Executive Policy Committee

REPORT OF THE STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES DATED NOVEMBER 20, 2023

Item #5 Comprehensive Urban Forest Strategy

Dave Green OURS-Winnipeg

December 5, 2023

OURS-WINNIPEG

- **Good day and thank you for this opportunity. My name is Dave Green and I am a member of OURS-Winnipeg (Outdoor Urban Recreational Spaces – Winnipeg).**

- **OURS-Winnipeg is a city-wide advocacy group that focuses on urban greenspaces, river corridors, and the urban forest. We urge the city to initiate consultations for development of planning documents that preserve and enhance the natural amenities of Winnipeg, and advocate for good stewardship of these valuable greenspace resources that belong to us all.**

Website: [OURS-WINNIPEG (OUTDOOR URBAN RECREATIONAL SPACES) - Home (weebly.com)]

- **OURS-Winnipeg strongly encourages the Executive Policy Committee to unanimously vote in favour of approving the 20 Year Comprehensive Urban Forest Strategy (CUFS) and the associated budget to implement the plan as outlined in the recommendations from Winnipeg Public Service Administration Report.**

- **In our opinion, this is a huge and positive step forward in the city's efforts to protect, maintain, and expand Winnipeg's urban forest infrastructure.**

- **This is Winnipeg's first urban forest strategy that is long overdue. It is important to have a planning tool such as this to ensure our greenspaces, trees, and other natural areas are part of the discussion and planning as the city grows.**

- **In conjunction with the CUFS and it's implementation, Winnipeg Council's Strategic Priorities Action Plan (SPAP), May 2023, identifies a 2 trees replacement for every tree removed (2:1 ratio).**

- **The SPAP initiative is important in the near-term until the city catches up to the deficit of trees lost compared to the lesser numbers planted over the last number of years.**

- **Instead of a 2:1 replacement ratio, the CUFS contains a 1:1 ratio that we think should keep pace with tree removal after the deficit is cleared.**

- **Also, the CUFS proposes to identify and fill upwards of 40,000+ "vacant tree planting locations," and to increase the canopy coverage from 17 % in 2018 to 24% by 2065.**

Why are trees and the urban forest important to urban centres?

- **Studies have shown how being around trees and nature areas are important for human health and well being.**
  - **Our generations have enjoyed the aesthetics and benefits of trees planted many, many decades ago and our generation must do the same for future generations.**
- **The urban forest provides biodiverse habitat for species from large wildlife to pollinating bees, to the variety of plant species that are important to ecosystem survival and restoration.**
- **The urban forest along water courses are important natural corridors for wildlife habitats and movements.**
- **Trees are important contributors for mitigating effects from climate change and make our city more resilient.**

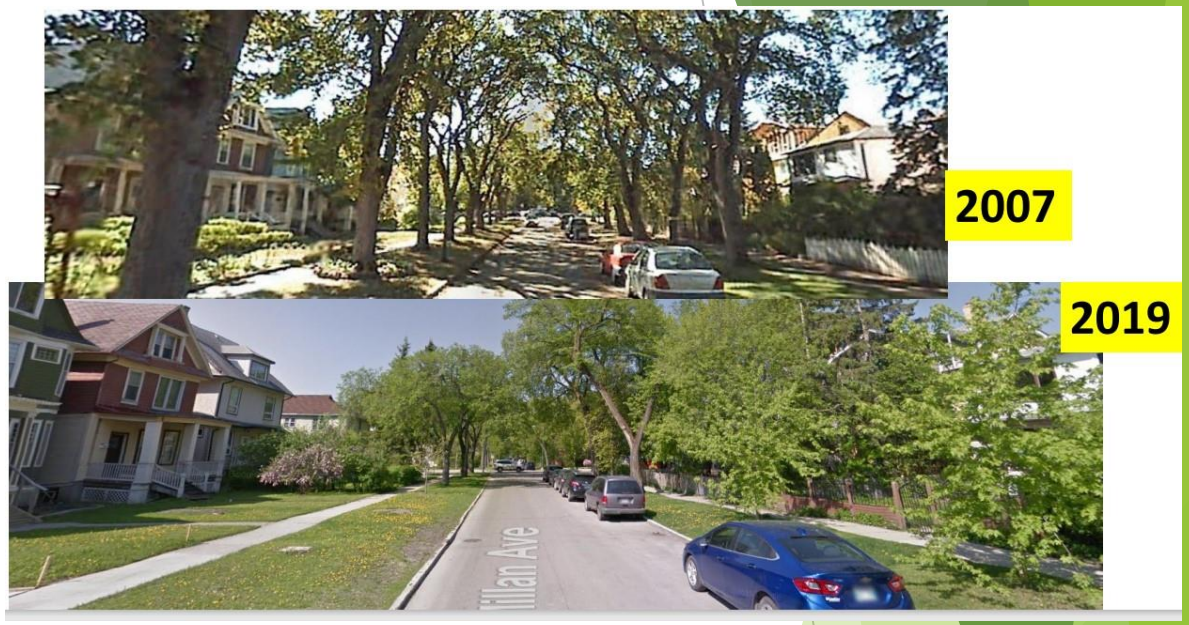
- **Trees intercept and absorb rainfall that reduces inputs to storm sewers and water treatment plants, absorb pollutants from the air such as nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, particulate matter, ground level ozone, provide shade to cool our houses to reduce air conditioning use and costs, and reduce the urban 'heat island effect' to name a few.**

- **For example, a well-treed neighbourhood can be up to 4° C cooler than a neighbourhood without trees (Arbor Day Foundation).**

- **Planting trees to mitigate for anticipated higher temperatures by 2050 must happen today – it takes time for trees to grow to a highly effective size.**

- **Before and after street views.**
  - **Much more shade and cooling effects when trees were present, plus better aesthetics for property values.**

McMillan Avenue in Fort Rouge-East Fort Garry Ward

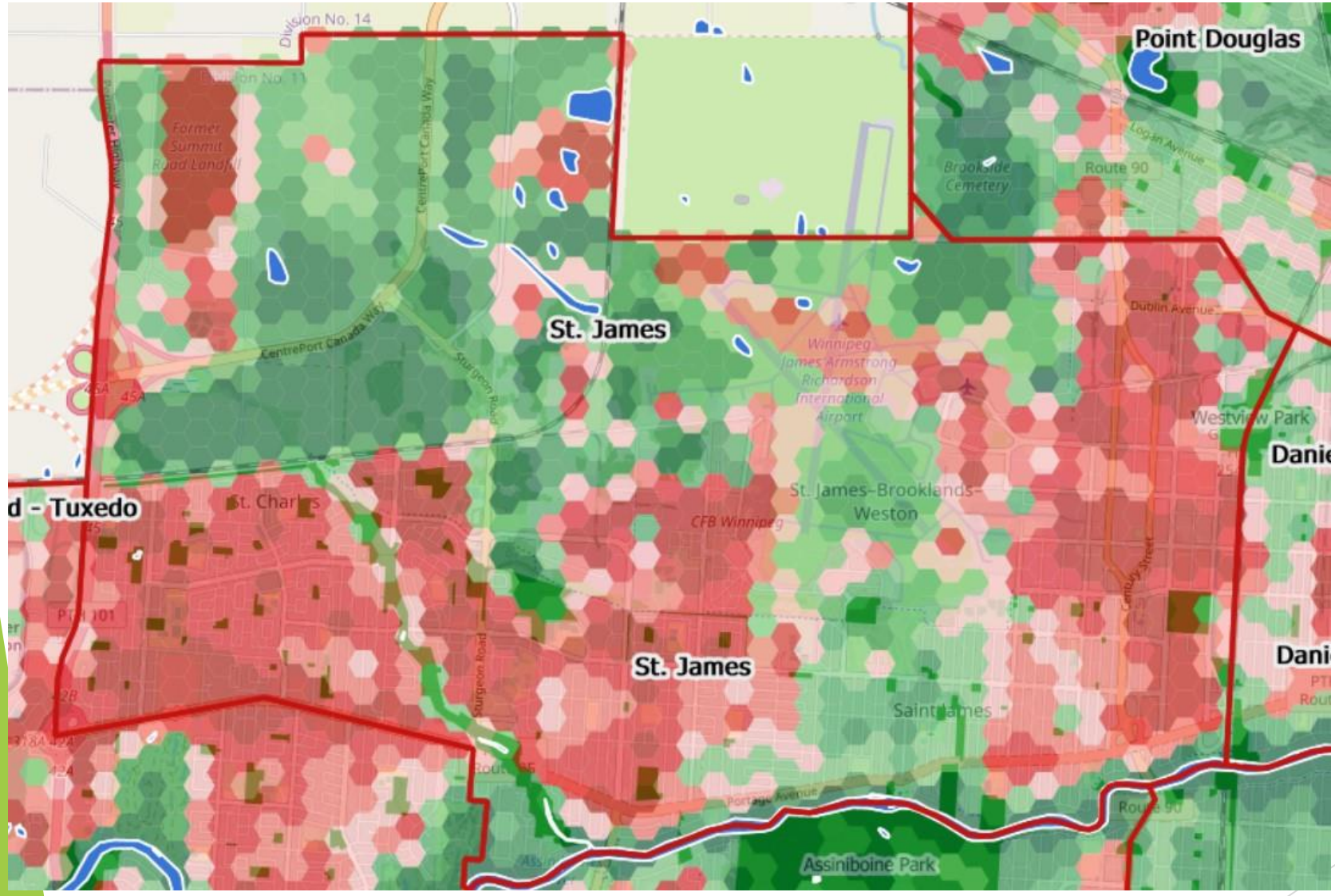


Ruby Street in Daniel McIntyre Ward



- **The following slide shows the mitigating effects of trees on summer temperatures in the city.**

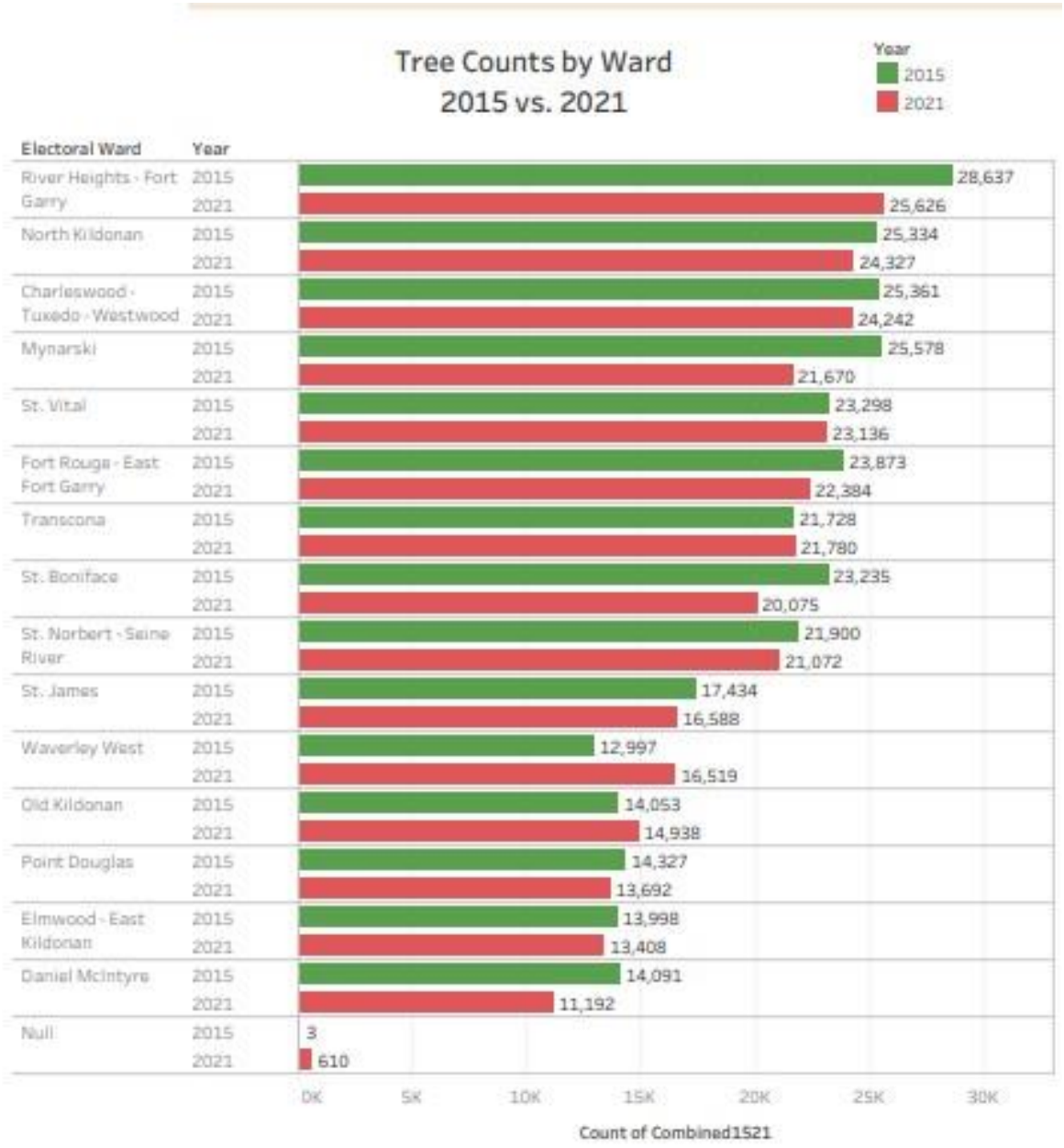
Heat map of the St. James Ward (typical hot day in July 2017).



You can see how much warmer it is where developments are more concentrated (shades of red) and where it is cooler in the greenspaces and more heavily treed areas of the ward (shades of green) .

The green Sturgeon Creek Corridor and Assiniboine River are especially important to providing cooling refuge for wildlife and people.

Source data: Draft Comprehensive Urban Forest Strategy May 2022



- **These are counts of public trees on boulevards and in parks by ward for 2015 and 2021.**
- **Most wards have lost significant numbers of trees that have not been replaced.**
- **“In 2020, only 19% of public trees cut down were re-planted.**
- **14,500 public trees remained un-replaced and the backlog was growing at a rate of about 2000 per year” (State of the Urban Forest Report, 2021, City of Winnipeg).**
- **The increase # of trees in Waverly West Ward in 2021 are due to new plantings in new developments.**

- **It is important for Winnipeggers present and future that you endorse this strategy and its budgetary requirements now.**
- **As the saying goes “the best time to plant a tree is ten years ago, but the second best time is right now....”**
- **In conclusion, OURS-Winnipeg hopes you look favourably on the Administrative Report recommendations and accept the CUFS and associated budget to move forward to successfully manage a healthy, thriving urban forest for current and future generations.**

Thank you