



## Council Member Motion

For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025

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**To:** Committee of the Whole

**Date:** March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**From:** Councillor Gardiner

**Subject:** Urban Forest Canopy

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### **BACKGROUND:**

A significant value for Victorians is nature, our climate, our hills, our natural green areas, and our urban forest. Section 4, Blue Green Networks of the 2025 DRAFT OCP, includes a brief description of the City's need for attention to the Urban Forest. The Urban Forest city-wide canopy cover is about 28 per cent (Draft OCP).

The City of Victoria Urban Forest Master Plan (February 2013) recommends that a canopy cover goal of 40% would be appropriate for cities in the Pacific Northwest. Table 1 of that document, citing a 2013 LIDAR analyses, states Victoria's City Wide Canopy Coverage was 26%. (see Appendix for list of reference documents).

The City's Tree Protection Bylaw's (21-035) Tree Reserve cash-in-lieu program receives funds when trees are removed from private property (75% of the urban forest) in order to replace them on public property (25% of the urban forest). While the City performs an appraisal value for trees on public property which could be valued between \$6000 and \$100,000 per tree to compensate for the value of the tree, installation and maintenance of the replacement tree, the cash-in-lieu fee associated with a deficit of the tree minimum at the end of a project on private land is \$2000 per tree.

Therefore, there are not enough funds collected from private property tree removals to plant and maintain replacement trees on public property. The City cannot replace trees on private land and achieve a 40% tree canopy target by 2050. We recognize higher costs that the City will need to increase costs for maintenance of trees removed from private property and maintained on public property.

An increase in fees for cash-in-lieu would incentivize developers to replace more trees and conversely, to disincentivize expedient tree removal.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That Council direct staff to

1. Set 5-year tree canopy (growth) targets within the OCP supporting a 40% city-wide 2050 tree canopy goal.
2. Set five-year neighbourhood-level planting targets within the OCP to reach a 40% tree canopy by 2050.

3. Raise cash-in-lieu fees when a development does not meet the Tree Protection Bylaw tree minimum on private property from \$2000 to \$5000 per tree to go into the Tree Reserve Fund, to reach 40% tree canopy by 2050.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'G' followed by a horizontal line.

Councillor Gardiner

CMM: Appendix: Urban Forest Canopy Policies – References and Excerpts  
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**References:**

**City of Victoria, The Tree Protection Bylaw (21-035):**

<https://www.victoria.ca/media/file/tree-protection-bylaw-21-035>

• Part 2 - Definitions: ““Tree Reserve” means a fund established by the City that is used to plant trees on public and private lands to replace tree canopy lost, and for the promotion and stewardship of a healthy tree canopy in the City.”

• Part 5 – Urban Forest Preservation Measures - Subsection 20, 7b: “for any other tree or hedge that is being replaced, the applicant must provide to the City \$2000.00 cash-in-lieu for each replacement tree that cannot be accommodated, and such money shall be placed in the Tree Reserve.”

**City of Victoria, 2013 Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP):**

<https://www.victoria.ca/media/file/urban-forest-master-planpdf>

Appendix B: Canopy Cover Targets: “American Forests, a leading urban forest management, conservation and research group, measured and analyzed tree cover in 440 communities with the assistance of the U.S. Forest Service. Through this work, American Forests has been able to quantify both the range and the value of ecosystem services associated with a given amount of canopy cover.

Their research recommends that a canopy cover goal of 40% would be appropriate for cities in the Pacific Northwest, varied as follows:

Suburban (mature residential) areas	50%
Urban residential areas	25%
Street R.O.W.s	25%
Central business districts	15%

Other sources calculate that in order to maintain healthy watershed function, a minimum of 45% tree canopy cover is required.<sup>1</sup> Victoria’s canopy cover (which includes a mix of these land uses) was stated as being about 18%”

<sup>1</sup> Centre for Watershed Protection, 2013. <http://www.cwp.org/your-watershed-101/urban-watershed-forestry.html>

NOTE: While the text in the 2013 UFMP suggests that the cover is 18%, the text was taken from the 2012 DRAFT UFMP (pages 9/10) which refers to Caslys Consulting Ltd 2008 estimates. The 2013 City of Victoria UFMP, authored by Gye + Associates Ltd, updates the data based on 2013 LIDAR showing a City-Wide Canopy Coverage of 26%.

**Table 1: Canopy Estimates by Neighbourhood**

Neighbourhood	Neighbourhood Area (ha)	Tree Cover (ha)	Percent of Neighbourhood (%)
Burnside	237	31	13
Downtown	77	6	8
Fairfield	297	95	32
Fernwood	175	51	29
Gonzales	136	50	37
Harris Green	24	4	16
Hillside/Quadra	166	50	30
James Bay	236	54	23
North Jubilee	63	17	27
North Park	56	11	19
Oaklands	173	48	28
Rockland	128	58	45
South Jubilee	38	10	26
Victoria West	157	30	19
<b>City-Wide Canopy Coverage</b>	<b>1963</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>26</b>

*based on LIDAR 2013*