

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Executive Committee
Friday, May 6, 2022 Meeting

FROM: Sameer Dhalla, Director, Development and Engineering Services

RE: **PEEL REGION URBAN FOREST BEST PRACTICE GUIDE**

KEY ISSUE

Introduction of the Peel Region Urban Forest Best Practice Guide, which was developed to support the objectives of the Peel Urban Forest Strategy and Peel Climate Change Partnership.

RECOMMENDATION:

WHEREAS the Region of Peel Council endorsed the Peel Region Urban Forest Best Practice Guide and directed staff to continue to collaborate with partners to support implementation of the ten recommended key strategic directions at the Council of the Regional Municipality of Peel meeting on October 28, 2021 and were recently released to the public;

THAT the Peel Region Urban Forest Best Practice Guide be received.

BACKGROUND

Peel Region's urban forest encompasses trees, shrubs, understory plants, and the soils that sustain them, located on both public and private property. The urban forest includes natural forests as well as trees in more manicured areas such as yards, streets, and parks. The urban forest is a vital part of the region's environmental, social, and economic well-being through the many services it provides, including cleaning the air, sequestering carbon, managing stormwater runoff, conserving building energy, buffering noise, supporting public health outcomes, and providing habitat for wildlife. Maintaining and enhancing a healthy and resilient urban forest is becoming even more important under a changing climate.

Urban forests are unique assets that contribute services that help address both climate change mitigation (carbon sequestration and pollutant capture) and adaptation (shading, microclimate cooling, and stormwater management). However, the impacts of climate change also increase the complexity of urban forest management. This is because trees and forests themselves are vulnerable to many of the changing temperature and precipitation patterns expected in the coming decades.

TRCA, CVC, the Region of Peel and their municipal partners work collaboratively to implement the Peel Urban Forest Strategy (2011) through participation in the Peel Urban Forest Working Group. The working group leads projects and supports policy directions that help foster a healthy urban forest across the region. The same partners, through the Peel Climate Change Partnership (PCCP), also continue to advance urban forestry through the PCCP's Green Natural Infrastructure Strategy. TRCA supported the development of the guides by drafting and coordinating consultation on the scope of work, assisting Peel Region staff in selecting a consultant, co-project managing the project, and reviewing all draft materials.

RATIONALE

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The Peel Region Urban Forest Best Practice project produced a series of guides for regional, municipal, and conservation authority staff to help them plan and manage urban forest assets to ensure conservation and enhancement in a changing climate.

An Overview of the Peel Region Urban Forest Best Practice Guide

The Peel Region Urban Forest Best Practice Guide is a collection of five documents and an Executive Summary that provide guidance and best practices to help sustain and expand tree canopy cover in Peel Region's urban areas. The reports also aim to help urban forest managers evolve their programs to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Extensive consultation with industry experts within and outside of Peel Region, together with inter-agency workshops with project partners (Peel Region, TRCA, CVC, City of Mississauga, City of Brampton, and Town of Caledon), were held to share information and draw on expertise to inform the development of the Guides. The five guides include:

- Guide 1: Best Practices Guide for Urban Forest Planning in Peel. This guide provides an overview of urban forest policy and planning tools at the Federal, Provincial, and local municipal levels.
- Guide 2: Urban Forest Management Best Practices Guide for Peel. This guide provides an overview of management best practices such as tree stock procurement, soil management, and urban forest monitoring.
- Guide 3: Guide for Tree and Shrub Standards and Specifications for Regional Roads in Peel. This guide provides recommended standards and specifications for street trees and shrubs.
- Guide 4: Potential Street and Park Tree Species for Peel in a Climate Change Context. This guide provides a climate change vulnerability assessment of 88 tree species now growing in or south of Peel Region within Southern Ontario.
- Guide 5: Working with Trees: Best Practices for a Resilient Future. This guide provides a framework for developing climate change adaptation practices for urban forest management and selecting trees and shrubs suited to Peel's current and anticipated future climate.

Ten Recommended Key Strategic Directions

Summarizing the best practices and research conducted for all five guides, Guide 5 and the Executive Summary recommend 10 strategic directions that will help staff grow urban forest resilience in a changing climate and leverage the urban forest's ability to enhance social and environmental outcomes in Peel Region. The 10 directions are as follows:

1. Value the Urban Forest as an Asset: Incorporate the urban forest (individual trees and forests) into municipal asset management plans.
2. Invest Strategically: Prioritize investment in actions that build resilience of the urban forest to current and anticipated stressors.
3. Have a Strategic Plan: Develop a strategic Urban Forest Management Plan and integrate it with other jurisdiction-wide plans.
4. Enhance Tree and Urban Forest Diversity: Incorporate structural, species, and genetic diversity into the urban forest system.
5. Plan with Equity in Mind: Improve the equitable distribution, availability, and quality of public greenspaces and tree cover across the jurisdiction.
6. Take an Integrated Approach to Planning: Align other strategic plans with urban forest goals and embed urban forest goals in all levels of planning.

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7. Take an Integrated Approach to Design: Develop an integrated approach at the site-level to ensure implementation of a tree-friendly design.
8. Seek Climate-Positive Outcomes: Actively seek opportunities to moderate the urban heat island effect where it is felt by the most vulnerable people.
9. Foster a Tree-Friendly Culture: Develop partnerships with private sector landowners to create opportunities for protecting and expanding Peel Region's privately-owned tree canopy.
10. Be Proactive and Be Prepared: Invest in proactive urban forest management to reduce the negative impacts of stressors (e.g., ice storm) and have a plan in place for emergencies.

Partners will use the best practices and strategic directions to inform their urban forest management plans, strategies, and operations.

Relationship to Building the Living City, the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following strategies set forth in the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan:

Strategy 3 – Rethink greenspace to maximize its value

Strategy 8 – Gather and share the best sustainability knowledge

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

TRCA Staff will continue to collaborate with the Region of Peel and partners to support the implementation of urban forest policy and best practices in Peel Region. The initiatives currently underway include:

- A region-wide tree canopy assessment
- Update of the Peel Urban Forest Strategy
- Peel Natural Green Infrastructure Inventory and Condition Assessment for Regional Roads project
- Peel Climate Change Partnership's Green Natural Infrastructure Strategy tree planting initiative in priority neighbourhoods

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Attachments: 1

Attachment 1: Peel Region Urban Forest Best Practice Guide - Executive Summary