

Action Sandy Hill

Proposed Motion

26-06-2023

Motion to request the City of Ottawa implement a proactive, city-initiated tree planting program on city-owned land in front of residential properties.

Whereas the City of Ottawa has declared a climate emergency and has adopted an ambitious Climate Change Master Plan¹ that recognizes the value of green infrastructure in mitigating the effects of climate change;

Whereas trees are known to capture carbon dioxide, improve air quality, provide shade to mitigate the urban heat island effect, reduce storm water run off, and provide habitats for wildlife;

Whereas the City of Ottawa acknowledges that “scientific and technical literature shows that trees and green spaces in urban areas provide direct and indirect benefits to human health, and can also help improve indicators of economic and social health and well-being”²;

Whereas urban street trees have aesthetic value that contribute to fulfilling the City of Ottawa’s commitment in its 2022 Year of the Garden Proclamation to be a “Garden Friendly City”;

Whereas the City of Ottawa owns frontage on private and commercial properties for installation of public infrastructure such as lamp posts, hydro poles, fire hydrants, traffic signs and street trees, which play an essential role in providing a safe and healthy community;

Whereas the City of Ottawa currently relies on private property owners to request tree plantings on the public, city-owned frontage of their homes and rental properties through the Trees in Trust program,³ a program that Action Sandy Hill has promoted at community events;

Whereas according to research by CBC/Radio-Canada, Sandy Hill and Lowertown have less vegetation than 94 per cent of Ottawa neighbourhoods and experience more heat than 88 per cent of those neighbourhoods⁴, while continuing to suffer tree canopy loss and urban heating;

Whereas Sandy Hill and other urban Ottawa neighbourhoods have a high percentage of rental properties whose non-resident landlords are difficult for community volunteers to locate in order to encourage them to request a tree for their street frontage;

¹ <https://ottawa.ca/en/living-ottawa/environment-conservation-and-climate/climate-change-and-energy#section-1184888c-9132-49a2-aa22-f32c705751c3> (accessed June 1, 2023)

² <https://ottawa.ca/en/living-ottawa/environment-conservation-and-climate/trees-and-urban-forests/ottawas-urban-forest-management-plan#section-43011856-45f6-4c1a-b4b4-86689e0f51ee> (quotation on p. 25) (accessed June 1, 2023)

³ <https://ottawa.ca/en/living-ottawa/environment-conservation-and-climate/public-spaces-and-environmental-programs/tree-planting/trees-trust> (accessed June 1, 2023)

⁴ <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/info/2022/07/ilots-chaleur-villes-inegalites-injustice-changements-climatiques/en>

Whereas the City of Ottawa’s new Official Plan proposes increasing the urban tree canopy target from the current 25 per cent to 40 per cent at a neighbourhood scale⁵;

Whereas the Mayor of the City of Ottawa has promised to double the annual tree planting goal by increasing the number of trees planted each year to 250,000 as part of his environmental platform⁶;

Whereas the City of Ottawa planted just 251 trees through the Trees in Trust program in the year since the *derecho* of May 20, 2022⁷;

Whereas the City of Ottawa’s tree planting targets are unlikely to be achieved with the current private-initiative model for planting street trees and would be better supported through a proactive, “city-initiative” tree planting model as practiced in other municipalities like the City of Toronto⁸;

Whereas such a proactive, city-initiative model recognizes that urban street trees are a public good and not merely a private amenity;

Therefore:

Be it resolved that the Chair of Action Sandy Hill write to the Mayor (copied to all Councillors) and attach this motion, urging the City of Ottawa to adopt and fund a proactive tree planting program whereby the City may initiate and authorize planting of street trees on the city-owned frontage of private properties without requiring a prior request from the property owner through the Trees in Trust program;

Be it further resolved that this proactive tree planting program address ongoing loss of mature canopy trees through timely replacement of dead trees on the city-owned frontage of private properties within no more than 24 months, as well as, where space allows, planting of succession trees near mature trees that are approaching the end of their lifespans.

⁵ <https://engage.ottawa.ca/8204/widgets/36458/documents/44128> (accessed June 1, 2023)

⁶ <https://marksutcliffe.ca/environment> (accessed June 1, 2023)

⁷ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/may-2022-ottawa-derecho-anniversary-tree-canopy-1.6845107> (accessed June 1, 2023)

⁸ <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/water-environment/trees/tree-planting/> (accessed June 1, 2023)