



What We Heard Urban Forestry **Corporate Tree Management Policy**

February 2020

SHARE YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton





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SHARE YOUR VOICE SHAPE OUR CITY

This is your city.

We welcome your input on how we maintain, grow and build Edmonton.

We believe engagement leads to better decision-making.

We are committed to reaching out to our diverse communities in thoughtful and meaningful ways.

We want to understand your perspectives and build trusting relationships with you.

We will show you how you help influence City decisions.

Share your voice with us and shape our city.





Project/Initiative Background

Name: Urban Forestry

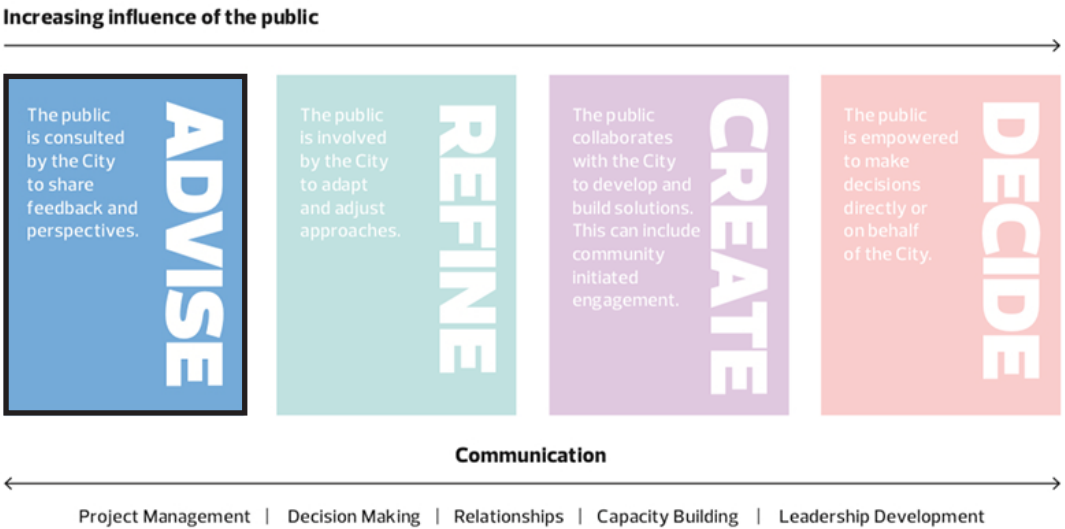
Date: October 22 through November 7, 2019

Location: Londonderry Mall, Terwillegar Recreation Centre, McKernan Community Hall, Kinsmen Sport Centre, and online

Contact: citytrees@edmonton.ca

Level of public engagement: ADVISE

The City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum.



Description:

The public engagement was held to **ADVISE** on the City's updated Corporate Tree Management Policy (C456B), collect feedback on the proposed tree bylaw, and identify elements that could improve future tree management.



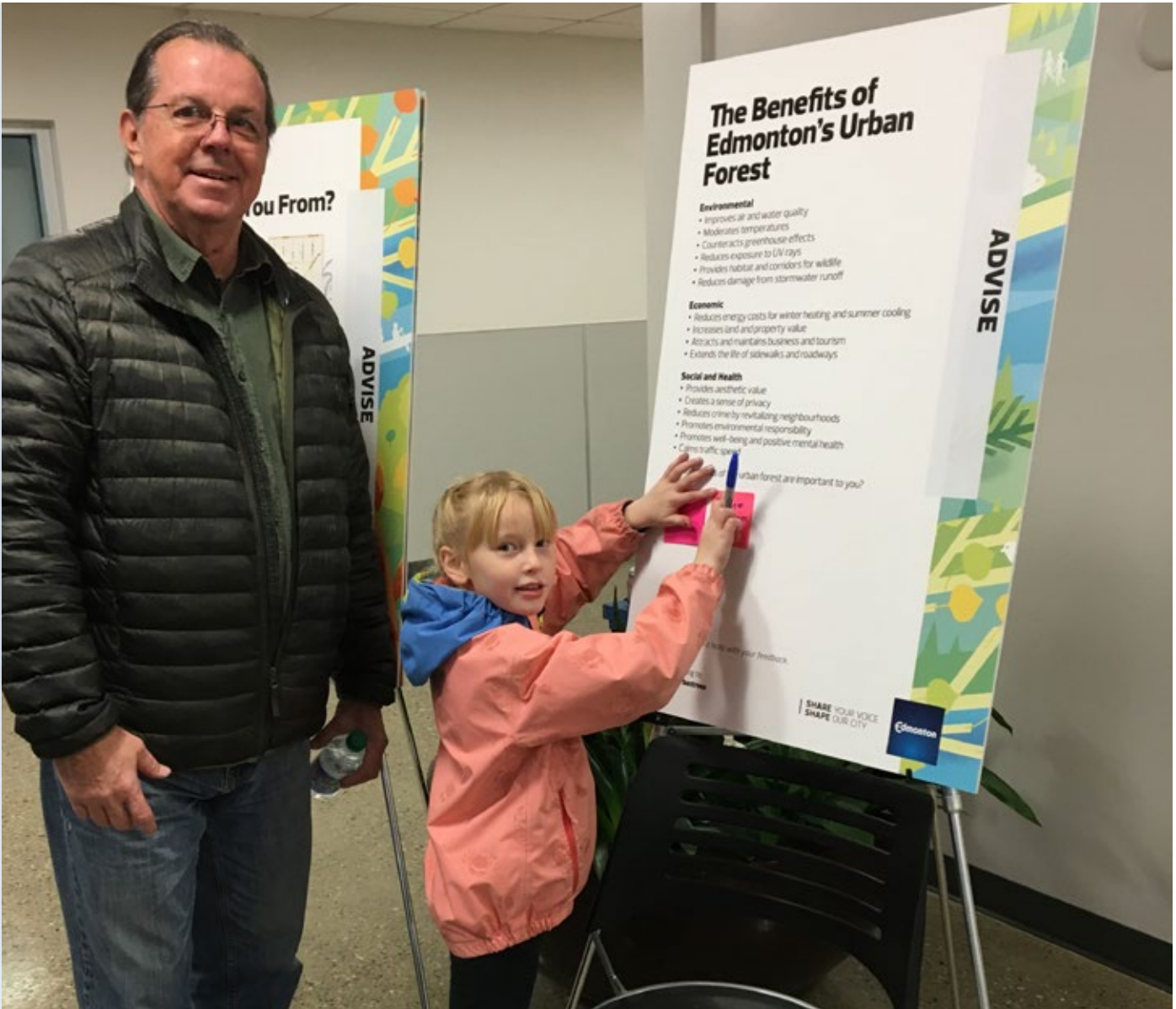
Executive Summary

In the spring of 2019 City Council directed City Administration to engage with the public and stakeholders to provide feedback on the Corporate Tree Management Policy C456B with the purpose of growing, preserving and protecting Edmonton's Urban Forest, particularly in regards to Natural Areas. To gather input on the Policy, citizens were engaged through an electronic survey, 3 public drop in events, and a stakeholder workshop which occurred in October and November 2019.

In total **3,499 people participated in engagement activities.**

During engagement the Project Team found that participants generally supported the Policy updates with emphasis on providing more community education. Participants encouraged the City to plant more trees, plant a diversity of species, and to expand naturalization efforts.







Introduction

The City of Edmonton is exploring ways to better preserve, protect, and grow Edmonton's Urban Forest. To achieve these goals the Urban Forestry Project is engaging citizens on three management tools: an updated Corporate Tree Management Policy, a proposed Tree Bylaw, and the development of an Urban Forestry Asset Management Plan. Conversations with the public and other stakeholders began in the fall of 2019 and will continue into 2020.

In the fall of 2019, citizens were asked to review, and suggest updates to, the Corporate Tree Management Policy C456B (the Policy) to ensure it achieves the desired principles and goals of growth, protection, preservation, and acquisition of natural areas. Engagement on the Tree Bylaw and Urban Forest Asset Management Plan will continue into 2020. This report will focus on the feedback collected regarding the Policy.

Public drop in events, a stakeholder workshop, and an electronic survey in October and November 2019 provided the opportunity to gather input on the Policy. A total of 3,499 citizens participated in the engagement events. Engagement activities concluded on November 7, 2019. Feedback gathered from the engagement activities will inform revisions to the Policy. A revised Policy will be presented to Council in March 2020.

Engagement Timeline

Gather public and stakeholder feedback

Fall 2019 / Winter 2019–20



Corporate Tree Management Policy update to Council

Spring 2020



Tree Protection Bylaw draft to Council

Summer 2020



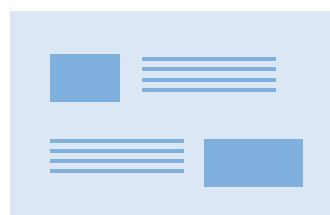
Urban Forest Asset Management Plan draft to Council

Winter 2020–21

What We Did

Communication activities were used to raise awareness of the Project and promote the engagement activities to encourage participation.

These included:



Posters were distributed to Community Leagues



Project website

Social media



Facebook ads

4,000 clicks
280,000+ impressions

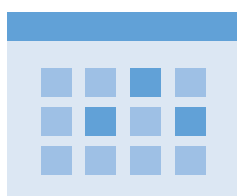


Twitter ads

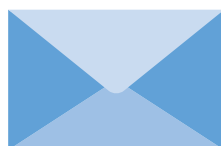
129 clicks
25,000+ impressions



Wayfinding signage at events



City of Edmonton Public Engagement Calendar



Emails to stakeholder groups



Digital advertising

700,000+ impressions



Public Drop-in Events

A total of 143 citizens participated in three public drop-in events.

The public drop-in events provided the Project team the opportunity to engage face to face with the public and allowed participants to interact with subject matter experts from the City. At each event, 18 storyboards were set up around the perimeter of the room to share information about the Project, the Urban Forest and how the City's Urban Forest is currently managed, protected, and enhanced. Information was organized into the three types of areas that make up the Urban Forest: Ornamental Trees, Naturalized Areas, and Natural Areas. The Policy, along with the updated Policy statement, was available as well as other handouts regarding Urban Forestry programs and tree care for residents.

Participants were encouraged to review the information, ask questions of the Project team, respond to questions on display boards with sticky notes, and provide comments that were documented by note takers. At each event, participants were requested to complete an evaluation form to provide comments and suggestions for improvements to the events.



Drop in events were hosted at locations that are accessible and convenient for public transit as well as have high pedestrian traffic. The locations were also chosen in mature neighbourhoods with infill development as well as neighbourhoods with new developments:

Londonderry Mall	Terwillegar Recreation Centre	McKernan Community Hall
Thursday, October 24 5:00pm – 8:00pm	Saturday, October 26 10:00am – 1:00pm	Wednesday, October 30 5:00pm – 8:00pm
49 participants	81 participants	13 participants



Stakeholder Workshop

Stakeholders from not-for-profit groups, including environmental groups, who had participated in previous discussions with the City regarding the Urban Forest were invited to a workshop to discuss priorities and perspectives on the City's Urban Forest and the Policy.

The workshop included presentations on the Policy by subject matter experts followed by a series of facilitated discussions. Thirteen people attended the workshop at the Kinsmen Sport Centre on Thursday, November 7, 2019 from 9:30am – 12:00pm.





Electronic Survey

An electronic survey was conducted between October 22 – November 7, 2019 on three separate platforms for the duration of the public drop-in sessions:

- The City of Edmonton's Insight Community Panel;
- An open link on the Project website www.edmonton.ca/urbantrees; and,
- An independent panel referred to as Edmonton Panel.

The City of Edmonton's Insight panel is an inclusive and accessible online citizen panel made up of diverse Edmontonians who provide feedback on City policies, initiatives and issues through responses to monthly surveys. The Edmonton Panel is made up of members of the public, within the City boundaries, who have agreed to respond to surveys conducted by Leger, a Canadian market research and analytics company with offices in Edmonton.

The electronic survey collected feedback on citizen's knowledge and appreciation of the City's Urban Forest, perspectives the City's management of the Urban Forest, and advice to update the Policy. The electronic survey was available to the public through the Project's website. A total of 3,343 people participated in the electronic survey.

PLATFORM	→	City of Edmonton Insight Community Panel	Link on the Project website www.edmonton.ca/ urbantrees	Edmonton Panel Members
# OF SURVEYS	→	2,388 surveys	555 surveys	400 surveys
CONDUCTED BETWEEN	→	October 22 and November 7, 2019	October 22 and November 7, 2019	October 24 and November 1, 2019



What Was Said

Engagement Results and Findings

From the engagement, the City heard that citizens appreciate the aesthetic appeal and environmental benefits of Edmonton's Urban Forest and want the trees managed, preserved, and protected. Management and protection of natural areas must balance preservation and risks attributed to pests, disease, wildfire, and public safety.

Ornamental trees and natural areas have a higher priority to other trees. There is strong support for naturalization adjacent to arterial roadways, on unsafe slopes, stormwater ponds and seasonally wet turf areas, underutilized areas of the river valley, and an expansion of naturalization to include other public areas, providing that noxious weeds are controlled.

There is significant support for awareness and education on protecting trees. Opportunities for community involvement and education are desired, including volunteer planting, school programs, and community education.

Public Drop-in Events

Participants at the drop-in events expressed that trees were important for the aesthetics of a community, air and water quality, wind reduction, and mitigating climate change. The City was advised to increase: planting, species diversity, educational activities, and monitoring for protection.

For Natural Areas, the public felt regular maintenance for public safety was a priority, as was conserving tree stands throughout the city. Monitoring Natural Areas for health, disease and pests was also a high priority. In conversations about management and maintenance, citizens suggested planting hardy species that will thrive in projected climate conditions, and planting more fruit trees.

Participants were supportive of the updates to the Corporate Tree Management Policy and discussed the need to enforce compensation. A handful of comments voiced that protection of mature trees as heritage or historical resources should be considered.

The current tree maintenance, preservation, and protection efforts for the types of trees and areas that comprise the Urban Forest were discussed: Naturalization, Natural Areas, and Ornamental Trees.



Naturalization

Naturalization is an ecologically-based approach to landscape management used to transform highly-maintained land to a more natural condition.

Participants supported Naturalization in arterial roadways and unsafe slopes, stormwater ponds and seasonally wet turf areas, low-use river valley parkland, low-use neighbourhood parkland, and non-arterial roadways. Further, they support expanding naturalization efforts to parks, school yards, and adjacent to natural areas.

Natural Areas

Regarding the management of Natural Areas, regular maintenance for public safety was identified as a priority, as was conserving tree stands throughout the city. A significant number of comments said it was important to monitor the health of Natural Areas for protection from disease or pests. Natural Areas were noted as important for conserving sensitive flora. Of the people who suggested removing deadfall, some felt it was important for reducing wildfire risk, while others thought deadfall should be removed to improve the aesthetics.

Ornamental Trees

While Ornamental trees were widely appreciated, much of the feedback received related to increasing the diversity of species. This included planting more trees, planting hardy species, planting species that will do well in future climate conditions, and planting more fruit trees. Other comments noted that maintenance should include enhancing soil conditions and adopting better planting techniques.

Feedback related to prioritizing the management of different treed areas was diverse, with Ornamental boulevard trees and Natural Areas more commonly expressed.

Participants indicated they would like to be involved with the Urban Forest through volunteer planting programs, community education workshops, plant propagation, as well as weed control of invasive species.

“Prioritize trees in neighbourhood boulevards and yards. Trees should be viewed as part of the community.”



Environmental and Nonprofit Groups Stakeholder Workshop

Discussion at the workshop focused on the relevance of the Policy updates, and whether the provisions for Natural Areas are sufficient.

Improve Internal Communication

Communication is important, including between departments, especially when reviewing development or building permits. Trees should be noted and be part of that review. This would allow for improved consideration around how density impacts the space available for trees. It may open up opportunities as well, such as back alley renewal.

Education

It was recommended that education should show that a healthy forest is tied to a healthy community. The public should be better informed. It should go under best practices to have community workshops on the benefits of trees, tree and root protection, traditional wisdom, and climate change mitigation. Thought should be given to educational approaches that will be effective for Edmonton's diverse citizens.

Ecological Integrity

The City was advised to be cautious about ecological integrity. It was noted that weeds and non-native grasses have naturalized. This needs to be recognized and stewarded. It was recommended that the City focus investment in diversity of ornamental tree species in boulevard and open space areas. It was also recommended to focus on planting native species in naturalized and natural area.

Plant More Trees

Workshop participants encouraged the City to steward and grow the Urban Forest. When asked about prioritization of preservation, protection and growth, stakeholders suggested planting more trees. Plant tree buffers along roadways which will also support traffic calming. Plant trees in new residential areas. Reclaim sites by planting trees. It was suggested to plant a diversity of species to mitigate impacts of pests, disease, and climate change. It was also suggested to steward natural tree stands and let the grasses grow. Reduce mowing and allow natural tree stands to expand.



Stakeholder feedback on the Policy included the following advice:

- The Policy should be about stewardship rather than management.
- It was noted that approximately 80% of species listed in the natural stand evaluation guidelines of the Policy are non-native species.
- Standard protocol for maintenance and enforcement is needed. Rangers will likely require more resources and authority to be able to do the work.
- Stakeholders discussed the ecological value of dead trees. Policy should weigh ecology and risk management, with a higher priority on ecology. For example, they advised to leave natural areas such as the river valley alone unless there is an imminent safety concern.
- Policy should include public educational signage to raise awareness. There should also be signage that educates people on ecological values.





Electronic Survey

Participants of the electronic survey responded with a high level of support for the updated Policy.

Respondents wanted the City to include more protection from damage caused by humans, and to plan for improved climate resiliency. They indicated that the top areas to prioritize for management, preservation, and protection were the river valley, ravines, natural areas, and naturalized sites. The majority of responses supported planting more trees and replacing trees that have been removed. Respondents agreed trees should be managed for health and disease. There was strong support for community education activities and a high interest in getting involved to improve the health of the Urban Forest by planting trees on public land, participating in a Root for Trees planting event, and becoming stewards.

The following summarizes the questions of and responses to the electronic survey¹. The number of respondents for each question is 400 for Edmonton Panel, 2,388 for Insight Community Panel and 555 for the open link on the Project website unless otherwise noted.

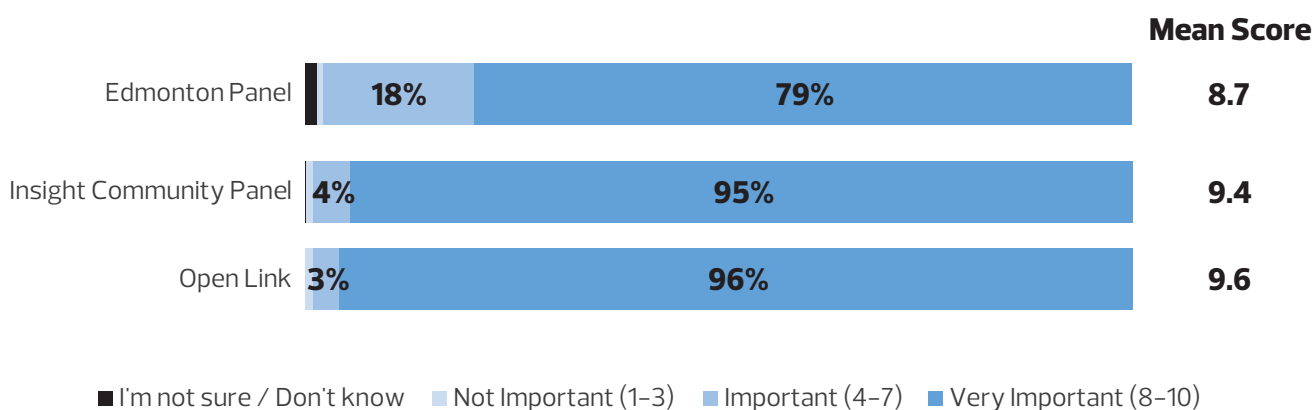
¹ The survey results are shown by platform rather than being grouped together because it is possible that some respondents may have answered the survey multiple times. The Edmonton Panel is shown in the first column because it is weighted to be representative of the City of Edmonton population. Participants in the other two platforms have sought out the survey and may have a stronger bias towards the topic.



Opinions On Urban Forests

1. The City of Edmonton is responsible for the care and maintenance of the City's Urban Forest. The Urban Forest includes all trees within Edmonton city limits and natural treed areas on City-owned land. The Urban Forest excludes trees on private property. Overall, how important is the City of Edmonton's Urban Forest?

Survey respondents are likely to view the City of Edmonton's Urban Forest as very important. Those who live in a mature area of the City are more likely to view the Urban Forest as important than those who don't





2. How important to you are these elements of Edmonton's Urban Forest? Please rate each characteristic on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means that the statement is not at all important and 5 means it is extremely important.

Participants identified the most important element of Edmonton's Urban Forest as its contributions to better air quality. The role of the Urban Forest in the ecosystem, such as providing habitat, food, nutrients, and its ability to provide relaxation space and reduce erosion were ranked of higher value over physical attributes such as increasing the attractiveness of commercial areas and increasing surrounding property values.

ELEMENT	EDMONTON PANEL	INSIGHT COMMUNITY	OPEN LINK
Contributes to better air quality	91%	95%	96%
Provides habitat and a food source for birds and other wildlife	88%	95%	95%
Provides a space for relaxation and mental health	85%	89%	90%
Reduces erosion	84%	93%	90%
Ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions	84%	89%	92%
Provides nutrients to the soil	81%	85%	86%
Absorbs stormwater runoff	80%	90%	84%
Provides shade	80%	84%	78%
Diversity of species/ characteristics	79%	82%	87%
Is nice looking	79%	88%	81%
Provides a space for recreation	78%	83%	84%
Provides a sound barrier	76%	85%	75%
Provides privacy	70%	74%	68%
Makes commercial areas more attractive	69%	78%	73%
Increases property values	60%	67%	56%



3. How much do you agree or disagree that the City is doing enough to protect the Urban Forest from natural disasters, pests and diseases, human caused damage or loss, effects of climate change?

About half or less of the respondents think the City is doing enough to protect the Urban Forest from damage caused by natural disasters, pests and disease, damage or loss caused by humans and the effects of climate change. There is an opportunity to improve the protection against the effects of climate change.

AGREE (SOMEWHAT / STRONGLY)	EDMONTON PANEL	INSIGHT COMMUNITY	OPEN LINK
Damage caused by natural disasters (e.g., storms, wildfire, extreme weather events, etc.)	53%	46%	44%
Pests and disease	50%	47%	41%
Damage or loss caused by humans	45%	36%	26%
Effects of climate change	38%	31%	25%

“If there is a chance trees are going to be damaged during construction, it should not go ahead as planned”



Corporate Tree Management Policy C456B

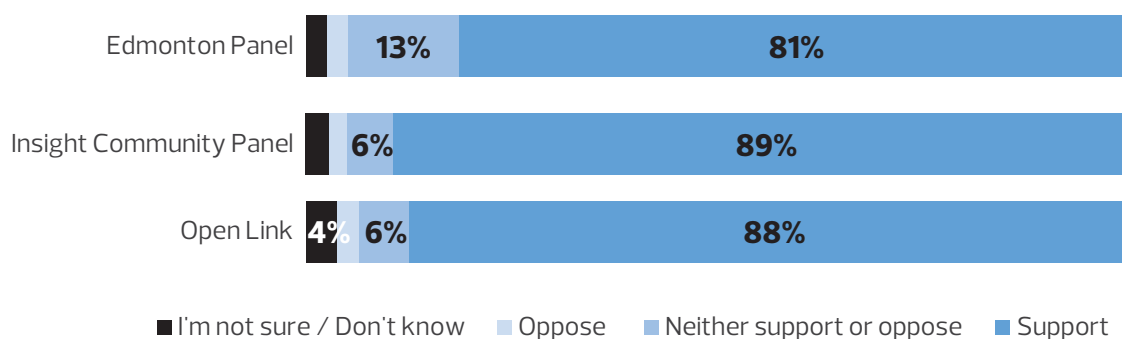
1. The purpose of the City of Edmonton Corporate Tree Management Policy is to ensure the City's Urban Forest is sustainable, maintained, protected and preserved. It also ensures there is a means of acquiring trees to grow the Urban Forest.

The current Corporate Tree Management Policy (Corporate Tree Policy C456B) covers:

- Growth of the City of Edmonton's Urban Forest through new plantings, replacement plantings and inventory management
- Preserving and protecting trees by ensuring work done on or near trees is done in accordance to preservation guidelines
- Recovery and redistribution of funds to replace tree canopy received from city tree losses and or damages
- Equitable compensation for the loss and/or damage to city trees
- Adoption of research and development, and best practices that align with the goals of Urban Forestry protection and preservation

Based on these principles, how much do you support the current Corporate Tree Management Policy (Corporate Tree Policy C456B):

Survey respondents support the current Corporate Tree Management Policy (Corporate Tree Policy C456B). Those who live in a mature area of the City are more likely to support the Corporate Tree Management Policy than those who don't.





2. In your opinion, what public areas should the City of Edmonton prioritize for Urban Forestry management, preservation and protection? Please rate each public area from lowest priority to highest priority.

The river valley natural areas including wetlands and grasslands, natural areas excluding the river valley, and naturalized areas were identified as the top three priorities for Urban Forestry management, preservation, and protection.

PRIORITY (4,5 RATINGS)	EDMONTON PANEL	INSIGHT COMMUNITY	OPEN LINK
River valley natural areas including wetlands and grasslands	77%	88%	89%
Natural areas excluding the river valley	73%	83%	85%
Naturalized areas	72%	79%	78%
Heritage trees	62%	70%	70%
Boulevard trees	56%	77%	72%
Treed buffer areas along major roadways	56%	70%	64%
Ornamental trees in open spaces	40%	49%	42%
Commemorative trees	36%	34%	29%

“ Trees allow us to create a better future for everybody”



3. What do you think the City of Edmonton should do to help preserve, protect and enhance the Urban Forest? Please select your top three choices.

Respondents think the City should plant more trees/ replace trees and remove sick/ diseased/ dying trees to help preserve, protect and enhance the Urban Forest. A few respondents added comments in the 'Other' category including fines for harming/removing trees, offering tree management services, increasing protection and regulations, and including tree planting in school curriculum.

	EDMONTON PANEL	INSIGHT COMMUNITY	OPEN LINK
Plant more trees/ replace trees	69%	81%	82%
Remove sick/ diseased/ dying trees	62%	76%	60%
Maintain and inspect trees	46%	65%	57%
Protect older/ mature trees	36%	55%	61%
Educate about tree care and preservation	26%	40%	51%
Require a permit for tree removal	23%	28%	38%
Other	1%	9%	12%
Don't know	4%	<1%	1%

“ Important to protect large trees as these have larger benefits”



Urban Forest Asset Management Plan

1. In your opinion, what natural areas should the City of Edmonton prioritize for Urban Forestry management, preservation and protection? Please rank from 1 to 4, with 1 being the highest priority.

Respondents think the City should prioritize the river valley and ravine natural areas for Urban Forestry management, preservation and protection.

The number of respondents for this question was 400 for Edmonton Panel, 1,881 for Insight Community Panel and 209 for the open link on the Project website.

	EDMONTON PANEL	INSIGHT COMMUNITY	OPEN LINK
River valley and ravine natural areas	53%	59%	60%
Naturalized areas	20%	8%	11%
Natural areas excluding the river valley	16%	16%	10%
Treed roadway buffers	11%	18%	18%

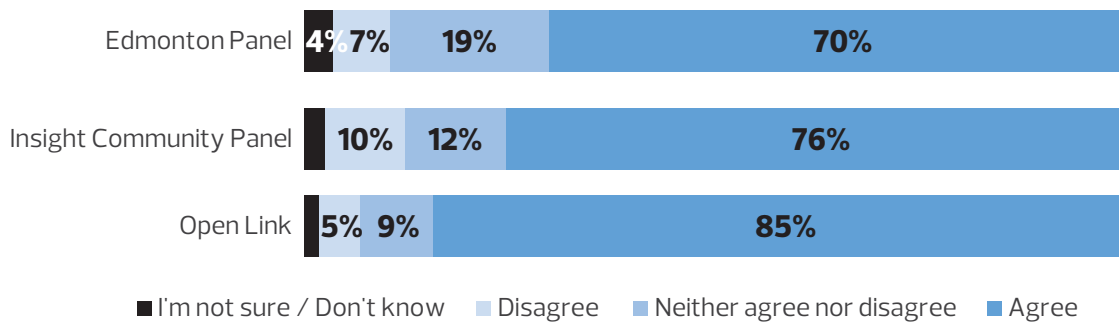
“ Keeping Edmonton “green” has a huge impact on quality of life in the city”



2. As you may know, trees in hardscape areas (those with man-made features such as concrete, bricks, and sidewalks) do not fare as well as those in natural areas. There are a variety of techniques to improve the soil conditions for tree health and growth. By investing in below-ground infrastructure in some areas (especially in hardscape areas) trees may be able to grow to a larger size and live longer.

How much do you agree or disagree that the City should invest more in improving tree-site conditions to improve the full growth potential for the trees in hardscape areas:

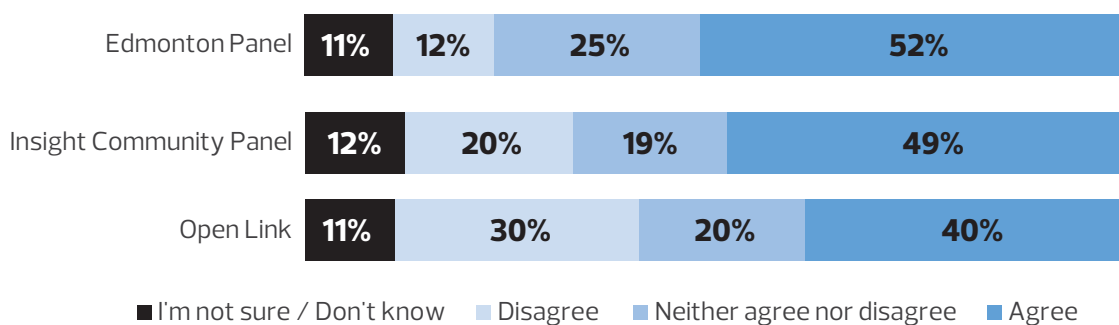
Survey respondents agree that the City should invest more in improving tree site conditions to improve the full growth potential for the trees in hardscape areas.





3. In your opinion do you agree or disagree that the City is doing enough to preserve and protect the City of Edmonton's Urban Forest?

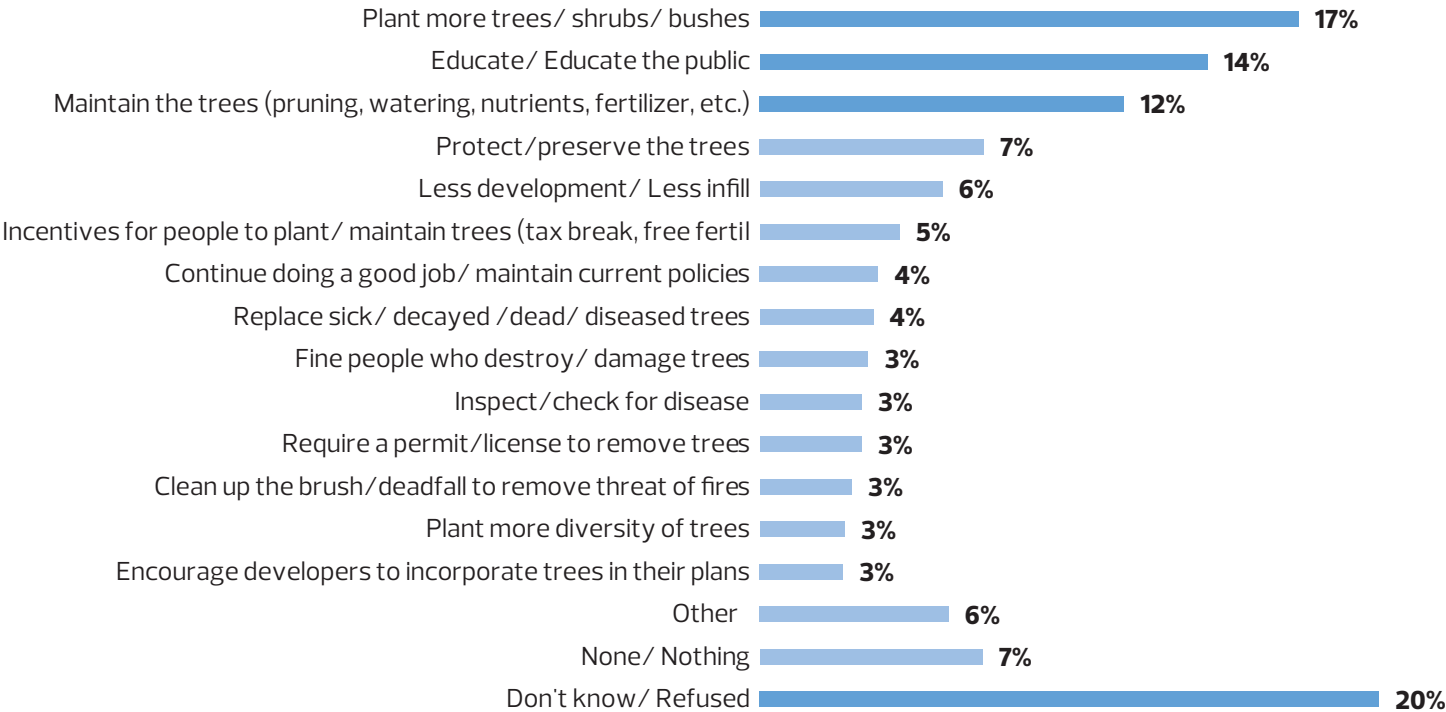
A small majority of respondents agree that the City is doing enough to preserve and protect the City of Edmonton's Urban Forest.





4. What more do you feel should be done to protect and preserve trees in Edmonton?

Survey respondents feel more trees/ shrubs/ bushes should be planted and the public should be educated to protect and preserve trees in Edmonton. The few responses to the 'Other' category were to be innovative or proactive with protection measures, such as by looking to examples from other cities. They also included reviewing snow clearing practices and the impact of road salt on boulevard trees.



“Protect the trees they give us clean air healthy urban forest ties to healthy community”



Public Participation in Urban Forestry Management

1. We can achieve positive results by providing interactive opportunities for the community to assist the City in improving the overall health of the Urban Forest. Please indicate all the ways you would be personally interested in assisting:

Respondents are personally interested in assisting the City in improving the overall health of the Urban Forest by planting trees on public land (through the Request to Plant program) and participating in a Root for Trees planting event. Responses from the 'Other' category notes included commemorative tree planting, as well as supporting residents with tree maintenance and planting on private property.

	EDMONTON PANEL	INSIGHT COMMUNITY	OPEN LINK
Plant trees on public land (through Request to Plant program)	49%	44%	59%
Participate in a Root for Trees planting event	46%	45%	62%
Participate in an education activity related to the City of Edmonton's urban forest	34%	30%	46%
Become a volunteer or steward to assist with urban forestry initiatives	28%	28%	47%
Donate money to be used for planting or protecting City trees/natural areas	26%	19%	23%
Purchase a commemorative tree	22%	19%	20%
Donate trees	20%	13%	19%
Donate money/sponsor Root for Trees events or initiatives	18%	18%	23%
Other	1%	6%	4%
None/ Nothing	5%	24%	12%
Don't know/ Refused	2%	–	–



2. How would you like to be informed of opportunities in assisting the City in improving and managing the overall health of the Urban Forest? Please select all that apply.

Respondents would like to be informed of opportunities assisting the City in improving and managing the overall health of the Urban Forest through the City of Edmonton website and social media. Ideas on sharing information from the 'Other' category include partnering with companies and not for profits or community leagues to get the message out, YouTube, and included with utility bills or property tax statements.

	EDMONTON PANEL	INSIGHT COMMUNITY	OPEN LINK
City of Edmonton website	58%	62%	63%
Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)	53%	52%	84%
Television	43%	33%	28%
Radio	33%	34%	41%
Mailouts	32%	27%	23%
Newspaper	28%	27%	19%
Pamphlets	20%	15%	11%
Public meeting	15%	15%	18%
Email	3%	–	–
Other	1%	13%	8%

“ Education does a good job at protecting our trees”



What's Next

Overall people who participated in the engagement supported the Policy updates with emphasis on providing more community education. The City was encouraged by participants to plant more trees, plant a diversity of species, and to expand naturalization efforts.

Feedback collected from this engagement will be used to advise administration on updates to be made to the Policy or guidelines associated with the Policy. In March 2020 a Council Report will be presented to City Council.

Public engagement will continue in February 2020 to develop the proposed Tree Bylaw, and in Spring 2020 to create the Urban Forest Asset Management Plan. Information regarding the 2020 engagement will be posted on the Project website **www.edmonton.ca/urbantrees**. The updated Policy will be presented to City Council in March 2020 and is open to the public.

Thank you for participating in sharing your voice and shaping our city.

For more information on City of Edmonton public engagement, please visit
www.edmonton.ca/publicengagement





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