Courtenay’s Urban Forest Strategy
Public Workshop, City of Courtenay
June 25-26, 2018
Who is in the room?
Courtenay’s Urban Forest Strategy will...

... establish a shared vision for the future of the community’s urban forest with principles, objectives and measurable targets.

- Trees in Parks + Open Spaces
- Trees on Residential and Commercial Property
- Green Infrastructure
- Trees on Streets
- Forest + Agricultural Buffers

Parks + Natural Areas  |  Residential Neighbourhoods  |  Urban Centres + Institutions  |  Industrial and Agricultural
Why develop an urban forest strategy?
What the community has said before...

Q1: In general, I support the City of Courtenay strengthening tree management and protection policies and regulatory tools.

Answered: 719  Biloped: 9

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Unsure

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

DIAMOND HEAD
What the community has said before...

Q2 In general, I support the City of Courtenay investing more resources into tree management and protection. (This could include a modest increase to staff hours or the creation of a heritage tree list or more public education resources as examples)

Answered: 712  Skipped: 7
What the community has said before...

Q3 In general, I support a strong policy of keeping existing trees where safe to do so.
Where are we up to in the process?

- Review corporate policies and initiatives
- Inventory the resource
- Engage stakeholders in the process
URBAN FOREST STATUS
Canopy status and trends

- 35% canopy cover

- Highest canopy in parks and undeveloped forest areas

- Lowest canopy in agricultural areas, downtown, commercial and new developments
i-Tree ecosystem services estimates

Courtenay

Ecosystem services reported by iTree Canopy

- **Carbon Sequestration**
  - $638,255/yr

- **Storage**
  - $16,092,397

- **Air Pollution Removal**
  - $47,625/yr
Native habitat and biodiversity
URBAN FOREST TRENDS
Canopy in Courtenay is in line with other nearby municipalities with similar population, density and land use. Comox has lower canopy cover but a large portion of its land use is the Comox Valley Airport.

Courtenay, like Campbell River has large areas of privately held forested land that are likely to develop at some time in the future.

If these lands were completely denuded, Courtenay’s canopy cover would drop significantly.

The urban forest strategy is an opportunity to consider how to manage this change thoughtfully to ensure that the City maintains an urban forest legacy for the future.

Over the last 20 years, Courtenay has been gradually losing canopy cover.
• Putting things in perspective, canopy cover decrease is a general trend for cities in BC and North America
In Courtenay, canopy has historically been lost to a range of natural and human disturbances.

Since 1996, canopy has been lost to development, but areas have also seen forest growth over time (see bottom example).
Canopy has also grown where fields reforested (naturally or with human intervention), where trees were planted, in backyards, on streets and in parks, as well as in agricultural areas.
Knowing all of that about Courtenay’s urban forest, how can the strategy shape its future?
Urban forest strategies generally focus on those five major themes:

- Protection
- Planting
- Management
- Stewardship
- Learning and adaptation
In our work to develop the UFS, we review best practices to manage the urban forest, and assess what kind of tools can help manage Courtenay’s urban forest given its local context.

- For example, most municipalities of Courtenay’s size and larger have a private tree protection bylaw as one of their tools.
We also review the major threats and vulnerabilities of Courtenay’s urban forest. For example, what are the potential impacts of climate change on the urban forest? Are there pests or diseases that might threaten some tree species? Etc.
Finally, we look throughout the City to assess opportunities to grow the urban forest: are there certain parks, streets or land uses that could support more trees? For example, are there opportunities to plant more trees on Duncan street?
The Downtown Playbook process highlighted the community's desire to see a greener downtown.
Perhaps it could one day look like this!
THERE IS A LOT WE CAN DO...
BUT WHAT IS COURTENAY’S VISION?
Our plan for the workshop

- Visioning: what’s special about Courtenay and its urban forest?
- Mapping: opportunities and priorities for improvement
- Project’s next steps & other opportunities for engagement
Today’s workshop – visioning

1. Thinking of your own story...
   a) What makes Courtenay a special place to live? On yellow post it notes
   b) How does the urban forest contribute to what is special about Courtenay? On green post it notes
   c) Group similar ideas and choose a word that describes the theme of that group
   d) Report out on the main themes that were discussed at your table

   a) What makes Courtenay a special place to live? On yellow post it notes and place them on the top of your paper (5 mins)
   b) How does the urban forest contribute to what is special about Courtenay? On green post it notes (10 mins)
   c) On your paper, group similar ideas and choose a word that describes the theme of that group (10 mins)
   d) Report out the groups’ findings (themes with some descriptive words) (10 mins)
1. Opportunities & priorities mapping

Work in table groups – on the map:

a) On the map, where are urban forest places you value? Use the green dots.

b) On the map, where are the urban forest places you think could be improved? Use the yellow dots.

2. Priority actions

Now, thinking about what you value and what could be improved, consider the themes on the side of your map.

a) What are some actions you think the UFS should take? List them under each theme:
   Protection
   Planting
   Management
   Stewardship
   Learning and adaptation

b) Move around the room, looking at the lists on each table. Vote on the 5 actions you think are most important for the strategy to address.
WHAT’S NEXT?
More opportunities for engagement

- Online story map
- Online survey
- Public open house in Fall

www.Courtenay.ca/urbanforest
Courtenay's Urban Forest

We want to know about your favourite places and ideas for urban forests in the city.
Urban Forest Status and Trends

A common metric, used for measuring urban forests and their change over time or across cities, is the percent canopy covering the land when viewed from above. The map in the left pane shows canopy cover per block group. Using the map, click on the blocks to find out the percent canopy cover of different neighborhoods in the city and use the geoglass to see what those areas look like on the air photo underneath.

Summer future forest (2035 A.D.):
- Canopy cover (as of 2035) is 1.5x the original 2018 canopy levels.
- Much of the forest is projected to be found in the following areas:
  - Mixed city/town and rural environments

Canopy cover is subject to change over time depending on the rate that trees grow or die. As trees are replaced, canopy loss also occurs primarily due to removal of aging or unhealthy trees, or due to development. Other factors include fire, flood, wind, and storm events or other natural or man-made factors. Canopy loss and change may increase the shading or extent of deforestation events in Courtney’s Forests.
Next steps in the strategy process

- Draft the vision and objectives
- Report on the status and trends in Courtenay’s urban forest
- Report on key opportunities to improve management practices and build resilience
- Develop an action plan with 5-year implementation time steps
- **Present draft to Council, Senior Staff and public**
Thank you!