SUBJECT: Trees Across Hamilton - Volunteer Naturalization Planting Program (PW05148) - (City Wide)  
Public Works, Infrastructure & Environment Committee Outstanding Business List

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That City of Hamilton Forestry staff be directed to develop an ongoing community based naturalized tree planting program, known as “Trees Across Hamilton” as presented in Report PW05148 for the solicitation of corporate and private donations and/or sponsorship to enhance the urban forest infrastructure through new planting investments in City owned parks, open spaces and other publicly owned properties.

(b) That the proposed “Trees Across Hamilton” Interim Program Delivery Model presented in Report PW05148 and the Interim Guideline as outlined in Report PW05148 as Appendix “A” be endorsed to guide staff in the development and delivery of the program.

(c) That staff be directed to include a “program enhancement” within the 2006 Operating Budget submission in the amount of $50K to provide baseline funding for the purchase of materials and services.

(d) That staff be directed to proceed with the planning and implementation of the 2006 Trees Across Hamilton program and submit a final program strategy by July 2006 for approval by Council in conjunction with a consultant’s recommendation for program fundraising and program models outlining the dissemination of the program.
That the item relating to the Toronto Tree Advocacy Program be removed from the Public Works, Infrastructure & Environment Committee Outstanding Business List.

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Scott Stewart, C.E.T.
General Manager
Public Works

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The City of Hamilton Forestry and Horticulture Section has historically had no budget for naturalized tree plantings in City owned parks and open spaces, as such a Trees Across Hamilton pilot program was introduced this year to engage volunteers and community groups in organized tree planting activities to assist in the creation and reforestation of naturalized areas across the City. The 2005 pilot program was successful in terms of the degree of public participation and the number of whip and seedling trees planted through a number of community events. In order to continue and expand on this program, this report proposes a program delivery model, interim operating guidelines, and an initiative to establish a “community funding” and governance model to support the ongoing operation of the program.

Funding has been committed by the Hamilton Community Foundation and other stakeholders to hire a consultant to perform a feasibility study for the establishment of a Hamilton Trees Foundation which would administer the collection of community donations. It is anticipated that a partnership between City staff and a Tree Foundation will attract financial and in-kind charitable donations to fund the program. All donations will go directly towards the program for tree planting to help increase our park and open space tree infrastructure.

**BACKGROUND:**

The information/recommendations contained within this report have city wide implications.

At the City Council meeting held on February 9, 2005, Council directed the Forestry and Horticulture Section to prepare a report respecting the Toronto Tree Advocacy Program and the efficacy of introducing a similar program in Hamilton. The City of Toronto has two separate programs aimed at enhancing public greenspaces: the Tree Advocacy Planting Program and the Toronto Parks Trees Foundation.

**Toronto’s Tree Advocacy Planting Program**

Last November, City of Hamilton representatives met with City of Toronto Councillor Joe Pantalone and his staff to discuss the City of Toronto’s successful Tree Advocacy Planting Program (TAPP). TAPP was implemented in 1999 by Toronto’s City Council to
plant trees along city streets, arterial roads, in ravines, and neighbourhood parks in an effort to improve and replenish the urban forest.

Under this program, opportunities exist for corporations, community organizations, and individuals to contribute. Corporations which sponsor the program through a tiered recognition system gain high visibility and company promotion through site signage, plaques, and/or recognition on the City’s Tree Hall of Fame, located in Toronto’s City Hall.

Since the inception of TAPP, the program has received over $1M in cash and in-kind support through donations and volunteers. City Council committed $700K in funding in 2002 and $750K in funding in 2003 and 2004. Council further demonstrated its commitment to this program in 2005 with an increase of $250K, providing TAPP with a $1M budget. In addition, the program has collected $241K in cash donations and $420K “in kind” donations, such as free advertising this year alone.

The City of Toronto has one full-time staff dedicated to the program whose salary is paid through the TAPP budget. Other staff support, as deemed necessary, is in addition to regular duties and is paid through the Urban Forestry Services operating budget.

There are many locations identified throughout the City that are suitable for tree planting, but are not conducive to using volunteers. These locations are often adjacent to heavily trafficked areas or are difficult to access. In these incidences, tree planting is performed by contractual services. Approximately 70% of the Tree Advocacy Program’s planting is currently being performed through contractual services.

Volunteers have played a major role in the success of this program. 12,000 volunteers have been instrumental in planting over 350,000 native trees and shrubs at over 300 locations across the City. This has represented a commitment of more than 6,000 hours of volunteer service.

The City of Toronto recognizes that these accomplishments are the result of partnerships working towards the common goal of leaving a legacy of trees for future generations.

Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation

The Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation was founded in 2002 as a charitable Public Foundation dedicated to achieving a range of enhancements throughout the parks system that can no longer be achieved through City funding alone. As it is a Public Foundation, funding can only be provided to groups or organizations that are eligible to receive charitable status.

The Foundation is guided by a twelve member Board of Directors and administered by an Executive Director seconded from the City of Toronto. The Foundation’s mandate is to raise funds to enhance the physical environment within public parks for the enjoyment and education of the public. These park beautification projects are achieved in partnership with local community groups and the City of Toronto’s Parks, Forestry, and Recreation Department and have included such projects as incorporating new playground equipment, creating community gardens, and improving the appearance of existing park land through the planting of native plant material.
Each year, the Foundation organizes one major fundraising event for a community grants program. Under this program, community groups can apply to receive funding for park enhancement. Approximately $30K is raised each year for this program. Corporate sponsorship also helps the Foundation increase its financial position. In 2004, $50K was raised through a single corporate sponsorship fundraiser.

Trees Across Hamilton 2005

At the City Council meeting of March 23, 2005, Council approved a one time funding of $60K allocated from the uncommitted Hamilton Future Fund Reserve balance for the Trees Across Hamilton proposal as initiated by Councillor McHattie. The goal of this initiative was to undertake organized community tree planting events in naturalized areas of parks and public open spaces where there is no budget available for tree planting. Presently, all City funded tree planting activities are performed through the Street Tree Planting Program and through capital projects within Public Works. Funding for tree planting is also received through subdivision agreements and through community based tree planting programs such as commemorative tree plantings and volunteer initiatives.

The Trees Across Hamilton initiative began this past spring with planting events occurring on the following dates:

April 30th  Lincoln Alexander Expressway Trail from Upper Sherman to Upper Ottawa
May 7th  Conferation Park, Valley Park, and the Upper James / Lincoln Alexander Expressway ramp
May 8th  Adjacent to Brock Road in Greensville on a City owned greenspace at the rear of 366 Moxley Road
May 14th  Captain Cornelius Park, Bayfront Park, and Churchill Park

Each location was planted with approximately 200 tree whips, with the Lincoln Alexander Expressway Trail and Greensville receiving approximately 2,000 seedlings, contributed by Councillor Braden. Volunteers were largely organized through Environment Hamilton to assist with the tree planting. On average, there were ten to twenty volunteers and ward Councillors participating at each location.

Trees Across Hamilton concluded its 2005 planting program with events occurring on the following dates:

September 29th  Binbrook Conservation Area, Mount Albion Conservation Area, and Gage Park
October 8th  Shamrock Park
October 15th  Spencer Creek from the trail head to Cootes Drive

Volunteers played an instrumental part in the success of the fall tree planting events with one hundred students and staff from Hillfield Strathallan College participating in the September 29th plantings. In addition, Rotary Club volunteers donated $1,000 to the Trees Across Hamilton program to purchase trees for the Shamrock Park tree planting.

The spring and fall planting events allowed for the planting of 3,000 tree whips and 2,000 seedlings across the City. Follow up investigations by staff on the spring tree plantings revealed there was up to an 85% survival rate, with the container grown trees exhibiting a greater survivability rate than the bare-root stock. The intense heat and drought conditions which occurred during the summer contributed to the decrease in
survival rates. On average, the trees were watered on a weekly basis; however, the severity of the weather conditions dried the soil out rapidly. The Trees Across Hamilton events held this year provided an opportunity for community involvement in tree planting in parks, Conservation Authority lands and open spaces that would otherwise not have been available.

**Trees Across Hamilton Model**

Discussions have been ongoing with the Hamilton Community Foundation to identify an appropriate governance and funding model for an annual Trees Across Hamilton program. The Public Works Department, in partnership with the Hamilton Community Foundation, Mountainview Residents’ Association, and Councillor McHattie have secured funding to hire a consultant to perform a feasibility study for the establishment of a Hamilton Trees Foundation. This study will assist in determining the overall structure the Trees Across Hamilton program will take in regards to volunteer and City staff involvement as well as make recommendations on guidelines for the tree planting activities (Appendix “A”).

It is anticipated that this program will possess characteristics from both TAPP and the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation, with operational support provided by Forestry staff and Business Services assisting the Hamilton Trees Foundation with fundraising initiatives. There are many grant programs and funding opportunities that are not available to municipalities. By having a model of this nature, the proposed Hamilton Trees Foundation could apply for funding that the City would not otherwise have access to.

It is expected that the fundraising for this program will take on a multi-dimensional approach with the Hamilton Trees Foundation and Business Services staff working together to set up and attract financial and in-kind charitable donations from corporations and members of the community. Foundation representatives and City staff will work with community organizations and environmental groups in researching and soliciting grants that are available from public and private foundations and provincial and federal government programs. All sponsorships and donations will be used in their entirety towards the Trees Across Hamilton program, providing for the purchase of plant materials, resources for planting, and staff costs. The long term vision would see the Trees Across Hamilton program support itself through private donations with the Forestry Section maintaining budget funding for the ongoing aftercare and maintenance of the planted trees.

The Trees Across Hamilton planting program provides an opportunity for members of Council and community leaders to solicit and engage volunteers in community based tree planting activities and stewardship initiatives. A guideline for the program is outlined in Appendix A. All tree planting events will occur in identified locations throughout the City during the spring and fall seasons using a variety of native plant material. Container grown whips in one to two gallon pots, easily transported by volunteers, will be utilized. The Hamilton Trees Foundation, assisted by the Business Services Section will develop a volunteer base to coordinate resources for the events. Forestry staff will assist volunteers during the tree planting activities and provide aftercare and ongoing maintenance to the trees.
ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

The Trees Across Hamilton program supports the objective of establishing a 30 – 35% tree canopy cover. This program provides an opportunity for community based volunteer initiatives which promote stewardship and sustainability of the urban forest.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

Staff considered the alternative of developing Trees Across Hamilton internally; however this alternative is not recommended as it would require a significant enhancement to the Forestry Section’s operating budget as well as an increase in the staffing complement through contractual and/or in-house staff.

Staff considered using unspent funding from the 2005 budget of the Street Tree Planting Program to support the Trees Across Hamilton Program until a new funding model is established. This alternative is not supported as a transfer of funds would impact the ability of the department to supply and install trees as part of the Street Tree Planting Program. These are two separate programs which should be supported by two distinct and separate funding sources.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications - The Hamilton Future Fund provided $60K in funding for Trees Across Hamilton for 2005. $50K of this funding was provided for Trees Across Hamilton and $10K was provided to Green Venture for their Backyard Tree Planting Program. Operations and Maintenance is requesting a budget enhancement of $50K to provide a baseline budget to fund the purchase of trees and to provide staff support for the program commencing in 2006.

A feasibility study will be undertaken to determine the terms of reference for establishing a Hamilton Trees Foundation commencing in 2006. Funding for this study has been secured from the following sources:

- Hamilton Community Foundation $ 5,000
- Mountainview Residents’ Association $ 2,000
- Public Works $ 2,000
  (Account no. 55801-440100, Directors Office Consulting)
- Councillor McHattie $ 1,000

Sub Total $ 10,000

The potential estimated revenue generated through corporate and private sponsorship is yet to be determined. Efforts to secure sponsors, receive in-kind contributions, and establish partnerships through the private sector and other levels of government will be part of the Foundations’ mandate.

Staffing Implications - Staffing implications for Trees Across Hamilton will be determined through the feasibility study. The Forestry Section has provided staff support for the program this year, which has been in addition to staff’s regular duties.

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

There are no policies in existence affected by this proposal.
RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

The Forestry and Horticulture Section consulted with City of Toronto staff, Hamilton Conservation Authority staff, and representatives from the Hamilton Community Foundation, Green Venture, and Environment Hamilton regarding this initiative. Staff will consult with all internal and external partners affected by the development and implementation of this new program once the program structure has been identified.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Public services and programs are delivered in an equitable manner, coordinated, efficient, effective and easily accessible to all citizens.

Trees contribute positively to the City image and encourage a sense of pride in its residents. Volunteer tree planting events brings people together and creates a sense of community. The volunteers are pleased they have been provided with the opportunity for involvement and to make a positive contribution to the environment.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Air quality and water quality and quantity are protected.

Trees help reduce green house gas emissions, thereby improving air quality for the residents and visitors to the City of Hamilton. Trees possess the ability to absorb pollutants and trap inhalable particulates by trapping these particles on the surface of leaves and on the bark, while providing us with a source of oxygen. A mature leafy tree produces as much oxygen in a season as ten people inhale in a year.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Hamilton's high-quality environmental amenities are maintained and enhanced.

Treed communities help to attract investors and increase tourism. Research supports findings that commercial retail areas are more attractive to shoppers, apartments rent more quickly, tenants stay longer, and realty market values are enhanced in areas with healthy and robust tree infrastructure.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines? ☑ Yes ☐ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants? ☐ Yes ☑ No