

**TO:** MAYOR & COUNCILLORS  
**FROM:** DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE  
**SUBJECT:** **DRAFT URBAN FOREST STRATEGY**  
**PURPOSE:** To provide an update and seek Council's direction on the Draft Urban Forest Strategy.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- THAT** the Draft Urban Forest Strategy be approved;
- THAT** the general targets for tree canopy be approved; and
- THAT** staff be directed to proceed to the final round of community engagement.

## **1.0 POLICY SECTION**

The Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) aligns with the following Council adopted policies, plans and strategies: Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2016), Climate Action Framework (2019), An Environmentally Sensitive Areas Strategy (1992), and Tree Management Policy for Public Lands and the Burnaby Tree Bylaw (1989, 2007).

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

Since Burnaby declared a climate emergency in 2019, the City has been leading the way in bold and innovative climate action. Recognizing the essential role of green spaces in creating a sustainable and resilient future, Burnaby launched its first Climate Action Framework in 2020. Central to this framework is "Big Move 3: Healthy Ecosystems," which includes the creation of Burnaby's first Urban Forest Strategy (UFS).

The UFS is more than just a plan, it is a science-based, practical, and unifying vision designed to align efforts across City departments and foster a shared commitment to tree protection and management. Along with its clear implementation and monitoring within the Action Plan, the UFS establishes corporate processes for regularly reviewing and adapting actions based on new insights and evolving needs. This approach ensures the strategy remains both practical and livable, enabling the City to make steady progress toward a greener and more resilient future.

Urban forests are vital to Burnaby's identity, providing far-reaching benefits that improve life for everyone. Trees cool our neighbourhoods during extreme heat, enhance air and water quality, manage stormwater, and support biodiversity by creating habitats for wildlife. But their value extends beyond environmental impact. Trees create beautiful, welcoming spaces that promote mental and physical well-being, inspire community pride, and strengthen social connections.

By integrating tree protection and management into our long-term vision, the UFS supports Burnaby's ambitious goal of achieving city wide carbon neutrality by 2050 while reinforcing our collective commitment to a healthier, more vibrant future. It is a powerful example of how a collaborative and adaptive strategy can help us achieve the bold climate goals our City has set, all while deepening the community's connection to nature.

The UFS is being developed through a structured five-phase process, aligning with the City's successful approach to major initiatives like the Official Community Plan. Since its launch in 2021, significant progress has been made:

**Phase 1: State of the Urban Forest (Completed)**

Delivered to Council on September 25, 2023, this report provided a comprehensive snapshot of Burnaby's urban forest, laying the foundation for the Strategy.

**Phase 2: Visioning (Completed)**

Through engagement with the community and Council, this phase helped shape the Strategy's future priorities. These key directions align with Metro Vancouver's 40% regional canopy target, strengthen private tree regulations, and promote biodiversity.

**Phase 3: Drafting the Strategy (Completed)**

Input from the community, staff, and Council informed the development of a robust and actionable draft Strategy, designed to achieve the City's ambitious goals.

**Phase 4: Confirming (In Progress)**

The Draft Urban Forest Strategy (**Attachment #1**) is undergoing review by Council and the community during a final round of engagement. This phase ensures that the Strategy's bold goals, clear objectives, and impactful actions are fully supported as Burnaby works to secure a thriving urban forest for future generations.

**3.0 GENERAL INFORMATION**

The City of Burnaby's urban forest is a defining feature of our green infrastructure, providing essential environmental and social benefits. From cooling neighbourhoods and improving air quality to enhancing biodiversity and reducing stormwater runoff, our trees and green spaces play a vital role in creating a sustainable and healthy future.

The UFS outlines a bold, 15-year Action Plan to grow Burnaby's tree canopy cover from 32% in 2022 to 40% by 2040. This living document is designed to evolve alongside our

community, with staff collaboration, monitoring, and regular updates ensuring we stay on track toward this shared vision.

Achieving the ambitious 40% canopy cover target will require significant effort. Burnaby will need to add nearly 700 hectares of tree canopy, while addressing challenges such as urban development, natural tree loss, and storm damage. The UFS emphasizes retaining mature trees, strategically planting new ones, and updating policies to support sustainable urban forestry practices.

To reach the canopy target, Burnaby must plant between 8,000 and 18,000 trees annually, depending on tree mortality rates. Public and private lands will both play a critical role in this effort, with tree planting targets guided by land-use considerations outlined in the UFS.

Table 6-1 (page 54 of Attachment #1) provides detailed modelling, using 2022 canopy data, plantable area availability, and tree growth projections. These targets are aligned with development goals in the City’s Official Community Plan, ensuring urban forest expansion supports Burnaby’s broader planning objectives.

The UFS recommends a longer-term canopy target for 2075, recognizing that significant investments and sustained efforts will be required. Regular reviews will allow the City to adjust planting targets and strategies as circumstances evolve.

The Urban Forest Strategy is built on five core goals:

- Plan: Integrate the urban forest into citywide planning efforts.
- Grow: Expand the tree canopy across public and private spaces.
- Protect: Strengthen policies to preserve existing trees.
- Manage: Ensure long-term health and sustainability through proactive care.
- Engage: Foster community involvement and stewardship.

These goals are supported by 14 strategies and 68 actionable steps, including:

- Quick Starts: Immediate actions aligned with ongoing projects, such as the Official Community Plan update.
- Big Moves: Essential actions requiring significant resources and coordination, like expanding tree planting programs, embedding natural assets into planning, and fostering stewardship.

With Council’s guidance, staff will seek additional community input in winter 2025 before presenting the final Strategy in spring. Together, we can ensure Burnaby’s urban forest thrives, securing its role as a lasting asset for generations to come.

**4.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Clear communication and meaningful engagement are essential to building community support for the UFS. Feedback received so far has shown strong public endorsement for the Strategy, and we are committed to maintaining this positive dialogue.

To continue these efforts, the City will host another round of public engagement in late January and early February. During this time, the Draft Strategy and an online survey will be made available on the City’s website through the UFS project webpage. The survey will collect feedback on various aspects of the Strategy, including its goal areas, proposed strategies, Quick Starts, Big Moves, and the implementation and monitoring within the Action Plan. Questions will focus on assessing community support for these elements, inviting suggestions for further improvement, and ensuring no opportunities are overlooked.

Beyond the public survey, the City will conduct targeted outreach to Burnaby’s stewardship community and Host Nations, ensuring that these key community partners are actively involved in the process. Additional presentations will be made to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee and the Environment Committee, fostering broader engagement and incorporating diverse perspectives into the final UFS.

**5.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This report has no immediate financial impact and funding for this project was provided through the 2023-2027 Financial Plan. As we move forward, funding for implementing the approved Quick Starts and other actions will be identified and requested by the relevant City departments as part of rolling out the actions outlined in the Urban Forest Strategy to achieve its strategic goals.

Respectfully submitted,

Carmen Gonzalez, Deputy General Manager Parks, Recreation and Culture

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment #1 – Draft Burnaby Urban Forest Strategy

Attachment #2 – Presentation

**REPORT CONTRIBUTORS**

This report was prepared by Melinda Yong, Park Planner, PRC Policy Planning; and reviewed by John Musil, Manager, PRC Policy Planning; Heather Edwards, Manager, PRC Planning Design and Development; and Andre Isakov, Director PRC Planning, Steve Bruneau, Director Parks Operations and Erica Lay, Manager Climate Action and Energy.