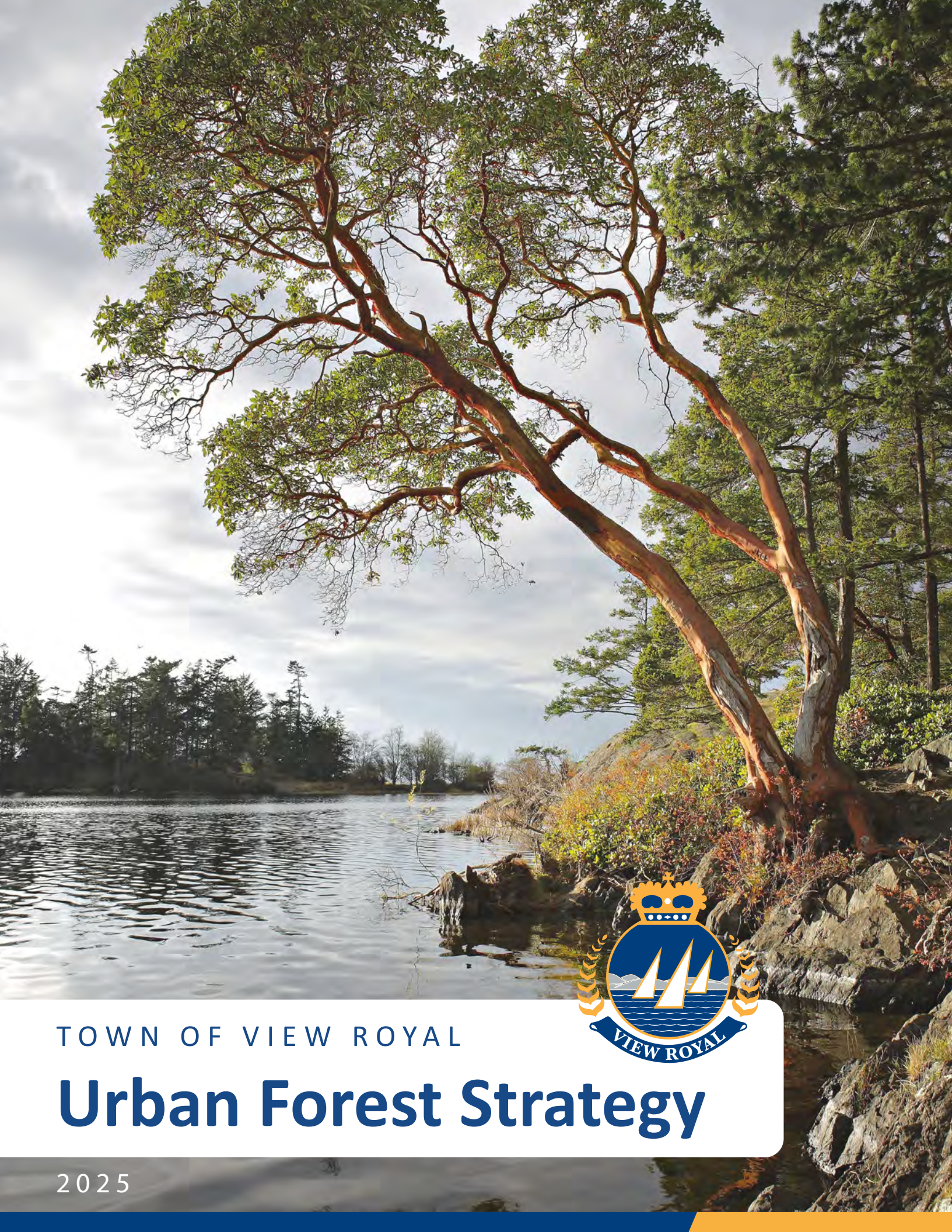


TOWN OF VIEW ROYAL

Urban Forest Strategy

2025

Plan at a Glance

This is the Town of View Royal's first Urban Forest Strategy (UFS). The UFS establishes a comprehensive, 20-year framework to guide the management of View Royal's urban forest. The UFS reflects the Town's commitment to enhancing community climate resilience, supporting the urban forest, enhancing public health and wellbeing, and protecting trees and native biodiversity.

View Royal's Urban Forest Vision

Our Town's urban forest is celebrated for its diverse, mature trees and interconnected green spaces. It provides vital habitat for native plants, pollinators, and wildlife, while enhancing community resilience, health, and well-being. By making space for trees, we have expanded our urban forest and strengthened our sense of place. We are stewards of our environment, and the trees we plant today will benefit our community for generations.

Urban Forest Value

$10 M
Value of our urban forest

$184,000
Urban forest program budget

Tree Inventory

1,200
boulevard trees inventoried

33%/25%
inventoried trees are maple / red maple

Canopy Cover

29%
Urban canopy cover (2023)

59%
of urban canopy is on private land

Survey Results

85%
Were concerned about tree loss

80%
Want canopy cover to increase

Acknowledgements

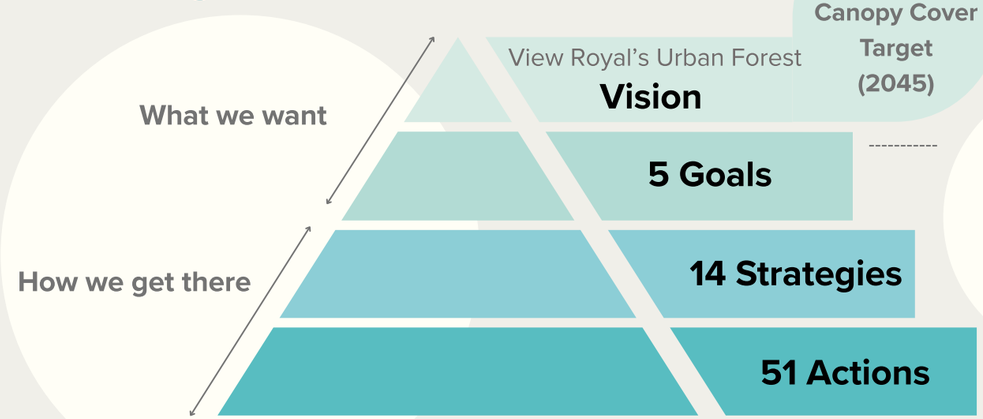
Land Acknowledgement
The Town of View Royal acknowledges with respect that it is on the unceded traditional territories of the Lekwungen peoples, known today as the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, and that their historic connections to these lands continue to this day.

Acknowledgement
We are grateful to all those who contributed to shaping the Town of View Royal's Urban Forest Strategy. The Strategy was developed with the support of Diamond Head Consulting.

Town of View Royal: Ivan Leung; Laura Busby
Diamond Head Consulting: Shane Hunt; Tyler Searls; Marco Sanelli; Vlad Romanescu; Amelia Needoba

Strategic Framework

30%
Canopy Cover Target (2045)



Goal 1. Plan
Goal 2. Manage
Goal 3. Maintain
Goal 4. Protect
Goal 5. Partner

19 Core Actions (!)
Are essential to program performance and no net loss of canopy cover.

14 Strategies

- **1.1** Ensure **planting standards** support long-term tree growth
- **1.2** Ensure **land use planning** supports the urban forest
- **1.3** Ensure rates of **tree planting** support net new outcomes
- **1.4** Consider **demonstrable need** in program decision-making
- **2.1** Improve urban forest **governance**
- **2.2** Prioritize program **monitoring** and **reporting**
- **2.3 Sustainably resource** urban forest management and the implementation of this Strategy.
- **3.1** Use **best practices** and industry benchmarks in the Town's maintenance regime
- **3.2** Maintain forested areas to a reasonable **standard of care**
- **4.1** Enhance **regulatory tools** and **processes** to achieve the right balance between tree protection and community growth.
- **4.2** Support the **resilience** of both View Royal as a community and its urban forest.
- **5.1** Build relationships with **Host Nations and Indigenous Peoples** living in View Royal
- **5.2** Build **community knowledge** of and participation in urban forest management
- **5.3** Develop **strategic partnerships**

- (!) Update View Royal's Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw and planting standards to enhance conditions for street trees
- (!) Adopt OCP policy supporting the urban forest and UFS that provides enhanced direction on the handling of View Royal's urban forest
- (!) Review View Royal's Zoning Bylaw to ensure performance criteria contribute to the Town's canopy cover target.
- (!) Municipal tree planting targeting 50 trees per year in parks and boulevards
- (!) Establish an adopt-a-tree program
- (!) Establish dedicated tree maintenance and planting budgets within parks to increase tree longevity.
- (!) Establish an interdepartmental Urban Forestry working group
- (!) Establish and maintain a GIS-based boulevard tree inventory
- (!) Produce a new urban tree canopy dataset
- (!) Produce a State of the Urban Forest report on a five-year interval
- (!) Establish a Town arborist or urban forester position within Parks to broadly enhance urban forest outcomes
- (!) Access external funding opportunities to support tree planting
- (!) Establish a Wildfire Hazard Development Permit Area (DPA)
- (!) Review the Town's Natural Watercourse and Shoreline Areas , and Sensitive Terrestrial Ecosystem DPAs
- (!) Develop a Terms of Reference for arborist reports and tree surveys
- (!) Explore the potential of a Landscaping Bylaw
- (!) Prepare a biannual newsletter to communicate key urban forestry messages, updates, and progress on UFS implementation
- (!) Continue to offer View Royal's Resident Tree Planting Program and expand it if demand outpaces current program capacity
- (!) Actively participate in and support initiatives that utilize the Capital Regional District's (CRD) network of urban forestry professionals

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Tables

1. Introduction & Overview

1.1 Welcome

View Royal values its trees. Our community consists of a mosaic of urbanized spaces, interwoven with natural landscapes — Douglas-fir forests, Garry oak meadows, and forested shorelines. These are places home to a rich diversity of species. Our natural spaces and features enhance our built environment and provide essential spaces for recreation, leisure and ecological health.

The urban forest has long been a priority in View Royal. The 2011 Official Community Plan (OCP) committed to maintaining a healthy urban forest by encouraging the retention of trees and ecological features, expanding tree canopy cover and enhancing biodiversity and habitat. Despite these commitments, new and evolving challenges, such as climate change, urban intensification, and declining forest health, threaten the quality and extent of the urban forest.

To address these growing threats and to enhance community resilience, a renewed approach is needed — one that strengthens our management of the urban forest and supports its long-term sustainability to secure benefits to the community.

Left and above: Camas flowers in Garry oak meadows (Lotus Johnson)

1.2 Plan Purpose

The Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) sets a clear, coordinated direction for managing View Royal's urban forest over the next 20 years. Its goal is to ensure the continued delivery of ecological, social, and health benefits provided by the urban forest.

Effective urban forest management is inherently interdisciplinary, involving multiple departments and interested parties in the community. Planning requires thoughtful integration of diverse interests, values, and technical expertise. This strategy is designed to provide that integration — balancing environmental protection, community needs, and the realities of urban development.

A 20-year horizon allows space for transformative but sustainable urban forest planning, while scheduled five-year reviews will ensure the strategy remains adaptive and responsive to evolving challenges and best practices.

By planning strategically, the Town can:

- Identify and track emerging issues in urban forest management,
- Establish organizational priorities in managing the urban forest,
- Support urban forest monitoring with reliable data and tools,
- Expand and enhance access to urban nature,
- Improve alignment between financial planning and operational needs,
- Inform data-driven policy development and decision-making, and
- Strengthen community outreach, education, and stewardship.

1.3 Structure of the Strategy

The UFS is organized into five sections:

1. **Introduction and Overview:** introduces the context, purpose, and benefits of urban forest management in View Royal.
2. **View Royal's Urban Forest:** summarizes the current condition of the urban forest, including its composition, trends, and pressures.
3. **Our Program:** describes the Town's existing urban forest programs and regulatory framework.
4. **The Path Forward**: Identifies the key challenges and community input that have informed this Strategy, and introduces the strategic framework.
5. **Action and Monitoring Plan:** details the actions, targets, and indicators that will guide implementation over the next 20 years.

1.4 What is the Urban Forest?

View Royal's urban forest includes all trees and forested landscapes within the Town's boundaries —those in public parks, along streets, in private yards, and within natural areas. It encompasses both planted and naturally occurring vegetation, and extends across the urban core to Thetis Lake, and Mill Hill Regional Parks, and the Town's rural edges (Figure 1)[1].

The urban forest is more than trees alone. It includes the living (biotic), non-living (abiotic), and cultural elements that shape our landscapes—soils, understory vegetation, hydrology, and the relationships between people and place. Together, these features form a complex urban ecological system embedded in the urban environment.

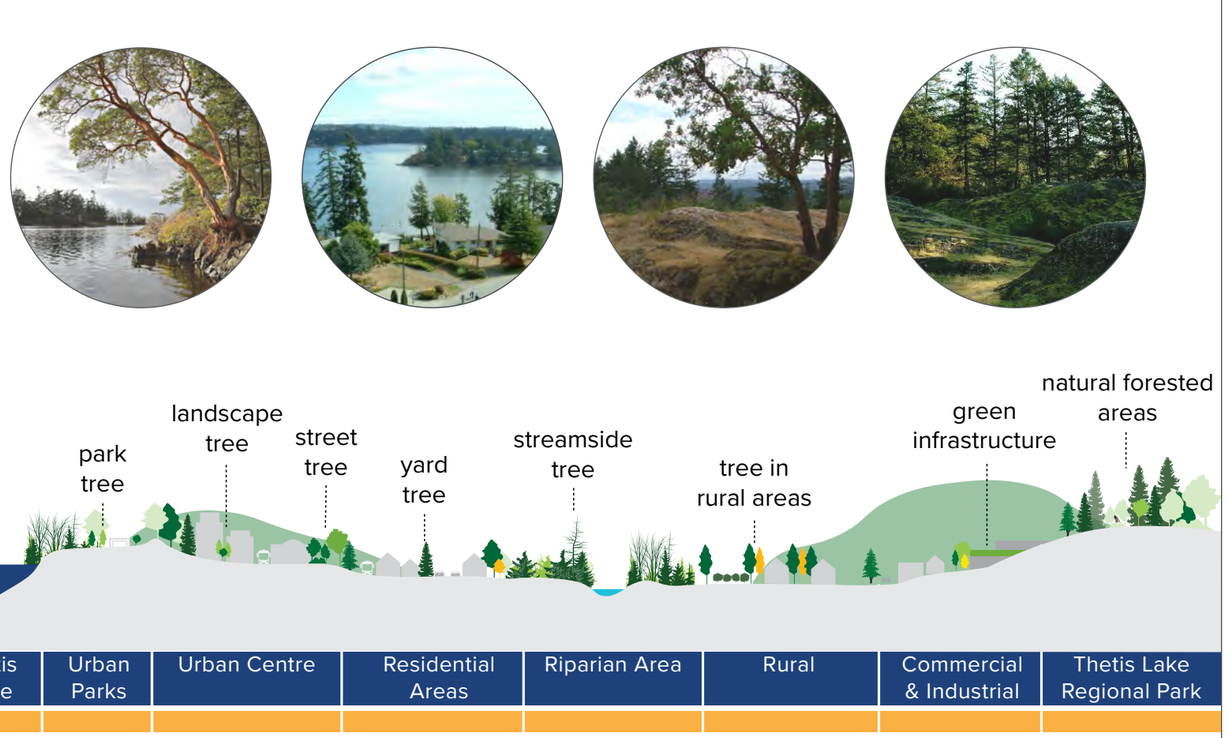


Figure 1. Urban to rural gradient showing the range of tree assets in View Royal

1.5 Why is the Urban Forest Important?

Urban forests are an essential part of a livable, resilient and healthy urban environment. The benefits trees provide are often referred to as 'ecosystem services'. Examples of benefits include:

Climate adaptation and mitigation

Trees regulate temperatures through shade and I and reduce storm and flood impacts[2,3]. They are also important carbon sinks, sequestering and storing atmospheric carbon[4,5].

Clean air and water

Leaves intercept or absorb pollutants like carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, and particulates[6]. Leaves and root systems also attenuate and filter rainwater and stormwater runoff, improving water quality before it enters our waterways[7,8].

Habitat and biodiversity

Urban forests support a wide range of plant, animal, fungal, and microbial life[9], benefiting both human and animal residents[10].

Improving human health

Exposure to greenery reduces stress, improves work performance, boosts creativity, and aids recovery in hospitals[11,12,13]. Schools with more trees and shrubs visible from classroom windows have been found to achieve higher test scores and graduation rates[14]. Access to parks or natural areas increases physical activity levels[15].

Economic value

Trees stimulate the local economy by attracting people to commercial districts, resulting in increased spending and longer stays[16]. Areas with abundant tree cover often have higher property values[17,18].

Resources

Trees provide resources for cultural, social, and economic uses, including food, medicines or materials like timber, firewood or bark for weaving.

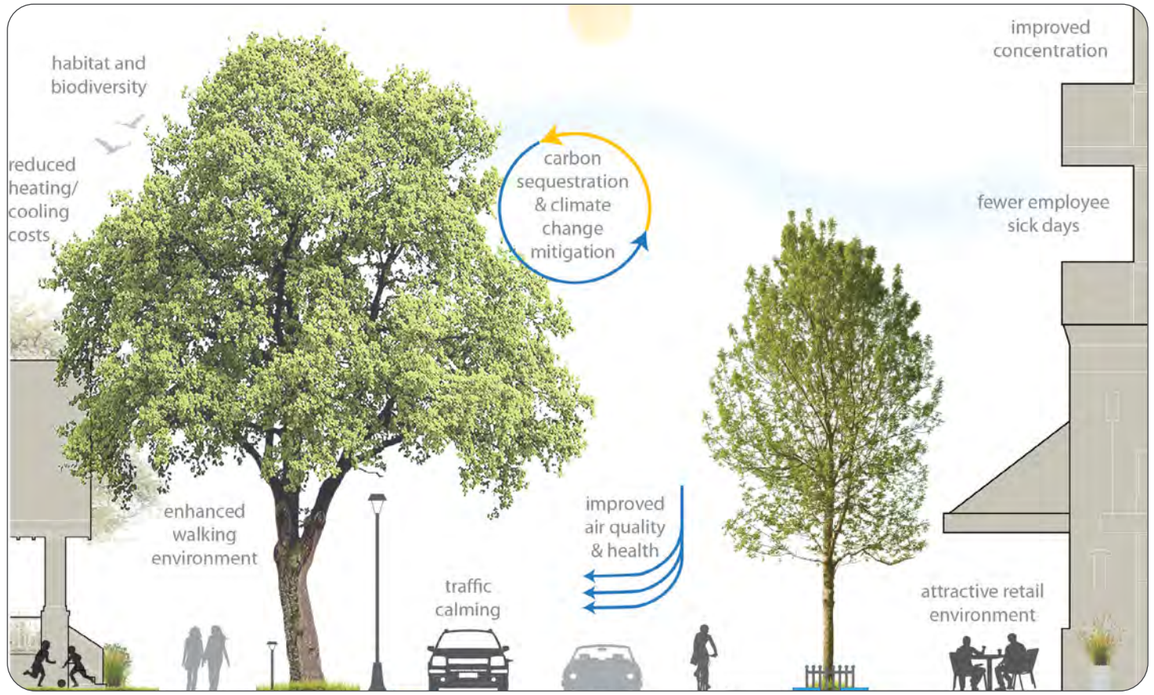


Figure 2. The many benefits provided by View Royal's urban forest

Extreme Heat

The urban forest also plays a critical role in protecting communities from the effects of extreme heat. By providing shade and releasing moisture into the air, they cool their environments. Urban areas with higher tree cover are better able to moderate extreme temperatures, reducing the risk of heat-related illnesses and mortality[19]. This benefit was underscored during British Columbia's 2021 heat dome, which caused over 800 fatalities[20]. A 2022 report to the Chief Coroner of BC identified low canopy cover as a contributing factor to this loss of life.

In contrast, areas with limited tree cover are often dominated by hard surfaces—such as pavement and rooftops—that absorb and retain heat throughout the day, then release it slowly at night, leading to elevated ambient temperatures and prolonged heat exposure. In View Royal, the effects of urban heat can be seen in a land surface temperature map captured on a hot summer day (Figure 2). This map highlights the cooling influence of forested areas like Thetis Lake Regional Park, shown in blue. In some cases, surface temperatures in these areas can be as must as 15°C cooler than the hottest urbanized areas in Town, shown in red.

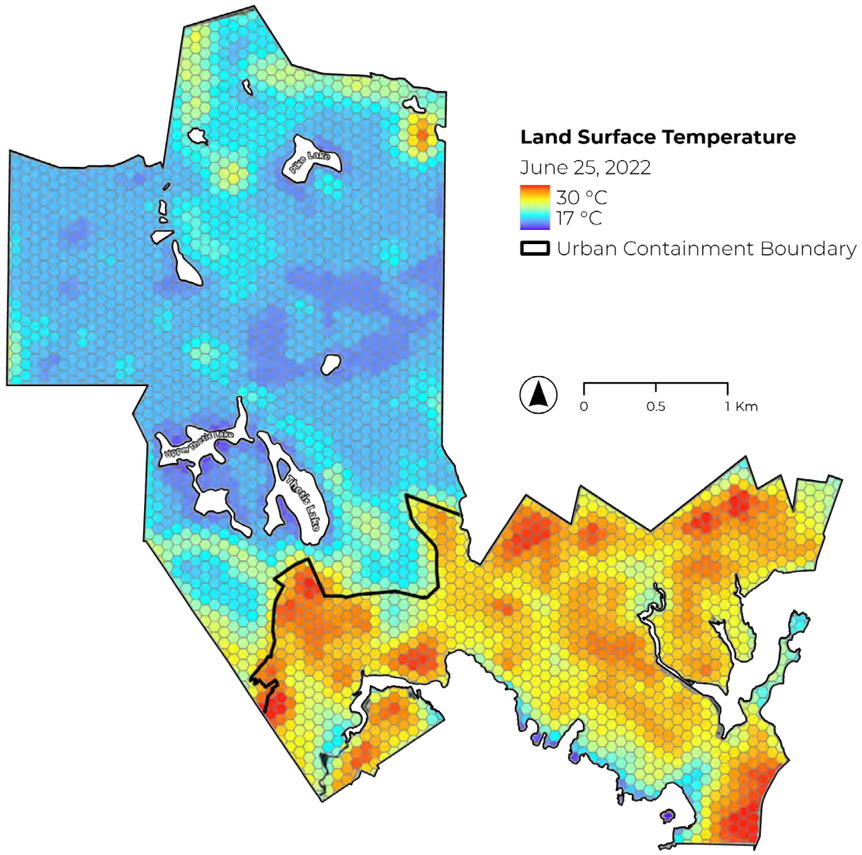


Figure 3. Land surface temperature across the Town during an extreme heat event (06-25-22)

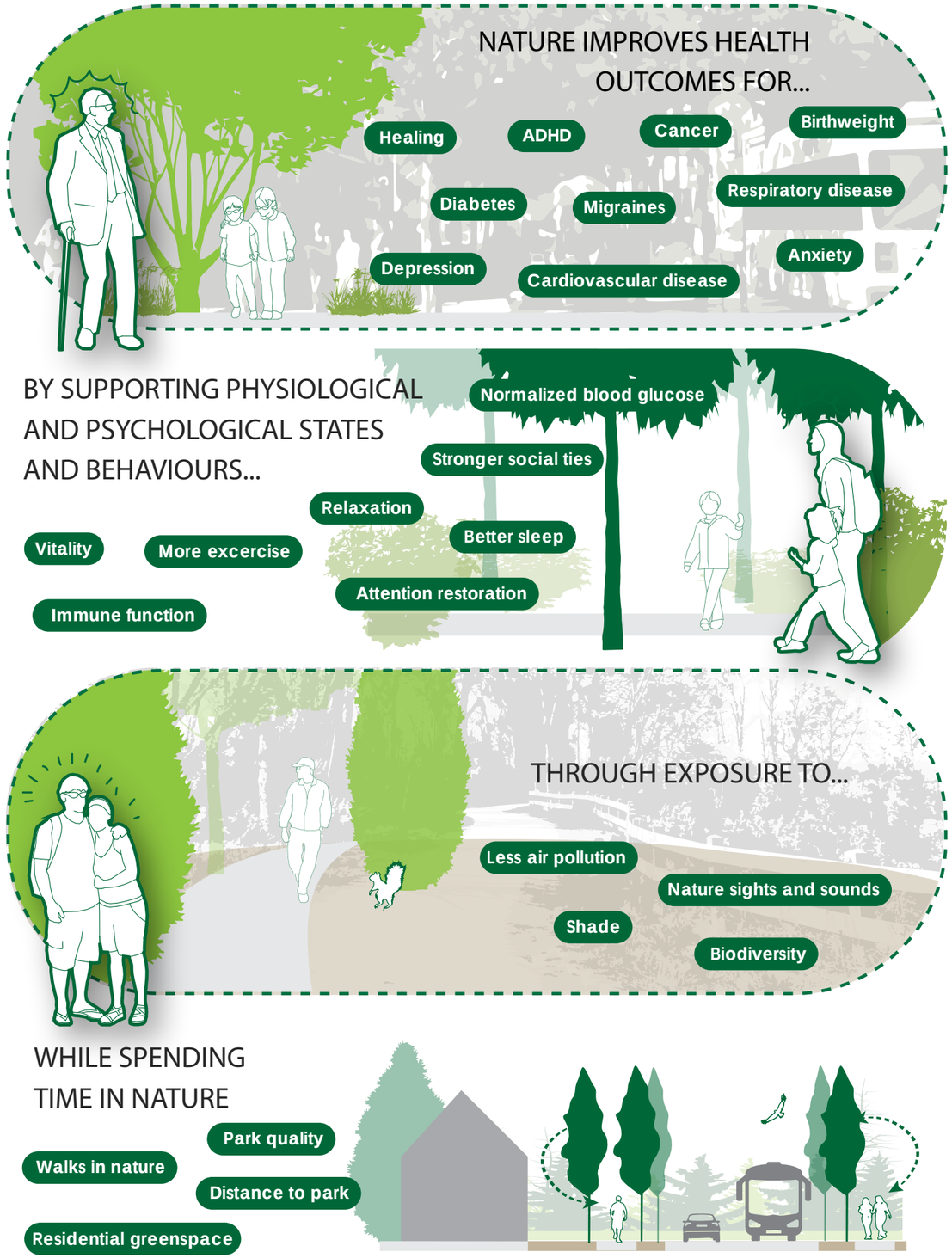


Figure 4. Health benefits of urban trees adapted from Urban Trees and Human Health: A Scoping Review.[60]

Ecosystem Services

Ecosystem services are the environmental, social, and economic benefits that natural systems provide, including climate regulation, air and water purification, habitat support, and cultural value. Quantifying these services helps demonstrate their importance and guide investment in their protection.

To assess the value of its urban forest, the Town of View Royal used the industry standard i-Tree software suite, which estimates the dollar value of measurable services like carbon storage, air purification, and stormwater interception. While valuable, this approach does not capture harder-to-quantify benefits such as biodiversity, cultural significance, and mental well-being—meaning the true value of the urban forest is much greater than the figures suggest.

Within the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB), View Royal's urban forest is estimated to provide over $10 million in stored carbon value and more than $600,000 in annual benefits (Table 1). Community-wide, the urban forest is valued over $68 million, including $2.7 million in annual services.

Carbon Storage

$9.4 Million stored

$330,000 sequestered per year

Flood Mitigation

$110,000 per year

Air Purification

$170,000 per year

Table 1. Summary of ecosystem service values for View Royal's UCB using i-Tree Canopy (2023)

Ecosystem Service	Service Estimates	Dollar Value ($)
Carbon & Stormwater		
C Sequestered annually in trees (t/year)	461	$331,800
C stored in trees (t)	13,135	$9,446,300
Stormwater Attenuation		
Avoided annual runoff (L/year)	47,648,156	$112,200
Air Quality		
CO removed annually (kg)	133,109	$200
NO2 removed annually (kg)	1,347,389	$400
O3 removed annually (kg)	9,531,455	$28,300
PM10 (kg)	2,814,651	$19,400
PM2.5 (kg)	734,974	$124,500
SO2 removed annually (kg)	516,131	$100
Total air pollution removed (kg/year)	**15,077,709**	**$172,900**
Total Annual Service Value		**$616,900**
Total Non-repeating Service Value		**$10,063,200**

Urban Forestry Program at a Glance

Tree Giveaway

View Royal's 'Resident Tree Planting Program' has grown significantly in recent years. In response to a surge in demand in 2024, funding increased from $4,500 to $26,000 to expand the program.

Tree Bylaw

The Tree Bylaw is administered by the Engineering Department, specifically the Directory of Engineering and the department Clerk. While there is no fee for standard applications, fees apply when trees cannot be replaced or when applicants request expedited processing. Annual administrative costs range from $20,000 to $25,000 in total and include contractor support, clerk and staff time.

Invasive Species Management

The Town addresses invasive species management in many ways: within road rights-of-way, management is contracted out at an annual cost of $10,000. For other municipal owned lands, including parks, a part-time Invasive Species Management Coordinator is supported by an $18,000 operating budget and oversees these efforts and guides restoration work led by the Greater Victoria Green Team (GVGT). The GVGT receives an additional $25,000 in annual funding.

Tree Care

Tree care operations are contractor dependent as the Town does not have a public works yard, in-house tree care crews, or a municipal arborist that can be dedicated to tree care. An operating budget of approximately $75,000 is used for tree consulting, hazard removals, and (clearance) pruning. Tree replacement ranges from $5,000 to $30,000 annually.

Work Orders

Annual public service requests related to tree work have averaged around 30 tickets in recent years.

Top to Bottom: Tree giveaway (Town of View Royal), tree bylaw (DHC), invasive species management (VRCA), tree care (Yulya Zolotko), work orders (Canva)

1.6 Urban Forest Program

How does the Town Manage its Trees?

Engineering & Parks Department

The Town's Engineering Department is responsible for managing the urban forest on Town property, including in its parks and along Municipal roads. This includes coordinating tree maintenance and removal activities on Town property, processing tree permits, development review, managing invasive species, and organizing the Town's residential tree-planting program. The Department's Engineering standards also influence the growing conditions provided for trees through their Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw (SDS, No. 985), Zoning Bylaw (ZBL, No. 900), and Official Community Plan (OCP, No. 811). The Town leverages dedicated funding for contracted arboriculture services, including tree pruning and consulting services that support tree and development permit applications. While tree protection is a priority for staff, urban forest management is one of several other responsibilities undertaken by related roles in Engineering and Parks.

Development Services Department

The Town's Development Services Department was previously responsible for processing tree permits associated with development applications which have informally become the responsibility of Engineering and Parks. They continue to process development permits which must comply with the Town's OCP and ZBL, including relevant Development Permit (DP) Areas; these policies moderate the amount of space available for tree planting on private property. New provincial housing policy direction has put emphasis on growth through urban intensification. Development Services is leading the Town's mandate to consider the Municipality's policy frameworks relative to these, and to balance growth with other core planning objectives like complete communities and urban greening.

Department of Protective Services/Fire

In View Royal, the Fire Chief oversees fire services and emergency preparedness, playing a key role in community safety and wildfire prevention. As part of this, the FireSmart program, led by the Municipality's FireSmart coordinator, helps residents reduce wildfire risk through public education, home assessments, and practical steps like fire-resistant landscaping. The Fire Chief supports these efforts to strengthen urban forest and community resilience, securing View Royal's preparedness for wildfire season.

Who else has a hand in urban forest management?

Capital Regional District

While the Town of View Royal is responsible for trees on Municipal property, most of the Town's urban forest canopy is under the management of the Capital Regional District (64%) by way of Mill Hill and Thetis Lake Regional Parks. The District also reports on regional canopy cover change and identifies the location of sensitive ecosystems within its jurisdictional area (which includes View Royal). In general, trees located in regional parks are protected.

Private Landowners

Within the Town's Urban Containment Boundary (UCB), 59% of all canopy cover is located on private property (Figure 5). Landowners influence the urban forest through their decisions to plant, maintain, or remove trees on their property, as well as through the species and locations they choose to plant. They also participate in urban forest stewardship opportunities and play an advocacy role in urban forest management.

Resident Tree Planting Program (2024)

$26,000 in funding

159 trees planted

6x more than in 2023

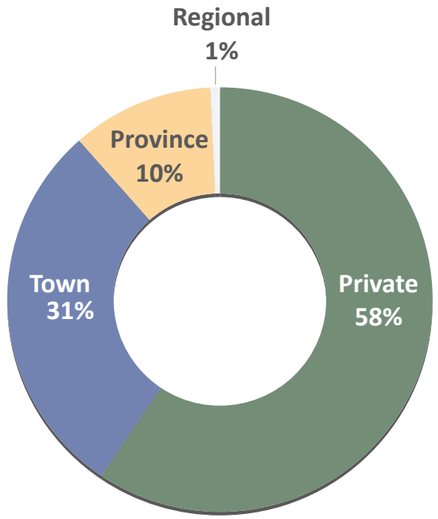
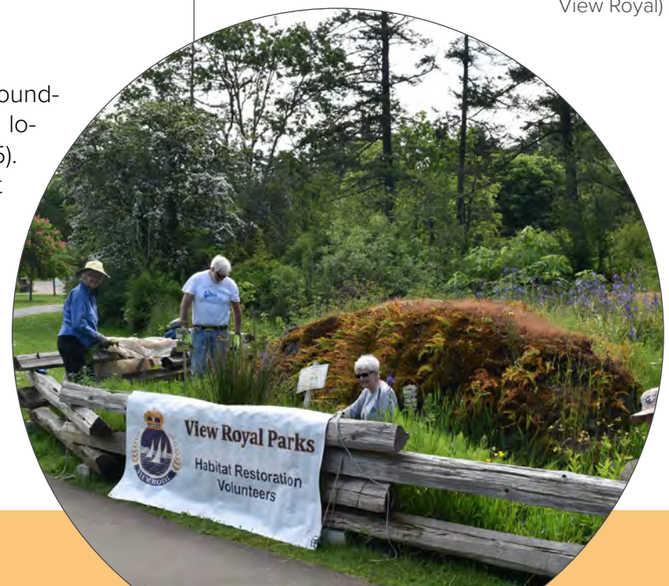


Figure 5. The proportion of canopy cover within the Town's Urban Containment Boundary by ownership type in 2023

Below: View Royal Habitat Restoration Project volunteers (Town of View Royal)



Utility Companies

Hydro, gas and other service providers require tree pruning to maintain reasonable clearance around their assets. Service providers are responsible for providing or procuring these services to support public health and safety and to prevent unplanned service disruption. Presently, pruning services for these providers are not performed in collaboration with Town staff and do not always follow arboricultural best practices.

Additional actors influencing the urban forest include the Province, which regulates riparian areas and the Town's Agricultural Land Reserve. Private arboriculture and landscape companies also plant, maintain, and remove trees on private property.

First Nations

The Town endeavours to engage First Nations on the happenings within View Royal. It is a continued and ongoing process. The urban forest has been identified to be of significant interest to the Xwesepsum and Songhees Nations and the Town will continue to reach out and engage with its neighbours regarding the state of the urban forest.

Greater Victoria Green Team

The Greater Victoria Green Team has worked in partnership with the Town of View Royal to manage invasive species in its public parks. They host popular monthly and weekly restoration activities that provide volunteers with the opportunity to steward the Town's natural areas. The Municipality contracts a part-time Volunteer Coordinator for at least nine invasive species removal activities per year. The limited financial resources allocated to the project limit its ability to manage invasive species across the Town's many parks, and the Team's ability to maintain and monitor the trees they plant in restoration sites.

1.7 Policy Context

Enabling Legislation

The *Community Charter* and the *Local Government Act* (LGA) are key pieces of legislation that empower municipalities in British Columbia to manage their urban forest. The Community Charter establishes core municipal powers, including authority over trees on public land, environmental protection, and bylaw enforcement. The LGA supports land use planning and development regulation, which influence how urban forests are protected or integrated into growth. Together, they provide the legal foundation for municipalities to plan, protect, and sustain urban forests in alignment with community priorities.

Strategic Plan

The Town of View Royal's 2023–2026 Strategic Plan identifies Council's priorities over the coming four years and serves as a guiding document outlining the municipality's priorities and actions over that period. A significant element in the plan is the development of an Urban Forest Strategy (UFS), which aims to enhance the management, protection, and growth of the town's urban forest. This initiative reflects View Royal's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable development, recognizing the vital role that urban forests play in climate resilience and community well-being.

Official Community Plan

The Community's Official Community Plan (OCP) outlines View Royal's long-term vision for sustainable growth, land use, and environmental stewardship. It emphasizes the protection of natural assets, including the urban forest, through policies that support biodiversity, climate resilience, and community well-being. The plan designates Development Permit Areas (DPAs) to manage development in sensitive ecosystems and commits to enhancing tree canopy cover and regularly updating the Tree Protection Bylaw.

Zoning Bylaw

The Zoning Bylaw (ZBL) regulates development within the Town of View Royal. The ZBL specifies what types of buildings can occur in each zone, and their associated performance regulations, which often include building height, setbacks and landscaped space requirements. In establishing the rules for form and lot configuration, View Royal's ZBL exerts significant influence over the space available for trees on private property.

Subdivision & Servicing Bylaw

View Royal's Subdivision & Servicing (SDS) bylaw governs land subdivision and infrastructure servicing standards. It includes specifications for boulevard widths and tree planting in public rights-of-way, ensuring that new developments accommodate street trees and support the growth of the urban forest.

Tree Protection Bylaw No. 1069

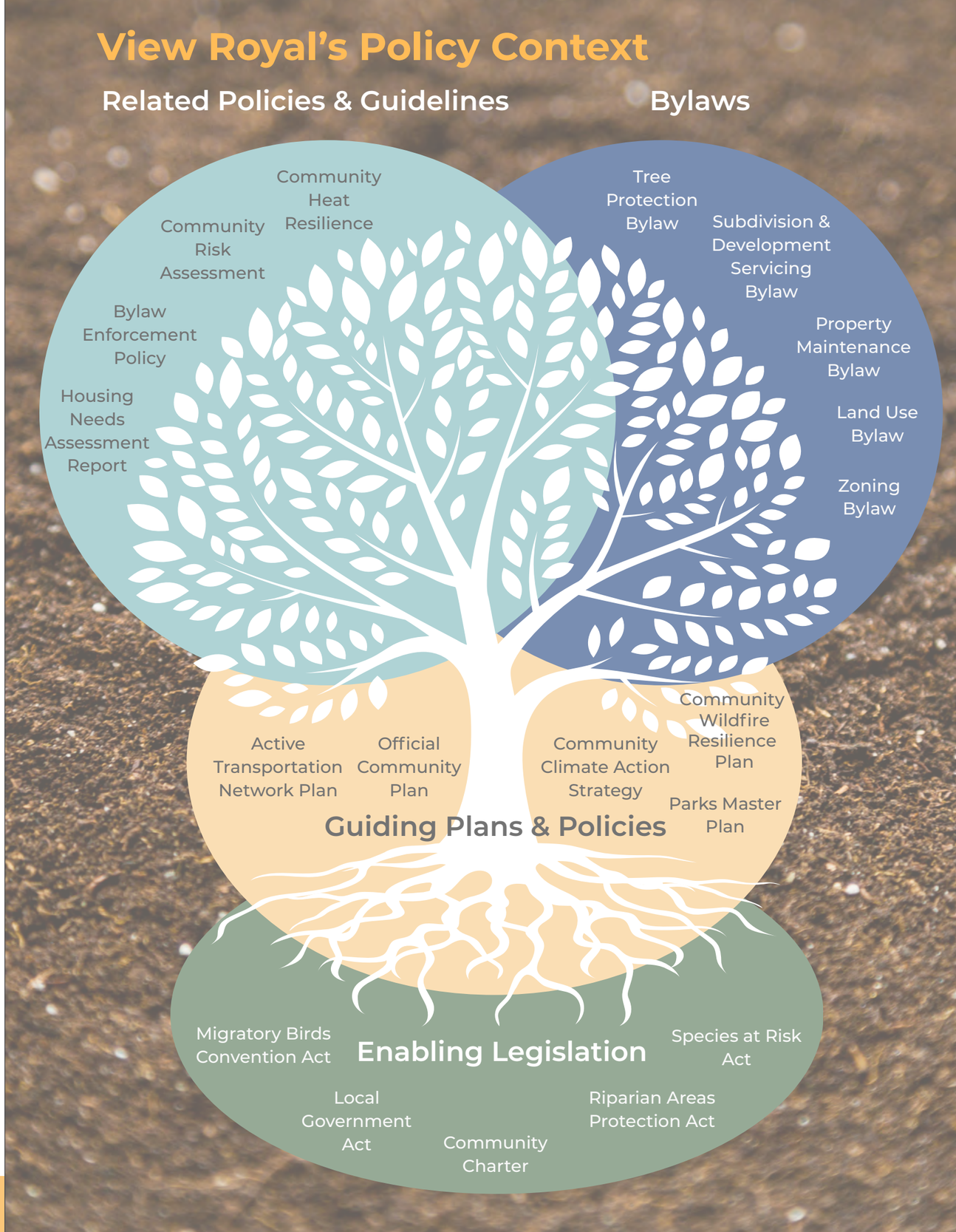
Adopted in 2022, View Royal's Tree Protection Bylaw regulates the alteration, removal, and replacement of trees within View Royal. It protects significant trees, including many native species and those over 20 cm in diameter, and sets conditions for their removal or alteration. The bylaw also outlines requirements for tree replacement and maintenance, supporting the Town's goals for canopy preservation and climate action.

Parks Master Plan

While not a regulatory document, the Parks Master Plan is a supporting document that informs financial planning and provides strategic direction for the management and enhancement of View Royal's parks and green spaces. It advocates for increased public access to greenspace, improved park connectivity, and the protection of ecological assets.

Community Climate Action Strategy (CCAS)

Similarly, the CCAS adopted in 2022 outlines View Royal's approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change. It commits to developing this Urban Forest Strategy and increasing community-wide tree canopy cover to enhance carbon sequestration and resilience to climate impacts.



Bill 44, 46, & 47

Bills 44, 46, and 47 represent a major shift in how growth and housing are managed in BC. By mandating higher-density housing, particularly near transit and in low-density neighbourhoods, and by streamlining approval processes, these laws can facilitate considerable acceleration in the pace of urban development. While intended to address the housing crisis, they can also introduce significant risk to the urban forest, especially as infill development puts pressure on private lots where most of the Town's canopy exists. Reduced setbacks, smaller yards, and expanded infrastructure leave less room for trees and often result in the loss of mature canopy with limited replacement.

Without careful thought, this regulatory shift could lead to a rapid and uneven decline in urban tree cover, increasing heat vulnerability, stormwater challenges, and ecological fragmentation—particularly in under-served neighbourhoods. Intentional urban forest planning is more important than ever. As a community, View Royal must assess whether our existing systems, processes and standards are adequate to navigate the period of growth ahead. The UFS is the first step in that process.

Development (right) around Victoria General Hospital (above) has resulted in recent canopy loss (John Newcomb)

1.8 Urban Forest Report Card

Criteria and indicators offer a standard framework for the assessment of municipal urban forest management programs. Such a framework enables municipalities to evaluate performance consistently over time and enables comparison with peer communities who have used the same evaluation approach. View Royal's urban forest program has been assessed against a widely recognized set of urban forest criteria and indicators. These criteria provide a baseline for evaluating progress across various elements of an urban forest management program, including planning, operations, maintenance, monitoring, and partnerships. The evaluation of the Town's program included a thorough review of relevant policies and procedures, supplemented by detailed consultations with Town staff.

Evaluation of View Royal's program was based on a detailed review of the municipal policies and staff interviews. Overall, the Town's urban forest program scored 'Fair'. The primary limitation in advancing View Royal's urban forest program has been the limited resources available to it. All of the program is administered by staff who's primary role includes a range of other core tasks.

Urban Forest Report Card

2024 program grade (in colour)

Not yet assessed

	Poor	Fair	Good	Optimal
PLAN				
Awareness of the urban forest as a community resource	○	○	●	○
Tree canopy cover relative to established canopy cover goals	○	○	○	○
Clear and defensible urban forest assessment and goals	○	○	○	●
Interdepartmental cooperation in urban forest strategy implementation	○	●	○	○
Municipality-wide urban forest management plan	○	○	○	●
Municipal green asset management	○	●	○	○
Municipal-wide biodiversity or green network strategy	○	●	○	○
Tracking urban forestry operational carbon footprint and carbon-cycle balance	●	○	○	○
Urban forest funding to implement a strategy	○	○	○	○
Municipal urban forestry program capacity	●	○	○	○
Waste biomass utilization	○	○	○	○
MANAGE				
Equity in planting program delivery	●	○	○	○
Forest Restoration & Native species planting	○	●	○	○
Ecosystem services targeted in tree planting projects and landscaping	○	●	○	○
Selection and procurement of stock in cooperation with nursery industry	●	○	○	○
Streetscape and servicing specifications and standards for planting trees	○	●	○	○
Municipal tree planting and replacement program design, planning, and implementation	○	●	○	○
Development requirements to plant trees on private land	○	○	●	○
Age diversity (size class distribution)	○	○	○	○
Species suitability	○	○	●	○
Species diversity	●	○	○	○
PROTECT				
Regulations for the protection and replacement of private and municipal trees	○	○	●	○
Regulations for sensitive ecosystems, soils, or permeability through private development	○	○	●	○
Internal protocols guide municipal tree or sensitive ecosystem protection	○	○	○	○
Standards and specifications supporting tree protection during development	○	●	○	○
Cooperation with utilities on protection and pruning of municipal trees	●	○	○	○
MONITOR				
Tree inventory	○	●	○	○
Natural areas inventory	○	●	○	○
Maintenance of intensively managed trees	○	○	○	○
Publicly owned tree species condition assessment	○	○	○	○
Tree risk management	○	○	○	○
Emergency response planning	○	○	●	○
Pest and disease management	○	○	○	○
Knowledge of trees on private property	○	○	●	○
PARTNER				
Citizen involvement	○	○	●	○
Involvement of large private land and institutional land holders	○	●	○	○
Urban forest research	●	○	○	○
Regional collaboration	○	●	○	○

Left: Thetis Lake Regional Park Viewpoint (Andrew C. Miller)

2. View Royal's Urban Forest

2.1 Climate and Ecology

Climate

The Town of View Royal has a temperate coastal climate, shaped by its sheltered location in the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains and Vancouver Island[21,22]. This results in mild, wet winters and warm, dry summers with a mean annual temperature near 10°C and over 1,000 mm of annual precipitation[23]. The climate and coastal setting support diverse terrestrial and marine ecosystems, including estuaries, deltas, meadows, and forests[24,25]. Low snowfall enables a high diversity of overwintering birds, and Portage Inlet lies within a migratory bird sanctuary.

Ecology

View Royal is in the Coastal Douglas-fir Moist Maritime (CDFmm) biogeoclimatic subzone, limited to low-elevation coastal areas around the Salish Sea[26,27]. Native ecosystems feature century-old Douglas-fir forests with a lush understory of ferns, salal, Oregon grape, and ocean spray, especially in Thetis Lake and Mill Hill Regional Parks[28]. Natural landscapes include grassy hilltops, marshes, mudflats, sandbars, streams, rivers, and lakes[29]. Willows, dogwood, and snowberry are common in CDFmm floodplains, and grand fir and western red cedar are more common in wetter sites.

Invasive Species

Invasive plants like English ivy, Himalayan blackberry, and spurge laurel are widespread in the CDFmm and in View Royal, outcompeting native species and degrading wildlife habitat. [30]. Over 150 invasive species have been introduced to the region since European settlement[31]. As early as 1972, a quarter of species in Garry oak ecosystems were non-native[32], with some areas having up to 80% of understory plants from exotic origins[33].

Garry oak meadow (left) and wildflowers found in them (above).

Left to right: Garry oak meadow (Pr2is), camas (Lotus Johnson), white farn lily (Brewbooks), Henderson's shooting star (ErincinSF) and yellow montane violet (Andreyz Harkikh)

Garry Oak Ecosystems

View Royal is home to many of Canada's rarest species and ecosystems[34,35]. Garry oak meadows and savannas are home to over 100 native species, including plants and wildlife. Many do not occur anywhere else in Canada and often have threatened or endangered conservation status[36].

Garry oak ecosystems were widespread prior to colonization and were intentionally burned by local Host Nations using frequent low-intensity fires for food, such as berries, camas bulbs, and nuts. Over time, these landscapes were converted to farmland and residential uses, and Host Nations were prevented from using traditional land management practices. Fire suppression has led to the transition of some Garry oak meadows into Douglas-fir forests. Work is underway to further recognize the significance of cultural burns for maintaining the most biodiverse ecosystem in Canada[37].

View Royal's Garry oak meadows have decreased in area by over 85% since 1800[38]. This area will likely decrease further since the ecosystem faces encroachment by urban development and Douglas fir forests[39,40]. Remnants of this ecosystem are often small and interspersed with urban areas which limits the movement and establishment of plants and wildlife.

In 2022, View Royal sold almost ten hectares of land to the Capital Regional District (CRD) to support the creation of Mill Hill Regional Park[41]. This decision helps protect the large concentration of species at risk contained within the resident Garry oak ecosystem. View Royal continues to protect rare Garry oak ecosystems through continued community development and is engaged in dialogues to further the community's management of these culturally important landscape features.

Left: Garry oak tree and meadow (Jeremy Eade); Right: Garry oak acorns

INVASIVE PLANTS

SCOTCH BROOM

Area of concern:
Dry open areas

Introduced in 1850 as an ornamental, dense thickets of scotch broom are fire prone and can shade out the numerous rare native flowering plants that normally occur in more open Garry oak meadows.

HIMALAYAN BLACKBERRY

Area of concern:
Parks, roadways, riparian and natural areas

Intentionally introduced to produce edible berries, it is now spread profusely by birds and expands aggressively through vegetative growth. Along streams and rivers, it can increase erosion

ENGLISH IVY

Area of concern:
Natural areas, edges

An ornamental plant that escaped from private gardens into natural areas that can smother native vegetation and reduce the lifespan of trees.

INVASIVE PESTS

Introduced in the 1930s from Europe and Russia, arriving on Vancouver Island in 1970, it now threatens the Garry oak ecosystem where it feeds on young Garry oak buds.

Target(s):
Garry oak
Maples
Apples

WINTER MOTH

Introduced from Europe in the 1960s, it is a growing concern in the Pacific Northwest. The insect pierces and extracts nutrients from Garry oak leaves which can cause the leaves to drop prematurely. Up to 10% of the trees attacked by the pest die from repeated defoliation.

Target(s):
Garry oak
English oak

OAK LEAF PHYLLOXERA

Introduced to North America around 1868, the moth has been found in Garry oak trees and can completely defoliate them. This can kill trees if repeated over multiple years, reducing the establishment of new trees, and impacting the health of older trees, which also affects the species that depend on them.

Target(s):
Hardwoods

GYPSY MOTH

2.2 History and Timeline

Time immemorial

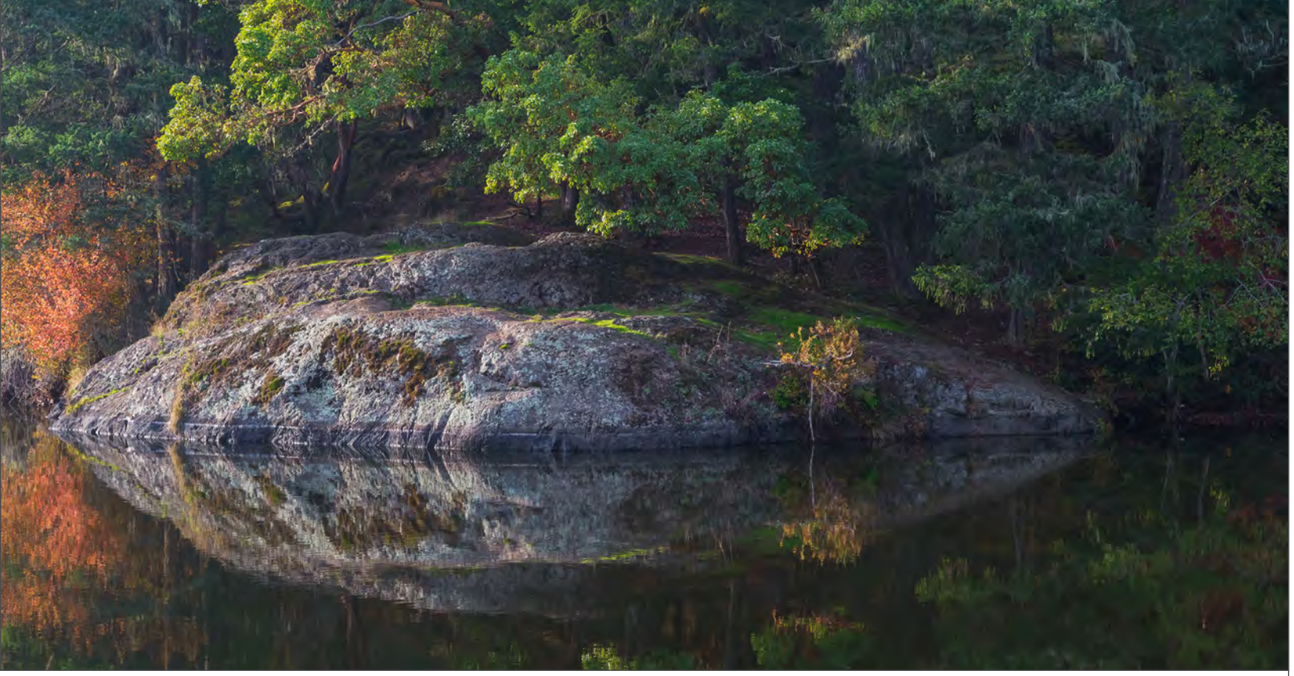
The Xwesepsum and Songhees Nations have stewarded the lands and waters in and around View Royal for thousands of years[42,43]. Indigenous land management, including burning and food cultivation, made the area's creeks and meadows rich in berries. Streams were used as paths by traditional bark harvesters and led back to food-gathering areas.

Colonial land management practices have had dramatic impact on Indigenous relationships with this landscape. Urban forest management can serve as an outlet to integrate Indigenous values, perspectives, and thousands of years of land management knowledge back into the management of these lands. The Town is working to further dialogues with local Nations, and will explore opportunities to support reconciliation and culturally sensitive management practices through implementation of this Strategy.

European Arrival

Captain James Douglas arrived at Clover Point in what is now the City of Victoria in the 19th century[44,45]. The Puget Sound Agricultural Company, a subsidiary of the Hudson's Bay Company, began farming along Esquimalt Harbour shortly after Douglas's arrival, transitioning the fur trading economy to an agricultural economy[46,47]. For much of it's history, View Royal's agricultural community fuelled the growth of urban centres like Victoria and Vancouver.

Urban development in the 1930s around Esquimalt Harbour and Portage Inlet was initially accompanied by market gardens and nurseries in its lowlands until the aftermath of WWII[48,49]. New residents introduced new and exotic trees and plants, featuring familiar foliage, flowers, and fruits from their places of origin. While some early settlers retained Garry oak meadows on their property, View Royal's growth began in earnest in the 1960s and 1970s, reducing the abundance of native trees and ecosystems within the community. In its transition from an agricultural community to an attractive getaway destination, View Royal has more than doubled its initial population since that time[50,51].



Native forests in Thetis Lake Regional Park (Emily Norton)

In 1993, Thetis Lake Regional Park was created to protect 921 ha of native forests and freshwater lakes within View Royal's municipal area, but outside of its Urban Containment Boundary[52]. Today, the Park is managed by the CRD, and supports a wide range of recreational opportunities such as cross-country skiing, swimming, running, and cycling.

Despite dramatic change, View Royal's native forests and waters continue to be a critical part of our community fabric. Without our trees and forests, View Royal would feel like a very different place than the one we have come to know and love.

Thetis Lake Regional Park (Left to Right): Larisa Kurzemnieks, Benedek, Emily Norton, Dave Mantel)

2.3 The Urban Forest Today

Canopy Cover

A tree's canopy cover is the area occupied by leaves or needles when viewed from above (Figure 6). In BC and across Canada, canopy cover is increasingly being used to monitor the growth or decline of community urban forests over time. Canopy cover can be summarized by different spatial areas, often including neighbourhoods, land uses, or ownership types. This type of analyses supports insight into how the urban forest is distributed across the community, and can help shape the development of policy and land use regulations toward achieving a defined canopy cover target.

View Royal's canopy cover in 2019 and 2023 were measured using 2019 LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) data, as well as 2019 and 2023 high-resolution imagery. Canopy layer processing was supported by machine learning methods.

While some canopy analyses below are provided Townwide for context, most focus on its Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) which the Town has a greater ability to influence.

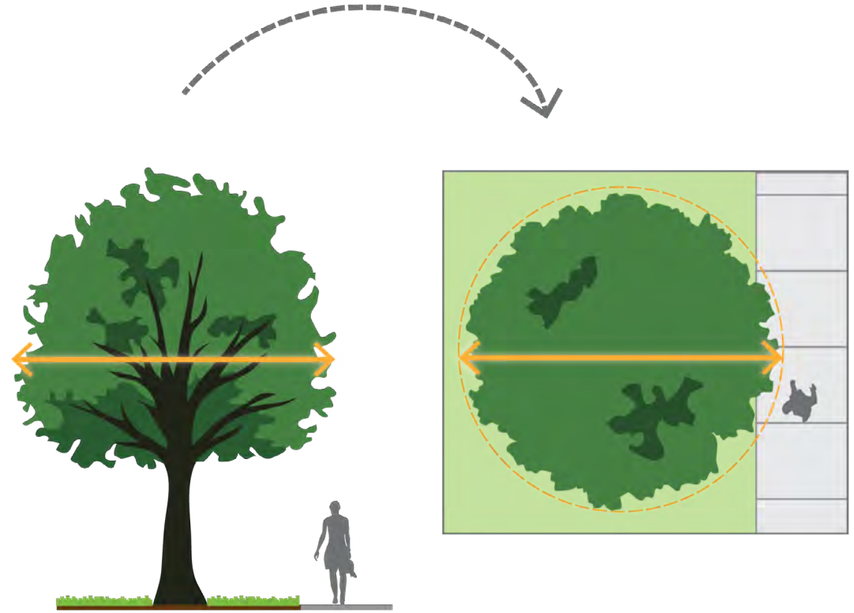


Figure 6. Canopy cover refers to the leafy upper part of trees when viewed from above (right)

View Royal's Canopy Cover

29%*

162 ha in 2023* ***within the Urban Containment Boundary**.*

Community-wide

In 2023, canopy cover within the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) was 29% (162 ha), down from 31% in 2019. This section explores canopy patterns within the following spatial units:

- **Neighbourhood:** Trends in canopy cover across View Royal's neighbourhoods
- **Land ownership:** Patterns of canopy cover across land ownership.
- **Land use:** Variation in canopy cover across different land uses.

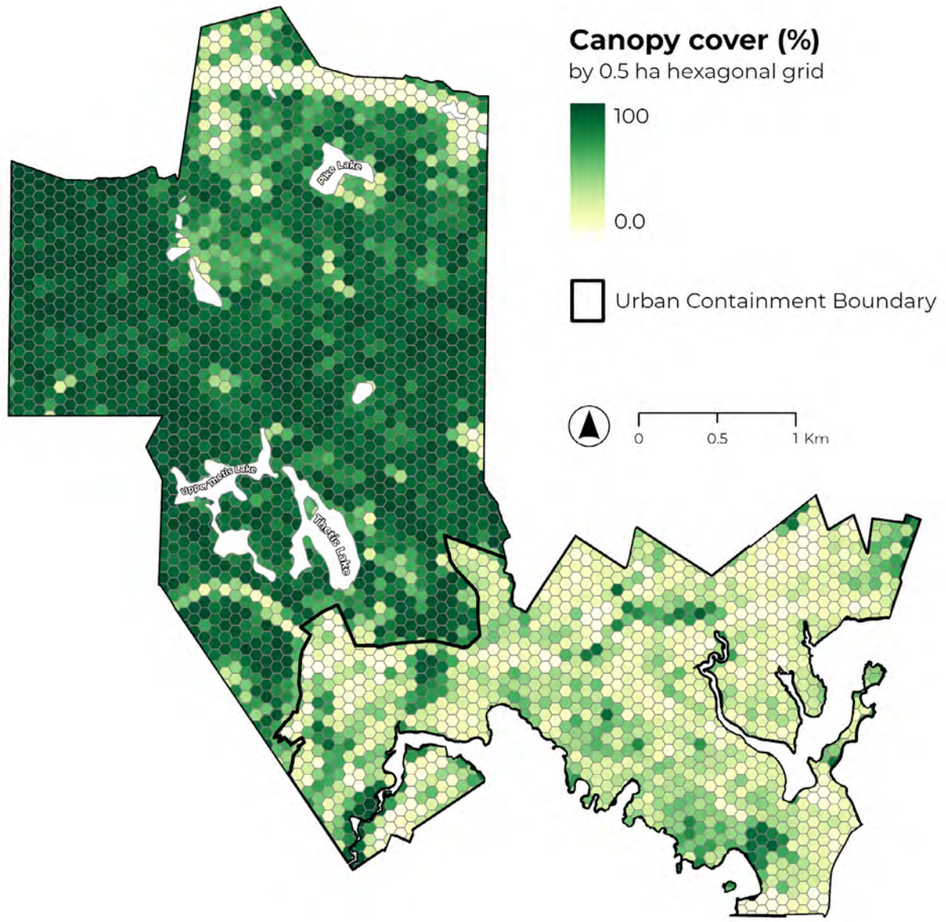


Figure 7. Town-wide canopy cover in 2023 with the UCB

By Neighbourhood

Canopy cover varies widely, from 79% in Thetis—due to extensive parkland—to 23% in Craigflower and Helmcken, which are more urbanized and have fewer trees (Figure 8). Thetis (79%) and Atkins (47%) maintain high cover due to nearby Regional Parks. Harbour also shows relatively high canopy (39%) due to larger, older residential lots that support mature trees. In contrast, Craigflower and Helmcken, developed more recently with more intensive land use, show lower canopy.

From 2019 to 2023, canopy declined in all neighbourhoods within the UCB. Most saw reductions of 3–5%, but the Hospital neighbourhood experienced an 11% drop. Since most canopy cover lies outside the UCB in CRD-managed regional parks, small losses within the UCB significantly affect urban tree canopy—especially in residential areas where the loss is more noticeable and impactful to the public.[53].

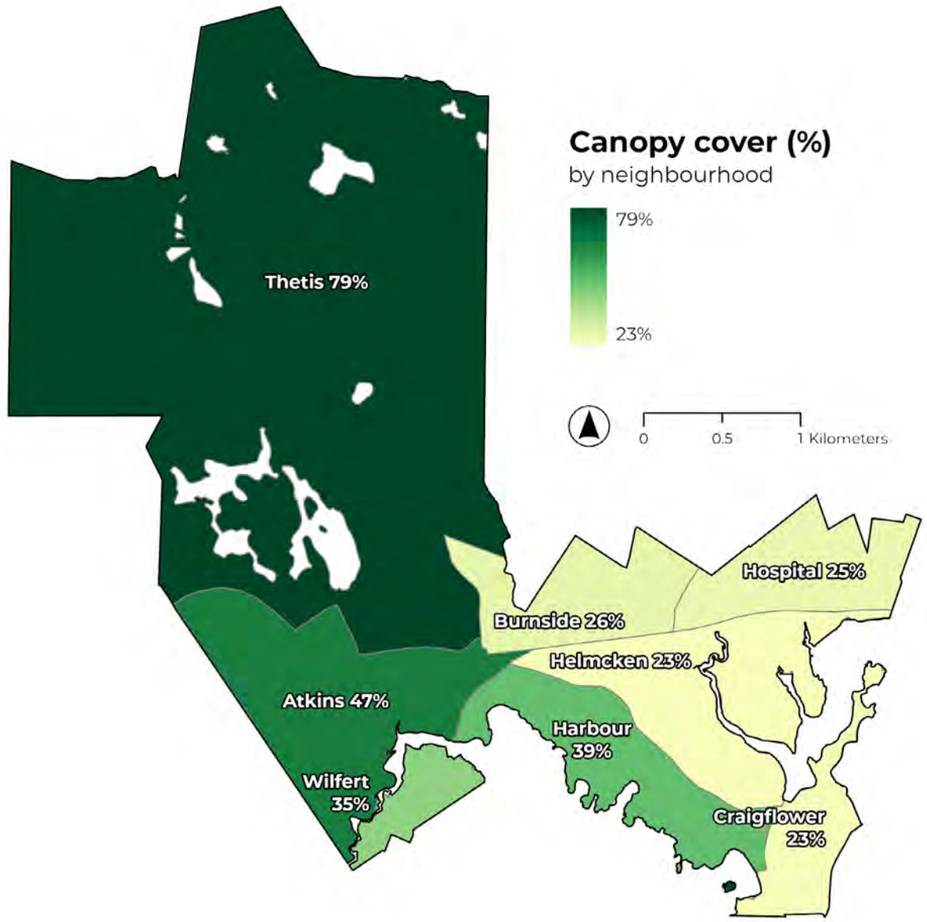


Figure 8. Canopy cover by neighbourhood in 2023

Canopy Trends

View Royal has a community-wide canopy cover above that of many peer communities (60%), and slightly lower than average canopy cover (29%) within the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) (Figure 9). High canopy coverage across the community is largely attributed to the extensive tree cover in Thetis Lake Regional Park and Mill Hill Regional Park (Figure 7). Within the UCB, the low canopy cover is due to urban land uses such as roads and housing, as well as commercial and institutional uses.

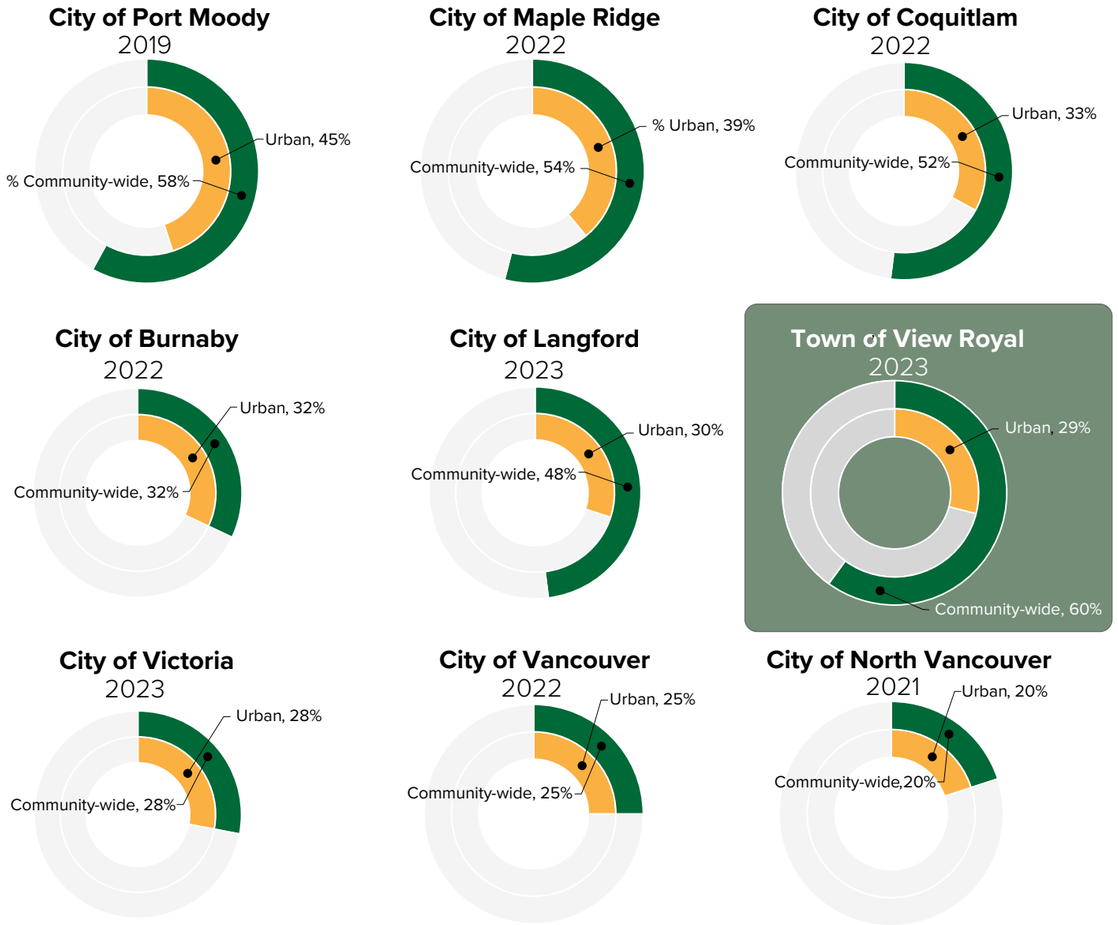


Figure 9. Citywide and UCB canopy cover comparison with municipalities in the region

3-30-300 Rule

The 3-30-300 rule has been proposed as an intuitive target that can be used by municipalities to increase access to the benefits that the urban forest provides[61]. It states that each building should have at least three trees within view, that canopy cover in temperate climates should be at least 30%, and that all residents should have access to greenspace within 300m of their homes.

Canopy Change

Most canopy cover loss in View Royal between 2019 and 2023 has occurred within the UCB, which does not include Thetis Lake Regional Park. Its canopy cover declined from 31% in 2019 to 29% in 2023 (Figure 10). This amounts to a compounding annualized rate of loss of roughly 1.1% over that period. Loss was generally consistent across neighbourhoods, ranging from 3–5%, and was typically localized, tied to specific large development projects rather than community-wide changes.

The Hospital neighbourhood experienced a sharper decline (11%) due to significant recent developments. Greenfield development in Mixed Residential areas saw even higher losses (22%). Together, large greenfield projects and smaller infill developments have contributed to notable canopy loss within the UCB over the past two decades.

As View Royal is now largely built out within the UCB, future growth—including 585 mandated housing units for over 3,200 new residents (a 25% increase over 25 years, or 0.9% annually)—will rely on urban intensification. This represents an acceleration from the past five years, during which canopy cover fell by 2%. Without intervention, increasing development may further erode canopy cover.

Tree removal to support the achievement of View Royal's housing target will occur, but development and canopy retention are not mutually exclusive. Careful design, policy interventions, and strong urban forest management will be required to preserve or restore canopy cover. The Town will need to prioritize not only tree protection but also initiatives that support tree canopy within new development following construction.

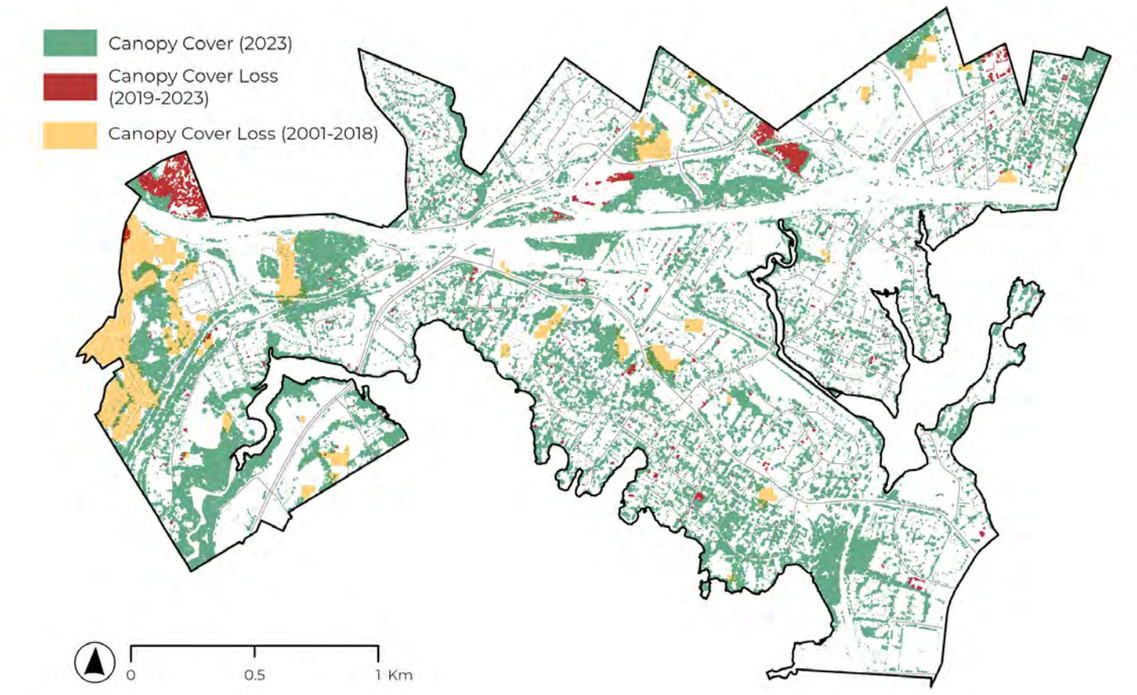


Figure 10. Canopy cover loss within the Urban Containment Boundary from 2001 - 2023

By Ownership

More than half of View Royal's total canopy cover is in Thetis Lake and Mill Hill Regional Parks, managed by the Capital Regional District (CRD). These protected parks will continue providing sizable canopy contributions to View Royal's urban forest in years to come. Within the UCB, over 58% of all canopy cover is located on private property, which is an ownership that makes up 59% of the Town's land base (Figure 11). This statistic highlights the critical role of private landowners in shaping the Town's canopy future, whether through loss or regeneration.

Municipal lands support above-average canopy cover. Though they make up 28% of the UCB land area, they account for 31% of its canopy cover—driven largely by the Town's Parks system. Provincial lands, including the Trans-Canada Highway, Victoria General Hospital (VGH), and schools, cover a notable portion of the Town but feature low canopy cover. Although the Town has limited influence over these lands, they represent important opportunities for future canopy expansion, especially in settings where trees offer proven public benefits.

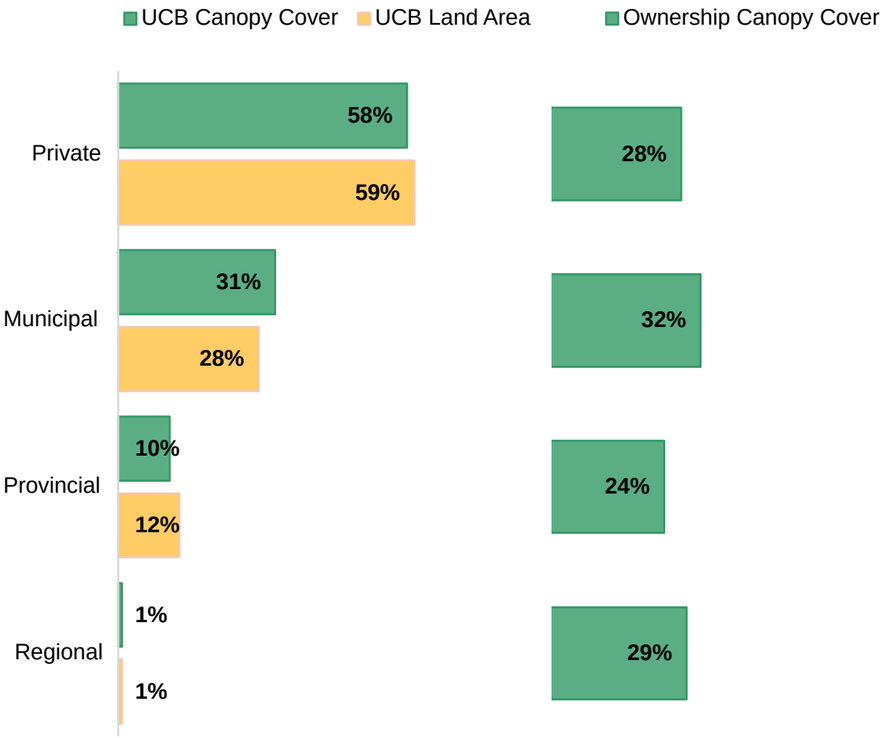


Figure 11. Proportion of View Royal's urban (UCB) canopy cover and land area by ownership type (left), and canopy cover within that ownership type (right) in 2023

By Land Use

View Royal's Official Community Plan (OCP) provides a high-level vision for growth, shaping land use and development patterns that affect tree retention and planting potential. The UCB's largest land uses—residential, parks, road rights-of-way (ROWs), large-lot and mixed residential, and community facilities—also host most of the Town's canopy cover (Figure 12). Residential areas make up 24% of the UCB and hold an equal share (24%) of canopy. Parks, while only 9% of the land, contribute 19% of canopy. ROWs, with lower average canopy (19%), still provide 16% of the total due to their extensive reach.

Higher-density land uses such as Intensive and Neighbourhood Mixed Use provide just 4% of total canopy cover, reflecting their smaller land footprint. Commercial areas, often dominated by surface parking, average 13% canopy cover and contribute just 2% to the total. Analyzing canopy by land use helps identify where policy changes or development regulations could most effectively increase future canopy across the Town.

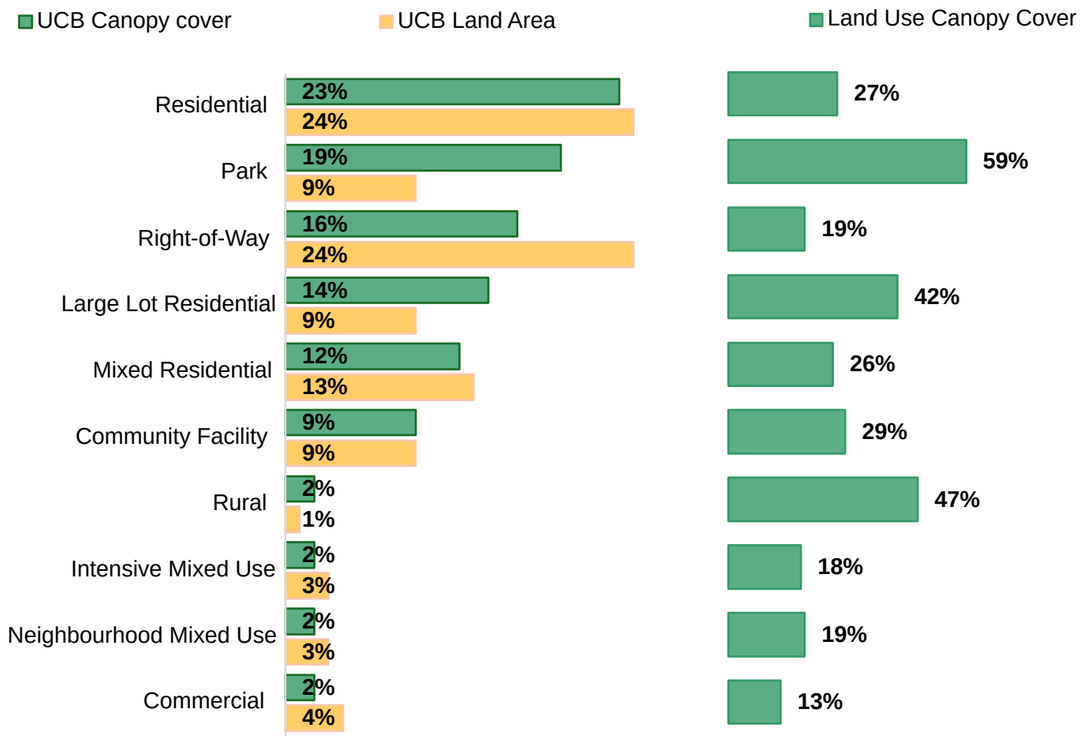


Figure 12. Proportion of View Royal's urban (UCB) canopy cover and land area by land use (left), and canopy cover within that land use (right) in 2023

Urban Heat

Reduction in the urban heat island (UHI) effect is a particularly salient ecosystem service that is difficult to assign a fiscal value to because its effect can range from a strain on human health, to biodiversity and even infrastructure. Urban trees reduce the urban heat island effect through the shade they provide and through transpiration. In contrast, impervious surfaces (e.g. roads and buildings) that tend to dominate in scarcely canopied urbanized neighbourhoods both absorb the sun's heat and dissipates that heat more gradually overnight.

There are some neighbourhoods in View Royal that are hotter than others. Shown in Figure 13 are View Royal's Low Canopy Hotspots (LCHs). These are localities where there is both a scarcity of urban trees and, as a result, land surface temperatures are relatively greater. LCH tend to be localities that either feature an abundance of surface parking facilities (e.g., commercial or institutional use) or that are dominated by more recent, denser residential subdivisions with smaller lots where space available for planting comes at a premium.

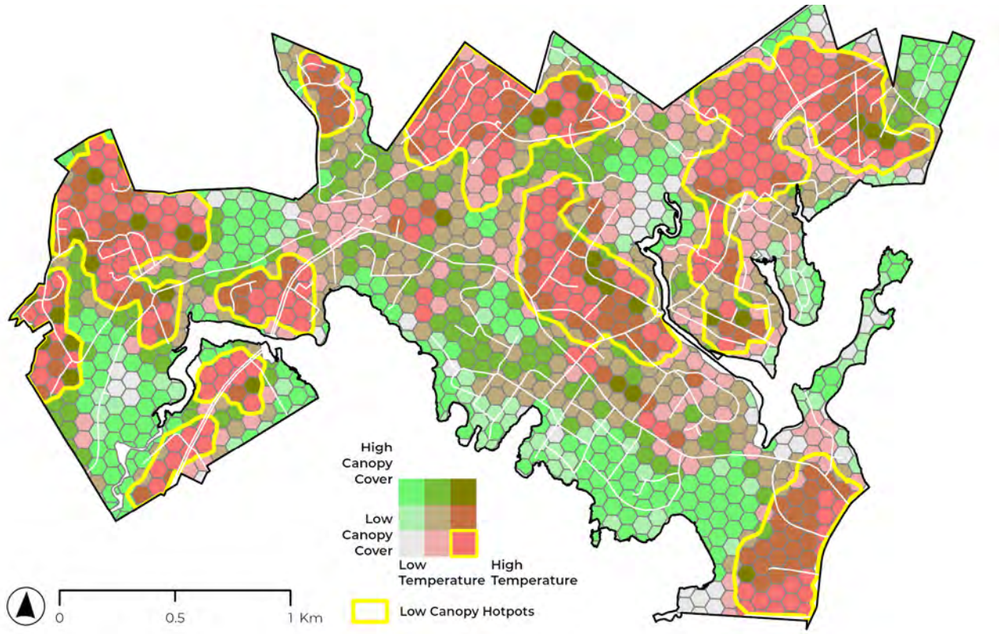


Figure 13. Low Canopy Hotspot (LCH) mapping within View Royal

Street Tree Inventory

The Town of View Royal maintains an inventory of more than 1,200 municipal boulevard trees (i.e., trees located within the Town's right-of-ways/roads), including the location and genera of those trees. View Royal's inventory encompasses 35 genera and 46 species, of which roughly one in three trees are presently maple (Figure 14). Most are red maple specifically (25%), and cherries and plums (9%), dogwoods (8%), and oaks (8%) are also common.

While the inventoried boulevard trees only represent a small proportion of all trees in View Royal, the dominance of maples is common within North American municipalities and is likely reflective of the broader planted tree population. Overuse of a single genus, and certainly a single species, is typically thought to reduce the resilience of a tree population through increasing exposure to singular pests, disease, and/or stressors. Eastern Canada has seen the consequences of limited urban tree diversity through the fallout of emerald ash borer and Dutch elm disease before it. By prioritizing diversification of planting stock, communities can build passive resilience by decreasing the representation of any single species or genus, and therefore the impact of the pests and diseases that they may host.

The value of a current and quality public tree inventory system cannot be overstated. Real insights into the condition, composition, and health of the Town's trees are invaluable to operational planning and would help shape a data-driven approach to urban forest management.

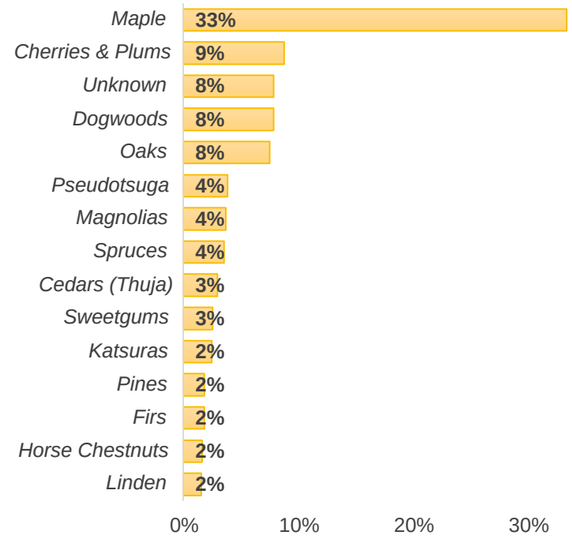


Figure 14. The relative proportion of genera included in the Town's inventory of street trees (1222)

30-20-10 Rule

The 30-20-10 rule is a species diversity recommendation that is used to help increase the resilience of the urban forest[62]. It states that no family should compose more than 30% of the urban forest, that no genus more than 20%, and that no species should occupy more than 10%. This helps build resilience to pests and diseases which often target individual species or genera, or a small subset of them.

Below: Mill Stream Creek (John Newcomb)

Forested Areas

View Royal is home to native forest ecosystems unique to Canada, including the Coastal Douglas-fir and Garry oak meadow ecosystems. Thetis and Mill Hill Regional Parks alone contain more than half of the community's urban forest canopy, underscoring the critical role of forested areas in maintaining the Town's canopy cover. View Royal's forested areas presently face various pressures, including the spread of invasive plants, climate change, and development.

View Royal is situated within the Coastal Douglas-fir Moist Maritime Biogeoclimatic subzone (CDFmm). The CDFmm is a unique set of ecosystems that occur in south-east Vancouver Island, portions of the Gulf Islands, and pockets along the south coast and mainland of British Columbia. Vancouver Island's rain shadow, which supports a Mediterranean-like climate allows for a rich flora and fauna to thrive.

The CDFmm's namesake tree is the coastal Douglas-fir, which is the dominant species in much of View Royal's forests. Douglas-fir tolerates a variety of site conditions and can be found in association with most native tree and understory species present in View Royal. Understory plants like Oregon-grape, oceanspray, salal, snowberry, honeysuckle, saskatoonberry, sword fern, bracken, and bald hip rose, along with mosses, lichens, mushrooms, give colour and life to these forests. The Town's largest, and likely oldest, trees tend to be found on sites with deeper soil horizon or where water is abundant (e.g., riparian zones), and on sites afforded the long-term protections offered by parks and protected land uses (e.g., Thetis Lake and Mill Hill Regional Parks, and Knockan Hill Park). It is important to recognize that the CDFmm includes far more than just Douglas-fir forests. In addition to those forests, the zone includes endangered Garry oak ecosystems, wetlands, and shorelines— all of which can be found in View Royal.

Most of View Royal's forested areas are mature, primarily coniferous forests that have regenerated after historical land clearings in the 19th and early 20th centuries (Figure 15). However, some early successional stands are also present. Early successional forests often consist of deciduous species such as red alder, cottonwood, and big leaf maple, typically found in more recently disturbed areas, riparian zones, or on marginal lands previously used for agriculture or industry.

View Royal's forested areas face significant challenges as the climate deviates from historical norms. Three of the last five years have seen record-breaking wildfires[54,55,56] and temperatures in British Columbia[57,58,59]. Remote sensing analysis conducted as part of this background review has identified more than 4,800 open grown or overstory trees exhibiting signs of decline or dieback in their crowns, an increase of 1120 (30%) since 2019. These trees are predominantly located in Thetis Lake Regional Park. Native species like western red cedar, western hemlock, and grand fir are struggling with the drier summers caused by climate change. The Park is managed by the CRD, so the Town does not have direct control over its management. However, increased fuel loading due to the decline of trees in the Park could increase the risk of wildfire in Town.

Incursions from invasive species are present to some degree in most of View Royal's forested parks and natural areas. English Ivy is a prolific understory plant in some locations, such as in Portage Park, however the efforts of View Royal's Invasive Species Coordinator and community volunteers have helped keep their tendrils off of overstory trees and the forest floor. Invasive blackberries, scotch broom, periwinkle, and several other common offenders to southeastern Vancouver Island were also confirmed present during spring 2024 field observations. Endangered ecosystems, such as those associated with Garry oak, should be prioritized in a monitoring a program to support early detection and treatment.

Where development creates new forest edges, or otherwise interfaces with existing ones, processes should ensure the integrity of that edge is preserved during construction and after development. Trees growing inside a stand experience sheltered conditions where wind forces are not as strong as they are on the exterior ('edge') of a stand. As a result, interior trees are commonly less adapted to these forces than their counterparts. Where edge trees are removed with development, this can expose weaker, ill-adapted interior trees to new forces, like strong winds. Tree failures caused by wind (i.e. windthrow) can occur in these circumstances. The risk of windthrow is moderated by site position, context, stand composition, and site conditions. New forest edges can often be made 'wind firm', generally through the insights of a qualified environmental professional (i.e., Registered Professional Forester). There are parks in View Royal, such as Nursery Hill Park, that feature interior trees recently exposed to edge wind loading.

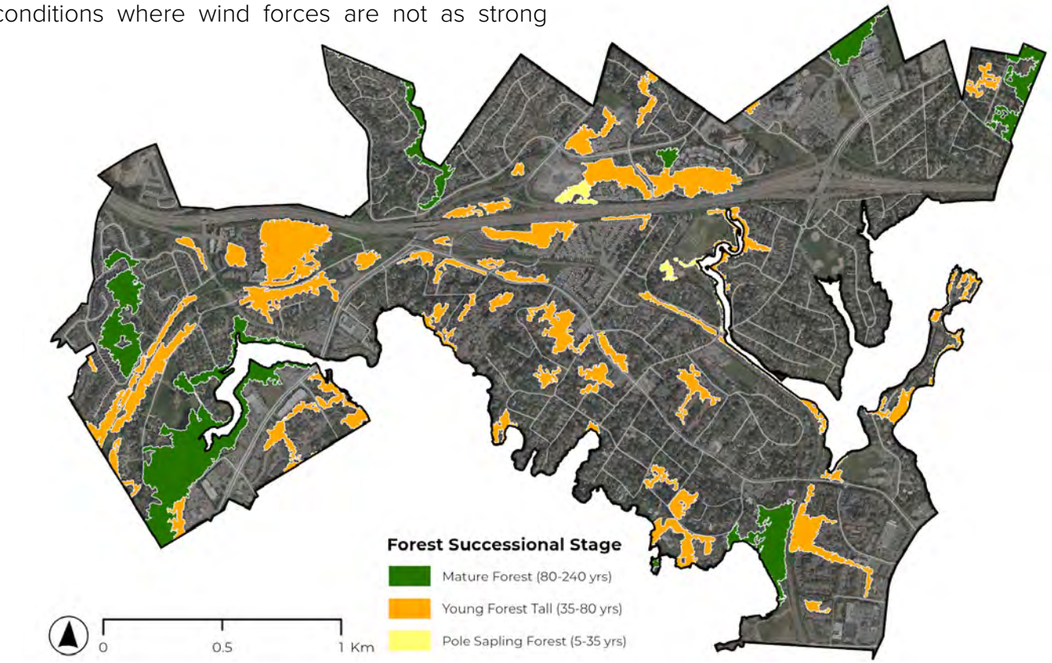


Figure 15. Successional stage of View Royal's urban forested areas (right)

WHAT WE HEARD

OVERVIEW

View Royal's Urban Forest Vision

Survey respondents were asked to describe their vision of the urban forest. The most common words in their responses were trees (115 mentions), urban (35), and forest (28).

#1 **Ecological benefits** were **most highly valued** by survey respondents

85% of survey respondents were **concerned about tree loss**

80% of survey respondents would like to see **View Royal's canopy cover increase**

54% of survey respondents **support increased program funding**

120 Online Survey Respondents

"Minimize tree loss during new development."

"I would like more information on how many trees are being planted by the Town each year."

"Provide more education to residents on how to care for their trees."

"Increasing funding to protect native biodiversity should be very high priority."

"I would like to see the town adopt a volunteer program similar to Saanich Pulling Together."

Fall 2024 — **Summer 2025** — **Fall 2025**

Background Review → **Draft Strategy** → **Final Strategy**

Engagement Phase 1
Community Vision & Values

Engagement Phase 2
Feedback on Draft Strategy

3. Looking Ahead

3.1 Where we are going

The UFS is meant to guide the management of View Royal's urban forest in the face of a changing community and climate. Using data sets from BC Stats, the Canadian Census, and the Town's 2024 Interim Housing Needs Report, the Town is expected to see an approximate population increase of 9,500 people between 2025 and 2050; to a population of more than 22,000 people within the life of this plan. New residents demand more homes and infrastructure, leading to increasingly tight urban spaces. At the same time climate change will bring with it conditions, including storms and extreme heat, different from those we and our urban forest have known in the past.

View Royal's Urban Forest Strategy takes guidance from the Town's Official Community Plan, and proposes strategies and actions meant to further the sustainable management of the urban forest in light of the range of threats it faces. In the pages following, we reflect both on the strengths and challenges experienced by the Town's urban forest management program, and the insights gleaned through community engagement, so that we can weave these issues, opportunities, and critical insights into a comprehensive management framework.

3.2 What We Heard

Two phases of public engagement will inform the development of this UFS. The first phase included an online survey open throughout October 2024. It focused on identifying community values and preferences for urban forest management to shape the draft UFS' vision, principles, and objectives. The second phase of engagement has begun and includes the opportunity to review this draft UFS, and identify priority actions for its implementation.

One-hundred-and-twenty (120) respondents participated in the phase 1 online survey. They indicated three benefits they would like the UFS prioritize:

1. **Ecological**: Such as habitat for native (local) plants and animals,
2. **Environmental**: Including stormwater management, air purification, and wind protection, and
3. **Climate resilience:** Like cooling, flood protection, carbon capture and carbon storage.

Eighty-five (85%) of respondents were concerned about tree loss, 80% would like to see an increase in Town-wide canopy cover, and over 75% believe that the protection of native trees, habitats, and biodiversity are high priorities. Over half of respondents (54%) are willing to support the Town increasing funding to its urban forest program to improve service levels.

Below: Official Plan open house (Town of View Royal)

Strengths & Opportunities

Strategic Direction & Policy Integration

This Strategy outlines a vision and actionable goals for managing the urban forest through 2045. Its goals are reinforced by the Town's other strategic policy documents, including its Strategic and Official Community Plans, and reflect an institutional awareness of the urban forest's importance.

Biodiversity

View Royal's urban forest is home to the endangered Garry oak ecosystem which is among Canada's most biodiverse and threatened plant communities. These meadows, once maintained by Indigenous cultural burning practices, now face pressure from urban development and Douglas-fir encroachment due to fire suppression. Efforts like the Town's land transfer to Mill Hill Regional Park in 2022 support the protection of species at risk highlight its ongoing committement to conservation.

Municipal Woodland Park Network

View Royal's large park system ranges from Community Parks, such as Edwards Park and Robin Hill Park, to Natural Greenspace, Linear Parks like Portage Inlet Linear Park, and Regional Parks such as Eagle Creek Park.

Reconciliation

The Town of View Royal has the opportunity to strengthen relationships with the Xwsepsum (Esquimalt Nation) and Songhees Nation, whose ancestors have stewarded the area for thousands of years. Despite the significant loss of access to traditional territories, View Royal's native forests and waterways remain critical to Host Nations' cultural practices. The Town is committed to enhancing dialogue with Host Nations and recognizes urban forest management as an opportunity to integrate Indigenous values, traditional knowledge, and culturally sensitive practices (see Strategy 5.1 in Section 5).

Stewardship

Programs like the Resident Tree Planting Program and the Greater Victoria Green Team foster strong community stewardship of the urban forest, enhancing public involvement and support for tree-related initiatives.

Protection

Existing regulations safeguard trees on both public and private lands, and most of the Town's urban forest is protected within Thetis Lake and Mill Hill Regional Parks. These areas act as vital reservoirs of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Challenges

Urbanization

As with most Canadian communities, growth in View Royal over the past two decades has resulted in net loss of the community's canopy cover. The that have contributed to this exchange will continue to amplify as the community looks forward to more than 2,800 new housing units and thousands more residents over the next 20 years. Processes and planning must adapt and diverge from historic patterns of growth and design if View Royal would like to maintain or increase its urban forest, rather than face continued loss.

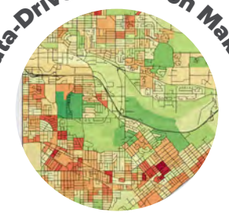
Climate & Extreme Weather

The impacts of climate change are being felt more with each passing year; extreme heat, drought, and wildfire. Additional challenges include flooding risks from sea level rise and increased rainfall. These pressures will not subside, and in fact, climate change may manifest as a source of underlying stress, that will erode the resilience of the urban trees to resist a number of other urban stressors. Management practices can help adapt to climate change, but it is now something we must plan for, rather than hope to avoid.

Program Capacity

Urban forest management responsibilities are divided among various departments, generally assigned to staff as a small part of their larger role within the municipality. This lack of dedicated capacity and very limited program funds restricts program capacity at present and would not facilitate meaningful implementation of this plan.

Data-Driven Decision Making



The Town has a partial street tree inventory that would benefit from being updated and completed with key attributes. Current datasets like a complete inventory support data-driven decision-making and support program monitoring efforts.

Woodland Health & Invasive Species

View Royal's forests are increasingly challenged by the range of threats faced. Remote sensing has detected a 30% increase in declining trees since 2019, especially in Thetis Lake Regional Park. Invasive plants such as English ivy, Himalayan blackberry, Scotch broom, and periwinkle are widespread, despite management efforts.

BY THE 2080s, PROJECTED CHANGES* TO:

TEMPERATURES
More extreme heat events with days above 25°C tripling. Milder winters. Summer extremes of 38°C (1-in-20 hottest day).

EVAPOTRANSPIRATION
Increased rates of evaporation and transpiration from waterbodies, soil and plants.

PRECIPITATION
Heavier rainfalls and more rain except in summer. Longer droughts and decreasing snowpack.

SNOWMELT
Faster snowmelt. Earlier peak spring flows and flooding. Lower late-summer flows.

GROWING SEASONS
Longer and warmer growing season, increasing by 83 days.

VARIABILITY
More frequent and unseasonal extreme weather

* Projected changes based on modeling for the Capital Regional District using the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Representative Concentration Pathway 8.5 scenario (RCP8.5), which represents a high emissions pathway with limited mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions by the end of this century (or "Business as Usual").

WILL LIKELY CAUSE

SPECIES DISTRIBUTION SHIFTS
Forest species may shift northward and upslope as heat and moisture conditions exceed their tolerances.

LESS MOISTURE AVAILABILITY
Evapotranspiration will increase relative to precipitation, limiting water available to trees reducing growth, potentially leading to decline.

LONGER FIRES SEASONS AND LARGER FIRES
Fires may occur more often and burn larger areas because of hotter drier summers and vegetation.

MORE PESTS AND INVASIVE SPECIES
Some pests could reproduce more rapidly and more often. Water stressed trees and ecosystems are more vulnerable to attack and invasion.

LONGER, WARMER GROWING SEASONS
Longer growing seasons may support more growth, species diversity and potentially more carbon sequestration where growing conditions are suitable.

MORE EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS
Extrem heat, precipitation, freezing rain, heavy wet snow, flooding, landslides, windstorms and other events may happen more often leading to more tree stress and damage.

Figure 16. Climate change projections in the CRD

Extreme heat (Dstockgraphy)

4. Strategic Framework

The Town of View Royal's urban forest strategic framework is grounded by a community-based vision and guided by five overarching goals. The **urban forest vision** reflects our community's urban forest aspirations for 2045:

Our Town's urban forest is celebrated for its diverse, mature trees and interconnected green spaces. It provides vital habitat for native plants, pollinators, and wildlife, while enhancing community resilience, health, and well-being. By making space for trees, we have expanded our urban forest and strengthened our sense of place. We are stewards of our environment, and the trees we plant today will benefit our community for generations.

The five goals of the UFS work together to provide a clear and cohesive roadmap for managing View Royal's urban forest. Each goal is supported by specific strategies and actions that offer targeted guidance for implementation. Progress will be measured through defined indicators and sustained by cross-departmental coordination and partnerships with external stakeholders.

Several 'quick start' actions will enable View Royal to begin rapidly working towards positive urban forest outcomes within the early stages of the Strategy's life. In parallel, 'priority actions' will require more time and resourcing to implement but will have the most significant impact on the success of View Royal's urban forest program.

Ultimately, the strategic framework will allow the Town of View Royal to ensure that its urban forest continues to meaningfully contribute to the community's livability, identity, and resilience for generations to come.

Left: Sunset in View Royal (Andrea C. Miller)

Strategic Framework

Goal 1. Plan

1.1 Ensure planting standards support long-term tree growth
1.2 Ensure land use planning supports the urban forest
1.3 Ensure rates of tree planting support net new outcomes
1.4 Consider demonstrable need in program decision-making

Goal 2. Manage

2.1 Improve urban forest governance
2.2 Prioritize program monitoring and reporting
2.3 Sustainably resource urban forest management and the implementation of this Strategy.

Goal 3. Maintain

3.1 Use best practices and industry benchmarks in the Town's maintenance regime
3.2 Maintain forested areas to a reasonable standard of care

Goal 4. Protect

4.1 Enhance regulatory tools and processes to achieve the right balance between tree protection and community growth.
4.2 Support the resilience of both View Royal as a community and its urban forest.

Goal 5. Partner

5.1 Build relationships with Host Nations and Indigenous Peoples living in View Royal
5.2 Build community knowledge of and participation in urban forest management
5.3 Develop strategic partnerships

5. Action Plan

Goal 1. Planning and design processes facilitate the growth of the urban forest.

Strategy 1.1. Ensure planting standards are supporting long-term tree growth.

The best tree outcomes are often decided well in advance of the tree being planted. In constrained urban growing environments it is often the case that the qualities of planting sites dictate the success and longevity of the trees planted within them. Planting area, stock selection, soil qualities and volumes, spacing, irrigation and a range of other considerations all influence which trees are likely to survive on a site. By incorporating arboricultural best practices into development regulation and planting processes, trees planted are expected to have longer life-cycles and provide more benefits.

Poor planting practices (above) and land clearing (right) can be mitigated through thoughtful land use planning, planting standards and design (Diamond Head Consulting)

KEY INDICATOR(S):
M3. Average DBH of boulevard trees at time of removal

BASELINE (2025):
Unknown

TARGET (2045):
>20 cm

Action 1. Ensure trees entering the boulevard inventory are inspected to verify compliance with stock and establishment standards prior to their acceptance by the Town.

Action 2. Update View Royal's Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw and standard details to enhance tree planting conditions in right-of-ways, including minimum soil volume, irrigation, boulevard width and soil depth requirements.

Action 3. Review tender specifications and warranty inspection standards for contracted tree planting.

Action 4. Review the Town's details for boulevards, tree planting, tree protection, and tree pits. Ensure design is aligned with best practices, and would support full tree life-cycles.

Action 5. Spatially define the areas across the Town where the use of native vegetation is to be prioritized given biodiversity preservation objectives within or adjacent to those areas (e.g. shoreline parks, park natural areas, and ESA buffers).

Strategy 1.2. Ensure land use planning is supporting the urban forest.

Nearly 60% of View Royal's urban land base is under private ownership. Land use planning policy and tools such as the OCP and zoning regulation play a significant role in shaping our community's urban forest through determining the amount of space available for tree planting on private property. This is significant because the planting opportunities, or lack thereof, created during development are likely to persist for decades.

Updates to land use planning policy and regulations can help ensure that as the Town grows to meet housing and infrastructure needs, it is also supporting urban forest goals. Maintaining, and certainly growing the urban forest canopy, will not be attainable otherwise.

KEY INDICATOR(S):
M4. Urban core canopy cover

BASELINE (2023):
29%

TARGET (2045):
30%

Action 6. Adopt OCP policy supporting the urban forest and UFS that provides enhanced direction on the handling of View Royal's urban forest within the community's guide to growth.

Action 7. Review View Royal's Zoning Bylaw to ensure performance criteria, including surface parking, landscaped open space, setbacks, and lot coverage, are supporting consistent inclusion of trees on development sites.

Canopy Cover Pathways

A growing number of communities have adopted a canopy cover target as a measurable indicator of their urban forest and urban greening aspirations. The establishment of an informed canopy cover target is a nuanced process, and gives consideration to the unique contexts relevant teach community.

While the OCP has committed to an increase in canopy cover, the community has yet to adopt a formalized target to better define this goal. The Town of View Royal currently has 29% urban canopy cover. View Royal has chosen to use an urban (i.e., UCB) canopy cover target in recognition that the vast majority of the community's rural area exists as protected parkland, and therefore does not face the same type of pressures as those in the heart of the community.

Through the development of this document, the Town has prepared three canopy cover scenarios (Figure 17): canopy growth, canopy net neutrality, and status quo (described in more detail adjacent).

While the document uses possible canopy cover pathways to frame future program trajectories, it is important to recognize that a full range of program actions, beyond just the act of planting of trees, benefits the sustainability of an urban forest management program, supports community resilience to climate change, and elongates tree lifecycles. Activities like cyclical pruning, tree watering, community outreach, planning and development processes, and program monitoring each are every bit as important to growing View Royal's urban forest canopy as is the act of planting trees itself.

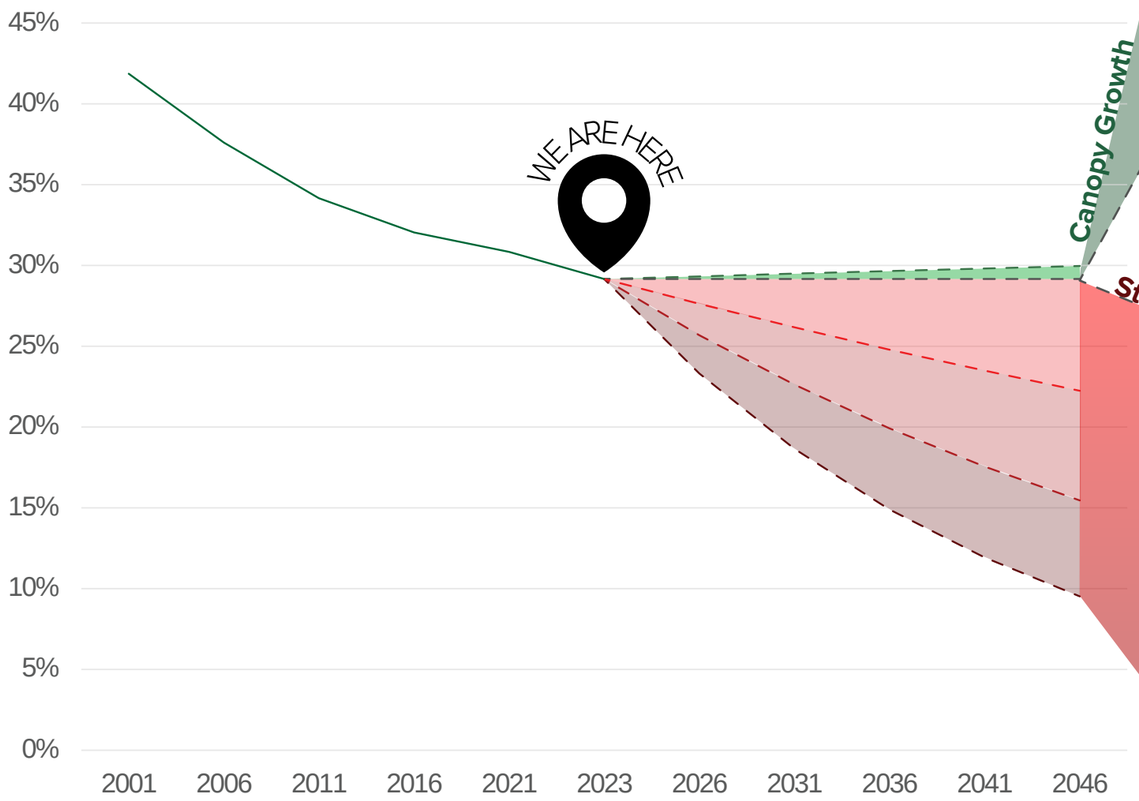


Figure 17. View Royal canopy cover pathways: Canopy growth, net neutral, and status quo.

Under a "canopy growth" scenario, View Royal's canopy would increase to at least 30% (+1%) over the coming two decades. Trends beginning over the past two decades would be reversed despite historic rates of loss and projected future population growth. New processes, resources, and procedures would build resilience to climate change and other developing forest health concerns. Rates of tree planting would not only offset loss, but would be sufficient to increase canopy cover. To achieve this, the existing gap between available program resources and demand would need to be considerably narrowed, and iterative evaluation may be necessary to ensure program development in accordance with the UFS remains adequately resourced.

The "canopy growth" scenario would demand substantial, but gradual implementation of this Strategy over the coming two decades. Achieving net canopy growth involves far more than just planting trees, and dollars spent toward this ends are dollars saved on tree removal, reactive management, and disaster relief.

~730 trees planted/replaced annually within the Town (est. 100 on municipal property, 2000 by 2045)
$250,000 - $500,000 (2045) 15,000 - 25,000 Residents

Under a "net neutral" scenario, View Royal's canopy would remain at its current coverage (29%) over the coming two decades. Trends beginning over the past two decades would be reversed, to the extent that canopy loss is not continued despite forecasted growth. To achieve this, the existing gap between available program resources and demand would need to be narrowed, and particular attention paid to View Royal's development processes, so as to ensure tree protection and replacement requirements are not net-negative.

The "net neutral" scenario would demand at least partial implementation of this Strategy over the coming two decades. Actions marked as core ( ) may be enough to realize this pathway. The emphasis under net neutral is endorsing the minimum programming that may be necessary to avoid continued loss in the face of anticipated growth.

~430 trees planted/replaced annually within the Town (est. 50 on municipal property, 1000 by 2045)
$150,000 - $250,000 (2045) 15,000 - 25,000 Residents

Under a "status quo" scenario, there would be no changes to the Community's existing program, structure, or meaningful change in level of resourcing. Trends beginning over the past two decades would be expected to continue over the next two decades, while at the same time pressures associated with climate change other forest health concerns would continue to amplify. The existing gap between available program resources and demand may widen. Under such a scenario, continued canopy loss would be assured, with the degree of loss moderated both by the magnitude of growth experienced over coming decades and by policy interventions the Town may explore to mitigate loss. Capital spending associated with severe weather and climate change may be expected to rise, where preventative measures and proactive planning are out of reach, given available resources.

The "status quo" scenario is illustrative, meant to identify the likely outcomes if programming moving forward remains unchanged from that of the past two decades. In practice, nothing in this Strategy would need to be acted on in order to realize a status quo scenario.

~ rates of canopy loss reflective of 20-year average
No assumed budgetary commitments 15,000 - 25,000 Residents

Strategy 1.3. Ensure rates of tree planting are supporting net new outcomes.

If View Royal desires to maintain its urban forest canopy over the coming two decades, more than 8,600 new and replacement trees will need to be planted over the coming two decades (roughly 430 trees per year). This number is even higher, at 14,600 new and replacement trees (roughly 430 trees per year) if the Town wishes to grow its canopy cover to 30% (Figure 17). The Town can endeavour to plant trees itself however this is not a initiative the Municipality will be able to rise to alone. Given how much of View Royal falls on private property, residents, businesses and community members will play a significant role in the Town's urban forest change (positive or regressive) moving forward.

To support the maintenance of tree canopy or to ensure future canopy growth, the Town of View Royal will need to increase rates of tree planting from those observed historically, while at the same time offsetting canopy loss on private property. Tree planting plans can support the Town with assessing suitable planting sites that consider program budgets, practical constraints, and program objectives such as reducing urban hotspots (Figure 13).

KEY INDICATOR(S):
M5. Net new public trees planted

BASELINE (2025):
Net negative (2001-2023)

TARGET (2025-2045):
730 (1% growth); 50 - 100 on municipal property

Action 8. Prepare five-year tree planting plans to direct short-term tree planting programming toward the Town maintaining the desired net new tree planting.

Action 9. Municipal tree planting targeting 50 - 100 trees per year between parks and boulevards and desired canopy cover pathways.

Action 10. Leverage restoration and afforestation to grow urban forest canopy within forested areas and in naturalization sites.

Action 11. Establish an adopt-a-tree program where the Town will plant trees in underutilized boulevard or park space in exchange for resident-led care through establishment.

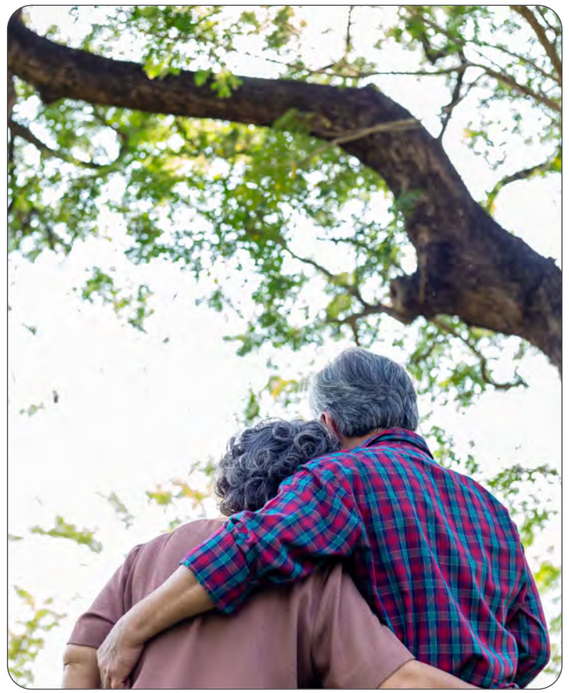
Case Study: Burnaby's Tree4Free Program

Burnaby's Tree4Free program offers residents a chance to help grow the city's urban forest by having a free boulevard tree planted in front of their property. While the city handles the planting and general maintenance, the program encourages residents to take an active stewardship role by watering the young trees—especially during dry periods—using green watering bags provided by the city. This partnership between the city and the community helps ensure that new trees thrive, contributing to a healthier, greener Burnaby.

Strategy 1.4. Consider demonstrable need in program decision-making.

View Royal's canopy cover is distributed unevenly across the community. Non-uniformity in the Town's canopy distribution is fairly typical in a growing urban community, but it means that the benefits associated with trees vary in their provision from one corner of the community to the next. By being strategic with program investment, incentives, and regulation, View Royal can encourage canopy growth in the parts of the community where it is lowest, at present.

Often, the negative impacts associated an uneven urban forest distribution disproportionately impacts vulnerable populations within a community. The impacts of heat, associated with the urban heat island effect (and low canopy cover), is more acutely felt where the costs of air conditioning are out of reach, or amongst elderly populations, children, or newcomer members of the community. There are processes View Royal can initiate to ensure its urban forest remains accessible to all members of the community, and to ensure programming is reaching all community segments.



Elderly couple enjoying nature's benefits (Nutlegal Photographer)

KEY INDICATOR(S):
M6. Spatial heat disparity

BASELINE (2025):
15°C

TARGET (2045):
10°C

Action 12. Explore opportunities for improving urban forest access and education in areas with concentrations of vulnerable populations.

Action 13. Ensure community engagement and outreach programming is broadly accessible to any interested members of the community. Explore opportunities for improving urban forest access and education in low tree equity areas.

Action 14. Explore requiring dedicated tree corridors, boulevards clear of active transportation facilities or any other community infrastructure, along priority right-of-ways such as: (i) those located in Transit Oriented Development areas and along arterial/collector corridors, or (ii) areas of lower tree equity where there is a lower density of public trees. Identify these locations as a schedule in the OCP, prepare accompanying policy, and consistently require widening dedications within these areas.

Goal 2. Program governance supports the Town in meeting it's urban forest aspirations.

Strategy 2.1. Improve urban forest governance to achieve positive urban forest outcomes.

Urban forest governance involves both administrative structures and cultural norms that influence how decisions about urban trees are made and implemented. This includes the adoption of appropriate tools to support urban forest outcomes, as well as interdepartmental and inter-agency coordination among stakeholder organizations. Clear mandates, dedicated funding, and trained personnel are essential components, as is the integration of urban forestry into broader municipal goals such as climate resilience, equity, and public health.

Urban forest governance is shaped by how trees are valued within municipal institutions and the community. This includes the degree to which trees are seen as infrastructure, how engaged residents are in stewardship, and whether diverse community perspectives—especially from historically excluded groups—are incorporated into planning processes. A strong urban forest culture within a municipality supports long-term commitment, intergenerational thinking, and shared responsibility, which are all critical for maintaining and growing healthy, equitable urban forests.

KEY INDICATOR(S):
M7. Working group meetings

BASELINE (2025):
None

TARGET (2045):
Twice annually

Action 15. Prepare and adopt a Town Tree policy to formalize: green infrastructure within the Town's broader asset management program, risk management procedures concerning urban forest assets, integrated pest management procedures, public tree protection, replacement, and compensation requirements, and tree protection and inspection requirements with respect to capital works.

Action 16. Establish dedicated tree maintenance and planting budgets within parks. Establish initial budgets based on a life-cycle costing approach.

Action 17. Establish an interdepartmental Urban Forestry working group and meet biannually to review progress on implementation, and to review current challenges and opportunities impacting the Town's urban forestry program.

Water bag for young trees in View Royal (DHC)

Strategy 2.2. Prioritize program monitoring and reporting.

In order to understand how the Town is doing relative to its urban forest ambitions, the Municipality must have the tools at its disposal to track progress and evaluate change. Regular monitoring and data collection provide these insights and are essential in supporting adaptive urban forest management, enabling responsiveness to the ranging pressures faced.

Completing and maintaining a comprehensive street tree inventory will allow the Town to track improvements in urban forest health and prioritize maintenance efforts[63]. Monitoring change in canopy cover, planting success rates, tree condition, and species diversity can all be used to evaluating the effectiveness of the Town's management efforts, and for identifying areas of necessary change. View Royal's success can then be shared in regular reports that support building awareness and developing ongoing support for the program.

KEY INDICATOR(S):
M8. Tree condition rating; M4. Urban core canopy cover

BASELINE (2025):
Unknown; 29%

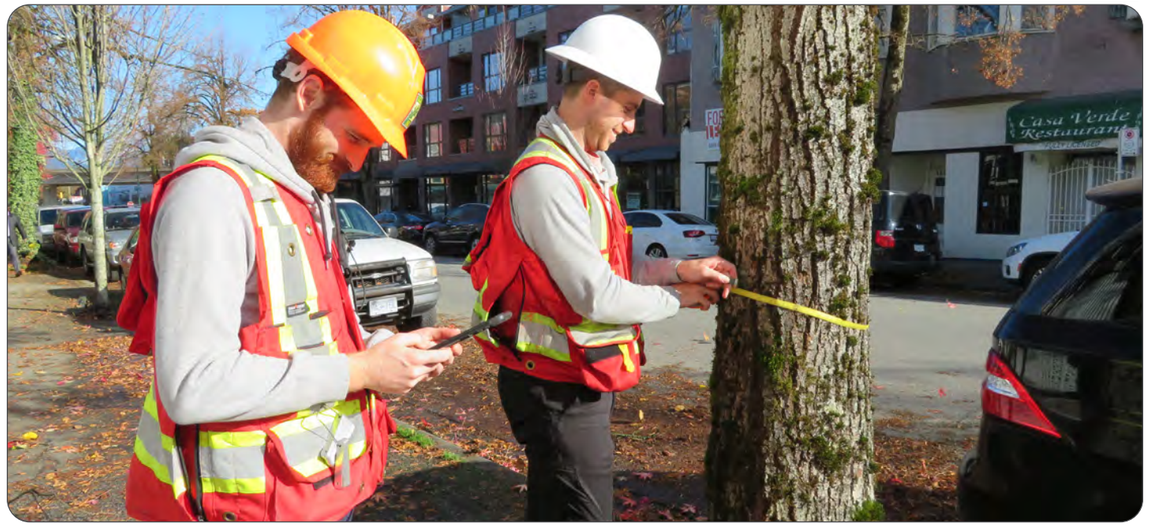
TARGET (2030):
< 10% in 'Poor' or worse condition; 30%

Action 18. Undertake a review of the Urban Forest Strategy every five years.

Action 19. Establish and maintain a GIS-based boulevard tree inventory featuring a technical design aligned with industry best practices and update the inventory in-step with a proactive maintenance regimen.

Action 20. Produce a new urban tree canopy dataset, derived from current LiDAR and imagery datasets, on a five-year interval.

Action 21. Produce a State of the Urban Forest report on a five-year interval to report on key program metrics and explore changes in the urban forest since prior reporting.



Collecting tree inventory data (DHC)

UFS Monitoring Approach

The following details View Royal's approach to monitoring it's progress in the implementation of the UFS. Table 2 contains a compilation of the indicators detailed throughout this Action Plan, as well as a small selection of supplementary indicators to further support program monitoring, administration, and decision-making.

The table describes each indicator, as well as the strategy it is most associated with, methods and datasets leveraged in its tracking, the frequency at which measurements will be undertaken, as well as the most current measurement (i.e., Baseline) and the target associated with it. If indicator measures suggest the Town is headed in the wrong direction with respect to one or more indicators through the life-cycle of this plan, adaptive measures may be identified through the next (five-year) review of the UFS.

Table 2. Monitoring framework to track the implementation of View Royal's Urban Forest Strategy.

Indicator	Method	Frequency	Baseline	Target
M1. Average DBH of boulevard trees	Inventory	Annual	Not Tracked	20 - 40 cm
M2. Interdepartmental working group meetings.	Calendar	Twice Annual	None	Twice Annual
M3. Average DBH of boulevard trees at time of removal	Inventory	Ongoing	Not Tracked	>20 cm
M4. Urban core canopy cover	LiDAR + Orthoimagery	2 years	29%	30% by 2045
M5. Net new public trees planted	Inventory	Annual	Not Tracked	513
M6. Spatial heat disparity	Thermal + Orthoimagery	5 years	15°C	5°C
M7. Working group meetings	-	Annual	Not Tracked	2
M8. Tree condition rating	Inventory	5 years	Not Tracked	<15% in 'Poor' or worse condition
M9. Inventory update cycle	Inventory	Annual	Ad hoc	7 years, iterative
M10. Program budget	Operating	Annual	$6.50 / capita	$10 / capita
M11. Cyclical pruning cycle	Inventory	7 years	Reactive	7 years, iterative
M12. Forest stand condition ratings	Inventory	Ongoing	Not Tracked	<20% 'Poor' or worse condition
M13. Genus and species diversity	Inventory	5 years	33% maple 25% red maple	< 30% Genera < 20% Species
M14. Program budget	Capital Budget	Annual	$70,000	$250,000
M15. Annual volunteer hours	-	Annual	Not Tracked	> 100 hours

Strategy 2.3. Sustainably resource urban forest management and the implementation of this Strategy.

Urban forest management responsibilities are currently dispersed across Municipal Departments. Without dedicated staff, urban forestry competes with other core professional responsibilities, limiting the Town's ability to manage its trees efficiently. Establishing a full-time urban forestry position will develop critical in-house arboriculture expertise, serving ranging utility in urban forest management efforts.

Existing levels of program funding will not be sufficient to meaningfully implement this UFS, nor to achieve the central objectives of the program described. Creating full-time or seasonal positions funded through partnerships, grants, or youth employment programs can leverage external support to add capacity to realize our urban forest vision.

KEY INDICATOR(S):
M10. Program budget

BASELINE (2025):
~$6.50 per capita

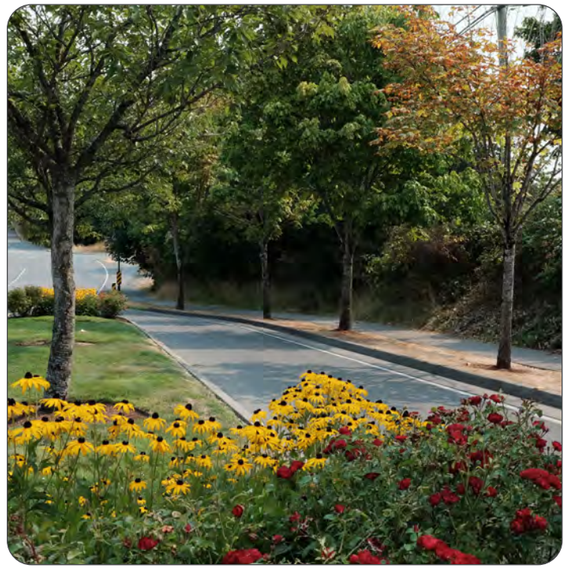
TARGET (2045):
$10 per capita

Action 22. Access external employment funding, such as Canada Summer Jobs wage subsidies, to employ youth over the summer and explore sustainable funding for student and internship positions that can contribute to a wide range of stewardship, tree inventory, and other projects.

Action 23. Establish a Town arborist or urban forester position within Parks to broadly enhance urban forest outcomes across all program areas and to support ongoing implementation of this Strategy.

Action 24. Transition the Town's Invasive Species Volunteer Coordinator to a full-time equivalent and expand community outreach, education, and stewardship programming.

Action 25. Access external funding opportunities to support tree planting, such as the Growing Canada's Community Canopies (GCCC) initiative.



Ornamental boulevard (DHC)

Goal 3. Urban forest maintenance regimen are aligned with industry best practices.

Strategy 3.1. Utilize best practices and industry benchmarks through the Town's maintenance regimen.

Like any other living thing, trees benefit from care throughout their life-cycle. A thoughtful and proactive maintenance regimen helps to maximize tree health, minimize associated risk, and ensure tree longevity. Younger trees often benefit from watering, structural pruning, and protection through establishment, and mature trees can benefit from pruning, integrated pest management, and various other life-cycle activities. Good care improves tree resilience to pests, diseases, and the impacts of climate change. A proactive maintenance regimen also tends to result in less frequent/intensive responsive maintenance activities and better prognosis for the tree. Tree care can be thought of in much the same way as dental hygiene; if you attend regular checkups and practice good dental care, your costs for service will be spread out across smaller appointments and will probably yield better outcomes than if you just see a dentist when you develop tooth pain.

KEY INDICATOR(S):
M11. Cyclical pruning cycle

BASELINE (2025):
None

TARGET (2045):
Seven years

Action 26. Expand the Town's watering program to water newly planted trees weekly in the growing season for a period of 3 to 5 years after planting.

Action 27. Transition to a seven-year cyclical pruning cycle for all inventoried boulevard trees.

Thetis Lake Regional Park (Emily Norton)

Strategy 3.2. Maintain forested areas to a reasonable standard of care.

View Royal is home to a rich mosaic of ecosystems, including coastal Douglas-fir forests, Garry oak meadows, riparian corridors, and wetlands. These systems support a wide range of native biodiversity, from sensitive plant communities to birds, amphibians, and pollinators. The town's natural areas are not only ecologically significant but also provide valuable services to the community—such as stormwater regulation, climate resilience, recreational opportunities, and a strong sense of place.

A proactive forest management approach is essential to maintaining the health and function of these ecosystems. By planning ahead, the community can reduce wildfire risk, manage invasive species, and support native habitat restoration. Integrating biodiversity thinking into forest management planning helps ensure that ecological integrity is preserved while also adapting to climate change and urban development pressures. Strategic, long-term planning allows View Royal to protect its natural heritage while building a more resilient and sustainable future.

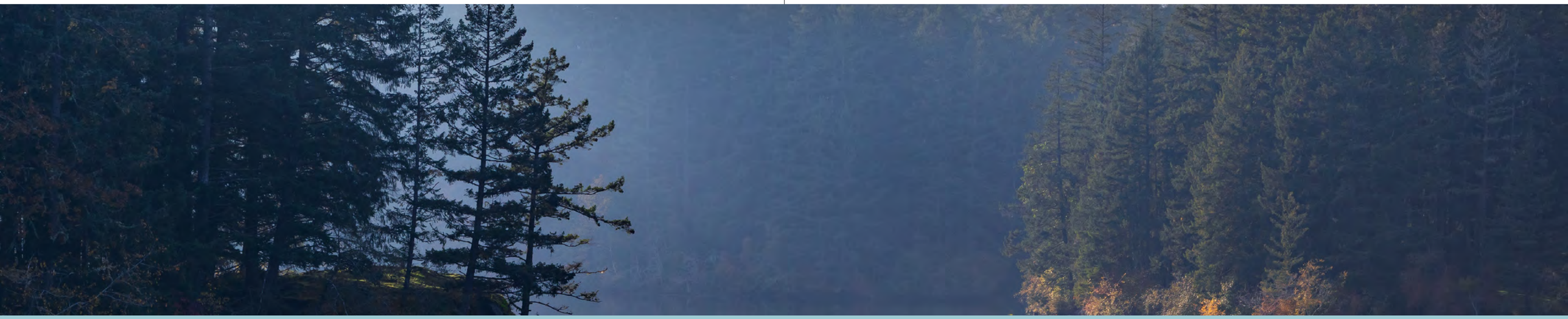
KEY INDICATOR(S):
M12. Forest stand condition ratings

BASELINE (2025):
Unknown

TARGET (2030):
<20% of stands 'poor' or worse condition

Action 28. Prepare forest management plans for flagship parks including Nursery Hill Park, Kelvin Grove/Wilfert Park, Eagle Creek, Robin Hill, Portage Park, to define long-term objectives for forest management and identify short-term management actions to achieve objectives. Ensure current assessments of forest health underpin forest management planning efforts.

Action 29. Prepare a biodiversity strategy to guide the management of View Royal's natural ecosystems, including rare ecosystems and species (e.g. Garry oak ecosystems), habitat hubs and corridors, their protection, invasive species management, access and recreational usage.

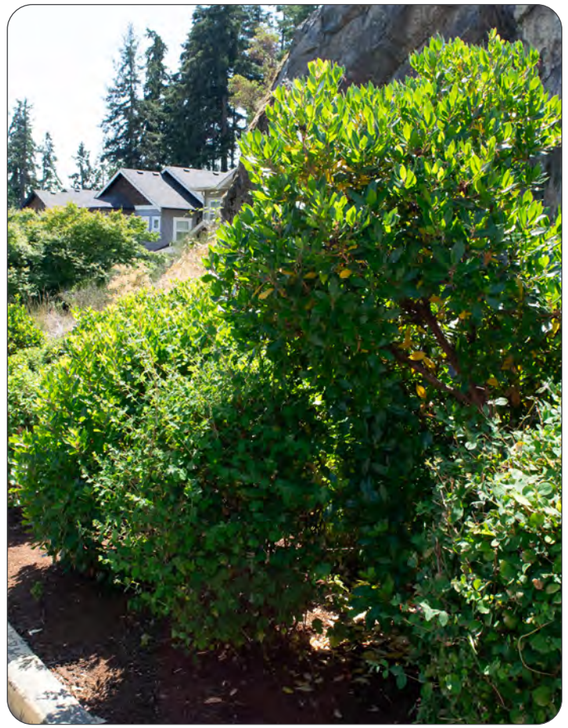


Goal 4. View Royal protects it's urban forest.

Strategy 4.1. Enhance regulatory tools and process are achieving the right balance between tree protection and community growth.

Large mature trees offer significant contributions to View Royal's canopy cover and generate substantial community benefits. Given the decades it requires for new trees to achieve the size and stature of a mature tree, their retention is a critical element in the Town achieving its urban forest management goals.

View Royal can strengthen its urban forest by adopting tools that prioritize the protection of trees, native soils, and sensitive ecosystems throughout the development process. Policies that require careful site assessment, promote thoughtful design, and incentivize conservation can help preserve ecological function, support climate resilience, and ensure long-term community benefits. Clear standards and accountability measures also reinforce a culture of stewardship and responsible land use.



Horticultural boulevard planting in View Royal (DHC)

Action 30. Establish a Wildfire Hazard Development Permit Area (DPA), including accompanying wildfire risk mapping as guided by View Royal's Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan.

Action 31. Require development proposals that would involve modification of an existing forest edge, or the creation of new forest edge, to be supported by a wind firm assessment prepared by a qualified professional.

Action 32. Review the Town's Natural Watercourse and Shoreline Areas DPA, as well as the Sensitive Terrestrial Ecosystem DPA to ensure mapping and associated requirements are aligned with the Town's broader vision for its urban forest management and natural systems.

Action 33. Develop a Terms of Reference for arborist reports and tree surveys, including specifying survey requirements and the conditions under which letters of assurance and/or arborist supervision will be imposed.

Action 34. Formalize a process for bonusing (e.g., height, floor area) where trees, or native soils, are voluntarily protected through development, or where proposed site configuration will support greater tree planting than would be supported by meeting minimum requirements (e.g., landscaped area, expanded setbacks, lot coverage, etc.). Include policy supporting this bonusing in the Town's OCP.

Action 35. Update contract language to require hold-backs related to tree protection where private contractors are working around public trees during capital projects.

Action 36. Review the Town's Tree Protection Bylaw to ensure alignment with broader community objectives for canopy growth.

Action 37. Explore the potential of a Landscaping Bylaw (s.527 of the LGA) toward improving consideration for the urban forest through development processes.

Strategy 4.2. Support the resilience of both View Royal as a community and its urban forest.

Inventoried street trees only represent a small portion of View Royal's urban forest. However, the over-reliance on maples identified through the inventory is consistent with trends across North America. Urban forests that are composed of a small number of species tend to be less resilient to stressors like climate change, pests, and diseases[64]. Emerald ash borer and Dutch elm disease have each contributed to the widespread decline of ash and elms due to their overuse in Northeast and Central North America.

Developing tree species selection requirements and/or recommendations for public and private land could improve the resilience of the urban forest by diversifying the species that compose it. The 30-20-10 Rule is a commonly used guideline to ensure that no tree species, genus, or family occupies more than 10%, 20%, and 30% of the urban forest, respectively.

KEY INDICATOR(S):
M13. Genus and species diversity

BASELINE (2025):
33% maple; 25% red maple

TARGET (2045):
<20% any one genera, <10% any one species

Action 38. Manage the diversity of public trees by limiting the continued planting of overrepresented species on public land. Aim for the Town's tree inventory to include no more than 20% of any single genus and no more than 10% of any single species.

Action 39. Consider sourcing climate-adapted native seed stock for use in the Town's native ecosystems.

Action 40. Adjust terms of reference for landscape plan submissions for large developments to include planting stock selection that achieves a minimum diversity of 3-5 individual species well-suited to the site.

Action 41. Support implementation of the actions contained to View Royal's Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Action 42. Adopt FireSmart principals in landscape management, programming, and treatments to build the resilience of municipal buildings and Town assets.

Edwards Park Viewpoint (Kevin Light Photo)

Case Study: July 2020 Mill Hill Fire and Community Wildfire Preparedness

In July 2020, a wildfire ignited in Mill Hill Regional Park, situated between Langford and View Royal. The fire was first reported around 5 p.m. on July 21 and rapidly expanded to nearly two hectares. Fire officials determined the blaze was likely human-caused, possibly due to a discarded cigarette or an unattended campfire, as no weather-related factors like lightning were present.

Firefighting efforts involved crews from Langford, View Royal, Colwood, Esquimalt, and the B.C. Wildfire Service, totaling around 70 personnel. The challenging terrain required extensive hose deployment, and aerial support from helicopters and air tankers was crucial in containing the fire. By July 29, the fire was officially declared extinguished, with no structures damaged.

This incident underscores the importance of fire safety, the threat it poses to View Royal as a Community, and the resources these events can consume in response.

Review View Royal's Community Wildfire Resilience Plan, schedule a free Firesmart Home Assessment, and learn the ways the Municipality is managing wildfire risk with your help through **View Royal's FireSmart webpage**.

BRITISH COLUMBIA FireSmart™

Goal 5. Sustainable urban forest management is achieved through partnership and community investment.

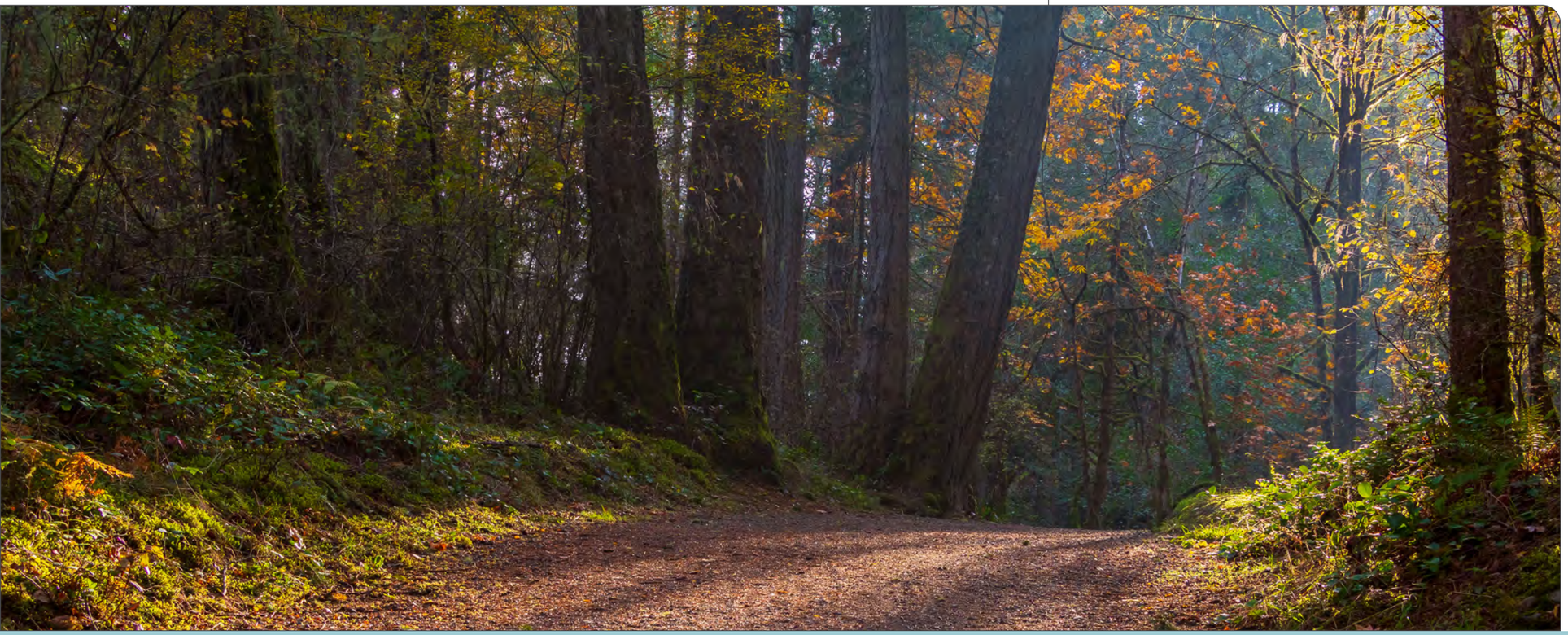
Strategy 5.1. Build relationships with host Nations and Indigenous Peoples living in View Royal to integrate Indigenous perspectives with urban forest management.

Expanding government-to-government relationships with Esquimalt and Songhees Nations is vital to building a more inclusive and respectful approach to urban forest management in View Royal. These partnerships can help identify shared priorities, foster mutual learning, and ensure Indigenous values, rights, and Traditional Knowledge are meaningfully reflected in how forested areas are cared for and protected.

Collaborative efforts to identify culturally significant species, climate-resilient planting opportunities, and high-priority forested areas can support both ecological and cultural objectives. Integrating Indigenous perspectives into urban forestry planning strengthens reconciliation efforts and contributes to more holistic, place-based stewardship.

Action 43. Expand government-to-government relationships with Esquimalt and Songhees Nations to better understand how Indigenous values and interests might be reflected in urban forest management practices, where high priority forested stands exist within View Royal, and identify opportunities to integrate Traditional Knowledge and land management practices into forested areas management.

Forest path in Thetis Lake Regional Park (Emily Norton)



Strategy 5.2. Build community knowledge of and participation in urban forest management.

Encouraging community participation and knowledge sharing is key to the long-term success of urban forestry in View Royal. Making information accessible through diverse communication channels ensures residents across all demographics can stay informed and engaged. Public access to urban forestry data, along with tools for reporting local concerns, fosters transparency and strengthens the relationship between the Town and its residents.

Programs that support direct involvement, such as tree planting opportunities, deepen public connection to the urban forest and encourage shared stewardship. Regular updates and educational materials help build community understanding, promote best practices, and maintain momentum as the Town's urban forest strategy is implemented.

KEY INDICATOR(S):
M15. Annual volunteer hours

BASELINE (2025):
Not tracked

TARGET (2030):
>100 hours

Action 44. Ensure important urban forestry communications use a diversity of print and digital avenues to reach all segments of View Royal's population.

Action 45. Make urban forestry data, including tree canopy mapping and inventory datasets, publicly available.

Action 46. Prepare a biannual newsletter to communicate key urban forestry messages, updates, and progress on UFS implementation.

Action 47. Continue to offer View Royal's Resident Tree Planting Program and expand it if demand outpaces current program capacity. Add non-invasive non-native tree species to the planting list for areas of the town that are not connected to natural ecosystems.

Action 48. As demand justifies, further build on the successful partnerships and programming delivered through arrangements with the Greater Victoria Green Team (GVGT).

Strategy 5.3. Develop strategic partnerships to support the urban forest.

A wide range of actors are involved in the management of the Town's urban forest. Community members, utility companies, educational institutions, and various governmental and non-governmental organizations manage trees on their property. Coordination between these actors can improve outcomes for trees and forests.

Community and inter-agency partnerships play a vital role in supporting a healthy and resilient urban forest. By working collaboratively with service providers, educational institutions, and regional networks, View Royal can align goals, reduce conflicts, and strengthen the effectiveness of urban forest initiatives. These relationships help ensure that infrastructure planning, land management, and tree protection efforts are better coordinated and mutually supportive.

Engaging youth, professionals, and researchers through education and knowledge-sharing fosters long-term stewardship and builds capacity within the field. Partnerships also create opportunities for innovation, shared learning, and the development of consistent best practices across jurisdictions—enhancing the collective impact of urban forestry efforts.

Action 49. Work with utility providers to define preferred and minimum planting setbacks from infrastructure assets and to identify acceptable solutions (e.g., utility sleeves, root barriers, vertical setbacks) supported in meeting minimum setbacks to reduce undue harm to trees.

Action 50. Explore partnership opportunities with the Greater Victoria School District (GVSD), including Shoreline Community Middle School, Eagle View Elementary School, and View Royal Elementary School to engage youth in educational programs that promote urban forest awareness and foster student interest in urban forestry.

Action 51. Actively participate in and support initiatives that utilize the Capital Regional District's (CRD) network of urban forestry professionals, including municipal staff, nurseries, consultants, and academics. Focus on sharing knowledge and collaborating to address key challenges.

Action 52. Explore partnering with Royal Roads University, the University of Victoria and other post-secondary institutions to support research and workforce development in View Royal's urban forest.

Left: Walking through Portage Park (Kevin Light Photography)
Below: Child enjoying the outdoors (Zhukov Vlad)

6. Implementation Plan

Action	Department Lead(s)	Monitoring Measure	Est. Cost (Freq.)	Timeline
Goal 1. Planning and design processes facilitate the growth of the urban forest.				
Strategy 1.1. Ensure planting standards are supporting long-term tree growth.				
Action 1. Ensure trees entering the boulevard inventory are inspected to verify compliance with stock and establishment standards prior to their acceptance by the Town.	Engineering	M8. Tree condition rating	$ (AN)	Short-Term
Action 2. ! Update View Royal's Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw and standard details to enhance tree planting conditions in right-of-ways, including minimum soil volume, irrigation, boulevard width and soil depth requirements.	Engineering, Development Services		$ - $$$ (OT)	Short-Term
Action 3. Review tender specifications and warranty inspection standards for contracted tree planting.	Engineering		$ (OT)	Immediate
Action 4. Review the Town's details for boulevards, tree planting, tree protection, and tree pits. Ensure design is aligned with best practices, and would support full tree life-cycles.	Engineering	M3. Average DBH of boulevard trees at time of removal	$ (OT)	Short-Term
Action 5. Spatially define the areas across the Town where the use of native vegetation is to be prioritized given biodiversity preservation objectives within or adjacent to those areas (e.g. shoreline parks, park natural areas, and ESA buffers).	Engineering, Development Services		$ (OT)	Short-Term
Strategy 1.2. Ensure land use planning is supporting the urban forest.				
Action 6. ! Adopt OCP policy supporting the urban forest and UFS that provides enhanced direction on the handling of View Royal's urban forest within the community's guide to growth.	Development Services	M6. Spatial heat disparity	$ (OT)	Short-Term
Action 7. ! Review View Royal's Zoning Bylaw to ensure performance criteria, including surface parking, landscaped open space, setbacks, and lot coverage, are supporting consistent inclusion of trees on development sites.	Development Services	M6. Spatial heat disparity	$ (OT)	Short-Term
Strategy 1.3. Ensure rates of tree planting are supporting net new outcomes.				
Action 8. Prepare five-year tree planting plans to direct short-term tree planting programming toward the Town maintaining the desired net new tree planting.	Engineering		$$$ (PR)	Mid-Term
Action 9. ! Municipal tree planting targeting 50 - 100 trees per year between parks and boulevards and desired canopy cover pathways.	Engineering	M5. Net new public trees planted	$$	Immediate
Action 10. Leverage restoration and afforestation to grow urban forest canopy within forested areas and in naturalization sites.	Engineering	M4. Urban core canopy cover	$ - $$$$ (AN)	Long-Term
Action 11. ! Establish an adopt-a-tree program where the Town will plant trees in underutilized boulevard or park space in exchange for resident-led care through establishment.	Engineering	M5. Net new public trees planted	$ - $$$ (AN)	Short-Term
Strategy 1.4. Consider demonstrable need in program decision-making.				

$ - Staff time or <$5,000
$$ - $5,000 - $10,000
$$$ - $10,000 - $25,000
$$$$ - >$25,000
AN - Annual/Ongoing
OT - One-time
PR - Periodic

Immediate - 2026
Short-Term - 2026 - 2030
Mid-Term - 2030 - 2040
Long-Term - Beyond 2040

Action	Department Lead(s)	Monitoring Measure	Est. Cost (Freq.)	Timeline
Action 12. Explore opportunities for improving urban forest access and education in areas with concentrations of vulnerable populations.	Engineering	M4. Urban core canopy cover	$ (AN)	Short-Term
Action 13. Ensure community engagement and outreach programming is broadly accessible to any interested members of the community. Explore opportunities for improving urban forest access and education in low tree equity areas.	Corporate Administration		$ (AN)	Immediate
Action 14. Explore requiring dedicated tree corridors, boulevards clear of active transportation facilities or any other community infrastructure, along priority right-of-ways such as: (i) those located in Transit Oriented Development areas and along arterial/collector corridors, or (ii) areas of lower tree equity where there is a lower density of public trees. Identify these locations as a schedule in the OCP, prepare accompanying policy, and consistently require widening dedications within these areas.	Development Services, Engineering		$ (OT)	Mid-Term
Goal 2. Program governance supports the Town in meeting it's urban forest aspirations.				
Strategy 2.1. Improve urban forest governance to achieve positive urban forest outcomes.				
Action 15. Prepare and adopt a Town Tree policy to formalize: green infrastructure within the Town's broader asset management program, risk management procedures concerning urban forest assets, integrated pest management procedures, public tree protection, replacement, and compensation requirements, and tree protection and inspection requirements with respect to capital works.	Engineering		$$-$$$ (OT)	Mid-Term
Action 16. ! Establish dedicated tree maintenance and planting budgets within parks. Establish initial budgets based on a life-cycle costing approach.	Engineering, Finance and Technology	M10. Program budget	$$$$ (AN)	Immediate
Action 17. ! Establish an interdepartmental Urban Forestry working group and meet biannually to review progress on implementation, and to review current challenges and opportunities impacting the Town's urban forestry program.	Chaired by Engineering, full representation from Internal departments	M2. Interdepartmental working group meetings.	$ (AN)	Immediate
Strategy 2.2. Prioritize program monitoring and reporting.				
Action 18. Undertake a review of the Urban Forest Strategy every five years.	Engineering		$-$$ (PR)	Mid-Term
Action 19. ! Establish and maintain a GIS-based boulevard tree inventory featuring a technical design aligned with industry best practices and update the inventory in-step with a proactive maintenance regimen.	Engineering	M9. Inventory update cycle	$* (AN) * moderated by size of boulevard tree population. Presently, relatively small.	Short-Term
Action 20. ! Produce a new urban tree canopy dataset, derived from current LiDAR and imagery datasets, on a five-year interval.	Engineering	M4. Urban core canopy cover	$$$ - $$$$* (PR) * potentional cost efficiencies through aligning LiDAR acquisition with neighbouring municipalities/regional districts undertaking similar work.	Mid-Term

$ - Staff time or <$5,000
$$ - $5,000 - $10,000
$$$ - $10,000 - $25,000
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Immediate - 2026
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Mid-Term - 2030 - 2040
Long-Term - Beyond 2040

Action	Department Lead(s)	Monitoring Measure	Est. Cost (Freq.)	Timeline
Action 21. ! Produce a State of the Urban Forest report on a five-year interval to report on key program metrics and explore changes in the urban forest since prior reporting.	Engineering		$$$ (PR)	Mid-Term
Strategy 2.3. Sustainably resource urban forest management and the implementation of this Strategy.				
Action 22. Access external employment funding, such as Canada Summer Jobs wage subsidies, to employ youth over the summer and explore sustainable funding for student and internship positions that can contribute to a wide range of stewardship, tree inventory, and other projects.	Engineering, Finance and Technology		$ (PR)	Immediate
Action 23. ! Establish a Town arborist or urban forester position within Parks to broadly enhance urban forest outcomes across all program areas and to support ongoing implementation of this Strategy.	Engineering, Finance and Technology		$$$$* (AN) * Investment here would bring capacity in-house that could reduce costs across multiple other implementation areas.	Immediate
Action 24. Transition the Town's Invasive Species Volunteer Coordinator to a full-time equivalent and expand community outreach, education, and stewardship programming.	Engineering, Finance and Technology		$$$$ (AN)	Immediate
Action 25. ! Access external funding opportunities to support tree planting, such as the Growing Canada's Community Canopies (GCCC) initiative.	Engineering, Finance and Technology		$ (PR)	Immediate
Goal 3. Urban forest maintenance regimen are aligned with industry best practices.				
Strategy 3.1. Utilize best practices and industry benchmarks through the Town's maintenance regimen.				
Action 26. Expand the Town's watering program to water newly planted trees weekly in the growing season for a period of 3 to 5 years after planting.	Engineering		$ - $$ (AN)	Mid-Term
Action 27. Transition to a seven-year cyclical pruning cycle for all inventoried boulevard trees.	Engineering	M11. Cyclical pruning cycle	$$$$ (AN)	Short-Term
Strategy 3.2. Maintain forested areas to a reasonable standard of care.				
Action 28. Prepare forest management plans for flagship parks including Nursery Hill Park, Kelvin Grove/Wilfert Park, Eagle Creek, Robin Hill, Portage Park, to define long-term objectives for forest management and identify short-term management actions to achieve objectives. Ensure current assessments of forest health underpin forest management planning efforts.	Engineering	M12. Forest stand condition ratings	$$$ (PR)	Long-Term
Action 29. Prepare a biodiversity strategy to guide the management of View Royal's natural ecosystems, including rare ecosystems and species (e.g. Garry oak ecosystems), habitat hubs and corridors, their protection, invasive species management, access and recreational usage.	Engineering, Development Services		$$$$ (OT)	Mid-Term
Goal 4. View Royal protects it's urban forest.				
Strategy 4.1. Enhance regulatory tools and process are achieving the right balance between tree protection and community growth.				
Action 30. ! Establish a Wildfire Hazard Development Permit Area (DPA), including accompanying wildfire risk mapping as guided by View Royal's Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan.	Development Services, Protective Services		$$ (OT)	Short-Term

$ - Staff time or <$5,000
$$ - $5,000 - $10,000
$$$ - $10,000 - $25,000
$$$$ - >$25,000
AN - Annual/Ongoing
OT - One-time
PR - Periodic

Immediate - 2026
Short-Term - 2026 - 2030
Mid-Term - 2030 - 2040
Long-Term - Beyond 2040

Action	Department Lead(s)	Monitoring Measure	Est. Cost (Freq.)	Timeline
Action 31. Require development proposals that would involve modification of an existing forest edge, or the creation of new forest edge, to be supported by a wind firm assessment prepared by a qualified professional.	Development Services		$ - $$* (OT) * scoping of terms of reference.	Short-Term
Action 32. Review the Town's Natural Watercourse and Shoreline Areas DPA, as well as the Sensitive Terrestrial Ecosystem DPA to ensure mapping and associated requirements are aligned with the Town's broader vision for its urban forest management and natural systems.	Development Services		$$ - $$$$* (OT) * often, work would be completed as part of a larger biodiversity strategy.	Short-Term
Action 33. Develop a Terms of Reference for arborist reports and tree surveys, including specifying survey requirements and the conditions under which letters of assurance and/or arborist supervision will be imposed.	Development Services, Engineering		$ - $$* (OT) * scoping of terms of reference.	Immediate
Action 34. Formalize a process for bonusing (e.g., height, floor area) where trees, or native soils, are voluntarily protected through development, or where proposed site configuration will support greater tree planting than would be supported by meeting minimum requirements (e.g., landscaped area, expanded setbacks, lot coverage, etc.). Include policy supporting this bonusing in the Town's OCP.	Development Services		$ (OT)	Short-Term
Action 35. Update contract language to require hold-backs related to tree protection where private contractors are working around public trees during capital projects.	Engineering		$ (OT)	Short-Term
Action 36. Review the Town's Tree Protection Bylaw to ensure alignment with broader community objectives for canopy growth.	Engineering, Development Services		$ - $$$ (OT)	Short-Term
Action 37. Explore the potential of a Landscaping Bylaw (s.527 of the LGA) toward improving consideration for the urban forest through development processes.	Engineering, Development Services	M13. Genus and species diversity	$ (AN)	Short-Term
Action 38. Manage the diversity of public trees by limiting the continued planting of overrepresented species on public land. Aim for the Town's tree inventory to include no more than 20% of any single genus and no more than 10% of any single species.				
Strategy 4.2. Support the resilience of both View Royal as a community and its urban forest.				
Action 39. Consider sourcing climate-adapted native seed stock for use in the Town's native ecosystems.	Engineering		$ (AN)	Mid-Term
Action 40. Adjust terms of reference for landscape plan submissions for large developments to include planting stock selection that achieves a minimum diversity of 3-5 individual species well-suited to the site.	Development Services		$ (OT)	Short-Term
Action 41. Support implementation of the actions contained to View Royal's Community Wildfire Protection Plan.	Protective Services		$ - $$$$ (AN)	Short-Term
Action 42. Adopt FireSmart principals in landscape management, programming, and treatments to build the resilience of municipal buildings and Town assets.	Engineering, Protective Services		$ - $$ (OT)	Short-Term

$ - Staff time or <$5,000
$$ - $5,000 - $10,000
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$$$$ - >$25,000
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Mid-Term - 2030 - 2040
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Action	Department Lead(s)	Monitoring Measure	Est. Cost (Freq.)	Timeline
Goal 5. Sustainable urban forest management is achieved through partnership and community investment.				
Strategy 5.1. Build relationships with host Nations and Indigenous Peoples living in View Royal to integrate Indigenous perspectives with urban forest management.				
Action 43. Expand government-to-government relationships with Esquimalt and Songhees Nations to better understand how Indigenous values and interests might be reflected in urban forest management practices, where high priority forested stands exist within View Royal, and identify opportunities to integrate Traditional Knowledge and land management practices into forested areas management.	Office of the Mayor & CAO, Corporate Administration, Engineering		$ - $$$$ (AN)	Immediate
Strategy 5.2. Build community knowledge of and participation in urban forest management.				
Action 44. Ensure important urban forestry communications use a diversity of print and digital avenues to reach all segments of View Royal's population.	Corporate Administration, Engineering		$ (AN)	Short-Term
Action 45. Make urban forestry data, including tree canopy mapping and inventory datasets, publicly available.	Corporate Administration, Engineering		$ (AN)	Mid-Term
Action 46. Prepare a biannual newsletter to communicate key urban forestry messages, updates, and progress on UFS implementation.	Corporate Administration, Engineering		$ (AN)	Short-Term
Action 47. Continue to offer View Royal's Resident Tree Planting Program and expand it if demand outpaces current program capacity. Add non-invasive non-native tree species to the planting list for areas of the town that are not connected to natural ecosystems.	Engineering		$$$ - $$$$ (AN)	Immediate
Action 48. As demand justifies, further build on the successful partnerships and programming delivered through arrangements with the Greater Victoria Green Team (GVGT).	Engineering		$$ - $$$$ (AN)	Short-Term
Strategy 5.3. Develop strategic partnerships to support the urban forest.				
Action 49. Work with utility providers to define preferred and minimum planting setbacks from infrastructure assets and to identify acceptable solutions (e.g., utility sleeves, root barriers, vertical setbacks) supported in meeting minimum setbacks to reduce undue harm to trees.	Engineering		$ (PR)	Short-Term
Action 50. Explore partnership opportunities with the Greater Victoria School District (GVSD), including Shoreline Community Middle School, Eagle View Elementary School, and View Royal Elementary School to engage youth in educational programs that promote urban forest awareness and foster student interest in urban forestry.	Engineering, Corporate Administration		$ (AN)	Mid-Term
Action 51. Actively participate in and support initiatives that utilize the Capital Regional District's (CRD) network of urban forestry professionals, including municipal staff, nurseries, consultants, and academics. Focus on sharing knowledge and collaborating to address key challenges.	Engineering		$ (AN)	Short-Term
Action 52. Explore partnering with Royal Roads University, the University of Victoria and other post-secondary institutions to support research and workforce development in View Royal's urban forest.	Engineering		$ (AN)	Long-Term

$ - Staff time or <$5,000
$$ - $5,000 - $10,000
$$$ - $10,000 - $25,000
$$$$ - >$25,000
AN - Annual/Ongoing
OT - One-time
PR - Periodic

Immediate - 2026
Short-Term - 2026 - 2030
Mid-Term - 2030 - 2040
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Appendix

To assess View Royal's urban forestry program, a set of urban forest criteria and indicators have been adapted from the urban forest sustainability model originally proposed by Clark et al. in 1997 and updated by Leff in 2016. This suite of criteria and performance indicators helps assess the program's status using a standardized approach. Each criterion is linked to one of five overarching goals: Plan, Plant, Protect, Manage, Partner.

Our evaluations were based on a detailed review of the Town's policies and staff interviews. Overall, the Town's urban forest program scored 'Fair'. The assessment results are summarized in a 'Report Card' that the Town can use for benchmarking and progress tracking.

Our criteria & indicators table is based on the following resources:

1. Davey Institute / USDA Forest Service: The Sustainable Urban Forest a Step-by-Step Approach (2016). Available online at www.itreetools.org/resources/content/Sustainable_Urban_Forest_Guide_14Nov2016.pdf

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A current (2025) evaluation of View Royal's urban forest management program, scoring "poor", "fair", "good", or "optimal" under each identified assessment criteria, are highlighted on the pages following.

Primary source *modified by DHC from original	Assessment Criteria		Indicators for Urban Forestry Performance			
		OBJECTIVE	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	OPTIMAL
PLAN						
Davey 2016 C6*	**Awareness of the urban forest as a community resource**	*The urban forest is recognized as vital to the community's environmental, social, and economic well-being.*	General ambivalence or negative attitudes about trees, which are perceived as neutral at best or as the source of problems. Actions harmful to trees may be taken deliberately.	Trees are widely acknowledged as providing environmental, social, and economic services but are not widely integrated in corporate strategies and policies.	Trees are widely acknowledged as providing environmental, social, and economic services and urban forest objectives are integrated into other corporate strategies and policies.	Urban forest recognized as vital to the community's environmental, social, and economic well-being. Widespread public and political support and advocacy for trees, resulting in strong policies and plans that advance the viability and sustainability of the entire urban forest.
Davey 2016 C1 target*	**Interdepartmental and Municipal agency cooperation on urban forest strategy implementation**	*Ensure all relevant municipal departments and agencies cooperate to advance goals related to urban forest issues and opportunities.*	Little cooperation and conflicting among departments and/or agencies often leading to poor outcomes for trees.	Common goals but limited cooperation among departments and/or agencies and mixed outcomes for trees.	Municipal departments, affected agencies and urban forest managers recognize potential conflicts and reach out to each other on an	Formal interdepartmental working agreements or protocols for all projects that could impact municipal trees.

Primary source *modified by DHC from original	Assessment Criteria		Indicators for Urban Forestry Performance			
		OBJECTIVE	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	OPTIMAL
					informal but regular basis.	
Davey 2016 R2 target*	**Clear and defensible urban forest canopy assessment and goals**	*Urban forest policy and practice is driven by comprehensive goals municipality-wide and at the neighbourhood or land use scale informed by accurate, high-resolution assessments of existing and potential canopy cover.*	No assessment or goals.	Low-resolution and/or point-based sampling of canopy cover using aerial photographs or satellite imagery – and limited or no goal setting.	Complete, detailed, and spatially explicit, high-resolution Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) assessment based on enhanced data (such as LiDAR) – accompanied by a comprehensive set of goals by land use and other parameters.	The City has a complete, detailed, and spatially explicit high-resolution Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) assessment accompanied by a comprehensive set of goals, all utilized effectively to drive urban forest policy and practice municipality-wide and at neighbourhood or smaller management level.
Davey 2016 T1	**Relative tree canopy cover**	*Achieve desired degree of tree cover, based on potential or according to goals set for entire municipality and for each neighbourhood or land use.*	The existing canopy cover for entire municipality is <50% of the desired canopy	The existing canopy is 50%-75% of desired	The existing canopy is >75%-100% of desired.	The existing canopy is >75%-100% of desired - at the individual neighborhood level

Primary source *modified by DHC from original	Assessment Criteria		Indicators for Urban Forestry Performance			
		OBJECTIVE	Poor	Fair	Good	Optimal
						as well as overall municipality
Davey 2016 R4	**Municipality-wide urban forest management plan**	*Develop and implement a comprehensive urban forest management plan for public and private property.*	No plan	Existing plan limited in scope and implementation	Recent comprehensive plan developed and implemented for publicly owned forest resources, including trees managed intensively (or individually) and those managed extensively, as a population (e.g., trees in natural areas)	Strategic, multi-tiered plan with built-in adaptive management mechanisms developed and implemented for public and private resources
DHC	**Municipal green infrastructure asset management**	Integrate green infrastructure assets into the municipal asset management system to support valuing and accounting for natural assets in the City's financial planning to build climate resilient infrastructure.	No recognition of value of natural or human-made elements that provide ecological and hydrological functions (green infrastructure)	Local government recognizes the value of green infrastructure but does not yet have information to include them in an asset management system.	Green infrastructure assets have been partially or fully inventoried and some assets are included in an asset management system, with the intent to ultimately capture all assets in the consolidated	Green infrastructure assets are inventoried and included in an asset management system and on the consolidated financial statement of the municipality.

Primary source *modified by DHC from original	Assessment Criteria		Indicators for Urban Forestry Performance			
		OBJECTIVE	Poor	Fair	Good	Optimal
					financial statements of the municipality.	
SFI Objective 3	**Municipal-wide biodiversity or green network strategy**	Acquire and restore publicly-owned natural areas in pursuit of meeting municipal-wide biodiversity and connectivity goals.	No or very limited planning and stewardship of natural areas.	Area specific management plans focused on management, restoration, and protection of natural areas.	Municipal-wide urban forest, parks or natural areas strategy guiding management, restoration, and protection of the existing natural areas network.	Biodiversity strategy or equivalent in effect to manage, restore and existing and acquire future natural areas network throughout the municipality.
Davey 2016 R6 target*	**Municipal urban forestry program capacity**	Maintain sufficient well-trained personnel and equipment – whether in-house or through contracted or volunteer services – to implement municipality-wide urban forest management plan	Team severely limited by lack of personnel and/or access to adequate equipment. Unable to perform adequate maintenance, let alone implement new goals.	Team limited by lack of staff and/or access to adequate equipment to implement new goals.	Team able to implement many of the goals and objectives of the urban forest management plan.	Team able to implement all of the goals and objectives of the urban forest management plan.
Davey 2016 R5 target*	**Urban forest funding to implement a strategy**	Maintain adequate funding to implement the urban forest strategy.	Little or no dedicated funding.	Dedicated funding but insufficient to implement the urban forest	Dedicated funding sufficient to partially implement the urban forest strategy and maintain new	Sustained funding to fully implement the urban forest strategy and maintain new

Primary source *modified by DHC from original	Assessment Criteria		Indicators for Urban Forestry Performance			
		OBJECTIVE	Poor	Fair	Good	Optimal
				strategy or maintain new assets as they are added to the inventory.	assets as they are added to the inventory.	assets as they are added to the inventory.

GROW						
Davey 2016 R7 target*	**City tree planting and replacement program design, planning and implementation**	Comprehensive and effective tree selection, planting and establishment program that is driven by canopy cover goals and other considerations according to the UFS.	Tree replacement and establishment is ad hoc.	Some tree planting and replacement occurs, but with limited overall municipality-wide planning and insufficient to meet replacement requirements.	Tree replacement and establishment is directed by needs derived from an opportunities assessment and species selection is guided by site conditions, tree health and climate adaptation considerations.	Tree planting and replacement is guided by strategic priorities and is planned out to make progress towards targets set for canopy cover, diversity, tree health and climate adaptation within the timeframe of the strategy.
DHC	**Development requirements to plant trees on private land**	Ensure that new trees are required in landscaping for new development or, where space is lacking, there is an equivalent contribution to tree planting in the public realm.	Landscaping requirements do not address trees on private land.	Developments are generally required to plant trees but the outcomes are often in conflict with public trees and other infrastructure due to space limitations and not connected to meeting canopy cover targets.	Developments are required to plant trees or, where space is not adequate according to soil volume available, provide cash-in-lieu for equivalent tree planting on public land. The requirement is not connected to meeting canopy cover targets.	Developments are required to provide a minimum density of trees per unit measure or, where space is not adequate according to soil volume available, provide adequate cash-in-lieu for equivalent tree planting on public land. Planting density is determined based on meeting a municipal-wide canopy cover target.

Davey 2016 R8 target*	**Streetscape and servicing specifications and standards for planting trees**	Ensure all publicly owned trees are planted into conditions that meet requirements for survival and maximize current and future tree benefits.	No or very few specifications and standards for growing sites.	Specifications and standards for growing sites exist but are inadequate to meet urban forest goals.	Specifications and standards exist and are adequate to meet urban forest goals but are not always achieved.	All trees planted are in sites with adequate soil quality and quantity, and with sufficient growing space to achieve their genetic potential and life expectancy, and thus provide maximum ecosystem services.
(Davey 2016 R3 target)	**Equity in planting program delivery**	*Ensure that the benefits of urban forests are made available to all, especially to those in greatest need of tree benefits.*	Tree planting and outreach are not determined equitably by canopy cover or need for benefits.	Planting and outreach include attention to low-canopy neighborhoods or areas.	Planting and outreach targets neighborhoods with low canopy and a high need for tree benefits.	Equitable planting and outreach at the neighbourhood level are guided by strong citizen engagement in identified low-canopy/high-need areas.
Davey 2016 R14 target*	**Forest restoration and native species planting**	*Encourage the appreciation of climate suitable native vegetation by the community and ensure native species are widely planted to enhance native biodiversity and connectivity*	Voluntary use of climate suitable native species on publicly and privately-owned lands.	The use of climate suitable native species is encouraged on a site-appropriate basis in public and private land development projects.	Policies require the use of climate suitable native species and management of invasive species on a site-appropriate basis in public and private land development projects but are not integrated across all	Policies require the use of climate suitable native species and management of invasive species on a site-appropriate basis in public and private land development projects and through tree bylaw.

					policy or guided by a connectivity analysis.	
Davey 2016	**Selection and procurement of stock in cooperation with nursery industry**	*Diversity targets and climate adaptation/mitigation objectives guide tree species selection and nurseries proactively grow stock based on municipal requirements.*	Species selection is not guided by diversity targets or climate adaptation/mitigation objectives.	Species selection is guided by diversity and climate adaptation/ mitigation but required stock is rarely available from nurseries and acceptable substitutes reduce diversity.	Species selection is guided by targets for diversity and climate adaptation/ mitigation and required stock or acceptable substitutes are usually available from nurseries.	Species selection is guided by targets for diversity and climate adaptation/mitigation and required stock is secured ahead of the planned planting year from contract or in-house nurseries.
SFI	**Ecosystem services targeted in tree planting projects and landscaping**	*Incorporate ecosystem services objectives into public and private tree planting projects to improve urban tree health and resilience, carbon sequestration, stormwater management and cooling.*	Ecosystem services not considered in planting projects or intentionally designed into vegetated landscapes	Ecosystem services, such as stormwater interception, occasionally incorporated into City or private land planting projects and landscape designs.	Guidelines in place for planting projects and landscape designs on public and private land to deliver specific ecosystem services.	Ecosystem services targets are defined for the urban forest and policy requires planting project and landscape designs on public and private land to contribute to meeting targets.

MANAGE						
Davey 2016 R1 target*	**Tree inventory**	*A current and comprehensive inventory of intensively managed trees to guide management, including data such as age distribution, species mix, tree condition and risk assessment.*	No inventory.	Partial inventory of publicly-owned trees in GIS.	Complete inventory of street trees and intensively managed park trees in GIS but inconsistently updated.	The municipal tree inventory is complete, is GIS-based, supported by mapping, and is continuously updated to record growth, work history and tree condition.
Davey 2016 T7 target*	**Knowledge of trees on private property**	Understand the extent, location, and general condition of privately-owned trees.	No information about privately owned trees.	Aerial, point-based or low-resolution assessment of tree canopy on private property, capturing broad extent.	Detailed Urban Tree Canopy analysis of the urban forest on private land, including extent and location, integrated into a municipality-wide GIS system	The City has an i-Tree Eco analysis of private trees as well as detailed Urban Tree Canopy analysis of the entire urban forest integrated into a municipality-wide GIS system.
Added to bridge gap in Davey	**Natural areas inventory**	*A current and comprehensive inventory of sensitive and modified natural ecosystems and their quality mapped to Provincial standards to provide standardized ecological information to support decision-making.*	No inventory of natural areas.	Natural areas inventoried in GIS but not recently updated and attribute information not to a standard that can support decision-making.	Natural areas inventoried in GIS and with standard and complete attribute information to support decision-making but not updated in the last 5 years.	Natural areas inventoried in GIS and with standard and complete attribute information to support decision-making and updated in the last 5 years.

Davey 2016 T2	**Age diversity (size class distribution)**	*Provide for ideal uneven age distribution of all "intensively" (or individually) managed trees – municipality-wide as well as at neighbourhood level*	Even-age distribution, or highly skewed toward a single age class (maturity stage) across entire population	Some uneven distribution, but most of the tree population falls into a single age class	Total tree population across municipality approaches an ideal age distribution of 40% juvenile, 30% semi-mature, 20% mature, and 10% senescent	Total population approaches that ideal distribution municipality-wide as well as at the neighborhood level
Davey 2016 T3	**Species diversity**	*Establish a genetically diverse population across the municipality as well as at the neighbourhood scale*	Five or fewer species dominate the entire tree population across municipality	No single species represents more than 10% of the total tree population; no genus more than 20%, and no family more than 30%	No single species represents more than 5% of total tree population; no genus more than 10%; and no family more than 15%	At least as diverse as "Good" rating (5/10/15) municipality-wide - and at least as diverse as "fair" (10/20/30) at the neighborhood level
Davey 2016 T4	**Species suitability**	*Establish a tree population suited to the urban environment and adapted to the overall region*	Fewer than 50% of all trees are from species considered suitable for the area	>50%-75% of trees are from species suitable for the area	More than 75% of trees are suitable for the area.	Virtually all trees are suitable for the area
Davey 2016 T5 target	**Publicly owned tree species condition**	*Current and detailed understanding of condition and risk potential of all publicly owned trees that are managed intensively (or individually)*	Condition of urban forest is unknown	Sample-based tree inventory indicating tree condition and risk level	Complete tree inventory that includes detailed tree condition ratings	Complete tree inventory that is GIS-based and includes detailed tree condition as well as risk ratings
Davey 2016 R10*	**Maintenance of intensively managed trees**	*Maintain all publicly owned intensively managed trees for optimal health and condition in order to extend longevity and maximize current and future benefits*	Intensively managed trees are maintained on a request/reactive basis.	Intensively managed trees are maintained on a request/reactive	All intensively managed trees are systematically maintained on a cycle determined by	All mature intensively managed trees are maintained on an optimal pruning

				basis. Limited systematic (block) pruning and/or immature trees are structurally pruned.	workload and resource limitations. All immature trees are structurally pruned.	cycle. All immature trees are structurally pruned.
	Emergency response planning	*A response plan guides call-out procedures, resources available and the clean-up response for extreme weather and earthquake.*	Response plan not documented or not current.	Response plan is documented and includes call-out procedures, roles and responsibilities but lacks details to prioritize hazards and clean-up.	Response plan includes call-out procedure, roles and responsibilities, and criteria for prioritizing tree hazards and removing debris is in place.	A comprehensive response plan is in place and a response drill occurs annually.
Davey 2016 R12 target* (Updated by DHC to make more relevant/ nuanced)	Tree risk management	*Comprehensive tree risk management program fully implemented, according to ANSI A300 (Part 9) "Tree Risk Assessment" standards, and supporting industry best management practices.*	No coordinated tree risk assessment or risk management program. Response is on a reactive basis only.	Some areas within the city are prioritized for risk assessment and management. Little annual budget is available to develop a more proactive inspection program.	Priority areas of the City are inspected on a regular schedule and operational standards and budgets are in place for responding to and managing tree risks within an appropriate timeframe.	A comprehensive risk management program is in place, with all public lands inspected on defined schedules and operational standards and budgets in place for responding to and managing tree risks within an appropriate timeframe.
DHC made	**Pest and Disease Management**	*An Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan guides treatment*	No integrated pest management plan	No integrated pest	An integrated pest management plan is	A comprehensive pest management

		responses to existing and potential pest, disease and invasive species threats to the urban forest.	and no pest management.	management plan and reactive pest management.	in place and implemented.	program is in place, with detection, communication, rapid response and IPM practiced.
Davey 2016 R13 target*	**Waste biomass utilization**	*A closed system diverts all urban wood and green waste through reuse and recycling.*	Wood waste from the urban forest is not utilized.	Wood waste from the urban forest is utilized as mulch or biofuel.	Wood waste from the urban forest is utilized as mulch or biofuel and sometimes high value pieces are milled and stored for later use or sold on to local value-added industries.	Low value wood waste from the urban forest is utilized as mulch or biofuel and all high value pieces are milled and stored for later use or sold on to local value-added industries.
SFI	**Tracking of operational carbon footprints and urban forest carbon-cycle balance**	*Organization will actively track their operational carbon footprints and their community-wide urban forest carbon-cycle balance and work with community partners to minimize greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) emissions while maximizing carbon sequestration and avoided GHG emissions.*	Basic CO2/GHG accounting not considered for urban forestry operations	Basic CO2/GHG accounting and carbon cycle assessment and climate action plan undertaken for urban forestry operations and for the entire community with general goals and objectives to minimize community emissions.	Basic CO2/GHG accounting and carbon cycle assessment and climate action plan undertaken with specific goals and objectives for urban forestry and formal policies in place to encourage use of trees and green infrastructure for carbon sequestration and energy conservation in buildings.	Basic CO2/GHG accounting and carbon cycle assessment and climate action plan undertaken for urban forestry operations and for the entire community with specific goals and objectives for urban forestry and formal policies in place to encourage use of trees and green infrastructure

						for carbon sequestration and energy conservation in buildings, and to maximize urban wood and woody biomass utilization.

PROTECT

Davey 2016 R9 target*	**Policy or regulations regulating the protection and replacement of private and City trees**	*Secure the benefits derived from trees on public and private land by enforcement of municipality-wide policies and practices including tree protection.*	No or very limited tree protection policy.	Policies in place to protect public trees and employ industry best management practice.	Policies in place to protect public and private trees with enforcement but lack integration with other municipal policy to enable effective tree retention.	Urban forest strategy and integrated municipal-wide policies that guide the protection of trees on public and private land, and ensure they are consistently applied and enforced.
SFI Objective 3 and 4	**Policy or regulations for conservation of sensitive ecosystems, soils, or permeability on private property through development**	*Secure the benefits derived from environmentally sensitive areas by enforcement of municipality-wide policies in pursuit of meeting biodiversity and connectivity goals.*	No or very limited natural areas protection policy.	Policies in place to protect privately-owned natural areas without enforcement.	Development Permit Areas in place to protect privately-owned natural areas with enforcement but lack integration with other municipal policy to	Biodiversity strategy or equivalent and integrated municipal-wide policies that guide privately-owned natural area protection and ensure they are

					enable effective tree retention.	consistently applied.
SFI Objective 3	**Internal protocols guide City tree or sensitive ecosystem protection**	*Ensure all relevant municipal departments follow consistent tree or ecosystem protection protocols for capital design and construction activities.*	No protocols guiding City tree or ecosystem protection for capital design and construction activities.	Informal and inconsistent processes followed for City tree or ecosystem protection for capital design and construction activities.	Established protocols for City tree or ecosystem protection for capital design and construction activities but outcomes are inconsistent or sometimes unachievable.	Established protocols for City tree or ecosystem protection for capital design and construction activities are consistently followed and outcomes are successful.
Davey 2016 C3 target*	**Standards of tree protection and tree care observed during development or by local arborists and tree care companies**	*Consulting arborists and tree care companies understand city-wide urban forest goals and objectives and adhere to high professional standards.*	Limited understanding or support for tree protection requirements.	General understanding or support for tree protection requirements but large variation in the quality of information and services provided.	General understanding or support for tree protection requirements and generally consistent quality of information and services provided.	Advocacy for tree protection requirements, engagement with City staff on improving processes and standards, and generally consistent quality of information and services provided to high professional standards.
Davey 2016 C2 target*	Cooperation with utilities on protection (and pruning) of City trees	*All 3rd party utilities employ best management practices and cooperate with the City to advance goals and objectives related to urban forest issues and opportunities.*	Utilities take actions impacting urban forest with no municipal coordination or consideration of	Utilities inconsistently employ best management practices, rarely recognizing potential	Utilities employ best management practices, recognize potential municipal conflicts, and reach out to urban	Utilities employ best management practices, recognize potential municipal conflicts, and consistently reach

			the urban forest resource.	municipal conflicts or reaching out to urban forest managers and vice versa.	forest managers on an ad hoc basis – and vice versa.	out to urban forest managers and vice versa.
PARTNER						
Davey 2016 C5 target*	Citizen involvement and neighbourhood action	*Citizens and groups participate and collaborate at the neighbourhood level with the municipality and/or its partnering NGOs in urban forest management activities to advance municipality-wide plans*	Little or no citizen involvement or neighborhood action.	Community groups are active and willing to partner in urban forest management, but involvement and opportunities are ad hoc.	Several active neighborhood groups engaged across the community, with actions coordinated or led by municipality and/or its partnering NGOs.	Proactive outreach and coordination efforts by the City and NGO partners result in widespread citizen involvement and collaboration among active neighbourhood groups engaged in urban forest management
Davey 2016 C4 target*	**Involvement of large private land and institutional land holders (e.g., schools)**	*Large private landholders to embrace and advance city-wide urban forest goals and objectives by implementing specific resource management plans.*	Large private landholders are generally uninformed about urban forest issues and opportunities.	Landholders manage their tree resource but are not engaged in meeting municipality-wide urban forest goals.	Landholders develop comprehensive tree management plans (including funding strategies) that advance municipality-wide urban forest goals.	As described in "Good" rating, plus active community engagement and access to the property's forest resource.
	Urban forest research	*Research is active and ongoing towards improving our understanding of the urban forest resource, the benefits it produces, and the impacts of planning, policy, design and management initiatives.*	No urban forest research.	Isolated academic research occurs in the municipality's urban forest.	The municipality supports and has input on academic research occurring	The urban forest is a living laboratory - in collaboration with public, private, NGO and academic institutions - integrating research and innovation into managing urban forest health, distribution, and abundance.
Davey 2016 C7 target	**Regional collaboration**	*There is cooperation and interaction on urban forest plans among neighbouring municipalities within the region, and/or within regional agencies.*	Municipalities have no interaction with each other or the broader region for planning or coordination on urban forestry.	Some neighboring municipalities and regional agencies share similar policies and plans related to trees and urban forest.	Some urban forest planning and cooperation across municipalities and regional agencies.	Widespread regional cooperation resulting in development and implementation of regional urban forest strategy.

Back Cover: Sunset in View Royal (Andrea C. Miller)


VIEW ROYAL