

# Urban Forest Strategy

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Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo  
Council Presentation

June 11, 2019

# AGENDA

- Purpose of the Strategy
- Project Process
- Methodology
- Engagement: What We Heard
- Integration with FireSmart
- RMWB's Urban Forest
- Urban Forest Action Plan
- Implementation
- Questions

# PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

- Establish the role and benefits of trees as part of the urban environment
- Develop a Regional urban forest vision and core principles
- Identify existing conditions and potential opportunities for enhancement
- Identify best practices to administer and manage the urban forestry program
- Identify ways to coordinate policies, practices, and procedures for all tree-related activities undertaken by the RMWB
- Develop an action plan that includes a prioritized list of strategies for current and future urban forestry service delivery

# PROJECT PROCESS



# METHODOLOGY



# ENGAGEMENT: WHAT WE HEARD

## THE PROCESS

- Hard copy and digital surveys
- 737 survey responses
- Over 500 written comments
- Consultation with staff, public and stakeholder groups




Staff Engagement Workshop

# ENGAGEMENT: WHAT WE HEARD

## THE RESULTS

- What should the UFS address?
  1. Protecting and maintaining native species
  2. Developing new treed greenspaces
  3. Developing plant species guidelines
- Most valued RM tree service?
  1. Hazardous tree removal
  2. FireSmart
  3. Home tree health assessments
- Support for a tree protection bylaw: 81%

737   
Survey  
Responses

# INTEGRATION WITH FIRESMART

## REGIONAL EMERGENCY SERVICES

- Consulted during development of UFS
- Endorses UFS recommendations



Firebreaks (David Thurton/CBC)



# RMWB's URBAN FOREST

## CURRENT STATE

- Located in the boreal forest
- Urban forest includes street trees, park trees, and natural stands
- Undeveloped lands have significant naturalized tree cover
- 25% canopy cover in the Urban Service Area
- 2016 Horse River wildfire had vast impact (canopy cover reduction 41% to 25%)



Fire Impacted Forest in Beacon Hill

# RMWB's URBAN FOREST

## BENEFITS

- Air quality
- Water quality
- Urban climate
- Increased property values
- Reduced energy costs
- Human health and well-being
- Community character/place



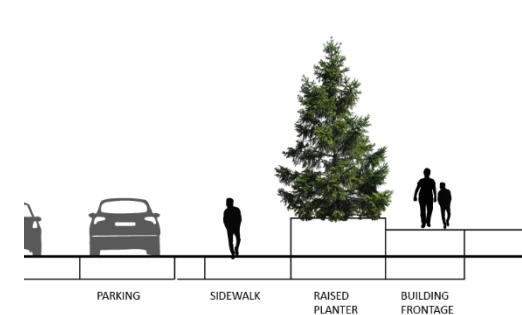
# RMWB's URBAN FOREST

## KEY CHALLENGES

- Limited selection of trees for climate
- Rapid addition to the street tree inventory and poor survival rates
- High impacts to street trees from winter maintenance
- Lack of guidelines and oversight for trees planted in new developments
- Limited data availability



Improve longevity



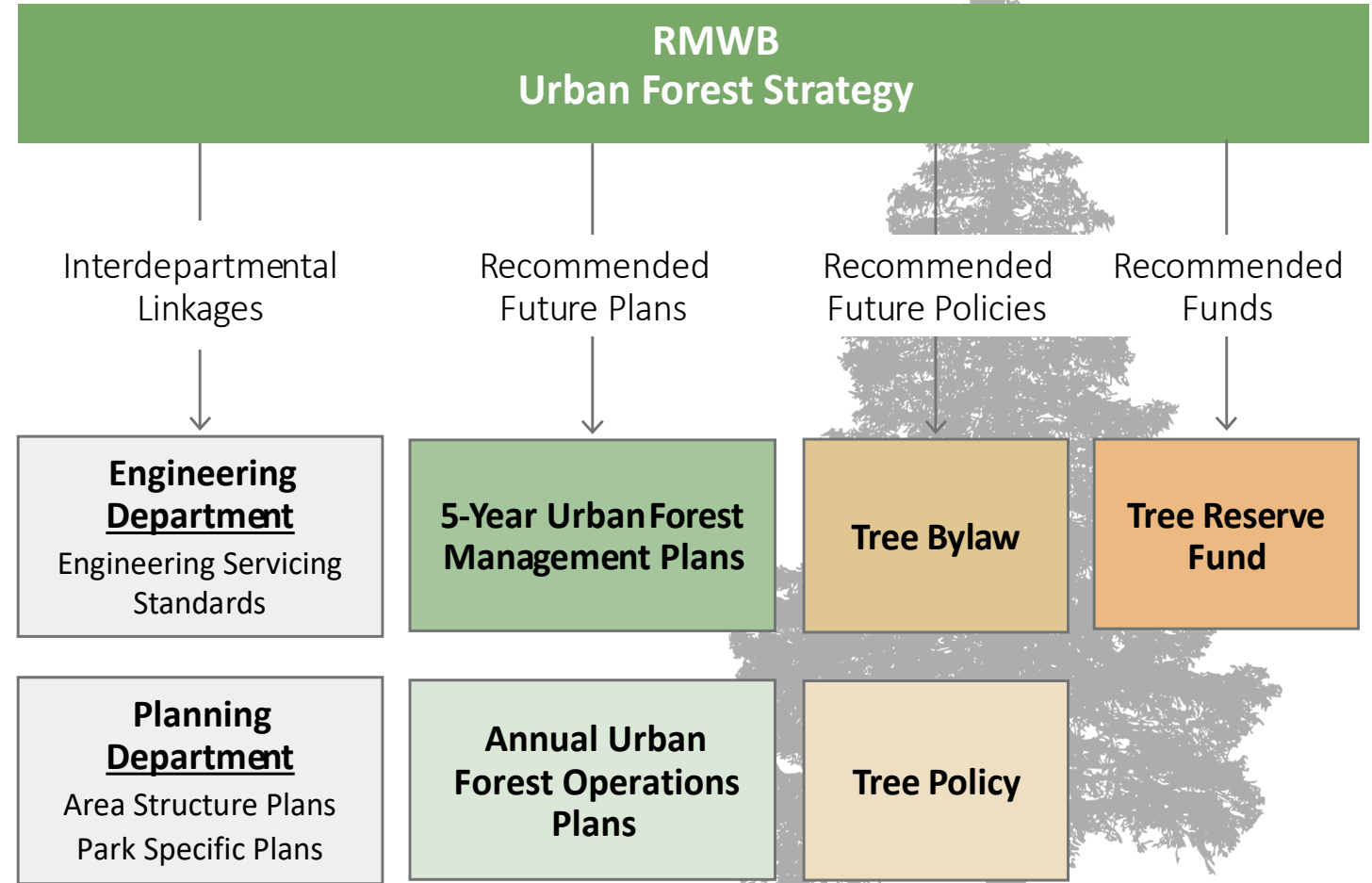
Raised tree planter

# URBAN FOREST ACTION PLAN

1. Plan the Urban Forest
2. Manage the Urban Forest
3. Grow the Urban Forest
4. Care for the Urban Forest
5. Support the Urban Forest

# 1. PLAN THE URBAN FOREST

- Develop an Urban Forest Management Plan
- Develop a Tree Bylaw
- Update engineering and operations standards
- Establish system of policy updates and evaluations
- Integrate Firesmart principles



## 2. MANAGE THE URBAN FOREST

- Establish an Urban Forest Working Group
- Increase cross-departmental coordination, to the extent possible
- Develop a Tree inventory
- Implement a Tree Asset Management System
- Explore potential for a Heritage Tree Registry





# 3. GROW THE URBAN FOREST

## TREE ESTABLISHMENT

- Develop guidelines and recommendations for selection and planting
- Implement a policy and procedure for new developments
- Establish a “no net loss” policy for municipal lands



# 4. CARE FOR THE URBAN FOREST

## URBAN TREE MAINTENANCE

- Develop maintenance guidelines for mature and young trees
- Establish an appropriate Level of Service for street trees

## TREE RISK MANAGEMENT

- Develop a Tree Risk Management Policy





# 4. CARE FOR THE URBAN FOREST

## TREE PROTECTION

- Develop a Tree Protection Policy for RMWB trees

## PLANT HEALTH CARE (PHC)

- Adopt a plant health care approach
- Manage forest pests and diseases



# 5. SUPPORT THE URBAN FOREST

- Develop partnerships with local volunteer groups and stakeholders
- Enhance public understanding
- Develop a variety of outreach and education programs



# IMPLEMENTATION

- The UFS is a living document – use as a framework for decision making
- Integrate UFS with community plans and the Parks Master Plan
- Link to the FireSmart Program to help prevent community level fires
- Use the strategy to guide future development and growth
- Approval by Council through budget process

# QUESTIONS?



# THANK YOU