

Date: Feb 28, 2024
Re: Report 2024CLS.002

Dear Mayor and City Councillors,

I am writing to express my disappointment regarding the potential divestment of surplus properties within our city, specifically those with existing tree canopy. These images to the right show four properties being considered for sale and development within my neighbourhood. You can see these properties are filled with trees and vegetation. What may not be clear from the photos is that these natural spaces, cherished by our community, are more than just undeveloped land. They are actively cared for by residents, with my family participating in Himalayan Balsam invasive plant pulls, and neighbors conducting annual EcoSuperior Spring-up to Clean-up activities on them. Additionally, two of the properties house a well-used pedestrian and dog walking trail which has been maintained by neighbours for many years, demonstrating the active involvement of our community.



These mini urban forests provide significant environmental, social, and economic benefits: They fill our neighbourhood with birdsong, enhancing our mental well-being. They are beautiful, creating an aesthetically pleasing backdrop to the horizon and buffering the noise from highway 11/17 traffic. During the summer they cool and clean our air, combating urban heat island effects. Slowing and absorbing stormwater, they function as natural filters, both reducing downstream flooding and cleaning the runoff before it empties into our storm sewers, creeks, and eventually Lake Superior. During a time of global biodiversity crisis, spaces like these provide critical urban habitat for wildlife, birds and pollinators.

Thunder Bay was recognized as a Tree City of the World¹ in 2020. Appendix H of the *Urban Forestry Management Plan*² lists four pages outlining urban tree benefits. This chart³ summarizes just a small number of

Benefit category	Total annual benefits (\$)	Average annual benefits per tree (\$)	Percent of total annual benefits
Stormwater Management	552,362	30	36%
Energy Reduction	455,908	25	29%
Aesthetic/Other	403,056	22	26%
Air Quality	77,383	4	5%
Carbon Dioxide Sequestration	67,178	4	4%
Total	1,555,887	85	100%

those. The City of Thunder Bay has declared a climate emergency. The DRAFT *Urban Design Guidelines*⁴ praise ongoing improvements to increase City-wide tree canopy coverage as “perhaps the single most important initiative in the evolution of the City into a clean, green, and beautiful community.” The Thunder Bay *Net-Zero Strategy*⁵ states one of our significant targets is the planting of 100,000 trees within the municipal boundary by 2050. With this in mind, I would appreciate your insight on the following:

1. Was the City’s Forestry & Horticulture Section consulted when considering the sale of lands containing tree canopy, and can their involvement be ensured in the future?
2. Could the City provide an estimate of the total tree canopy across all potential “surplus” properties and calculate the potential annual loss of benefits to our city when those trees are removed for development?
3. What measures will be taken to offset the loss and ensure a net gain in green cover over time if a City Council decision results in decreased urban tree canopy?
4. Does our city have provisions for mandatory tree canopy in new developments, and can regulations be considered to ensure compliance with green space requirements?

Despite our city’s financial struggles, and the Provincial Government’s push to seek solutions to the housing crisis, divesting from properties with mature trees seems short-sighted. I urge you to consider the contribution natural assets make to our community's overall well-being and strengthen efforts to find a balance between sustainable urban ecosystem services and development. Preserving green space is not only a commitment to the long-term health of our city but also secures a legacy for future residents.

Thank you for your time and dedication to our city’s future.

Sincerely, Kyla Moore

¹ <https://treecitiesoftheworld.org/about.cfm>
² <https://www.thunderbay.ca/en/city-hall/urban-forestry-management-plan.aspx>
³ <https://www.thunderbay.ca/en/city-services/trees.aspx>
⁴ <https://getinvolvedthunderbay.ca/urban-design-guidelines-update>
⁵ <https://www.thunderbay.ca/en/community-energy-and-emissions-plan.aspx>