CITY OF HAMILTON STAFF WORKSHOP SUMMARY

This report provides a high-level summary of participant feedback and is not intended to provide a verbatim transcript of the meeting. If you have any questions after reviewing this summary, please contact Catherine Plosz, Natural Heritage Planner, City of Hamilton, at Catherine.Plosz@hamilton.ca or 905-546-2424 ext. 1231.

Event Overview

On May 17, 2018, the City of Hamilton hosted an internal working seminar for the Hamilton Urban Forest Strategy. The workshop was held at City Hall at 71 Main Street West on the 8th Floor in Room 830 in Hamilton from 1:00-3:30pm. The working seminar was attended by representatives from Forestry and Horticulture, Community Planning, Public Health Services, Landscape Architecture Services, Planning and Engineering, Urban Renewal, Public Works Design, Hamilton Water, Parks and Cemeteries, Engineering Services, and Development Planning. The event structure was:

> **1:00-1:10pm – Welcome and Introductions**
>
> **1:10-1:55pm – Presentation – An Urban Forest Strategy for Hamilton:** Dillon staff presentation on the context and objectives for the Hamilton Urban Forest Strategy, including interactive mentimeter questions.
>
> **1:55-2:10pm – Break**
>
> **2:10-3:10pm – Strengthening our Urban Forest**: City staff engagement activity identifying ways to reach the City's target of 30-35% tree cover.
>
> **3:25-3:30pm – Next Steps and Closing**

Consultation materials are available online at

www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/strategies-actions/urban-forest-strategy

Source: City of Hamilton

The purpose of the event was to provide City staff with an overview of what the City of Hamilton and other municipalities are doing related to urban forestry, discuss the strengths and challenges City departments and associated agencies face implementing its Official Plan forestry objectives at site level, build the internal collaboration necessary to implement the strategy, and explore a vision for Hamilton's urban forest in the future.

A total of 20 people attended the internal workshop and over 110 individual comments were written and consolidated into nine themes during a collaborative brainstorming exercise.

20 Participants

OVER 110 Comments

Consolidate into

9 Themes

The presentation "**An Urban Forest Strategy for Hamilton**" highlighted the following:

- **Defining the Urban Forest:** The urban forest includes all of the trees and woodlands growing on public and private lands, including parks and cemeteries, natural areas, streets, and in residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional areas.

- **Purpose of the Urban Forest Strategy:** The purpose of the Urban Forest Strategy is to develop a vision and prepare a plan that outlines the necessary steps that must be taken to protect, maintain, enhance, and monitor the trees and forests in the urban area of Hamilton over the next 20 years and beyond.

- **Urban Forest Canopy Target:** The City of Hamilton's current urban forest canopy cover is approximately 17%. While the City's Urban Official Plan has an urban forest canopy cover target of 30%, By-law 15-125 "To Regulate Trees on or Affecting Public Property" has a goal to increase the current forest canopy cover target in urban areas of the City and in parklands to 35% by 2030.

- **Overview of Hamilton's Urban Forest:** Hamilton has a diverse Natural heritage System, with a patchy forest cover, and a high portion of urban forest is located on private lands. The City has a high number of smaller trees (e.g., newer residential developments). Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) removals and an increasing percentage of invasive species (e.g., black locust) have had a big impact on tree cover in recent years.

- **Current Structure of the Urban Forest Program:** The City's Forestry and Horticulture Section oversees public tree planting, maintenance and removal of street trees; occasional planting of trees in natural areas; and select outreach programs. The Planning and Development Department reviews applications involving private trees during the site plan development process. The Parks and Recreation Department and the Conservation Authority oversee the management of most natural areas in Hamilton.

- **Existing Policies, By-laws and Guidelines:** The following list represents the City's existing policies, By-laws and guidelines:
  - Reforestation Policy – Municipally Owned Lands
  - City of Hamilton Public Tree By-law (No. 15-125)
  - Public Tree Preservative and Sustainability Policy (August 10th, 2015)[1]
  - Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth Woodlands Conservation By-law (R00-054)

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[1] Added at a later date after the workshop

- Tree Protection Guidelines for Development Sites
- Forestry and Horticulture Design and Preservation for Working in the Public Right-of-Way V1 (2017)[1]
- By-law to Promote the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Woodlands on Private Property with the Urban Boundary of the City of Hamilton (No. 14-212)
- The Corporation of the Town of Ancaster Tree Protection By-Law (No. 2000-118)
- Town of Dundas Tree Protection By-law (No. 4513-99)
- City of Stoney Creek Tree By-law (No. 4401-96)

- **Urban Forestry Trends:** Based on the *State of the Infrastructure Report* (2016), the City of Hamilton has experienced a net gain of trees in urban streets and parks (urban areas) and natural areas (rural areas), and a net loss of trees on rural roadways. Overall, no positive trends in tree condition forecast have been documented based on the *State of the Infrastructure Report*.

- **Urban Forestry Practices in other Municipalities:** Examples of Urban Forestry programs in other municipalities include:

  - City of London Urban Forestry Strategy – Enhancing the Forest City (2014)
  - City of Mississauga Urban Forest Management Plan (2014)
  - City of New Westminster Urban Forest Management Strategy (2016)
  - Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Urban Forest Master Plan (2013)
  - North Oakville Urban Forest Strategic Management Plan (2011)

- **Current Trends in Urban Forestry Practices:** The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) developed 28 urban forest targets to promote sustainable urban forestry practices. Each target represents a key objective for developing a sustainable urban forest and includes performance indicators. Three broad target categories currently exist:

  - **Trees and Forest:** Targets related to the status of the vegetation resource;
  - **Community Framework:** Engagement and collaboration amongst stakeholders at all levels; and
  - **Resource Management Approach:** Plans, practices and policies to improve and/or sustain urban forests.
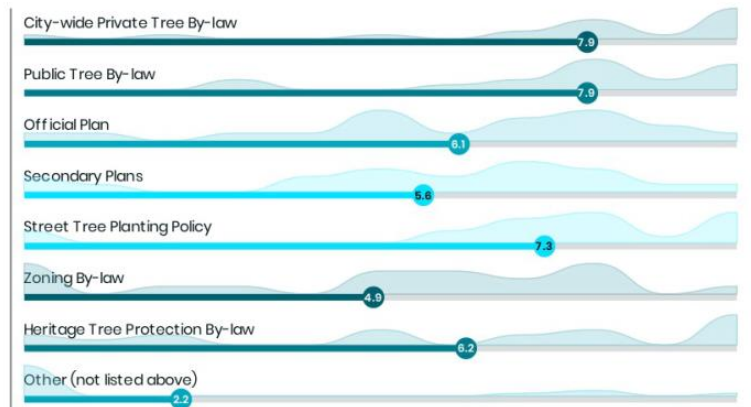
  The City of Hamilton currently addresses 7 of the 28 urban forestry targets by the USDA to at least a low to moderate performance level. The City addresses another 6 additional targets partially, but comprehensive plans, policies, and programs do not exist. The most common targets adopted by reviewed municipalities relate to canopy cover, inventories, species diversity and native species, management and cooperation and collaboration. Additional targets adopted in Urban Forest Plans by municipalities include green infrastructure, stormwater management, standards, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Throughout the presentation, the facilitation team asked questions using mentimeter, an interactive and real-time polling tool.

Following the presentation, participants engaged in a collaborative brainstorming exercise to develop a consensus-based list of the key opportunities to increase Hamilton's tree canopy cover (e.g., planning tools, design tools - green infrastructure, tree protection and preservation, outreach and education, incentives, etc.). Attendees provided feedback by engaging with each other and by submitting comment cards. Attendees collaboratively categorized the comment cards into key themes with assistance from the facilitation team.
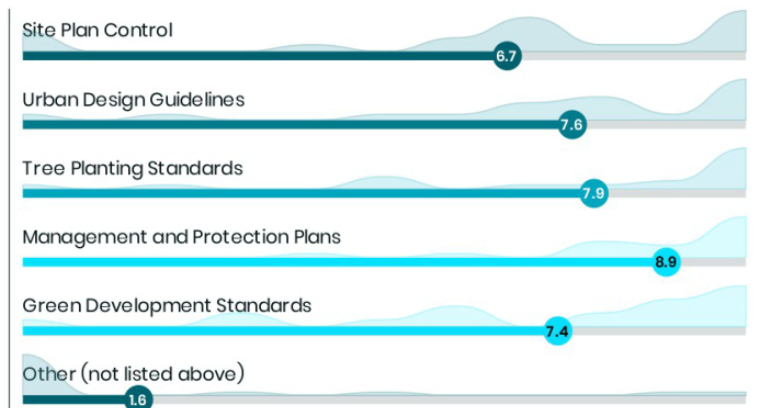
A summary of the responses to the mentimeter questions and the collaborative brainstorming exercise is provided in the "Summary of What We Heard" section below.

The City appreciates the participation and involvement of the community. Thank you to all who attended!

Consultation Promotion

The workshop was promoted through internal e-mailed distribution of a notice to City staff.

Summary of What We Heard

MENTIMETER QUESTIONS

As part of the presentation, the facilitation team asked participants to provide their input on a variety of interactive mentimeter questions on Hamilton's urban forest. The following provides an overview of the input received.

A total of 55 responses were collected on what City Staff value about Hamilton's urban forest. The top three characteristics that City Staff value about the urban forest include *shade*, *green*, and *beauty*. Other items listed include *air quality*, *protection*, *diversity*, and *pedestrian comfort*, among others.

A total of 22 responses were collected on City Staffs' perception on how the urban forest is currently being managed. The top two responses are *inconsistent* and *improving*. Other responses include *conflict between development and policy*, *program based, lack of resources*, and *reactive*, among others.

What type of City policies would have the most significant impact on sustaining and enhancing the urban forest?

- City-wide Private Tree By-law — 7.9
- Public Tree By-law — 7.9
- Official Plan — 6.1
- Secondary Plans — 5.6
- Street Tree Planting Policy — 7.3
- Zoning By-law — 4.9
- Heritage Tree Protection By-law — 6.2
- Other (not listed above) — 2.2

👤 19

What type of City guidelines and standards would have the most significant impact on sustaining and enhancing the urban forest?

- Site Plan Control — 6.7
- Urban Design Guidelines — 7.6
- Tree Planting Standards — 7.9
- Management and Protection Plans — 8.9
- Green Development Standards — 7.4
- Other (not listed above) — 1.6

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A total of 19 responses were collected on the impact of City *policies* and *guidelines and standards* on urban forestry practices. In regards to *policies*, based on a 10-point rating scale, with 10 being the highest impact and 1 being the lowest impact, the City-wide Private Tree By-law and the Public Tree By-law received an average rating of 7.9 points, followed by the Street Tree Planting Policy with an average rating of 7.3 points and the Heritage Tree Protection By-law with an average rating of 6.3 points.

Overall, the City-wide Private Tree By-law and the Public Tree By-law were voted to have the most significant impact on sustaining and enhancing the urban forest.

In regards to *guidelines and standards*, based on a 10-point rating scale, Management and Protection Plans received an average rating of 8.9 points, followed by Tree Planting Standards with an average rating of 7.9 points and Urban Design Guidelines with an average rating of 7.6 points.

Some of the 'other' responses listed by attendees include environmental policies, tree planting guidelines, asset management plans, development guidelines, private development guidelines and a detailed tree inventory (i.e., library).

Overall, Management and Protection Plans were voted to have the most significant impact on sustaining and enhancing the urban forest.
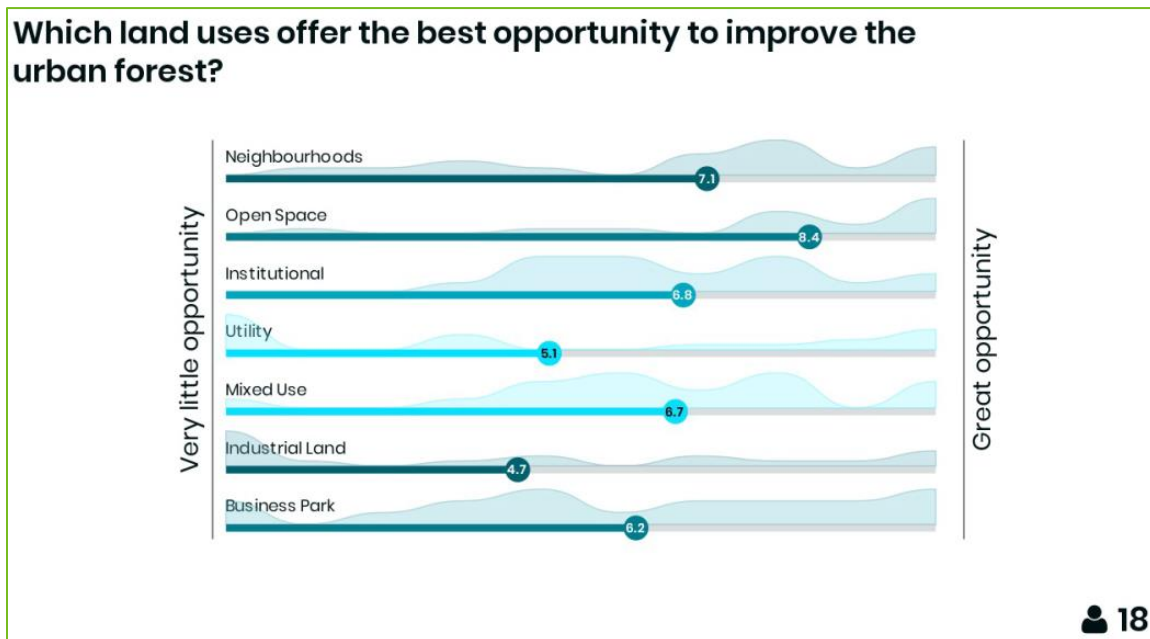
A total of 18 responses were collected on City Staffs' perception on which land uses offer the best opportunities to improve the urban forest. Based on a 10-point rating scale, Open Space received an average rating of 8.4 points, followed by Neighbourhoods with an average rating of 7.1 points and Institutional with an average rating of 6.8 points.

Attendees noted that Industrial Lands provide an opportunity for remediation through tree planning. Open Space was identified as an opportunity to increase the urban tree canopy. Reference was made to other municipalities who actively buy open space to use land for tree planting.

Overall, Open Space was voted to offer the best opportunities to improve the urban forest.

COLLABORATIVE BRAINSTORMING EXERCISE

Attendees input was also collected during a lively and collaborative brainstorming exercise as participants noted key opportunities to increase Hamilton's tree canopy cover on comment cards. The activity was guided by the question "What can we as City of Hamilton Staff do to reach the target of 30-35% tree cover?"

The comment cards were thematically clustered into key themes by the attendees and the facilitation team at the workshop. The results of the exercise are summarized below, clustered in the overall themes identified during the workshop.

The following sections provide an overall summary of all feedback received. Priorities are shown as they were categorized by participants themselves into the themes described in the Event Overview (note that many of the priorities overlap themes).

KEY THEMES AND PRIORITIES: HOW TO REACH THE TARGET OF 30-35% TREE COVER?

Design and New Technology	Improve street tree health and Silva cells	Supportive tree infrastructure from start	New technology for infrastructure				
Free Trees and Other Incentives	Free trees to residents	Free trees for homeowners					
Better/More Research and Development	Best practice research and development ongoing	Plant trees on brownfield sites (passive remediation)	Pilot tree technologies on brownfields	Green stormwater management practices			
Strengthen Pro-tree Policies	Strict tree compensation ratio	Inspections by qualified Arborists	City-wide tree protection by-law	Establish standards, protect municipal infrastructure	20-year strategic planning	Better inspections by qualified tree folk	Add natural heritage to Secondary Plans
	Balanced and logical approach	Remove a tree, plant a tree	Private tree by-law (protection)	Be consistent	Integrated departmental agenda	One Tree By-law	Cash-in-lieu requirements
Progressive Design and Standards	More trees within new builds	Increase tree canopy in schools (shade)	Planting trees in open spaces (parks)	Strict development standards	Development charges	Integrate nature into building design	Stronger policies and guidelines for developers
	New construction 30-35% canopy requirement	Improve post-construction inspection process (landscape plan)					
Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is	Register as inventory assets	Put a money value to a tree	Increase open space development budget				
Shared Responsibility	Assumption of trees	Open data: show on GIS maps desired tree planting goals	Incentives and co-benefits to find partners	Public private partnerships for maintenance			
The Right Trees	Site appropriate species selection	Plant species adapted to the future climate	Prioritize mature tree care	Maintenance of forested areas	Fruit trees	Native tree selection	
Promote Conservation Through Education	Advertise benefits of urban trees	Community engagement	Stewardship through education and awareness	Political will for trees	Heritage tree app	Market free tree program	Education of residents, staff, and council

Hamilton

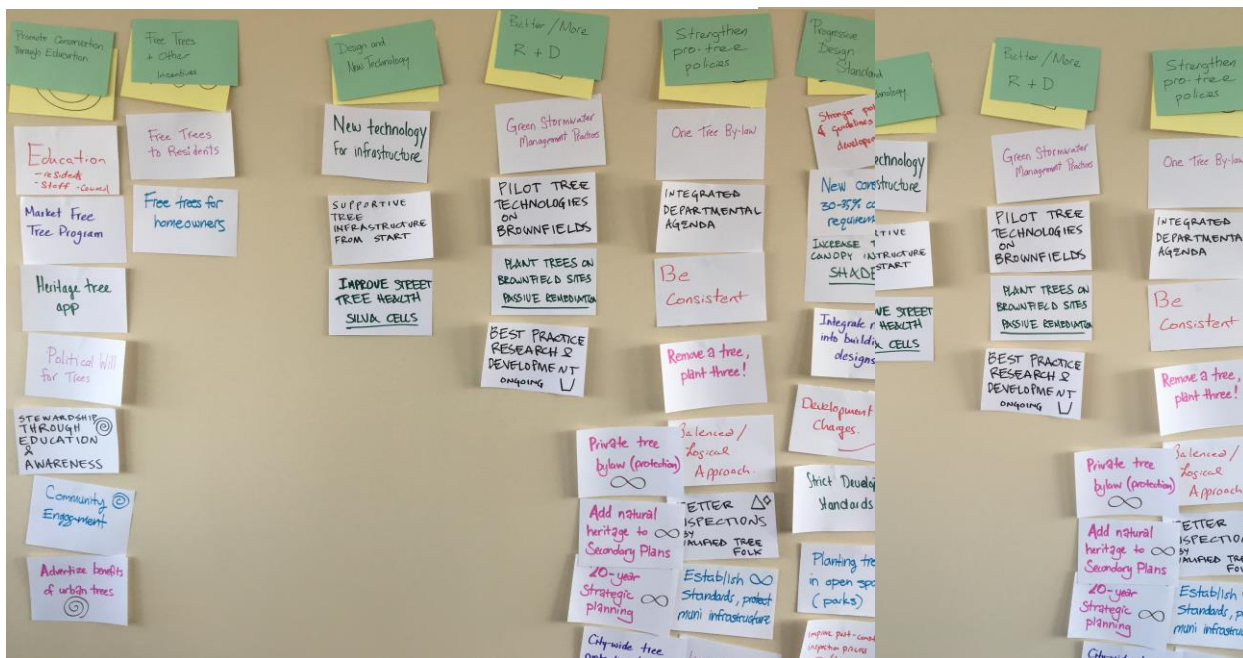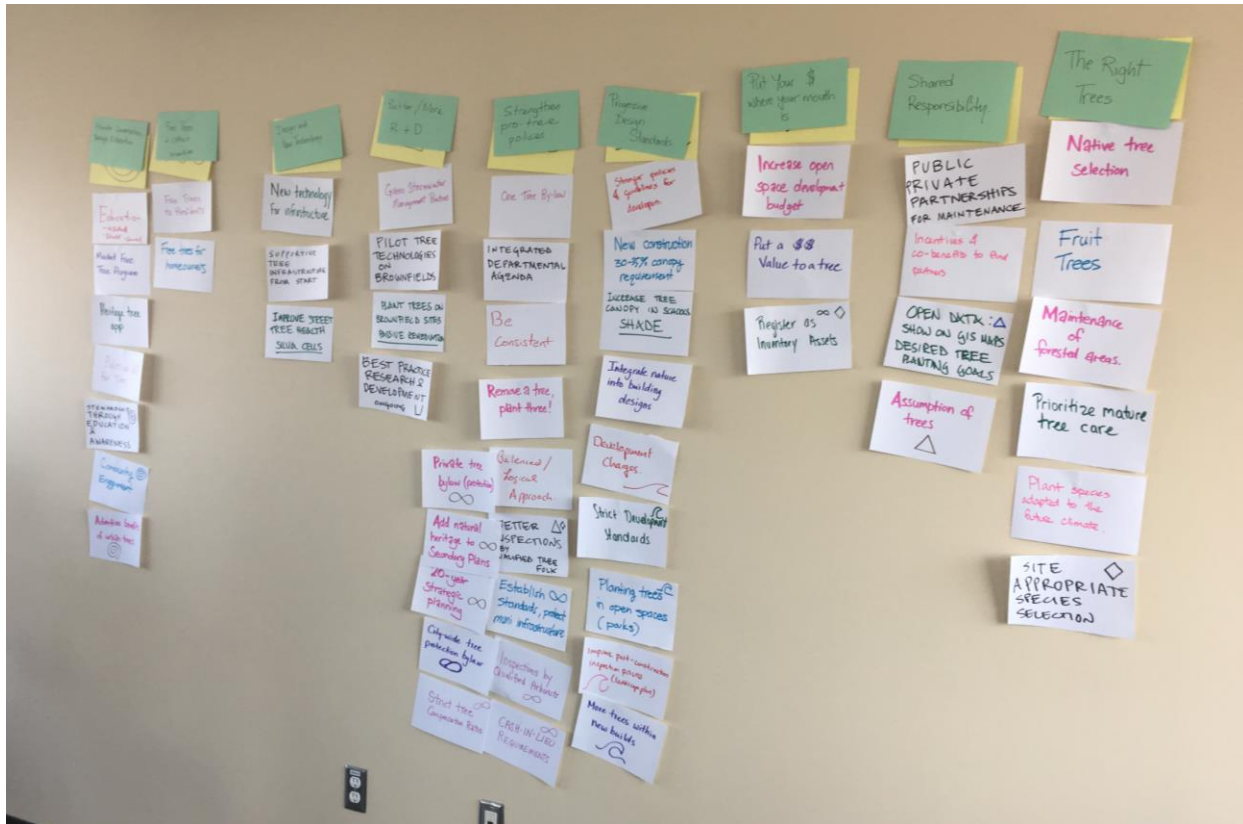BioForest   KBM RESOURCES GROUP   DILLON CONSULTING

Photo: Collaborative Brainstorming Exercise

Other verbal and written comments collected as part of the workshop presentation and the collaborative brainstorming exercise not captured above include:

- Provide information on the percentage of private and public trees that make up the current 17% tree canopy cover;
- Trees were described as disruptive (e.g., interfere with street lights and intersections) to City servicing;
- Establish user agreements to ease/balance maintenance responsibility concerns;
- Paradigm shift – modify existing practices to protect larger trees (maintenance ought to be exhausted before removal is enforced);
- Actively purchase vacant lands in built up areas and create forest;
- Consider what pressures may be introduced to resources (e.g., human, costs, etc.) by enlarging the forest infrastructure;
- Reduce salt use in winter;
- Enforce a private tree by-law especially for develops of subdivisions;
- Advertising campaign on the benefits of urban trees: air quality, property values, mental health, physical well-being, climate change mitigation, and habitat;
- Printing GIS data in open data to allow residents to see priority tree planting sites and allow residents to fund raise and plant;
- Vertical forest;
- Introduce a Downtown Tree Planting Plan; and
- Increase tree replacement requirements for developments

Next Steps

Further community consultations related to the Urban Forest Strategy are being organized, including a second workshop in spring 2019. Until then, you can continue to learn more about the Project here: www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/strategies-actions/urban-forest-strategy

Project timeline