

REPORT

REPORT TO: Chair and Members of the Planning, Public Works and Transportation Committee

REPORT FROM: Gabriel Clarke – Manager of Sustainability & Climate Change

DATE: 6 February 2019

REPORT NO.: PLS-2019-0003

RE: Private Tree Management Strategy Terms of Reference

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report THAT Report No. PLS-2019-0003, dated February 6, 2019, regarding the Terms of Reference for developing a management strategy for trees located on private settlement area lands in Halton Hills be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Town of Halton Hills Planning, Public Works & Transportation Committee approve the Terms of Reference for the Private Tree Management Strategy, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

BACKGROUND:

Halton Hills has a longstanding commitment to maintaining and enhancing the community's tree canopy. Initiatives such as the annual tree sale at public works have provided residents with access to low cost native tree seedlings, and others such as the Town's Official Plan, the Green Plan and the Town's Integrated Community Sustainability Strategy have, among other things, articulated the benefits that trees provide the community, the value that the community places on trees and the community's long term objectives for Halton Hills' tree canopy. Additional Town-led measures include the tree replacement program, the Green Development Standards which encourage the integration of trees in new developments, and the development of a management program for trees located on Town lands which was initiated in 2018 and is currently under development.

In 2019, Halton Hills intends to initiate the development of the Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy to explore and evaluate various tree management tools and identify those that are suitable to the context of Halton Hills and reflect the community's long term vision for the Town's settlement area tree canopy.

COMMENTS:

1. Support for the Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy

The completion of the Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy has been identified as a Council priority during the 2019 capital budget process and is supported by a number of community objectives contained in Imagine Halton Hills – the Town's Integrated Community Sustainability Strategy. These include:

- Expanding the tree canopy and increase the number of trees in rural and settlement areas
- Ensuring native species are dominant in Halton Hills
- Restoring and remediating degraded natural areas where possible
- Being prepared for climate change
- Protecting and enhancing an interconnected natural heritage system
- Demonstrating leadership in biodiversity initiatives

2. Alignment with Other Town Priorities and Initiatives

The development of the Private Tree Management Strategy will take the following initiatives into consideration to ensure alignment, avoid duplication, and optimize effective and efficient use of resources.

Community Forest Strategic Management Plan:

In 2018 the Town initiated the Community Forest Strategic Management Plan for trees located on municipal property. This project, which is scheduled to be completed in 2019, will inform the development of an enhanced management program for trees located on municipally-owned properties throughout the Town.

Climate Change Adaptation Plan

Halton Hills has initiated the development of a climate change adaptation plan in 2017. One of the key components of the project, which is scheduled to be completed in 2019, involves the completion of a natural capital mapping and assessment exercise to delineate and assess the relative vulnerability of the Town's significant environmental features against projected changes in climate to the year 2100.

Municipal Natural Asset Initiative

As part of the its wider Asset Management Program, in 2019 the Town will initiate the Municipal Natural Asset Initiative to assess the economic value to the Town's natural assets that provide key anthropogenic ecosystem services for Halton Hills. An example of this can be found in the Town's storm water management program which currently employs a number of creeks to convey storm water away from properties and out of the community. Those creeks form integral components of the Town's storm water

management infrastructure, but the precise economic value they provide the Town is not yet fully understood. This project will:

1. Identify key natural assets that provide important ecosystem services to the Town;
2. Assess the economic value of those key natural assets; and
3. Enable the integration of natural assets into the Town's wider asset management program.

Annual Earth Day Tree Sale at Public Works

To encourage the planting of trees on private property, Halton Hills organizes and hosts an annual spring tree sale where residents and businesses can buy native tree seedlings at a discounted price.

Green Development Standards Program

The Town's Green Development Standards Program was introduced in 2010 to enhance the sustainability of new developments. The current iteration of the program which was introduced in 2014 requires the use of native, non-invasive and drought tolerant plant material for landscaping and contains a number of other actions that support an enhanced settlement area tree canopy. The green development standards program is scheduled to be reviewed in 2019.

3. Scope of Work

As outlined in the draft Terms of Reference (attached as appendix 1 to this Report) staff are proposing to complete this project by employing a phased approach that is summarized below:

Phase 1: Explore

The initial phase of the project will involve outlining the powers that municipal governments have been granted to manage trees on private lands and exploring the various approaches that municipalities across Ontario have employed to manage trees on private lands to date.

Phase 2: Project Framework

The second phase of the project will be led by the consultant and will include the development of a work plan and engagement plan that will guide the consultants work throughout the project.

Phase 3: Engage

The third phase of the project will involve completing a public and Council engagement process to determine the community's long term vision for its privately-owned settlement area tree canopy and the balance that the community wishes to strike between a landowner's right to manage trees on their property as they wish and the public's desire to maintain and enhance the Town's settlement area tree canopy. The engagement process will enable the Town to identify the range of tree management tools that are both appropriate for Halton Hills and supported by the community, which will be evaluated in detail in the next phase of the project.

Phase 4: Evaluate, Assess, Determine

The fourth phase of the project will involve producing an assessment of the various implications associated with each of the short-listed tree management tools both corporately and from the community's perspective.

The resource and administrative requirements associated with each short-listed tree management tool will be evaluated and overall suitability within the context of Halton Hills assessed. Council will then be provided with this information and asked to determine the way forward for managing privately-owned trees located in the Town's settlement areas.

Phase 5: Strategy Development

The fifth Phase of the project involves developing the draft strategy document, obtaining feedback from the community to finalize the document and presenting the Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy to Council for approval.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

The completion of a tree management strategy for Halton Hills was identified as a Council priority during the development of the 2019 capital budget.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Funding for this project in the amount of \$70,000.00 is included in the approved 2019 Capital Budget.

CONSULTATION:

Members of the Town's Senior Management Team were consulted during the development of the draft Terms of Reference for this project.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

The question of how the Town should manage trees on private property is very much a function of the value that the community places on its settlement area tree canopy versus the value that it places on landowner rights. Therefore, the development of the Private Tree Management Strategy will be informed by a comprehensive engagement process that adheres to the Town's [Public Engagement Charter](#) and involves a wide range of residents, community stakeholders and elected officials. The engagement process will employ a variety of in-person and electronic engagement tools, such as the Town's online engagement platform – Let's Talk Halton Hills www.letstalkhaltonhills.ca.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life. The development of the Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy advances the Strategy's implementation of the following community objectives:

- Expand the tree canopy and increase the number of trees in rural and settlement areas
- Ensure native species are dominant in Halton Hills
- Restore and remediate degraded natural areas where possible
- Be prepared for climate change
- Protect and enhance an interconnected natural heritage system.
- Demonstrate leadership in biodiversity initiatives

This report supports the environmental health pillar of sustainability and in summary the alignment of this report with the Community Sustainability Strategy is Excellent.

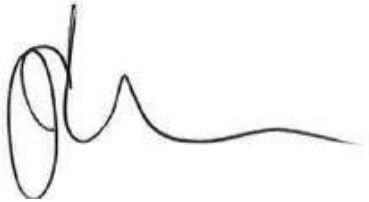
COMMUNICATIONS:

The development of the engagement plan will include a comprehensive communications component to ensure that the community is made aware of the project as well as the various opportunities to provide input into the process.

CONCLUSION:

The development of the Privately-Owned Tree Management Strategy has been identified as a priority initiative by Council for 2019. The Terms of Reference attached as Appendix 1 outline how staff propose to complete this important project.

Reviewed and Approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Linhardt', with a stylized, flowing script.

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Brent Marshall', with a stylized, flowing script.

Brent Marshall, Chief Administrative Officer