

Municipality of Lakeshore - Report to Council

Community & Development Services

Development Services



To: Mayor & Members of Council
From: Ayusha Hanif, Planner II
Date: May 21, 2021
Subject: Preservation of Tree Canopy and Vegetation Policy

Recommendation

Direct Administration to prepare a by-law to adopt the Preservation of Tree Canopy and Vegetation Policy, as presented at the June 22, 2021 Council meeting.

Background

In May 2017, Bill 68 entitled Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Act, 2016 received royal assent which introduced an amendment to Section 270 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*. This amendment requires all municipalities to adopt and maintain policies with respect to the protection and enhancement of tree canopy and natural vegetation in the municipality.

In an October 6, 2020 report to Council, on "Council Roles and Responsibilities" presented on October 12, 2020, several key policies and instruments that set the framework for Council governance in accordance with Section 270 of the Municipal Act were described. In that report it was noted that the Municipality needs to adopt and maintain policies on "The manner in which the municipality will protect and enhance the tree canopy and natural vegetation in the municipality", and that it was anticipated that this policy would be presented to Council in Q1, 2021.

Administration has drafted such a policy, (Appendix B) reviewed it internally with senior staff, and circulated it to the County of Essex Planning Department, the Essex Region Conservation Authority and the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority.

In addition, the policy was reviewed with the Youth Advisory Committee. The following motion was passed by the Youth Advisory Committee at its April 8, 2021 meeting:

Endorse the adoption of the Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation policy with the following amendment - add "refer to the land use planning proposals" to section 3.1.

Comments

The Municipality of Lakeshore currently does not have a Tree Protection Policy for municipally owned or privately owned lands. The proposed policy will ensure compliance with the updated requirements of Section 270 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* by encouraging the following:

- Enhance the Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation on municipally-owned lands through municipal programs; and
- Shall endeavour to protect the Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation on privately-owned lands as part of the development review process and tree conservation and restoration programs as they refer to land use planning proposals.

Further, the Official Plan has various policies in place to encourage the preservation and enhancement of trees and natural vegetation on municipal property. In brief, these policies raise awareness of the need for the municipality to be environmentally aware and encourage the protection and enhancement of trees on both private and public property. Please refer to Appendix A for policies relating to municipal tree protection and enhancement.

It is intended that the attached Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation policy passed under the Municipal Act will be an overall guiding policy. Going forward, supporting policies will be implemented in the Official Plan (Appendix A). In addition, administration intends to bring forward two tree by-laws. The first will be a by-law to control the placement or removal of vegetation/trees on public land such as parks and road allowances and the second will be a by-law to control the removal of trees of significant woodlots on private land.

The process for developing both proposed by-laws that apply to publicly and privately owned lands will be as follows (please note that steps 4 to 8 were highlighted in a report taken to Council on March 5, 2019):

1. Identification of what would be significant woodlots in the Lakeshore context;
2. Administration to research on how tree removal is handled in other jurisdictions;
3. Administration to research on enforcement;
4. Administration, collaborating with the Conservation Authorities, draft a by-law. The bylaw is to limit controls to woodlots, riparian corridors, and public lands;
5. Administration presents the draft bylaw to Council for initial comment;
6. Administration circulates the by-law to external agencies, including the County of Essex, and conducts a public open house to receive public input;
7. Administration makes any revisions to the by-law necessary based on feedback; and
8. Administration returns to Council with the by-law for formal Council adoption.

This process of by-law development allows for an open transparent process with multiple opportunities for Council and public input.

Tree Canopy and Vegetation Benefits

There are multiple social, economic and environmental benefits for protecting and enhancing the tree canopy and natural vegetation within the municipality. The following are brief benefits of preserving and enhancing tree canopy and natural vegetation:⁷

- Improved quality of life: tree canopy and natural vegetation can help reduce stress and promote mental well-being. They can also promote physical activity by providing space for recreation and creating an appealing outdoor environment. Studies show that a 10% increase in urban green space can postpone the onset of health problems by up to 5 years.¹
- Reduced crime rates: tree canopy and natural vegetation can help reduce crime and violence within a city. Research indicates that a 10% increase in tree canopy can result in a 12% decrease in crime rate.²
- Increase in property value: tree canopy and natural vegetation can help increase property values from anywhere between 5 to 18%.³
- Provide habitat for wildlife: tree canopy and natural vegetation provide a habitat for wildlife and help promote and preserve biodiversity within the municipality.⁴
- Improved air quality: tree canopy and natural vegetation help improve the air quality and reduce pollution.⁵
- Reduced energy use: tree canopy and natural vegetation help reduce a buildings energy use and can decrease the heating and cooling costs.⁶
- Reduced urban heat island effect: tree canopy and natural vegetation help reduce the urban heat island effect which helps cities adapt to climate change.⁷
- Stormwater management: tree canopy and natural vegetation help reduce stormwater runoff and improve water filtration. It can also help recharge the groundwater table, reduce surface water contaminants and can help prevent erosion along slopes. Studies show that for every 5% of tree cover, stormwater runoff is reduced by 2%.⁸

Others Consulted

- Senior Management Team
- Youth Advisory Committee
- County of Essex
- Essex Region Conservation Authority
- Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority

¹ Green Blue Urban, 2018

² Green Blue Urban, 2018

³ Green Blue Urban, 2018

⁴ Bardekijan, A., 2018

⁵ Bardekijan, A., 2018

⁶ Bardekijan, A., 2018

⁷ Bardekijan, A., 2018

⁸ Green Blue Urban, 2018

Financial Impacts

There are no budget impacts resulting from the recommendation.

Attachments:

Appendix A – Relevant Official Plan Policies (current and adopted Official Plan)
Appendix B – Preservation of Tree Canopy and Vegetation Policy
Appendix C – Presentation – Tree Policy

Citations:

Bardekjian, A. (2018). Compendium of best urban forest management practices. Second Edition. Originally commissioned to Tree Canada by Natural Resources Canada. Retrieved from: <https://treecanada.ca/resources/canadian-urban-forest-compendium/>

Green Blue Urban. (2018). *Street Tree Cost Benefit Analysis*. Retrieved from GreenBlue Urban: https://www.greenblue.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/GBU_Street-Tree-Cost-Benefit-Analysis-2018.pdf?gator_td=cyP22AYr34YJBizK3O8%2bQs%2fwT3UaSYNJydW0ns203Ikl5B1qE5mn2Asb7hKFLt6

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Preservation of Tree Canopy and Vegetation Policy Report.docx
Attachments:	- Appendix A - Relevant Official Plan Policies.docx - Appendix B - Preservation of Tree Canopy and Vegetation Policy.docx - Appendix C - Tree Policy Presentation - Council.pptx
Final Approval Date:	Jun 17, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

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