

Policy: **Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy**

Main Contact: **Environmental Officer**

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Policy Statement

The Corporation of the Town of Renfrew (the Town) is committed to preserve and enhance the level and quality of tree and vegetation cover within the Town, recognizing the ecological, social and economic benefits of trees and natural vegetation.

Purpose

This policy recognizes the importance of the tree canopy and the many environmental, economic and social benefits of urban forests to communities as listed below.

Environmental Benefits

- Improves air quality by removing particulates and other air pollution
- Moderation of storm water events by increasing soil permeability and intercepting rainfall in the canopy
- Provides habitat for animals
- Increases biodiversity
- Improvement to public health
- Temperature moderation
- Reduces energy expenditure and cost
- Improves riparian zones; preventing erosion

Economic Benefits

- Improves interest in retail businesses
- Improves marketability of the city
- Reduces infrastructure costs by reducing the strain on sewers and roadways
- Reduces liability and prevents damage through maintenance
- Reduces energy costs
- Reduces health care costs

Social Benefits

- Improves social connection within communities
- Improves walkability of communities
- Provides a sound barrier
- Promotes public education and engagement
- Adds natural character to streetscape

This policy provides guidelines regarding the injuring or destruction of trees within the Town and enables the establishment of procedures to preserve tree canopy by minimizing tree removal, preventing damage or destruction of trees, and optimize planting provisions and tree health within the Town.

Definitions

“Boulevard Tree” shall mean a tree located within a road allowance owned and maintained by the Town.

“Dead, Dying, or Diseased” in reference to a tree, means a tree with no living tissue, a tree where seventy (70) percent or more of its crown is dead, or a tree infected by a lethal pathogen as certified by a Qualified Tree Expert.

“Hazard / Danger Tree” includes dead or dying trees, dead parts of live trees, or unstable live trees (due to structural defects or other factors) that are within striking distance of people or property (a target).

“Invasive Species” shall mean non-native plants that are introduced to the local area that disrupt the natural balance of an ecosystem, often spreading over a specific area.

“Native Species” shall mean an uncultivated vegetation indigenous to geographic regions, which have adapted over time to various environmental influences, which grow naturally in the local area. For the purposes of this section, “cultivated” means a native species that has been altered to an unnatural variation not found in the wild.

“**Natural Vegetation**” shall mean plant life that grows naturally in the area (a non-Invasive Species) and does not include a manicured lawn or garden.

“**Park Tree**” shall mean a tree located in a Town-owned Park or actively managed open space.

“**Public Tree**” shall mean a Boulevard Tree, Park Tree or a tree located on other lands owned by the Town.

“**Tree Protection Zone**” is the area that occupies 1 meter beyond the drip line of a tree.

Policy Requirements

1 Application

1.1 This policy applies to all properties and development on public lands within the Municipality. The Town encourages private property owners to adopt the principles of this policy as it relates to trees on private property.

1.2 The Town, through its operations will foster a “tree-friendly culture” through interdepartmental coordination on tree issues and sharing of ideas and best practices for tree protection, maintenance and planting. Its actions can also serve as a model for actions taken by citizens on their own property.

1.3 This Policy supports a multi-disciplinary, multi-department review of plans and proposals that have the potential to impact trees. The following broad service areas in the Town play an important role in advancing the objectives of this Policy:

- Land Use Planning (policy and development approvals)
- Public Works (right-of-way maintenance)
- Parks & Recreation (Town-owned parks and recreational services within our jurisdiction)

Town staff are encouraged to cooperate in the following ways:

- Interdepartmental review of private development proposals and municipal works to ensure all opportunities for tree preservation and planting are included;
- Coordination of by-laws, policies and procedures to ensure that urban trees and vegetated areas are consistently referenced, planned, enhanced and maintained; and,
- Coordination of existing and future initiatives that have tree-related components (e.g., Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Asset Management Plans, Official Plan).

2 Best Practices

The best practices outlined in this Section are intended as a guide to Town staff, residents and businesses to support landscaping decisions that result in a growing and sustainable

tree canopy that functions harmoniously with the surrounding environment.

2.1 Encourage Native Species

The Town encourages the planting of trees and vegetation that are native to Eastern Ontario. Native Species that are best adapted to the local environment typically have higher survival rates and require less maintenance than introduced species which often contribute little to the local ecosystem and may become invasive. Wherever possible, planting plans should consist of Native Species, especially in proximity to natural areas. In some cases however, a hardy, non-invasive, non-native tree is appropriate if it is better adapted to a particular site and has a better chance of survival over the long term.

Preferred native species include a mix of:

- Red Maple
- Sugar Maple
- Silver Maple
- White Oak
- Red Oak
- Bur Oak
- Black Walnut
- American Basswood
- Northern Hackberry
- White Spruce
- Eastern White Pine
- Red Pine
- Eastern White Cedar

Although native species, species of ash, beech and elm are not recommended for planting due to high susceptibility to disease and invasive pests. Additionally species of poplar, aspen, willow and Manitoba Maple are not recommended for planting given they are highly susceptible to wind damage.

Pre-approved non-native species include:

- Honey Locust
- Little Leaf Linden
- Norway Spruce
- Green Colorado Spruce
- Blue Colorado Spruce
- Austrian Pine
- Lilacs

- Maidenhair (*Ginkgo biloba*)

Other non-native tree species may be considered at the recommendation of a qualified arborist or landscape architect and with the approval of the Town of Renfrew.

2.2 Setting Trees up for Success

Tree and vegetation enhancement is a long term investment that pays dividends to the community. It is very important to consider the constraints of a location to ensure the right tree is chosen for the right place. Constraints to consider when choosing a species to plant include:

- Utilities such as power lines, buried water/sewer laterals and other hard infrastructure
- Urban conditions such as road salt and compaction
- Rooting space
- Environmental conditions such as full-sun, full-shade and pooling water
- Property lines
- Compatibility with existing trees with respect to size and rate of growth

The right species will be able to endure against the challenges of the chosen location and avoid interfering with overhead or underground services. Appropriate research may aid property owners in finding the desired height, width and endurance for successfully planting in the desired location. The Town encourages the use of professional landscape architects, arborists, and/or horticulturalists to assist in choosing the right location and species for planting initiatives.

2.3 Diverse Greenspaces

A good planting plan makes use of a variety of trees, shrubs and herbaceous vegetation to enhance biodiversity, create habitat for pollinators and other useful wildlife and improves the desirability of public and private greenspaces.

Neighbourhoods are encouraged to have a diverse variety of tree species. This helps limit invasive insects and tree specific diseases which can affect the overall health of the Town's tree canopy.

2.4 Managing Invasive Species

The Town recognizes that the ecological benefit of removing Invasive Species over the long term exceeds the limited benefits of allowing these plants to remain in place. The easiest way to control the spread of Invasive Species is to avoid planting them and prioritize Native Species or imported plants that are known not to spread on their own. Different species will require different control mechanisms to remove. Methods of removal include pulling, cutting, burning or smothering. Removed plants should be disposed of in the garbage. They should not be placed in the compost or discarded in natural areas as discarded flowers may produce seeds.

2.5 Tree Maintenance

Protecting a tree through proper pruning and maintenance shall be the first consideration versus tree removal on properties and developments within the Town. Tree maintenance shall be conducted in accordance with standards normally accepted in the nursery, landscape and arborist trades. The Town shall give reasonable consideration to the allocation of sufficient funds to adequately maintain existing municipal trees.

3 Tree Removal

3.1 Requirements

No person shall harm or remove a Public Tree unless authorized by the Town. Tree removal on Town owned land will only occur when:

- the tree is dead, dying or diseased, or;
- it is a hazard / danger tree (as determined by Town Staff), or;
- it is required as a result of emergency work, or;
- it is required under an order pursuant to the Town's Property Clean Yards By-law, or;
- the tree requires removal, pruning or maintenance where the branches or limbs interfere with existing utility conductors, sightlines, buildings or structures, or development projects being undertaken by the Town, and it is determined that removal is necessary.

The location, species and health status of any public tree that is removed shall be reported to the Town's Environmental Officer for tracking purposes.

3.2 Alternatives

When considering tree removal, in all instances, alternatives to tree removal shall be the first consideration.

3.3 Replacements

For all tree removals on Town property or related to Town Projects, the Town or contractor shall be required to plant one (1) tree for each tree removed, in a suitable location on Municipal property within one (1) year of the tree removal. Tree re-planting should be planted in locations that will support the long-term survival of the tree and in a location that is similar to the tree that was removed (e.g., a removed street tree should be replaced with a new street tree in the same neighbourhood).

3.4 Tree Disposal

The disposal of wood material resulting from the removal of a tree shall be completed in a way that reduces the potential for the spread of invasive species and in accordance with the Federal Plant Protection Act. Appropriate disposal methods can vary depending on the tree species, however grinding the material and leaving at the site, or hauling wood material to the Renfrew Landfill site are considered the best methods.

4 Tree Protection Zones

For all public trees greater than 10 cm in diameter at breast height, a Tree Protection Zone (TPZ) is to be established by Town staff and contractors. Tree protection zones area defines a 1 meter beyond the drip line of a tree. The purpose of a Tree Protection Zone is to prevent physical damage and mechanical injury to trees, soil compaction and soil contamination. Workers and machinery must not disturb tree protection zones in any way unless given written approval by the Town. Tree protection zones should be physically demarcated and signage erected for large construction projects spanning more than two weeks of active construction and locations of all Tree protection zones should be clearly identified on site plans.

5 Planning, Development and Construction Considerations

When development is considered, the Town will apply creative planning approaches designed to protect and enhance its tree canopy and natural vegetation; ensuring the Town's amenity value and identity is enhanced as the canopy and vegetation matures.

Consistent with Renfrew's Official Plan, approval of a plan of subdivision shall be conditional upon the planting of a tree on each of the proposed lots, where such planting is possible considering the width of the lot and the presence of subgrade services, parking, and snow storage areas. Soft" or "green" landscaping treatments, including the planting of native tree and plant species, will be maximized to the extent possible within rights-of-way.

The Town Departments overseeing development and construction will make every effort to ensure development proposals coincide with this policy.

6 Community Education and Engagement

Public education that communicates the value of a healthy, growing tree canopy and provides information to residents on proper tree care are key components to increasing our tree canopy. Through community engagement and education, the Town will celebrate program successes and build upon them. As part of this outreach, the Town will communicate the details of this policy and how its implementation will impact various stakeholders.

Monitoring

The Environmental Officer shall be responsible for receiving complaints and/or concerns related to this policy.

Authority

Section 270(1)(7) of the Municipal Act, 2001, SO 2001, c25 requires the Town of Renfrew to adopt and maintain a policy setting out the manner in which the Municipality will protect and enhance the tree canopy and natural vegetation within the Municipality.

Contact

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Change History

Policy Name	Effective Date	Significant Changes	By-law No.
Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy	August 8, 2023	New policy	67-2023