

URBAN FOREST STRATEGY

March 2025





Territorial Acknowledgment

We respectfully acknowledge that the City of Burnaby is located on the unceded territories of the *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam), *Sḵwxwú7mesh* (Squamish), *səlilwətaɫ* (Tsleil-Waututh), and *kʷikwəłəm* (Kwikwetlem) Peoples. Each Nation has distinct histories and distinct traditional territories that fully or partially encompass the City. We encourage you to learn more about the Host Nations whose ancestors have occupied and used these lands, including parts of present-day Burnaby, for thousands of years.



Acknowledgments

The Urban Forest Strategy was guided by input from the following groups:

City of Burnaby

We would like to acknowledge the time and effort of staff across many City Departments, including but not limited to, Parks, Recreation and Culture, Planning and Development, Engineering, Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and Corporate Services.

Thank you also to the interest holders and members of the public who shared their thoughts and ideas throughout the public engagement process.

Consulting Team

Diamond Head Consulting Ltd.

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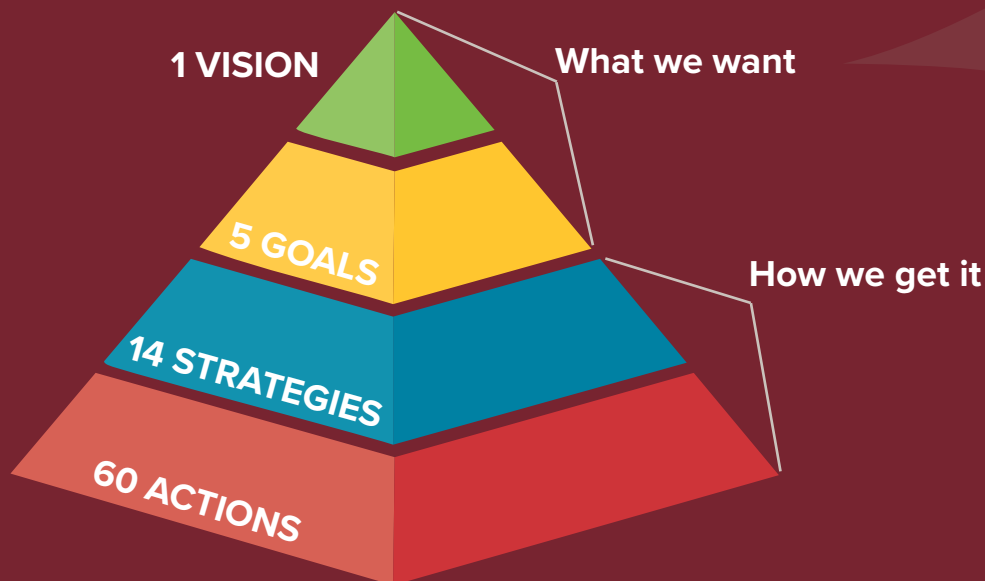
URBAN FOREST STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

Burnaby's Urban Forest Strategy guides how Burnaby will manage its tree and forest resources amid growing pressures. The City aims to grow its canopy cover to secure benefits like neighbourhood cooling, community well-being, ecosystem health and climate resilience. To guide this effort, the Urban Forest Strategy provides a 15-year Action Plan with 60 actions under five key goals: **PLAN, GROW, PROTECT, MANAGE, and ENGAGE**. It will help achieve best practices in tree protection, planting, urban design and risk management, as well as public engagement. Implementing this strategy will require significant new tree planting, and expanded resources and programs.

VISION

Burnaby's urban forest will be an equitably distributed, resilient, biodiverse and interconnected network of trees and green spaces across the city. These natural assets will cool the city, enhance air and water quality, manage stormwater and support community health and well-being. By applying best practices in urban forestry and fostering active community engagement, the urban forest will continue to grow, adapt and thrive, ensuring a sustainable, livable future for all community members.

FRAMEWORK



40% CANOPY COVER TARGET BY 2075 

QUICK START ACTIONS

- Create an interdepartmental team.
- Review the Civic Tree Reserve Fund.
- Explore funding options.
- Update landscaping rules and guidelines.
- Strengthen tree protection through updates to bylaws.

BIG MOVES

- Embed City-managed natural assets into asset management plans.
- Consider codifying tree canopy cover/tree density targets, green infrastructure, pervious area and landscaped area by land use.
- Develop a 10-year urban tree planting program.
- Develop a 10-year natural area restoration planting program.
- Explore the creation of a new reserve fund for City trees.
- Explore incentives for property owners to retain and plant trees and maximize pervious surface areas.
- Expand community stewardship opportunities.





PLAN: Strengthen governance, monitoring and resourcing to achieve the long-term vision

1. Improve urban forest governance through interdepartmental collaboration and asset management integration.
2. Monitor implementation and adapt management to achieve adopted targets and maintain service standards.
3. Provide sufficient resourcing to implement the Urban Forest Strategy and align with best practices.



GROW: Expand the urban forest in alignment with community planning goals

4. Improve policy, regulations, processes and standards for integrating trees and forests into the built environment.
5. Integrate equity considerations into decision-making about urban forest investment.
6. Restore forests and enhance biodiversity.



PROTECT: Protect urban forest resources and increase the climate resilience of urban landscapes

7. Protect trees and soil when possible and compensate for losses when necessary.
8. Develop a coordinated approach for managing and resolving issues of park encroachment (see details on Page 64).
9. Increase the climate resilience of Burnaby's urban landscapes and urban forest.



MANAGE: Maintain a healthy and safe urban forest

10. Maintain healthy and resilient trees using best management practices.
11. Maintain safe trees and forests to a reasonable standard of care.

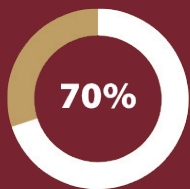


ENGAGE: Involve the community in urban forest management

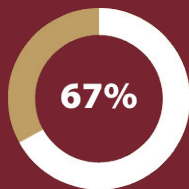
12. Enhance and build relationships with community partners to protect and enhance the urban forest.
13. Build relationships with Host Nations and Indigenous Peoples living in Burnaby to integrate Indigenous perspectives with urban forest management.
14. Build community knowledge of and participation in urban forest management.

WHAT WE HEARD

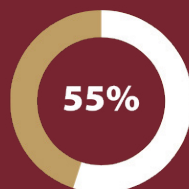
Burnaby's Urban Forest Strategy and Action Plan prioritized public input to help shape the future of the city's urban forest. Over 2,000 residents contributed ideas through online surveys, open houses, workshops, and guided nature walks. Insights gathered through these engagement efforts are summarized in the [Engagement Summary](#). A second phase of engagement on the draft Strategy confirmed support for the vision, goals and targets.



Strongly Support
Vision



Strongly Support
Goals



Strongly Support
Canopy Targets

FOREST FACTS

In 2022, Burnaby had...

- 32% canopy cover
- 2,900 ha of tree canopy
- > 600,000 trees citywide
- 32,500 street trees
- >2,100 ha of parkland
- 1,400 ha of forested parks
- >70% of tree canopy under public management

Burnaby will need to plant an area equivalent to eight Central Parks (680 ha) to reach its ambitious 40% canopy cover target.

8 x



WHY A 2075 CANOPY TARGET?

Trees need time to grow! Burnaby's 50-year canopy target accounts for the time trees need to grow and canopy loss from future development. A much larger number of young trees is needed than mature trees to achieve the same canopy coverage—demonstrating that real gains come as trees mature. Given space constraints, reaching 40% canopy cover sooner is not possible through planting alone. A longer timeline ensures that trees have time to grow, expand canopy cover, and mature into a resilient urban forest for future generations.

330 x 10 year old trees = 1 ha canopy

65 x 50 year old trees = 1 ha canopy

How many trees will we need to plant?

To achieve the canopy target, an estimated 3,500 net new trees must be planted each year, in addition to replacing every removed tree and continuing forest restoration. Around 40% of these new trees will need to be planted on public land and 60% on private land. This planting rate represents a three- to fourfold increase over the current planting volume.

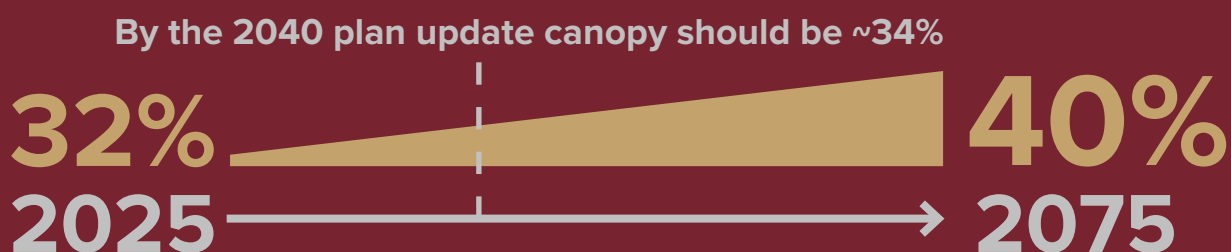


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1 Introduction

The Urban Forest Strategy guides how Burnaby will manage the community's tree and forest resources over the next 15 years.

The urban forest is an integral part of Burnaby's rich environment and provides a wide range of benefits known as ecosystem servicesⁱ, to the community. Trees and forests provide shade and cooling, reduce rainwater runoff, absorb and store carbon, support recreation, provide habitat and enhance human health and well-being for the nearly 300,000 residents of the city. A healthy urban forest will also help Burnaby become carbon-neutral by 2050, a goal outlined in the Climate Action Framework (2020).

Burnaby's urban forest canopy today is the result of past decisions to preserve riparian corridors, parks and forests through thoughtful conservation and land-use planning. Demand for urban forest services is also growing with

Burnaby's population as people seek access to the recreation and climate regulating services trees provide. To meet that demand, the City has set an ambitious target to grow Burnaby's urban forest canopy from 32% (as measured in 2022) to the Metro Vancouver regional goal of 40%. However, the urban forest faces growing challenges from development pressures, declining forest health and climate change. To face these challenges, the City recognizes the need to renew and expand its urban forest by implementing its first Urban Forest Strategy.

1.1 Plan Purpose

Burnaby's Urban Forest Strategy is a roadmap to 2040 for creating a diverse, resilient and healthy urban forest aligned with the Strategy's community-supported vision. Five goals structure the City's approach to implementing the vision and achieving the canopy cover target (see Section 7: Action Plan for details on

i Ecosystem services are the direct and indirect benefits that ecosystems provide humans.

Urban forestry is the sustained planning, planting, protection, maintenance and care of trees, forests, green space and related resources in and around cities and communities for economic, environmental, social and public health benefits for people.¹



goals, strategies and recommended actions for Burnaby's urban forest).

The Urban Forest Strategy aims to maximize the benefits of the urban forest while furthering common objectives with other City policies for improved climate resilience, livability and ecological health. As a long-term plan, implementing the Strategy will ensure the urban forest provides social, economic and ecological benefits to residents and visitors for generations to come.

1.2 Strategic Alignment

In 2019, Burnaby declared a climate emergency, and in 2020, the City adopted a new Climate Action Framework. A key component, Big Move 3: Healthy Ecosystems, led to the creation of the Urban Forest Strategy to improve the health and resilience of the City's green spaces.

The Urban Forest Strategy's 15-year Action Plan reflects Burnaby's 2023 Strategic Plan priorities, including to empower staff, provide industry-leading and innovative customer experiences and create vibrant communities.

The Urban Forest Strategy builds on several key long-term planning documents, including a new Official Community Plan in preparation, the Social Sustainability Strategy (2011) and the Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2016). Each of these supports the natural environment, trees and other natural assets as important for supporting Burnaby's high quality of life.

1.3 Structure of the Strategy

The Urban Forest Strategy is organized into seven sections:

1. Introduction – Introduces the Urban Forest Strategy and discusses its purpose and connection to the City's other strategic initiatives.

2. Urban Forestry 101 – Describes what the urban forest is, discusses several ways a healthy urban forest benefits society, and explains how professionals approach tree and forest management in urban areas to support these benefits.

3. Burnaby's Urban Forest Management Program – Reviews the City's current program for managing trees and forests, positions trees as a unique class of assets contributing services to support our quality of life, and examines regulations and policies influencing Burnaby's urban forest.

4. Status and Trends in Burnaby's Urban Forest – Summarizes the results from the background analysis of Burnaby's urban forest, including the mapping of forest canopy, species composition, and neighbourhood tree equity. It also considers the influences of land use and known forest health issues.

5. Looking Ahead – Summarizes the strengths, opportunities and challenges faced by the urban forest, with a focus on what we heard from the community and the expected impacts of climate change.

6. What We Want: Vision and Goals – Introduces the long-term vision for the urban forest developed following community engagement, considers how Burnaby can achieve its target of 40% canopy cover, proposes goals, strategies, and actions for the Action Plan and looks at implementation examples from other cities.

7. Action Plan – Contains a tabular implementation plan, identifying which actions are short-, medium- and long-term priorities and proposes approximate costs and responsibilities among City departments. A separate monitoring plan defines indicators to measure implementation progress.