



## TREES FOR THE FUTURE: Victoria's Urban Forest Master Plan

Victoria, the City of Gardens, lies nestled beneath a protective canopy of trees – our urban forest.

An urban forest includes all of a community's trees, shrubs and groundcover and the soils in which they grow. Parks, natural areas, boulevards, and residential gardens are examples of some of the many and diverse treed areas that make up the urban forest.

The City of Victoria manages over 40,000 trees within its parks and boulevards. Many of these trees are nearing the end of their life cycle. The City is keeping close tabs on its valuable tree inventory to prevent injury or property damage. At the same time, it needs to think about how best to invest in and ensure Victoria's urban forest is healthy, safe and abundant in the future.

### What is an Urban Forest Master Plan?

An Urban Forest Master Plan is a framework for action. It identifies the issues and values most important to the community, describes a vision for the future of an urban forest, and provides strategies to achieve that vision. Victoria's Urban Forest Master Plan will provide a "roadmap" to help the City of Victoria invest in and maintain its urban forest for the next 20 years and beyond.

Some key issues that the Plan will address include:

- Preparing for challenges facing Victoria's urban forest in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Balancing urban development with tree conservation
- Protecting significant treed areas and increasing biodiversity
- Creating strategies for communities to influence the treed character of their neighbourhoods
- Determining if the City of Victoria should be planting more trees, and if so, where and what kind

- Minimizing any negative impacts of existing and new trees
- Planning for the effects of climate change on Victoria's urban forest

Stewardship of Victoria's urban forest involves more than simply replacing one tree with another. Trees in cities require special care and planning as they are often constrained by streets and sidewalks, buildings, utilities, and the demands of vehicle and pedestrian traffic. The Plan for Victoria's urban forest will inform planning initiatives of developments, neighbourhoods, parks, and infrastructure.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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The City of Victoria has hired Gye and Associates Urban Forestry Consultants Ltd. to conduct a review of Victoria's urban forest over the coming months and to develop an Urban Forest Master Plan. A steering committee has been formed to help guide this process, and consists of representatives from community associations, the development and design communities, environmental organizations, and the City of Victoria.

### What are the benefits of Victoria's urban forest?

The urban forest plays an important role in a community. In addition to their beauty, trees provide peaceful places for citizens to enjoy. Trees protect people from the weather, provide privacy, buffer sounds, and create homes for wildlife. They also reduce energy bills by shading and cooling homes in summer. Trees have also been shown to make a community safer, with less crime and fewer traffic accidents. People often become personally attached to trees that they or loved ones have planted; and many trees are planted as living memorials.

Victoria's urban forest has significant economic value. Trees and shrubs help increase real estate values of homes and encourage customers to linger and shop at local businesses. Trees also reduce stormwater runoff and filter air and water pollutants. And, by shading roads and parking lots, well-placed trees can increase the life of asphalt.

The value of trees on City land is over \$80 million, and much more when the value of trees on private lands is considered.

### What are some challenges of Victoria's urban forest?

As much as we value trees, they can pose challenges. Leaves can clog storm drains, roots can crack and raise sidewalks or driveways, and sap can drip onto vehicles. Trees sometimes provide too much shade or block views. When building new homes or developments, trees may simply be in the way.

A lot of time and effort goes into maintaining trees on public lands. City crews remove fragile, unsafe trees and limbs, prune and water trees, maintain vehicle sightlines and pedestrian access, and protect trees from pests, disease and fire hazards. The age of the trees in Victoria's parks and boulevards is also a concern for the City of Victoria from a public safety and investment perspective.

Many of Victoria's trees are surrounded by asphalt roads and paved sidewalks, as well as overhead utilities. Rehabilitating and maintaining Victoria's water and sewer pipes without damaging or removing trees is a priority, and City arbourists assess and work alongside road crews to reduce potential impacts and the removal of trees wherever possible.

Global climate changes can cause drought, increased wind storms, and introduce new pests and diseases – all of which directly impact Victoria's urban forest. The species of trees that will best survive and thrive in the future may differ from those that have been planted in the past.

Victoria's Urban Forest Master Plan will address these challenges and provide strategies to ensure the urban forest is healthy, safe and abundant in the future.

### How can citizens provide input into the development of the Plan?

The public's input is key to developing Victoria's Urban Forest Master Plan. Public workshops in January will provide an opportunity for citizens to learn more about Victoria's urban forest and to share their vision for its future. A survey will be provided at the workshops as well as posted on the City of Victoria website. A draft plan will be ready for review in the spring and the public will be invited to provide feedback.

### For More Information

For more information on the development of Victoria's Urban Forest Master Plan, visit: [www.victoria.ca/urbanforest](http://www.victoria.ca/urbanforest)