



## Memo

**To:** Angila Bains, Director of Legislative and Protective Services/Corporate Officer  
**From:** Colton Whittaker, Committee Clerk  
**Date:** November 1, 2024  
**Subject:** Funding Options for The Biodiversity Conservation and Urban Forest Strategies

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At the October 28, 2024, Finance and Governance Standing Committee meeting, the committee discussed funding options for the Biodiversity Conservation and Urban Forest Strategies. This discussion resulted in the following motion:

**"That the Finance and Governance Standing Committee concur with the staff recommendation of a scaled funding approach, to align with financial priorities and staff workplans, and recommend to Council that a reserve fund not be established at this time."**

**CARRIED**

An excerpt of the October 28, 2024 draft minutes and report from the Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services dated October 10, 2024 are attached for information.

*Colton Whittaker*

Colton Whittaker  
Committee Clerk

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**FUNDING OPTIONS FOR THE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND URBAN FOREST STRATEGIES**

The Senior Manager of Parks highlighted that they are currently developing a joint work plan for both strategies for the next two years. Each strategy has a long-term vision with numerous actions to implement. For 2025, there is a combined ongoing funding request of \$457,000 and a one-time funding request of \$227,000. In 2026, the anticipated ongoing funding request would be \$512,000, with an additional one-time request of \$152,000. These amounts would result in a 0.39% increase in property taxes for 2025. Staff also examined a scenario where funding is distributed over four years rather than two. Additionally, they explored the potential for a reserve fund to support the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy but concluded it would be more effective for Council to fund this initiative directly. The Parks Department continues to consider various funding sources, including grants, in-kind support, and donations.

During the discussion, the committee considered the advantages of spreading the funding over four years instead of two. A grant from the Fraser Basin Council is enabling Parks to explore a private land stewardship program working with the Habitat Acquisition Trust to review pilot programs, including policy and incentive opportunities.

Further collaboration with Community Planning is underway to examine incentive programs, density bonuses, and protections for the environment and trees. The Urban Forest Strategy does not receive funding from a reserve fund. As the committee considered the two- versus four-year funding question, they emphasized the need for sufficient time to establish and sustain these initiatives effectively. A strong partnership with Engineering was emphasized by the Senior Manager of Parks.

**MOVED by Councillor Harper and Seconded by Councillor Phelps Bondaroff: "That the Finance and Governance Standing Committee concur with the staff recommendation of a scaled funding approach, to align with financial priorities and staff workplans, and recommend to Council that a reserve fund not be established at this time."**

The following discussion ensued:

The committee discussed whether to separate the motion into two parts but ultimately decided to keep it intact. Members discussed how establishing a reserve fund might imply that this initiative is being treated differently from other strategic initiatives.

**The Motion was then Put and CARRIED**

# Memo

**To:** Finance and Governance Standing Committee  
**From:** Suzanne Samborski, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services  
**Date:** October 10, 2024  
**Subject:** **Funding Options for the Biodiversity Conservation and Urban Forest Strategies**

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## Background

Council endorsed the Biodiversity Conservation and Urban Forest Strategies in June and Sof 2024. In addition to endorsement, they requested that the Finance and Governance Committee consider options to fund the implementation of the Strategies as per the motions noted below:

As moved at the June 17, 2024, Committee of the Whole meeting:

*"That Council direct staff to report back on establishing a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy Reserve Fund." – be referred to the Finance and Governance Standing Committee."*

As moved at the September 9, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting:

*"That the memo from the Sustainability and Climate Action Advisory Committee dated May 21, 2024, with respect to funding for the [Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and] Urban Forest Strategy be referred to the Finance and Governance Standing Committee."*

Both Strategies reflect the community's 20 to 40 year visions and have many associated action items. A list of high priority actions with related cost estimates for the first two years were identified and presented to Council in the staff reports. Staff are currently developing a joint workplan for 2025/26 using these high priority actions.

For the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, implications for the 2025 budget included the following estimates:

- A staff or contracted field biologist, \$110,000/year;
- A Community Stewardship Technician to assist with expanding demand in the Pulling Together program, \$110,000/year;
- Invasive Species Management Strategy, contracted, \$75,000;
- Funding to continue stewardship support on private lands, \$50,000;
- Review and assessment of freshwater systems, contracted, \$50,000;
- Research on incentive program for land development in UCB, contracted, \$25,000;
- Monitoring and reporting program, contracted, \$20,000.

As presented, the total requests in 2025 would be about \$220,000 ongoing and \$220,000 in one-time requests.

For the Urban Forest Strategy, implications for the 2025 and 2026 budgets included the following estimates:

- Tree Protection Bylaw Review, \$75,000, funded by Housing Accelerator Fund;
- Tree Planting Bundle 1 (focus on parks and natural areas), \$397,000/year and \$152,000 one time for vehicles, (beginning in 2025);
- Garry Oak ecosystem restoration projects, \$50,000/year (beginning in 2025);
- Indigenous relations projects, \$10,000/year (beginning in 2025);
- Tree Planting Bundle 2 (focus on boulevards and rights of way), \$409,000/year and \$152,000 one time for vehicles, (beginning in 2026); and
- Tree inventory technician, \$103,000/year.

As presented, the total requests in 2025 would be about \$457,000/year and \$227,000 in one time requests and \$512,000/year and \$152,000 one time requests in 2026.

The total requests from both strategies in 2025 would be \$677,000/year or 0.39% tax increase and \$447,000 in one time requests and \$512,000/year or 0.28% in tax increase and \$152,000 in one time requests in 2026. Future years' funding requirements are difficult to predict as they will be based on delivery of actions in the first two years.

## Options

In reviewing the request to explore the development of a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy Reserve Fund, staff are not recommending establishing one at the outset of implementing the Strategies. Two reserve funds already exist that could be helpful for the strategies: Urban Forest Reserve and Parkland Acquisition Reserve funds.

Unlike the Urban Forest Reserve Fund, which holds revenue from fines, cash in lieu of replacement trees and signed over replacement tree fees, there is no obvious revenue source for a reserve fund for biodiversity conservation. Council would need to commit funds to the reserve account as it does with the Parkland Acquisition Fund, where the goal is to build up funding for long term and expensive land acquisitions. With no associated revenue stream, a reserve fund which requires regular contribution of funds from Council is inefficient to fund operations projects and programs. A much more efficient approach is the direct funding of projects and programs by Council through appropriate budget requests.

Staff have further reviewed the budget requests noted in the Council reports and are suggesting a scaled approach over the next four years as outlined in the attached table. The table provides the resources required in each year, their total, and the related percent tax increase. Staff feel that the approach outlined is measured and realistic for successful outcomes.

Additional funding strategies that are less certain, and more opportunistic include:

- Grants
- Partnerships
- In-kind donations

Staff will pursue these options as they become available.

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommend a scaled approach to funding the Urban Forest and Biodiversity Conservation as outlined in the attached table.

**Multi-year Funding Option for Biodiversity and Urban Forestry Strategies**

<b>Biodiversity Strategy</b>	<b>Funding Needed</b>		<b>Ongoing Estimated Budget Increase</b>				<b>One Time</b>	
	On-going	One time	2025	2026	2027	2028	2025	2027
Field Biologist	110,000		55,000	59,400				
Invasive Species Management Strategy		75,000					75,000	
Stewardship Support on Private Lands		50,000					50,000	
Review & Assessment of Freshwater Systems		50,000					50,000	
Research on Incentive Program for Land Development in UCB		25,000					25,000	
Monitoring & Reporting Program		20,000					20,000	
Community Stewardship Technician	110,000		55,000	59,400				
<b>Urban Forest Strategy</b>								
Tree Protection Bylaw		75,000						
<i>Tree Planting Bundle 1 (Parks &amp; Natural Areas)</i>								
Biodiversity & Natural Areas Lead	129,000		64,500	69,660				
Natural Areas Parks Worker 2	103,000		51,500	55,620				
Parks Worker 1 (Casual)	40,000		20,000	21,600				
Tree Purchase	75,000		37,500	37,500				
Transport Truck for Tree & Worker	25,000	77,000	12,500	12,500			77,000	
Watering Truck	25,000	75,000	12,500	12,500			75,000	
Garry Oak Ecosystem Restoration Projects	50,000		25,000	25,000				
Indigenous Relations Projects	10,000		10,000					
<i>Tree Planting Bundle 2 (Boulevards &amp; Right of Ways)</i>								
Urban Forestry Technician	110,000				57,200	61,776		
Urban Forestry Arboriculture Worker	103,000				55,702	60,159		
Irrigation Technician	76,000				41,101	44,389		
Parks Worker 1 (Casual)	40,000				21,632	23,363		
Tree Purchase	30,000				15,000	15,000		
Transport Truck for Tree & Worker	25,000	77,000			12,500	12,500	77,000	
Watering Truck	25,000	75,000			12,500	12,500	75,000	
Tree Inventory Technician	103,000				51,500	55,620		
<b>Total Cost</b>			<b>343,500</b>	<b>353,180</b>	<b>267,135</b>	<b>285,306</b>	<b>372,000</b>	<b>152,000</b>
Estimated tax increase			0.20%	0.19%	0.14%	0.14%		