

# Policy Amendments - Corporate Tree Management Policy

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**Recommendation:**

That the November 29, 2017, City Operations report CR\_5058, be received for information.

**Previous Council/Committee Action**

At the July 5, 2017, Urban Planning Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration prepare amendments to Policy C456A, Corporate Tree Management Policy, based on the high-level themes outlined in the July 5, 2017, City Operations report CR\_4124.

**Executive Summary**

This report outlines work currently underway that will support future amendments to the Corporate Tree Management Policy and its Administrative Procedures. This work includes a review of the current Tree Reserve, an update to the formulas used to calculate the value of trees and natural areas, as well as an update to the definitions and terminology in the policy. Recommendations for specific amendments to the policy will be brought to Committee at a later date. Aspects of the Corporate Tree Management Policy that are currently under review or in need of an update include clearly defining what will be funded from the Tree Reserve Account, reviewing and updating the calculations used to define equitable compensation for the loss of tree canopy, and providing administrative updates to improve the clarity of policy scope.

**Report**

The original impetus to review and amend the Corporate Tree Management Policy C456A came from the need to identify opportunities for improved protection of City Forestry assets. At the July 5, 2017 Urban Planning Committee meeting, Council agreed that the policy was not the best-suited tool for this purpose. A subsequent motion from this meeting tasked Administration to identify other tools for tree protection. During the course of the policy review pursuant to the July meeting, however, opportunities for improvement were identified. As the policy sets the direction

for Administration in the protection and preservation of city trees, and as our business practices across the corporation are constantly evolving and improving to better serve the residents of the City of Edmonton, so too must this policy.

The following are aspects of the policy currently under review for amending or updating:

### 1. Tree Reserve Account

The current definition of the tree reserve in the policy is brief and provides little definition as to what programs the reserve was to be used for. It is currently defined as an account whereby funds for losses or damages can be collected and carried forward for use in planting trees in the future.

To improve transparency and accountability, Administration has begun to review the reserve, its inputs and outputs, and its ability to sustain funding for the various programs it supports.

The Tree Reserve has been identified under the Program and Service Review as an opportunity for improvement. External expertise has been engaged to conduct the review and provide recommendations for improvements.

### 2. Collection of Compensation for loss of or damage to City Trees

In the July 5, 2017 Report CR\_4124 - Proposed Amendments to the Corporate Tree Management Policy, Administration committed to:

- Review and update the calculations used to define Equitable Compensation, as well as the procedures for implementation. The current formulas are out of date and require an expert analysis to ensure they are adequately valuing ornamental trees and natural areas to ensure canopy conservation;
- Updating Administration's procedures concerning the recovery of value for canopy loss and clarifying accountabilities and expectations, exemptions (e.g. ditch trees and utility easements), and credits for replacements.

Since then, Administration has engaged external expertise to review the existing natural area stand calculation and its implementation procedures. This review is currently underway and will include a literature review of current best management practices for tree and natural stand valuation, and a review of similar-sized municipalities for comparison and opportunities. As part of this work, engagement with industry partners, stakeholder groups and other city business areas will be carried out.

3. Administrative updates to improve clarity of policy scope and to comply with new corporate structure

In the July 5, 2017, report CR\_4124 - Proposed Amendments to the Corporate Tree Management Policy, Administration committed to:

- Updating terminology to clarify the scope of the policy. Examples include the use of the term 'Urban Forest' as opposed to the current term 'Tree Canopy' to better reflect the holistic concept of the benefits city trees provide to residents;
- Updating the definitions to improve clarity of scope. Some of the terminology is ambiguous or overlapping and requires clearer definition to ensure common understanding.

Once this work is complete and further stakeholder engagement is conducted, specific amendments to the wording of the policy and its Procedures will be recommended.

Administration is proposing to return to Council in the second quarter of 2018 with recommended specific updates to the policy, including specific draft amendments, definitions, and procedures.

**Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management**

<b>Corporate Outcome: Edmonton is an environmentally sustainable and resilient city</b>			
<b>Outcome(s)</b>	<b>Measure(s)</b>	<b>Result(s)</b>	<b>Target(s)</b>
Edmonton is recognized as an environmentally sustainable city	% of funds recovered into tree reserve used for canopy growth vs canopy replacement	22.5% of funds used for canopy growth.	65% of funds recovered into reserve used for canopy growth, 35% used for canopy replacement.
	% canopy growth citywide	10% canopy cover	20% canopy cover

**Others Reviewing this Report**

- T. Burge, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- L. McCarthy, Deputy City Manager, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development
- A. Laughlin, Deputy City Manager, Integrated Infrastructure Services
- R. Smyth, Deputy City Manager, Citizen Services
- C. Campbell, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement