



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Morgan Jones, Director of Operations

Prepared by: David Plant, Sr. Manager, Parks, Horticulture and Forestry, Operations

Date: January 18, 2021

Re: **Trees for Tomorrow Program – 3 Year Plan (2019 – 2021)**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the memorandum entitled “Trees for Tomorrow Program – 3 Year Plan (2019 – 2021)” dated January 18, 2021, be received; and,
2. That staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

BACKGROUND:

This memorandum provides an update and overview of the 3 Year Plan for the Trees for Tomorrow (TFT) program outlining goals, key objectives and overall program focus.

At the time of this update the 2020 program was greatly impacted by COVID19 and the Provincial limits for gatherings. All activities outlined in this memo will be coordinated and implemented or cancelled in accordance with guidelines for physical distancing and the safety of all participants.

The goals for the TFT program fall into three major categories which capture the key elements with deliverables identified for each one. The following plan has been formulated and will operate within the Council approved budgets on a yearly basis. The goals of the Trees for Tomorrow program are as follows.

1. **Increase Markham’s tree canopy to realize our goal of 30% total tree canopy.**
2. **Foster existing and create new partnership opportunities to plant and care for trees.**
3. **Educate and engage the public to properly plant and care for trees on private property.**

INCREASE TREE CANOPY:

Since its inception in 2007, Markham's Trees for Tomorrow Program has helped to significantly increase the number of trees planted annually across the City. The 10,000 Trees for the Rouge 30th Annual Habitat Restoration planting event on April 28, 2019 served as a milestone event for the Trees for Tomorrow Program as the total number of trees planted surpassed 400,000 trees since the program's launch. The large scale plantings along with other restoration projects undertaken by the City and its partners constitute the primary means of reaching tree canopy and woodland cover goals on City and other publically owned land. From 2007 to 2016 Markham's woodland cover has increased by more than 235 hectares which represents an increase of 1.1% in total woodland cover.

Habitat restoration projects include:

- i. NGO Planting/Corporate Plantings – medium to large scale plantings with 10,000 Trees for the Rouge in single day events. Large scale plantings of 4,500 native trees and shrubs planted in partnership with Tree Canada and Forests Ontario and their corporate donors. Since 2015, 10 small to medium scale planting events have also been completed. Corporate donors pay for the trees and planting events are conducted jointly by Operations and Tree Canada/Forests Ontario staff. To date one spring and one fall planting have been scheduled for 2021.
- ii. Friends of the Rouge Watershed (FRW) – FRW focuses on multiple plantings with school groups and other community organizations. These smaller scale plantings build upon and connect existing nodes of trees in previous planting sites. FRW works with Markham staff to finalize planting plans and schedule for the upcoming year.
- iii. Operations Department Community Planting Events – small to medium scale community planting events coordinated and tailored to the number of participants and supported in advance through site preparations to focus the event on education and promoting stewardship all based on available funding.
- iv. Operations Department Park Plantings – recognizing the opportunity to provide shade near playgrounds in established parks the program of “cooling center” plantings will continue in all eight wards as a green alternative to shade structures, annual planting plans include 7 to 10 planting events per year as above with annual planting numbers in the range of 6,000 to 8,000 trees.

FOSTER EXISTING AND CREATE NEW PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES TO PLANT AND CARE FOR TREES:

In 2019 more than 715 volunteers contributed a conservatively estimated 1,787 hours of post planting maintenance and after care work on recently planted young trees at restoration planting sites in 7 different park locations. This stewardship work can play a critical role in the survival rates and early establishment of these young trees.

Annual supporting corporate partners with at least 3 years' continuous involvement includes:

- Nielsen Canada Inc.
- General Electric
- Stantec Engineering
- IBM Canada
- Johnson and Johnson
- AMD
- Shiseido
- Sephora

Of the many volunteer participants from schools, two in particular deserve special mention having supported the program for more than eight years.

1. Father Michael McGivney Catholic High School
2. Milliken Mills High School

Retaining volunteer participation takes a great deal of work to organize a meaningful event and provide the tools and instructions to the group. Starting in 2019 a number of initiatives were taken to improve the volunteer experience.

1. Hired a seasonal employee to assist with the event logistics
2. Produced signage for the event complete with the sponsor logo to remain after completion
3. Engaged Corporate Communication to recognize the events and sponsors via social media
4. Created long-term participation recognition award as part of community volunteer awards
5. Explored planting opportunities to signify a longer term legacy for stakeholders such as native wild flowers, shrubs and trees.

ENGAGE AND EDUCATE THE PUBLIC:

Outreach, Engagement and Promotion to enhance program profile, public awareness and increase level of community engagement, especially with younger demographic groups with refreshed TFT branding was geared largely to engage youth as the benefactors of the trees for tomorrow. Brand promotion and private tree education will be achieved through an active presence at City events through the following initiatives.

- (a) Trees for Tomorrow updated branding signage to support the program and event
- (b) Children's Picture Tree to engage youth and promote social media
- (c) Banners and signage for planting sites including partner names and logos
- (d) Information boards at strategic locations Citywide with TFT branding to promote events such as 10,000 Trees
- (e) Signage installed at past projects to acknowledge partners and increase awareness
- (f) Tree giveaways at key events and Citizenship Ceremony
- (g) Trees for Tomorrow presence at a minimum of ten City events/festivals
- (h) Simple, concise information for resident on how and where to plant trees with a list of suitable trees based on location
- (i) Social media campaign coordinated through Corporate Communications
#Markham/trees; #treesfortomorrow; www.markham.ca/trees

Additional and ongoing efforts to promote the TFT program and recognition will be achieved but not limited to the following initiatives once social gatherings are permitted.

- (a) In recognition of Markham veterans, Trees for Tomorrow will continue with an annual donation of trees along the Highway for Heroes for recognition at Remembrance Day.
- (b) For the Mayor to formally acknowledge the significance of the program throughout the City, one caliper tree will be planted for official park openings along with signage to commemorate the event. Plantings for the year will take place in the spring.
- (c) Development of the City portal to simplify resident's access to *All Things Trees* with the TFT program and its information as part of this.
- (d) Continue to develop opportunities for education within Recreation (pollinator camps) and the local schools to plant and care for trees on the school property.