tree Expert
- **Hazard / Danger Tree:** includes dead or dying trees, dead parts of live trees, or unstable live trees (due to structural defects or other factors) that are within striking distance of people or property (a target)

- Urban Forestry Management Plan: A document that guides the sustained planning, planting, protection, maintenance, and care of trees, forests, greenspace and related resources in and around cities and communities for economic, environmental, social, and public health benefits for people.

## **4. BENEFITS OF TREES**

As our understanding of the relationship between trees and human wellness advances, trees have become more widely recognized as vital green infrastructure and public health assets, linking the health and quality of the city environment to the state of the urban forest. A healthy urban forest provides many benefits, both social and economical to residents of the City of Sarnia including sequestering CO<sub>2</sub> and other pollutants, energy conservation through transpirational cooling, shade, wind damping, storm water reduction, erosion control, noise buffering, wildlife habitat, increased property value, improved aesthetics and psychological wellbeing. The City of Sarnia recognizes the importance of its green infrastructure and will take a sustainable, holistic approach to the management of its resource to maximize the benefits of trees that will be reflected in the Urban Forestry Management Plan and Climate Change Adaptation Plan.

## **5. CITY OF SARNIA'S APPROACH**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The City of Sarnia has undertaken a number of initiatives (see Section 7. Appendix) including the forthcoming Urban Forestry Management Plan that cumulatively protect and enhance the tree canopy and vegetation within the City. The guiding principles for developing the tree canopy and vegetation strategy are as follows:

- Monitoring
- Management
- Sustainability and Protection
- Community Engagement and Education

### **5.2 MONITORING**

Through the forestry supervisor or designate, trees will be evaluated to ensure they are safe, healthy and not encroaching on or impeding, roads, sidewalks, commercial and residential properties as part of a monitoring program. Under the direction of the parks manager, significant pest and diseases such as oak wilt will be monitored and any suspected occurrence will be reported to the Ministry of

Natural Resources and Forestry for proper procedures.

### 5.3 MANAGEMENT

The City of Sarnia's Parks and Recreation department are the stewards of public trees, native vegetation, parks, and boulevards, and are committed to maintaining and promoting best practices including conservation techniques and Good Arboriculture Practices. This involves a range of staff and equipment to address urban forest management including tree removal, tree trimming, wood removal, stump grinding, storm cleanup, a City Wide Tree Planting Program, Young Tree Watering Program, trail inspections, and other operational functions. All concerns related to municipal trees including maintenance, safety or obstructions can be directed to City Hall where they will be forwarded to the forestry supervisor. Trees on public lands shall be removed only to safeguard public safety. Trees with significant structural and/or health problems and dying trees may also be removed with confirmation from the Forestry supervisor. Trees cannot be removed solely for reasons of aesthetics or nuisance, including shade, the shedding of tree leaves, nuts, or fruits, or damage caused by tree roots.

### 5.4 PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY

When development is considered, the municipality will apply creative approaches to planning to protect and enhance its tree canopy and native vegetation so as to ensure the municipality's amenity values and identity is protected as it grows. Where possible healthy trees will not be removed and an emphasis will be placed on mitigating hazards or obstruction issues through proper tree trimming practices. When trees reach a point where an obstruction, safety, or tree health issues cannot be mitigated by tree trimming, the tree will be removed and if possible a tree will be planted in its place. An emphasis will be placed on selecting native tree and vegetation species for park plantings and native tree species will be used for street tree plantings where applicable. If no native species are appropriate for a street tree location, species will be selected to encourage biodiversity and build climate resiliency. Species identified as invasive will not be selected for plantings. The City of Sarnia will continue to strive to enhance and increase our tree canopy cover for future generations.

### 5.5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

The City of Sarnia, through its Parks & Recreation Department has several community partnerships between community groups, supporters and interested residents including Programs such as the Commemorative Tree and Bench Program, Commemorative Forest Program, Adopt-A-Park or Trail Program, and Trees of Distinction Program, as well as participation in Arbor Week and Earth Day Celebrations, and other special events.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The sustainability and enhancement of the tree canopy will continue to be of significant importance to the City of Sarnia. The benefits of trees cannot be ignored, which adds weight to the importance of this document and its management themes. The guiding principles identified in this document are keystone themes in the City of Sarnia's approach towards management of its green infrastructure that will be recognized in the Urban Forestry Management Plan.

## 7. APPENDIX

- 7.1 City of Sarnia Tree By-law #34 of 1992 [By-Laws – City of Sarnia](#)
- 7.2 [City of Sarnia Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan, 2019](#)
- 7.3 [Commemorative Bench & Tree and Memorial Forest Policy](#)
- 7.4 [Adopt a Park or Trail Program](#)
- 7.5 Trees of Distinction Program
- 7.6 Individual Management Plans for 6 environmentally sensitive areas
- 7.7 [Oak Wilt Awareness and Education Program](#)
- 7.8 [Sarnia Environmental Advisory Committee](#)