



The Corporation of the Town of Tecumseh

Community & Recreation Services

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Beth Gignac, Director Community & Recreation Services

Date to Council: Tuesday, April 14, 2026

Report Number: CRS-2026-04

Subject: Draft Urban Forestry and Naturalization Management Plan

Recommendations

It is recommended:

That CRS-2026-04 Draft Urban Forestry and Naturalization Management Plan be received.

Background

Previous Council reports on the Urban Forestry and Naturalization Management Plan (UFNMP) are as follows:

- [PWES-2024-38](#) "Amendment to the 2024-2028 PWES Capital Works Plan, Urban Forestry and Naturalization Management Plan" which was received by Council at the July 23, 2024 Regular Meeting of Council (Motion: RCM-174-24);
- At the November 26, 2024 Regular Meeting of Council, the Urban Forestry and Naturalization Management Plan (UFNMP) Award of Consulting Services was awarded to Dillon Consulting Ltd in the amount of \$197,696.50 excluding HST as per [By-Law 2024-102](#);
- [CRS-2025-19](#) "Urban Forestry and Naturalization Management Plan Status Update" which was received by Council at the December 9, 2025 Regular Meeting of Council (Motion: RCM-299-25).

This latter report indicated that the Draft UFNMP was nearing 75% completion and that the final UFNMP would be provided to Council in early Q2 2026.

Comments

The UFNMP is an inaugural plan intended to provide oversight and guidance on the management, maintenance and development of Tecumseh's urban forest and naturalized areas with an exclusive focus on Town-owned land. These assets are referred to as "green infrastructure" and form part of the Town's Asset Management Program and Risk Assessment frameworks.

The UFNMP is accompanied by a Public Tree By-Law and a Tree Canopy and Vegetation Policy and other Appendices which reference technical standards and preferred native species.

The UFNMP does not address or impact green infrastructure on privately owned land. As such, the context and resulting guidelines, implementation recommendations, Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy and Public Tree By-Law are exclusively focused on the green infrastructure on Town-owned land which includes parks, boulevards, road right of ways and storm water pond areas.

Further, the UFNMP does not restrict normal farm practices as defined by the *Farming and Food Production Protection Act*.

The UFNMP is intended to provide comprehensive strategic guidance to help the Town effectively manage its green infrastructure over the next two decades. The Plan reviewed and assessed the Town's current management of its urban forest and is making recommendations for effective management based on a review of municipal best practices and precedents and input from key stakeholders.

This report provides an overview of the following aspects of the UFNMP:

- Context for Urban Forest Management
- Vision, Stewardship Pillars, Themes
- Recommendations and Guidance
- Public Tree By-Law
- Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy

In advance of the final version of the UFNMP being presented to Council in early Q2 2026, a Draft of the UFNMP is being provided to Council as an attachment to this report. This version will be available for public review on the Town's website, and a Public Information Centre has been scheduled for Tuesday, April 21 from 4:00 p.m. –

8:00 p.m. in the Horwood Room, Tecumseh Arena 12021 McNorton Street, Tecumseh, Ontario. All comments must be received by 4:30 p.m. on May 1, 2026.

Context for Urban Forest Management

The Town has a total land area of 95.3km² that includes parts of six sub watersheds and borders five other municipalities. The Town is in the Carolinian forest zone and includes a variety of natural heritage features such as forest and swamp vegetation.

The Town has a tree canopy cover area of approximately 11.56km². This includes 9,424 public trees of various species, sizes and ages located on Town boulevards, right of ways and parks. There are also trees located on residential properties and in public and privately owned hedgerows and forests. Since the number and types of trees on privately owned properties have not been inventoried, the total canopy coverage has been estimated based on a visual review of vegetation distribution available on public maps of the community.

Trees across the community are considered part of the urban forest. This includes individual trees and wooded natural areas. Trees are living assets that form part of the Town green infrastructure which is critical to supporting community health and well-being, while also contributing to local climate resilience and biodiversity by filtering air pollution, providing shade, reducing energy use and providing access to trees and nature for passive recreation to support physical and mental health.

The success of Tecumseh's environment is a collective endeavour. While the UFNMP addresses public green infrastructure, the entire urban forest relies on the actions of residents, neighbours and organizations where everyone is working together in acknowledgement that natural resources enhance the quality of life and that protection of natural heritage is a shared responsibility.

As in most of southern Ontario, where land was largely cleared for agricultural use over hundreds of years, few wooded natural areas, wetlands and grasslands remain as part of the landscape in Tecumseh.

As a result, Tecumseh has a total tree canopy cover of 12.1% with approximately 8.8% of that cover owned and managed by the Town. Most of the cover is located on lands outside of the Town's direct management responsibility (approximately 88%). This means that most of the total tree canopy is on private property and not on Town-owned land.

The following tables illustrate Canopy Cover Distribution by Ward and by Land Use Type.

Table 1 Canopy Cover Distribution by Ward (in square kilometres)

WARD	Total Area of Ward	Tree Canopy Cover Area	Canopy Coverage in Ward (%)
1	2.24	0.49	21.92%
2	4.11	0.96	23.28%
3	2.86	0.34	11.73%
4	4.35	0.51	11.82%
5	80.61	9.19	11.4%
Total	94.17	11.49	

Table 2 Canopy Cover Distribution by Land Use Type (in square kilometres)

Land Use Type	Total Area of Land Use Type	Tree Canopy Cover Area	Canopy Coverage in Land Use (%)
Agricultural	64.14	4.19	6.62%
Business, Commercial, Industrial, Institutional	9.69	0.85	8.80%
Natural Environment and Parks	5.38	3.71	69.06%
Residential	15.45	2.80	18.14%
Utility and Transportation Corridor	1.23	0.18	9.27%
Total	94.17	11.49	

Tecumseh's woodland cover and overall tree canopy are considered average among comparators in Essex County; however, it is lower than other municipalities in southern Ontario which report coverage between 15% and 30%. The urban forestry recommended for municipal canopy cover is 30% or greater on municipally-owned property. This percentage is based on current best practice in Ontario municipalities.

Due to the land use distribution in Tecumseh, it is not appropriate to use canopy cover as the single metric for the analysis of the urban forest. It is recommended that the primary metric will be the total number of trees planted, per annum (estimated at 500 trees per year) with a corresponding annual analysis of the impacts of those plantings on the canopy cover.

Summary of Relevant Policies

Notwithstanding the fact that approximately 88% of the total canopy cover is located on lands outside of the Town's direct management responsibility, the Town is required to make decisions that are consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 ("PPS"), and conform to the County of Essex Official Plan ("County OP") and the Tecumseh Official Plan ("Tecumseh OP"). These documents, to varying degrees, govern land use, natural heritage and urban forest infrastructure. A summary of the relevant policies is provided below, with more specific policy references to the Tecumseh OP are in the UFNMP.

Provincial Policy Statement, 2024

The Provincial Planning Statement ("PPS") establishes that municipalities shall plan to reduce GHG emissions and prepare for the impacts of a changing climate through approaches that promote green infrastructure. Natural heritage features, parklands, street trees and urban forests are all identified in the PPS as components of green infrastructure.

County of Essex Official Plan

One of the principles of the County Official Plan ("County OP") is to ensure climate resilience and climate change adaptation through, among other things, ensuring actions are taken to protect people and property from higher temperatures. The County OP sets out that local Municipalities shall integrate pedestrian and cycling facilities as part of the transportation system, in conjunction with boulevard tree planting providing shade to reduce the urban heat island. As a goal under the Natural Heritage System policies, it establishes that natural features shall be protected and encourage private individuals and businesses to support and to participate in tree planting, restoration and stewardship programs and other opportunities to enhance the County's natural heritage system. The County OP also states, under Section 10.B Air Quality, that the County, working collaboratively with local Municipalities, shall establish county-wide standards for tree planting in urban neighbourhoods, along streets and boulevards, in parks and

open space areas, and in the rural countryside, to improve air quality and to help communities adapt to a changing climate.

Tecumseh Official Plan

The Tecumseh OP includes goals and policies that seek to protect and enhance the natural heritage system and tree assets, which contribute to an improved quality of life in the Town. Climate change mitigation policies encourage the enhancement of the natural heritage system and promotes the protection and expansion of the urban forest, including street trees, through tree planting as part of new development and on municipally-owned land. A similar policy promotes tree planting in new and existing development as one of the measures to adapt to the impacts of climate change. This is reinforced through urban design policies that require new development and construction of public works to maintain and enhance streetscapes by providing, among other things, shade through natural means to provide comfortable outdoor environments. Finally, trees and green infrastructure are encouraged to balance the needs and priorities of the various users within the municipal road right-of-way to achieve complete streets. More detailed policies requiring enhanced tree plantings and canopies towards the creation of “green streets” are included in the Tecumseh Hamlet Secondary Plan section of the Tecumseh OP.

Vision, Stewardship Pillars and Themes

The UFNMP proposes the following Vision, Stewardship Pillars and Themes:

Vision

Tecumseh nurtures a resilient and flourishing urban forest by recognizing trees and natural areas as shared community assets, guiding decisions with knowledge and adaptability, and strengthening the connection between people and the natural environment that enriches their lives.

Stewardship Pillars

- **Shared Stewardship**
We value the urban forest as a collective resource, cared for by residents, staff, and partners who help sustain Tecumseh’s natural heritage.
- **Green Infrastructure Excellence**
We treat trees and natural areas as essential infrastructure that supports ecological resilience, climate adaptation, and community well-being.
- **Knowledge-Driven**
We make informed decisions grounded in strong data and flexible approaches that respond to changing environmental conditions.

- **Protect and Grow the Canopy**
We safeguard existing trees and plant wisely for the future, ensuring the right tree thrives in the right place to strengthen long-term canopy cover.
- **Community Connection**
We cultivate meaningful connections between people and nature, enhancing public spaces, cultural identity, and a sense of belonging.

Themes

Each theme has corresponding goals, a high-level summary of which can be found in the UNFMP. The themes and goals are summarized below.

- Urban Forest Management and Maintenance
 - Transitioning from reactive to proactive management and maintenance
- Urban Forest Establishment and Enhancement
 - Improving restoration of natural areas, tree establishment and associated practices
- Urban Forest Protection
 - Strengthen Town policies and establish technical protections and standards
- Outreach Stewardship and Partnerships
 - Develop and implement knowledge sharing opportunities with the community to help manage the urban forest and local natural heritage

Recommendations and Guidance

All recommendations are aligned to a specific theme and are designated as either Short-term (1-5 years), Medium-term (6-10 years) or Long-term (10+ years).

Recommendations are intended to provide guidance and annual review, consideration and resource assessment by Council over the period of the UFNMP.

Key Short-term recommendations are summarized in the following table:

Table 3 Short-term Recommendations (1-5 years)

Theme: Urban Forest Management and Maintenance	
Recommendation	Guidance
Create a new full-time “Town Arborist” position	Position to focus on the provision of:

	- ongoing tree inspections and condition monitoring for risk management - inventory and asset management - young tree structural pruning and other maintenance matters
Enhance maintenance of newly planted Town trees	Ensure adequate allocation of post-planting maintenance resources (e.g. watering)
Integrate urban forestry assets with the Town's Asset Management Program	Expedite integration of existing geo-spatial tree inventory with Cityworks Establish procedures for "near real time" updating of tree inventory database as service requests are received and work orders are generated/closed
Expand and update the urban forest asset inventory	Increase the frequency of inventory updates Implement LiDAR scanning to improve accuracy of inventory
Undertake proactive tree risk management and monitoring in natural areas	Undertake an annual Level 1 Limited (walk through) inspection of trees in natural areas and risk mitigation as required
Enhance urban forest pest, disease and invasive species management	Improve training for early detection Establish emergency response protocols
Theme: Urban Forest Establishment and Enhancement	
Recommendation	Guidance
Approve and implement the new tree planting/establishment specifications and standard design details for Town street trees, park trees and naturalization projects	Implement the tree planting/establishment specifications and standard design details for Town street trees, park trees and naturalization projects that are included in the UFNMP
Approve and implement the new monitoring and maintenance standards for naturalization plantings	Implement monitoring and maintenance guidelines for naturalization (ecological restoration) planting projects including but not limited to survival/performance surveying, watering, weeding, mulching, thinning and pruning, as necessary

Approve and implement the new tree replacement guidelines and associated protocol	Implement the tree replacement as outlined in the new Public Tree By-Law
Approve and implement the new Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy	Implement a management process for the protection, maintenance and replacement and restoration of Town trees, woodlands and natural areas as per the Policy
Prioritize tree planting in naturalization areas	Identify priority areas for naturalization based on technical and field assessments that prioritize ecological connectivity
Theme: Urban Forest Protection	
Recommendation	Guidance
Approve and implement the new Public Tree By-Law	Implement the new Public Tree By-Law and conduct an education campaign for Town staff, external partners and residents
Implement new tree protection specifications and standards	Implement the tree specifications and standards that are detailed in Appendix E of the UFNMP
Improve the current planning process for capital projects and Building Permit reviews to provide more opportunities for protecting and enhancing the urban forest	Develop criteria for review (rejection or approval) of proposed tree injury and/or removal application for Town-owned trees through Building Permits, curb-cut driveway access requests and other applicable permit processes or externally initiated requests that aligns with the new Public Tree By-Law Develop a “Tree Declaration” procedure for all Planning Act and non-Planning Act applications to facilitate screening for potential impact on Town-owned trees.
Improve on-site tree monitoring	Develop internal procedures for enhanced on-site monitoring of approved tree protection plans for Town-owned trees affected by construction
Theme: Outreach Stewardship and Partnerships	
Recommendation	Guidance

Formalize existing and develop new community programs	Expand Earth Day (or other) planting partnerships and expand locations
Develop new urban forest and naturalization education programs	Provide educational programming in collaboration with partners and in conjunction with Town or community-led events
Support and develop urban forest and naturalization partnerships	Actively seek out partnerships either local, regional, provincial or national to advance knowledge and implementation of the UFNMP
Pursue funding opportunities to support the initiative of the UFNMP	Actively seek funding/grants to advance the recommendations of the UFNMP

Public Tree By-Law

The Public Tree By-Law 2026-021 specifically references the multiple sections of the Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001 that pertain to the manner in which the municipality will protect and enhance the tree canopy and vegetation cover. The opening section of the By-Law references each relevant section of the Municipal Act, accordingly.

Hence, the Public Tree By-Law applies to all Town trees on any Town-owned land in Tecumseh. Town-owned land, or municipal land, is defined as any land owned by, or leased by, or leased to, or controlled by or vested by the Corporation of the Town of Tecumseh.

The Public Tree By-Law does not apply to any trees on private property in Tecumseh.

The following summarizes Prohibitions, Exemptions and Permits. Tree Compensation (Schedule A) and Tree Protection Zones (Schedule B) provide the specific details mentioned in these sections.

3.2 Prohibitions

a) Except as provided in this By-Law, no Person shall, without a valid Permit issued under this By-Law, Injure or Destroy, or cause, direct, or permit, the Injury or Destruction of any Town Tree.

b) No Person shall perform any Work within a Town Tree's Tree Protection Zone without a valid Permit under this By-Law.

c) No Person shall, without the written consent of the Director:

(i) damage, deface, disable, relocate, or otherwise interfere with the condition or function of any Tree Protection Measure associated with a Town tree;

- (ii) plant a Tree on Municipal Property;
- (iii) deface, tack, paste or otherwise attach an object or thing to, around, or through a Town Tree; or
- (iv) remove any woody debris that has fallen or has been cut down by the Town in a natural area on Municipal Property.

Section 5 Exemptions

As outlined in this section, there are a range of Statutory Exemptions to ensure alignment with the following Acts:

- Subsection 135 (12) of the Municipal Act
- The Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994
- The Surveyors Act
- Sections 41, 51, 53 and 70.2 of the Planning Act
- Section 2 of the Electricity Act
- The Aggregate Resources Act

Further, the By-Law does not regulate activities that may result in Injury or Destruction of Town Trees undertaken to install or maintain energy, utilities or communications lines as determined by various agreements or memoranda of understanding between external service providers and the Town.

Section 6 Permit Application, Issuance, Conditions and Refusal or Revocation

This section provides the process, terms and conditions for permit applications by any individual and/or organization that seeks to injure or destroy a Town tree or to undertake work within a Tree Protection Zone that might cause injury or damage to a Town tree.

Essentially, these requests must be made in writing for consideration as per the terms outlined in this section of the By-Law. Should approval for an exemption be granted, compensation rates would be applied as per the Tree Compensation Fees.

Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy

The purpose of the policy is to acknowledge and establish, at a high level, the ways in which the Town will undertake and support activities to help ensure the protection, maintenance, enhancement and stewardship of the tree canopy and natural vegetation cover on Town-owned land.

Town-owned land, or municipal land, is defined as any land owned by, or leased by, or leased to, or controlled by or vested by the Corporation of the Town of Tecumseh.

This policy ensures that the Town is in compliance with Section 270 of the Municipal Act, 2001 which mandates that municipalities adopt and maintain a policy detailing the way the municipality will protect and enhance tree canopy and natural vegetation.

The policy has four (4) categories that are to be considered in an integrated manner to provide overarching guidance for all activities related to trees and natural vegetation on Town-owned property:

1. Protect – which supports the preservation of trees and natural vegetation and ensures that protection standards and specifications are aligned with applicable best practices as articulated in the UFNMP.
2. Maintain – which ensures that the green infrastructure is integrated into the Town's Asset Management Program and that an inventory of all trees and natural vegetation areas remains current for the purposes of proactive maintenance practices to keep the assets resilient and in good condition.
3. Establish and Enhance – which supports proper tree establishment to the Town's standards and specifications as articulated in the UFNMP while also enhancing local biodiversity by using native species and excluding invasive species in all Town plantings.
4. Engage and Collaborate – which supports and advances community knowledge and stewardship through ongoing outreach, education and partnerships.

It is important to note that nothing in this policy is intended to restrict normal farm practices as defined by the Farming and Food Production Protection Act nor would it take precedence over any by-laws, resolutions, plans or agreements of the Municipality or other applicable legislation.

The draft Policy (see Attachment 1) provides more specific details and alignment to related documents and other Town policies or plans.

Next Steps

As noted, the draft UFNMP, new Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy and Public Tree By-Law will be placed on the Town's municipal website by end of day April 15, 2026. The following public engagement opportunity is proposed:

1. A Public Information Centre to be held on Tuesday, April 21, 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. in the Horwood Room, Tecumseh Arena, 12021 McNorton Street, Tecumseh, ON

Review opportunities will be extended to ERCA and Friends of Tecumseh Forests.

After the engagement and review opportunities, revisions to the draft UFNMP, Tree Canopy and Natural Vegetation Policy and Public Tree By-Law will be undertaken where deemed appropriate, and a follow-up report will be provided to Council for consideration of adoption of same, as revised.

All comments must be received by May 8, 2026 at 4:00 p.m.

Consultations

Chief Administrative Officer
Development Services
Public Works & Engineering Services
Dillon Consulting Ltd
Essex Region Conservation Authority
Friends of Tecumseh Forests
Grounded Solutions
Urban Forest Innovations Inc.

Financial Implications

The UFNMP is proposed to be a multi-year Plan. Recommendations with specific budget implications will be quantified for consideration during the annual budget process.

The final Council report will forecast the operational and capital costs for the initial implementation of the UFNMP in 2027.

Link to Strategic Priorities

Applicable	<u>2023-2026 Strategic Priorities</u>
☐	Sustainable Growth: Achieve prosperity and a livable community through sustainable growth.
☒	Community Health and Inclusion: Integrate community health and inclusion into our places and spaces and everything we do.
☐	Service Experience: Enhance the experience of Team Tecumseh and our citizens through responsive and respectful service.

Communications

Not applicable ☐

Website ☒

Social Media ☒

News Release ☐

Local Newspaper ☐

This report has been reviewed by Senior Administration as indicated below and recommended for submission by the Chief Administrative Officer.

Prepared by:

Beth Gignac, BA Hons
Director Community & Recreation Services

Reviewed by:

Phil Bartnik, P.Eng.
Director Public Works & Engineering Services

Recommended by:

Margaret Misek-Evans, MCIP, RPP
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment Number	Attachment Name
1	Draft Urban Forestry and Naturalization Management Plan