Urban Forestry Management Plan
Presented by: Anthony Lake, Director
RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the "Urban Forest Management Plan" provided as an attachment to the March 20, 2017 agenda report entitled " Urban Forestry Management Plan" be received as information.

2. That Council members review the Urban Forest Management Plan and provide comment to Administration by April 30, 2017.

3. That Administration present the final draft of the Urban Forest Managment Plan for Council's consideration by the end of Quarter Two, 2017.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide the draft Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP), including recommendations on establishing Urban Tree Canopy Cover Targets, for Council review and feedback.

COUNCIL DIRECTION

At the December 1, 2014 Council Meeting the following resolution was passed:

(C544-2014)
That City Council Policy C-IS-04 Urban Forest Management, provided as Attachment 1 to the Agenda Report dated December 1, 2014, be approved.

At the June 16, 2014 Council Meeting the following resolution was passed:

(C311-2014)
That Council Members review proposed Policy C-IS-04 Urban Forest Management, included as Attachment 1 to the Agenda report dated June 16, 2014 and provide feedback to Administration by July 18, 2014;

That Administration seek review and feedback on the proposed policy by the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) at the earliest available date; and

That Administration incorporate Council's and EAC's feedback and bring the policy back to Council by the end of the 4th Quarter 2014.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

The City of St. Albert is known for its flourishing, expansive Urban Forest which includes trees and associated vegetation on both public and private land and that can be seen along our streets, trails and the Sturgeon River valley and in our parks, ravines and natural areas. The attached "City Council Policy C-IS-04 Urban Forest Management", which was approved in 2014, indicates that:

"The City shall ensure the Urban Forest is properly managed through implementation of an Urban Forest Management Plan that aligns with other City bylaws, policies, community long term plans, programs and the Municipal Engineering Standards."

Administration has developed a draft of the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) which is a long term strategic plan for managing the Urban Forest in the City of St. Albert, please refer to the attachment titled "City of St. Albert Urban Forest Management Plan." As with other City long term plans, the UFMP is meant to be used for planning purposes only and any financial or service level implications that may result from the Plan would be brought to Council for their approval prior to being implemented.

The vision of the Plan is "*Protect, ensure health, cherish, and expand our urban forest for today and future generations*" and includes four main goals:

1. Develop and maintain strong community-wide support for the Urban Forest by increasing awareness among City staff, local landowners, and residents about the benefits and services provided by the Urban Forest and how to care for it.

   Outcome: Passionate and knowledgeable staff, landowners, and residents

2. Design and manage the Urban Forest to maximize watershed health, biodiversity, and conservation of sensitive ecosystems to support the recommendations of the Natural Areas Conservation and Management Plan.

   Outcome: Healthy, thriving, and connected ecosystems

3. Protect, enhance, and expand St. Albert's urban forest by:

   - increasing urban forest cover to optimal levels in neighbourhoods currently exhibiting low canopy cover;
   - continuing a vigorous street-tree replacement program (minimum 1 to 1);
   - creating opportunities to retain and enhance the urban forest;
   - developing urban forest guidelines specific to different land uses;
   - ensuring all development, internal and external, follow up-to-date engineering standards; and
   - ensuring engineering standards are adaptable so that all vegetation can thrive and reach

its full potential (site specific, on approval by City).

Outcome: Right trees in the right places, reaching their full potential

4. Transition the City to a increased proactive Urban Forest management approach by implementing policies and management practices for maintaining and protecting existing trees and planting new trees.

   Outcome: Effective resource allocation and sustainable canopy cover

The City Council Policy C-IS-04 Urban Forest Management also indicates that through the Urban Forest Management Plan, the City shall establish a minimum tree canopy percentage to maintain and set a future tree canopy target percentage to support the growth and sustainability of the Urban Forest.

After a review of preliminary air photo information, tree canopy targets used by other municipalities across Canada and meetings with stakeholders, including the Environmental Advisory Committee, Administration is proposing the following targets:

Land Use	Cover (current)	Cover (goal)
Residential	15.8%	25%
Industrial	5.8%	10%
Commercial	14.4%	15%
Entire City (all land uses)	13%	20%

Administration is recommending that the current tree canopy cover of 13% be used as the minimum percentage to maintain and as more detailed information is collected on the characteristics and health of the existing urban forest, Administration may refine this number but for now it is considered the best minimum percentage to start with.

For the future tree canopy target, most other municipalities set the target at twice the amount of their current cover or higher, i.e. Edmonton is targeting 20% cover from its existing 10% and Calgary is targeting 20% from 7%. The overall Tree Canopy Target for the City of St. Albert being recommended to Council is 20%, slightly under double the existing canopy cover of 13%.

If the status quo in Urban Forest Management was continued it is likely that the City would reach the 20% urban tree canopy cover target in twenty years (2037). If the target was increased to 25%, it would likely require an increase in planting programs and it is recommended that the timeline be increased to thirty years (2047).

In addition to the overall target, Administration is proposing targets for major land use categories to provide more detailed guidance for development and management objectives for the varied areas within the City.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS OR ENGAGEMENT

Internal stakeholders involved in the development of the document included Public Works,

Recreation and Parks, Planning and Development, Engineering and Environment departments. The draft plan was also reviewed by the new internal Green Assets Committee.

The draft plan and proposed targets were also presented to the Environmental Advisory Committee on January 26, 2017 and their written advice is in the attachment titled, “Environmental Advisory Committee Advice - Urban Forest Management Plan and proposed Canopy Cover Targets”.

Any recommendations within the report that may affect the Municipal Engineering Standards would be provided as input to the next update of the Standards to be undertaken in 2018. This update would include feedback from additional stakeholders, including the Urban Development Institute.

IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

Financial:
There may be financial implications if Council wishes to increase the percentages or accelerate the timelines for meeting the Urban Forest Canopy Targets.

Legal / Risk:
There is the risk that if the City was hit by a widespread tree disease or insect infestation, forest fire or major weather event, that the urban tree canopy cover could be significantly affected and the Management Plan or Targets would need to be reassessed.

Program or Service:
If Council wished to provide programs or incentives for the community to plant trees on private property, this would be an addition to City programs or service levels.

Organizational:
None at this time.

ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED

If Council does not wish to support the recommendations, the following alternatives could be considered:

a. Refer the Urban Forest Management Plan or Urban Forest Canopy Cover targets back to Administration to amend as per Council direction.
b. Take no further action on this matter.

STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS

a) City of St. Albert Strategic Plan (Policy C-CG-02)

BUILT ENVIRONMENT - We build our community towards the future to sustain balanced development, with a reverent eye to the past, honouring our unique settlement history and distinct identity.

- *We build innovative, long lasting infrastructure that is efficient, minimizes the use of our natural resources and creates harmony between the natural and built environment*.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT- We protect, embrace and treasure our deeply-rooted connections with the natural environment through championing environmental action.

- *We strongly believe that maintaining and promoting our flourishing, expansive tree canopy for future generations is a shared duty.*

Governance Strategy - Council is committed to ensuring that the City of St. Albert is a responsive, accountable government that delivers value to the community.

Service Delivery Strategy - Council is committed to ensuring that the City of St. Albert is engaging residents to identify opportunities to improve delivery of services to the community.

b) Long Term Plans

- Municipal Development Plan
- Environmental Master Plan
- Recreation Master Plan
- Public Works Long Term Department Plan

c) Corporate Objectives

- Deliver programs and services that meet or exceed our standards
- Exercise strong fiscal management
- Ensure our customers are very satisfied

d) Council Policies, Bylaws

- C-EUS-01 Environmental Sustainability <http://stalbert.ca/uploads/files-excel/C-EUS-01_Environmental_Sustainability_Policy.pdf>
- C-IS-04 Urban Forest Management <https://stalbert.ca/uploads/legislative/C-IS_-04_UrbanForestManagement.pdf>
- Dutch Elm Disease Bylaw 5/98 <https://stalbert.ca/uploads/legacy/documents/Bylaw-1997-05-DutchElmDisease.pdf>

e) Other documents

- Parks and Open Spaces Management Plan
- Grey Nuns White Spruce Forest Management Plan
- Natural Areas Conservation and Management Plan
- Municipal Engineering Standards

Report Date: March 20, 2017
Author(s): Tony Lake/Louise Stewart
Committee/Department: Public Works
General Manager: Glenn Tompolski
City Manager: Kevin Scoble