

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

TO: Shane Bourke, City Manager	DATE: July 8, 2025
FROM: Brian Glavin, Chief Operating Officer	MEETING: Operational Services Committee
REPORT WRITER: Kase DeVries, M.Sc., Director of Environment and Parks	
SUBJECT: Urban Forest Strategy	

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Operational Services Committee recommend Council approve the Urban Forest Strategy as presented in Attachment 1.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL / COMMITTEE DIRECTIONS

At the June 21, 2022, Infrastructure and Economic Development Committee, the following motion was passed:

“Committee direct Administration to bring back information regarding Urban Forest Strategies from other communities.”

At the October 17, 2022 City Council Meeting, the following motion was passed:

“Council Refer a capital request of \$140,000 for Phase 1a of the proposed Urban Forest Strategy (Attachment 1) to 2023 budget deliberations; and Refer a capital request of \$100,000 for Phase 2 of the proposed Urban Forest Strategy (Attachment 1) to 2023 budget deliberations.”

At the November 18, 2022 Council Committee of the Whole Budget Deliberations, the following motion was passed:

“Council amend the 2023 Capital Budget to include “Urban Forest Strategy – Phase 1a” in the amount of \$140,000 and the ‘Urban Forest Strategy – Phase 2’ in the amount of \$100,000, to be funded from Capital Tax.”

BACKGROUND

The City of Grande Prairie has developed a comprehensive Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) to guide the sustainable management, preservation, and enhancement of the City’s urban forest. Up until this juncture, Administration had relied on three aging documents for guidance on managing the urban forest:

1. 2007 Tree Management Plan
2. 2012 Parks and Open Space Master Plan
3. 2014 Integrated Pest Management Plan

Other guiding documents, such as the Engineering Design and Construction Manuals and Parkland Bylaw C-1310, encompass additional aspects related to tree strategy and protection. Recognizing the necessity to consolidate these elements into a comprehensive Urban Forest Strategy (UFS), Administration initiated efforts to integrate urban forest-related components from existing plans. With the approval of funding by Council, Administration engaged a consultant to craft a comprehensive UFS.

ANALYSIS

The Urban Forest Strategy (Attachment 1) outlines the City of Grande Prairie's approach to planting, protection, and maintenance of trees for economic, environmental, and public health benefits. The UFS provides direction on four key goals:

1. Rooted in the Community

- a. Engage citizens, businesses, and Indigenous Community in the awareness, management, and celebration of the urban forest

2. Proactively Managed

- a. Proactively manage the urban forest to mitigate against future threats, ensure public safety, and maximize urban forest benefits for all

3. Growing for the Future

- a. Target tree planting programs to support beautification and a diverse, resilient urban forest

4. Monitor and Adapt

- a. Implement adaptive management principals to make evidence-based decisions that respond to changing conditions within the urban forest landscape.

The UFS delineates essential action items that cascade from the goals and are categorized into short, medium, and long-term timelines. This strategic framework enables Administration to realign urban forest management efforts, ensuring both immediate benefits and sustained advantages for future generations.

Relationship to City Council's Areas of Focus / Strategic Priorities

Quality of Life – Fostering a community in which our residents love where they live and embrace their environment.

Environmental Impact

A healthy urban forest provides countless environmental benefits from shade to nutrient cycling. An up-to-date Urban Forest Strategy re-focuses tree planting and protection efforts to improve the City's long term environmental sustainability.

Economic Impact

Cities that have well developed parks and open space systems are generally more desirable places to live, work and do business. This desire, measured in part by urban green space and street design, can be a significant determining factor in real estate values and economic vitality (Parks and Open Space Master Plan, 2012).

Social Impact

The presence of parks and healthy urban forests are often an indicator of a community's quality of life. Adding to and continually protecting the City's urban forest is one of the most effective tools to ensure the quality of life of residents by embedding nature within urban design.

Relevant Statutes / Master Plans / City Documents

- 2007 Tree Management Plan
- 2012 Parks and Open Space Master Plan
- 2014 Integrated Pest Management Plan (Policy 703)
- City of Grande Prairie Design Manual
- City of Grande Prairie Construction Manual
- Parkland Bylaw (Bylaw C-1310)

Risk

There are minimal risks associated with the implementation of an Urban Forest Strategy.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Internally, Administration and the consultant conducted engagement sessions with multiple departments to evaluate current urban forest practices. Sessions were accompanied by an internal survey with a broader reach. Externally, Administration and the consultant hosted an open house and an indigenous engagement session to gain valuable insights. A public survey was also used to acquire more information from the wider community.

BUDGET / FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget or financial implications currently. Several urban forest grove capital projects have been funded to date, along with grant funded FireSmart work. Administration will evaluate further recommendations of the UFS to understand where and how investment should be prioritized and what mechanisms are best suited to finance future work.

SUMMARY / CONCLUSION

Administration recommends that the Operational Services Committee recommend Council approve the Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) presented in Attachment 1. This strategic document, shaped by engagement efforts, outlines key goals and actionable items for the planting, protection, and maintenance of trees.

Aligned with City Council's priorities, the UFS enhances environmental sustainability, economic vitality, and the quality of life for residents. Endorsing the UFS signifies an investment in the city's long-term well-being demonstrating a commitment to creating a sustainable and vibrant community for generations to come.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – City of Grande Prairie Urban Forest Strategy