



CITY OF HAMILTON
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Environmental Services Division

TO:	Chair and Members Public Works Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	August 11, 2021
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Private Tree Giveaway (PW21044) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Sam Scarlett (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3919
SUBMITTED BY:	Craig Murdoch Director, Environmental Services Public Works Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That staff be directed to plan and execute a City Wide Private Tree Giveaway Program for the remainder of 2021 and on an annual basis from 2022 and beyond, subject to the approval of the following:
- (i) That \$15,000 be allocated from the 2021 Forestry tax operating budget to fund the 2021 Fall Private Tree Giveaway Program; and,
 - (ii) That the 2022 Private Tree Giveaway Program annual operating budget request of \$45,000 be referred to the 2022 tax operating budget process for consideration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Hamilton Corporate Climate Change Task Force and the draft Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) have both identified tree planting as a key action to aid in the efforts of offsetting the City of Hamilton's (City) carbon footprint, improving air quality and reducing surface temperatures, amongst many other environmental and social benefits. The current urban tree canopy coverage for the City is 21.2%, with a draft future target of 30%. Significant increases in tree planting over the next several years is critical in meeting or exceeding the 30% tree canopy coverage target.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

In 2021, successful Ward specific Private Tree Giveaways of native tree species were executed by staff for Wards 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, interested residents were required to register for the species of tree they desired, including their address and contact information, and the trees were delivered to their homes. Overall, 756 trees were requested and delivered. This Program was positively received by residents of participating Wards and significant interest was received from other Wards.

This Report recommends the Program be implemented City Wide as a core service. This will give the City an opportunity to increase the City's tree canopy on private property by approximately 3,000 trees per year. The Program will also allow for wider engagement amongst the City's residents to promote the benefits of a healthy and robust tree canopy.

Alternatives for Consideration – See page 4

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: That the estimated costs to implement a Fall 2021 Private Tree Giveaway Program of \$15,000 be funded through the existing 2021 Forestry operating budget. Approval to establish a permanent City Wide Private Tree Giveaway Program at an estimated annual cost of \$45,000 per year be referred to the 2022 tax operating budget process. All ownership and future maintenance of the trees given away through the Private Tree Giveaway Program are the responsibility of the homeowner.

Staffing: There are no staffing implications associated with the recommendation in this Report.

Legal: There are no legal implications associated with the recommendation in this Report.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 2020, staff were requested by the Ward 5 Councillor to implement a Private Tree Giveaway Program for Ward 5. Staff created a Program for the promotion and distribution of trees to residents. Unexpectedly, the restrictions and challenges faced by COVID-19 caused this to be delayed until 2021.

Initial plans for the 2020 Private Tree Giveaways were based on similar Programs offered through other Divisions in Public Works, such as the compost and rain barrel giveaways. Due to the closure of various facilities and public gatherings being restricted, staff created a new Program in 2021 that would comply with all COVID-19 restrictions.

In Q4 of 2020 and Q1 of 2021, motions for Private Tree Giveaways were also passed for Wards 2, 3, 6, 7, and 8. In Q2 of 2021, staff worked with various Ward Councillor offices to complete advertising and marketing for the Ward specific Private Tree Giveaways.

Staff selected 4 native tree species that would provide a range of options to best suit the various locations and yard sizes in the City. Tree planting and care information material was created and attached to each tree for reference. A mulch mat was also provided to promote improved health and of survival of the newly planted trees by assisting in water retention and suppression of weeds. Staff then set delivery dates based on the addresses for each Ward, with staff contacting each applicant to notify them of the delivery date and process. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, staff completed a contactless delivery.

A total of 756 residents requested trees through the online portal created for participating Wards. Additional requests were received from residents in other Wards who did not have a Ward specific Private Tree Giveaway Program in place through the Customer Contact Centre and City of Hamilton Website. As a result of these additional requests, staff are recommending that a permanent Program be created.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

Goal Six, Protect and Restore the Natural Environment, of the Corporate Climate Change Task Force, Appendix "A" to Report CMO19008/HSC19073, states an area of focus is to adopt the Urban Forest Strategy.

Theme Four, Grow, of the City of Hamilton Draft Urban Forest Strategy, "Appendix "B" to Report PED20173, time (1) states a key activity is to "Increase the level of tree planting and/or natural forest regeneration in the City over the next five years."

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

This report was prepared in consultation with staff from the Corporate Services Department (Financial Planning, Administration and Policy Division) and the Planning and Economic Development Department (Community Planning, Development Planning, Heritage and Design).

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Through the draft UFS, as well as the City's Corporate Climate Change Task Force, tree planting is identified as an effective action for combatting the climate emergency currently facing the City. The draft UFS also noted that throughout the City's urban area, 58% of the existing tree canopy is located on private property and 42% is currently located on public property (e.g. public road allowance, parks, City owned cemeteries

and naturalized areas). In order to reach the target of 30% canopy coverage from the current 21.2%, extensive tree planting will be required on private property, as well as on public land.

Potential tree planting locations on public land, especially in the higher population dense areas, is limited due to several reasons. Examples of these include overhead utility conflicts, limited grass boulevard area, high proportions of off-street parking spaces and small City owned road allowances. This restricts the ability of the Forestry Section to establish large numbers of new trees on public property in these areas. Supplying trees to residents to plant on private property will allow for greater planting and in time, greater canopy coverage that may not be achieved by solely planting trees on public property.

If approved, 1,000 trees will be made available and be distributed to residents City Wide in the Fall of 2021. For 2022 and beyond, an annual total of 3,000 trees will be available for both Spring and Fall planting Programs, as these are the best times to plant new trees and ensure survival. Moving forward, and in anticipation that COVID-19 restrictions will be eased, trees will be available to be collected from Giveaway Events held throughout the City, rather than delivered, as happened in Spring of 2021. The Program will limit residents to 1 tree per address, per year.

Through the proposed City Wide Program, staff will advertise and market through print media outlets, social media and the City's website. Additional outreach will be undertaken with neighbourhood associations and local environmental organisations to promote the Program.

On an annual basis, a random sample of residents who participated in the Program will be contacted to report back on survival of the City supplied tree approximately 12 months after the tree is received. This will provide valuable data on tree survival and allow for future Program improvements. Staff will report annually on the success of the Program in the annual Tree Planting Communication Update to Council.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

That the City Wide Private Tree Giveaway Program be offered as a temporary project for the remainder of 2021 and not proceed forward to future years.

Financial: The estimated program cost of \$15,000 for the remainder of 2021 will be funded from the existing Forestry operating budget.

Staffing: There are no staffing implications associated with the recommendation in this Report.

Legal: There are no legal implications associated with the recommendation in this Report.

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Engagement and Participation

Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community

Healthy and Safe Communities

Hamilton is a safe and supportive City where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

Clean and Green

Hamilton is environmentally sustainable with a healthy balance of natural and urban spaces.

Our People and Performance

Hamiltonians have a high level of trust and confidence in their City government.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

N/A