

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, April 8, 2025

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: BACK YARD TREE PLANTING PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL ENHANCEMENT AND APPRECIATION OF FORESTS (LEAF)

FROM:

Emilie Alderman, Deputy City Manager, Public Works

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

This report seeks Council's approval to partner with Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF) to implement the Backyard Tree Planting Program.

Report Highlights

- The City's Urban Forest Management Plan recommends partnering with LEAF in order to contribute to City-wide canopy cover targets.
- LEAF is a highly experienced not-for-profit organization delivering low-cost tree planting services on private property.
- A financial contribution of \$15,000 would be required from the City to support the implementation of the program. The contribution for 2025 would be allocated from the existing operating budgets for urban forest initiatives.
- Staff are seeking authority to enter into an agreement with LEAF for 2025 and to continue the partnership beyond 2025.

Recommendations

1. That Council endorse the collaboration with LEAF for the Backyard Tree Planting Program in the City of Vaughan;
2. That Council approve a \$15,000 financial contribution to LEAF for the implementation of the 2025 program, and that funding for contributions to LEAF in future years be managed through the City's budget process;

3. That the Deputy City Manager, Public Works be authorized to enter into, execute, renew, amend and terminate agreements, in a form satisfactory to Legal Services, with LEAF for its tree planting program in 2025 and in future years; and
4. That staff be authorized to take any steps necessary to give effect to the above-mentioned recommendations.

Background

The City's Urban Forest Management Plan is built on a strong foundation of urban forest management practices.

The City of Vaughan's Urban Forest Management Plan provides a comprehensive approach to managing and enhancing the urban forest within the City. The Urban Forestry Management Plan, which was endorsed by Council in March 2024, serves as a roadmap for the sustainable management of Vaughan's urban forest for the next 20 years. The plan addresses all trees, vegetation, soils, and ecosystem elements, covering city-owned street trees, park trees, natural woodlands, and trees on private land in both urban and rural areas. Its goal is to protect and care for every tree in Vaughan, recognizing their role in shaping the city's character and enhancing the quality of life.

The Urban Forest Management Plan aligns with the Term of Council's 2022-2026 Service Excellence Strategic Plan.

Urban forestry in Vaughan is uniquely positioned to support the City's 2022-2026 Service Excellence Strategic Plan priorities of Environmental Sustainability and Active, Engaged and Inclusive Communities. The Urban Forestry Management Plan underscores the importance of expanding the urban forest canopy and boosting community involvement in tree planting efforts. A partnership with LEAF enables tree planting on private lands, a critical step in meeting Vaughan's canopy cover goals. LEAF's Backyard Tree Planting Program offers a full range of services, including on-site consultations, delivery and planting, and ongoing tree care support.

LEAF's expertise and experience form award-winning tree planting and community engagement programs.

LEAF is a non-profit organization that educates people about trees and inspires excitement about the urban forest. The organization plants trees on private property and provides guidance on how to care for trees within communities. LEAF has a proven track record in urban forest stewardship and tree planting on private lands. Their

programs have shown high tree survival rates and has received positive feedback from participants.

LEAF has been closely working with the Regional Municipality of York since 2023, supporting private tree planting programs across all nine local municipalities across the Region.

Previous Reports/Authority

[URBAN FORESTRY MANAGEMENT PLAN AND WOODLAND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY](#)

Analysis and Options

The City's Urban Forestry Management Plan recommendation to partner with LEAF will positively contribute to urban forest and community engagement targets.

LEAF's Backyard Tree Planting Program will support Vaughan's canopy cover targets, providing benefits to citizens such as improved air quality, reduced stormwater runoff, increased biodiversity, and enhanced climate resilience. An expanded urban forest canopy is expected to help mitigate the impacts of climate change by reducing urban heat islands and sequestering carbon.

The program will engage communities and residents in tree planting activities, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for the urban forest, while also providing educational opportunities.

Partnering with LEAF will leverage decades of experience in providing low-cost tree planting services.

The partnership with LEAF offers several benefits, including LEAF's proven track record in urban forest stewardship and tree planting on private lands. Their programs have demonstrated high tree survival rates and received positive feedback from participants. LEAF will manage all aspects of the Backyard Tree Planting Program, including participant screening, arborist consultations, tree planting, and follow-up assessments. LEAF's focus is to help residents get the right species in the right places with the right care so that the trees and shrubs survive and thrive.

Additionally, the program is scheduled to launch in spring 2025, targeting 40 to 60 tree installations before the end of the 2025 fall planting season. Homeowners will pay

approximately \$110 to \$230 per tree, depending on the species selected, to enroll in this tree planting program. LEAF will provide detailed reports on program outcomes, including the number of trees planted, species diversity, and participant feedback. This data will help support the City's urban forest management efforts. The program will engage Vaughan residents in tree planting and care, promoting environmental stewardship and raising awareness of the benefits of the urban forest. Staff plan to include an update on the outcomes of the 2025 program as part of the annual forestry update to Council.

Financial Impact

The financial contribution of \$15,000, which represents 40 per cent of the total program cost, will be allocated from the existing operating budgets for urban forest initiatives in 2025. This funding will support the implementation of the Backyard Tree Planting Program, including promotional activities, tree planting, and follow-up assessments. The program's cost-effectiveness is enhanced by LEAF's ability to pool regional and local municipal resources, ensuring efficient and consistent program delivery across the Region. Following a successful pilot, future funding will be subject to the standard City-wide budgeting process; however, staff have identified the Tree Planting Reserve, funded by tree replacement fees, as a potential source of future funding.

Operational Impact

The partnership will involve collaboration with various City departments, including Communications, Marketing and Engagement, to promote the program and ensure its success. LEAF will manage the administration and implementation of the program, while the City will support it through promotional activities and provide feedback for continuous improvement.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

The partnership with LEAF will strengthen the existing tree planting programs offered by York Region. The program's region-wide approach ensures that Vaughan's efforts are aligned with broader regional goals for urban forest enhancement and environmental sustainability. This collaboration will help achieve the Region's goals of protecting forests, promoting tree planting, improving environmental quality, and engaging the community in tree planting activities.

Conclusion

The partnership with LEAF for the Backyard Tree Planting Program is a strategic initiative that supports Vaughan's Urban Forest Management Plan goals. It leverages LEAF's expertise and resources to enhance the urban forest canopy on private lands,

engage the community, and promote environmental stewardship. This program will benefit the City and its residents by increasing canopy cover across the city, improving environmental quality and stewardship, and enhancing community engagement and well-being.

For more information, please contact: Shanon Kalra-Ramjoo, Director, Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations at ext. 6308.

Attachments

N/A

Prepared by

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