

City of Belleville

Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy

2019

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Background

Section 270(1)(7) of the Municipal Act, 2001, SO 2001, c25 requires the City of Belleville 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.

Application

This policy applies to all properties and development, on public and private lands, within the Municipality. It is a resource which can be referred to and utilized as establishing guiding principles for residential, commercial and public purposes. This policy shall be an overarching document that will develop Standard Operating Procedures with in Departments, Subdivision Development Guidelines, and The City's Official Plan as developed. Nothing in this policy is intended to restrict normal farm practices as defined by the Normal Farm Practices Protection Act, including agroforestry.

Definitions

- ❖ Natural vegetation: native plant life that grows naturally without human intervention
- ❖ Tree canopy: the layer of tree leaves, branches, and stems that cover the ground when viewed from above
- ❖ Maintenance: includes all work or operations related to trimming, pruning, spraying, injecting, fertilizing, treating, cabling and bracing a tree in accordance with Good Arboricultural Practice
- ❖ 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)

Guiding Principles for the Tree Canopy and Vegetation Policy

Guidance for developing the Tree Canopy and Vegetation strategy:

- Expand planting
- Protection
- Maintenance
- Community engagement and education

Purpose

A healthy urban forest improves the quality of life of City of Belleville residents. Trees, plants and shrubs help clean the air, conserve energy, increase property values, and make Belleville neighborhoods more beautiful and enjoyable.

Environmental

- 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

- Improves interest in retail businesses
- Improves marketability of the city
- Increases property values
- 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

Community

- Improves social connection within communities
- Improves walkability of communities
- Provides a sound barrier
- Reduces infrastructure costs by reducing the strain on sewers and roadways
- Reduces energy costs
- Reduces health care costs
- Increases property value
- Promotes public education and engagement

Figure 1: An illustration from the Journal of Environmental Quality showing the benefits of a healthy urban forest

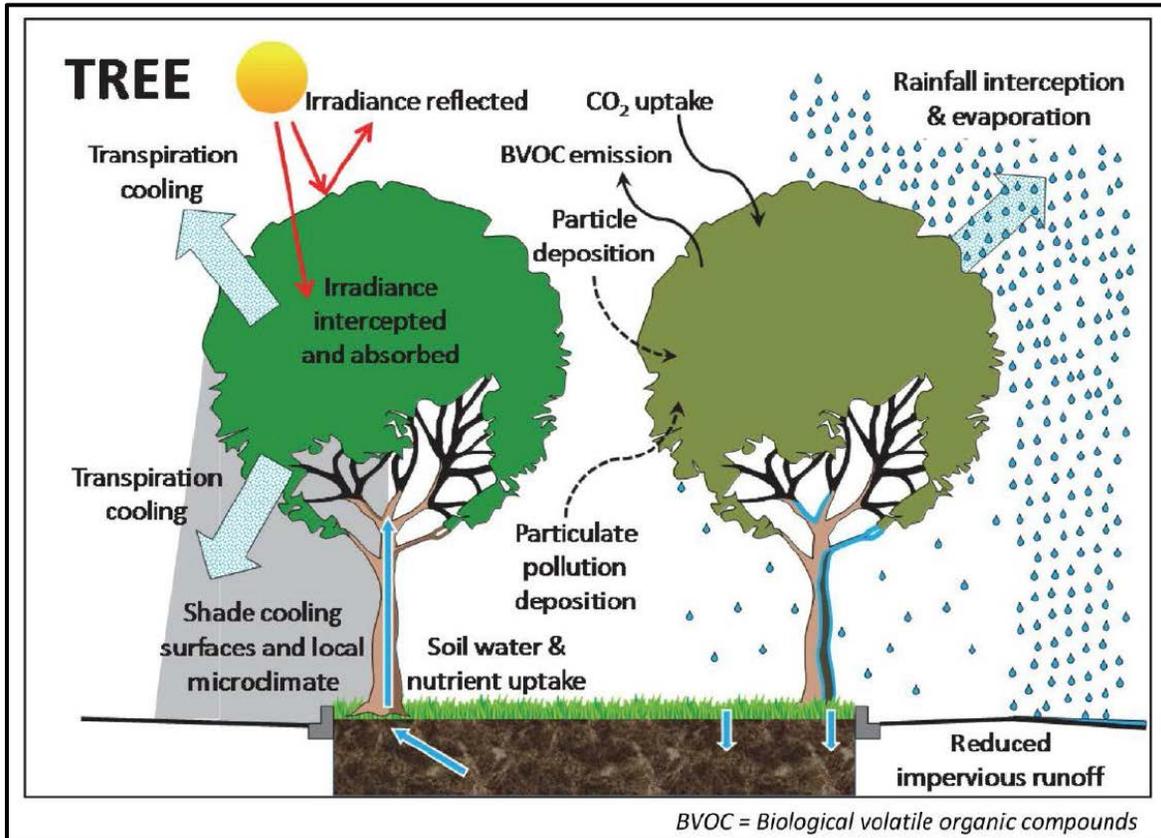
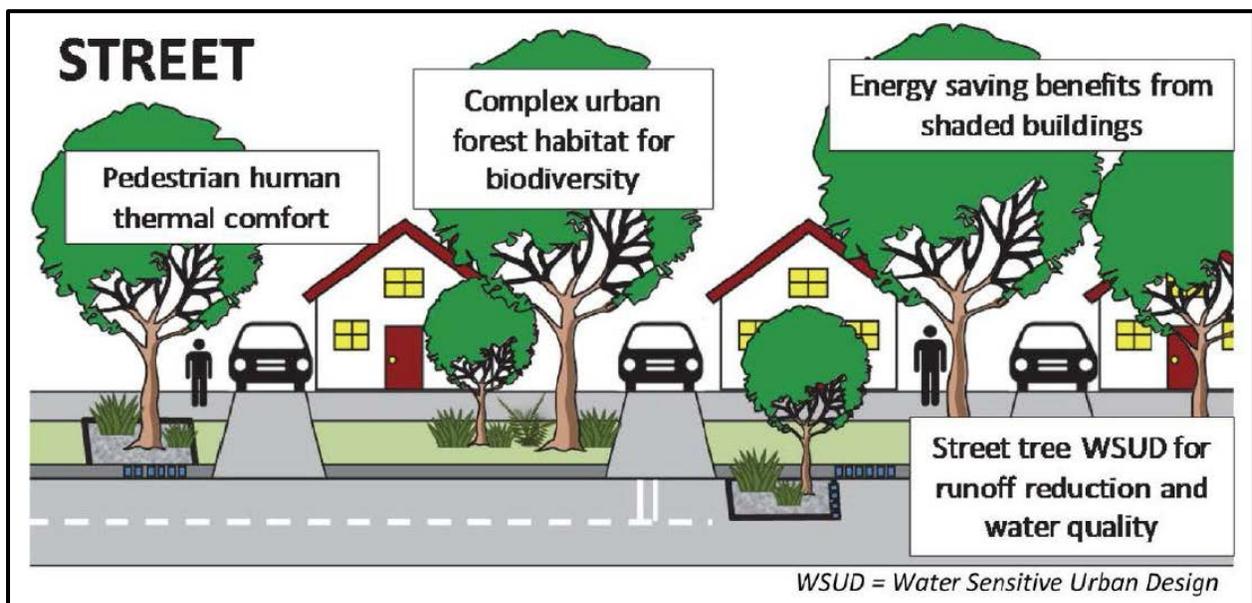


Figure 2: An illustration from the Journal of Environmental Quality showing how a healthy urban forest can benefit our community



City of Belleville Tree Canopy

Belleville is located along the north shore of the Bay of Quinte, off Lake Ontario. It is located 190 kilometers east of Toronto and 360 kilometers west of Montreal. The City has a population of 67,666 (2016 census), and regionally the population consists of approximately 200,000 people. The population of the City has been steadily increasing at a rate typically higher than other eastern Ontario communities.

It is estimated that the tree canopy in Belleville was reduced by 6% over 15 years, between 2002 and 2018. Moving forward, a proactive approach shall be used to maintain current tree canopy levels and working towards improvement.

Tree Maintenance

Protecting a tree through proper pruning and maintenance shall be the first consideration versus tree removal on properties and development, on public and private lands, within the Municipality. Tree maintenance shall be conducted in accordance with standards normally accepted in the nursery, landscape and arborist trades.

The City shall give reasonable consideration to the allocation of sufficient funds to adequately maintain existing municipal trees and trees relative to new stock from new developments, reconstruction and other planting projects.

Tree removal on City owned land will only occur when,

- I. the tree is dead, dying or diseased, or
- II. it is a hazard / danger tree, or
- III. it is required as a result of emergency work, or
- IV. it is required under an order pursuant to the City's Property Standards By-law, or
- V. the tree requires pruning or maintenance where the branches or limbs interfere with existing utility conductors, buildings or structures and it is determined that removal is necessary

When considering tree removal; in all instances, alternatives to tree removal shall be the first consideration. All tree removals on City property and City Projects; the city shall contain a tree replacement component; requiring the planting of one (1) tree for each tree removed, in a suitable location on Municipal property within one (1) year of the tree removal.

Tree Protection Zones and Potential Rooting Areas are to be established by city staff and contractors when working on City Projects on City Property; save and except road construction projects within the road allowance. The purpose of Tree Protection Zones and Potential Rooting Areas 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. Design specifications for tree protection signage and hoarding, locations of all TPZs, and other tree protection measures should be clearly identified on grading plans, and/or tree removal/preservation plans.

Planning and Development

When development is considered, the Municipality will apply creative planning approaches designed to protect and enhance its tree canopy and natural vegetation; ensuring the Municipality's amenity value and identity is enhanced as the canopy and vegetation matures. Landscape plans are to be submitted as part of development proposals, which should maintain and/or enhance the current tree canopy rather than reduce it. The City of Belleville's Engineering and Development Services will make every effort to ensure development proposals coincide with this policy regarding tree canopy and natural vegetation.

Ideally, one tree planted for every new building lot or house built as part of a subdivision agreement is a goal that is desired. Street trees provide so much benefit to residents, and builds communities.

The City of Belleville Tree Canopy and Vegetation Policy is applicable to all new single detached homes and smaller residential developments. This policy can also be used as a guidance tool for commercial/multiple residential developments. Increased natural vegetation buffers help beautify commercial properties and enhance the natural beauty of the City of Belleville.

Other benefits can include:

- green infrastructure to reduce storm water flows and the costs of storm water maintenance
- vegetated aisles and parking islands to increase shaded areas
- improved surface and groundwater quality and levels
- green roofs to reduce total storm water runoff and enhance the urban canopy

Community Engagement and Education

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 Municipality will celebrate program successes and build upon them. As part of this outreach, the Municipality will communicate the details of this policy and how its implementation will impact various stakeholders.

The Municipality will endeavor to provide this information to the public in a variety of accessible formats. This will be done in a cost-effective manner with digital outreach, pamphlets and via environmental events such as Earth Day celebrations and tree seedling giveaways. Private land planting programs managed by Conservation Authorities may also be used as educational opportunities. The Municipality will look for opportunities to partner with organizations to conduct outreach and do community planting events as done in the past.

Disclaimer

This policy does not take precedence over any by-laws, resolutions, plans or agreements of the Municipality or other Legislation.