

The New Official Plan policies will:

- Ensure the urban forest will not be compromised by growth and intensification
- Require early consideration of trees in development and infrastructure projects
- Provide guidance on tree issues to City staff and the Committee of Adjustment
- Support outreach and private stewardship

## Tree Canopy

Research shows that a tree canopy of 40% or more at a neighbourhood scale helps to offset the “urban heat island effect” – the increase in extreme summer temperatures caused by pavement, buildings, and other features of the urban landscape. Large, mature trees also reduce community energy use, promote and improve public health and well-being. They contribute to a beautiful City that attracts economic investment and talent. Ottawa’s New Official Plan proposes an urban tree canopy target of 40%, which is higher than the current urban tree canopy cover of 25%. Achieving this ambitious target will require a coordinated effort by the City, the private sector and residents over many years. Fortunately, Ottawa is already acting through the implementation of the Urban Forest Management Plan and the new Tree Protection By-law.

## Addressing Tree Loss

Ottawa must reverse the trend of urban tree loss. Retaining space for existing trees and finding space for new trees pose the biggest challenges. Healthy trees require above-ground space for their canopies. They require below-ground space and good soil for their roots.

Finding space for urban trees will become more challenging as Ottawa’s population continues to grow. The City must “intensify” – accommodate more households in the same space – to ensure financial health and to minimize urban growth into the surrounding farmlands, wetlands, and forests. The City’s streets must accommodate more people and uses, like cycling lanes. These trends will make it more difficult to protect space for existing trees and to find space for new trees.

## Challenges drive innovation

Starting with its new Infill zoning and R4 zoning, Ottawa has begun adding space for trees into its urban land use regulations. Public projects, such as the Elgin Street renewal, have begun to use “soil cell” technologies and permeable pavement to provide street trees with soil and water for healthy growth. The City is doing an inventory of potential planting space on public and private lands.

The proposed Official Plan policies support these initiatives with strong commitments and direction while providing the discretion and flexibility necessary to meet the City’s other priorities.

