

Winnipeg City Council

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

Item #5 Comprehensive Urban Forest Strategy

Dave Green

December 14, 2023

OURS-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 \(weebly.com\)](http://ours-winnipeg.com)**
- ▶ **We strongly encourage Council 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.**
- ▶ **We emphasize that it is important to endorse the CUFS and budget recommendations from the Administrative Report otherwise it will probably be impossible to restore and increase Winnipeg's urban forest and tree canopy as hoped in the strategy.**
- ▶ **In the recent past, the city planted about 3,500 trees/yr and with the help of the Home Grown Grant Program is striving for about 14,000+/yr to hit 70,000 new tree plantings by 2027** [City of Winnipeg opens latest round of funding for tree planting | CBC News](#)
- ▶ **This is still a bit short of 17,000/yr the CUFS suggests is needed to increase the tree canopy by about 7% (from ~ 17% in 2018 to 24% by 2065), but definitely a move in the right direction.**

- ▶ We cannot skimp on hoping for the best because there are other factors that determine the success to maintain health and increase our urban forest and tree canopy such as adverse effects from disease infestations (*e.g.*, Dutch Elm Disease and the Emerald Ash Borer found here) complicated by extra stresses from periodic drought conditions.
- ▶ Another organization, Trees Please Winnipeg, have been advocating to include trees as part of our infrastructure needs and we need the city's mindset to integrate that into our core operations along with sewer pipes, sidewalks, roads, etc.
- ▶ With expected climate change impacts and noticeable extreme weather events in the last few years, cities and jurisdictions around the world are incorporating trees as a key tool to help mitigate some of those effects.
- ▶ **More recent examples, Barcelona** (<https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/metadata/case-studies/barcelona-trees-tempering-the-mediterranean-city-climate>), **Singapore** (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/09/18/world/asia/singapore-heat.html>); **US State of Rhode Island** ([Rhode Island is investing in trees to mitigate the effects of climate change. East Providence is helping lead the way. \(msn.com\)](#)) **to name a few.**

- ▶ In conjunction with the CUFS and its 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 very 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.

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 decades to over a century ago and current generations 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.

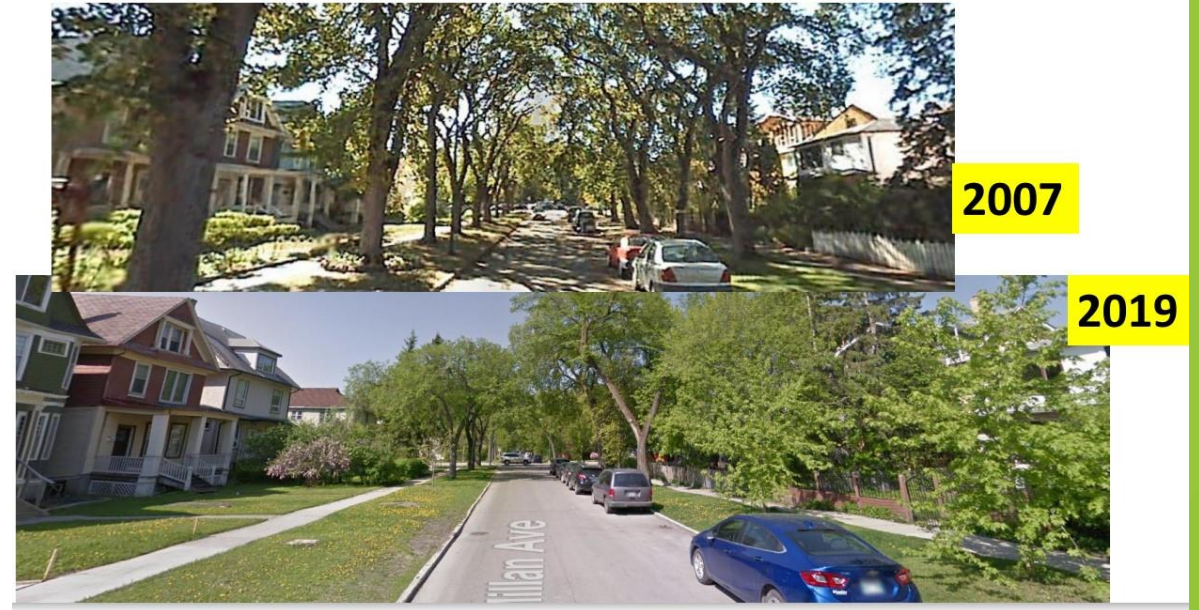
- ▶ **Trees intercept and absorb rainfall that reduces inputs to storm sewers and water treatment plants, absorb pollutants from the air such as nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, particulate matter, ground level ozone, provide shade to cool our houses to reduce air conditioning use and costs, and reduce the urban ‘heat island effect’ to name a few.**
- ▶ **On hot sunny days: where do you find people picnicking in parks? – under the trees; where do people camping want to be? – under the trees; where is it most comfortable to walk on the sidewalks? – under the trees.**
- ▶ **For example, a well-treed neighbourhood can be up to 4° C cooler than a neighbourhood without trees (Arbor Day Foundation).**
- ▶ **A New Scientist Journal article showed trees cooled the land surface temperature of European cities by up to 12°C. This was an analysis of satellite data from 293 cities in Europe [Urban heat: Trees cool land surface temperature in cities by up to 12°C | New Scientist](#)**
- ▶ **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.**

Ruby Street in Daniel McIntyre Ward

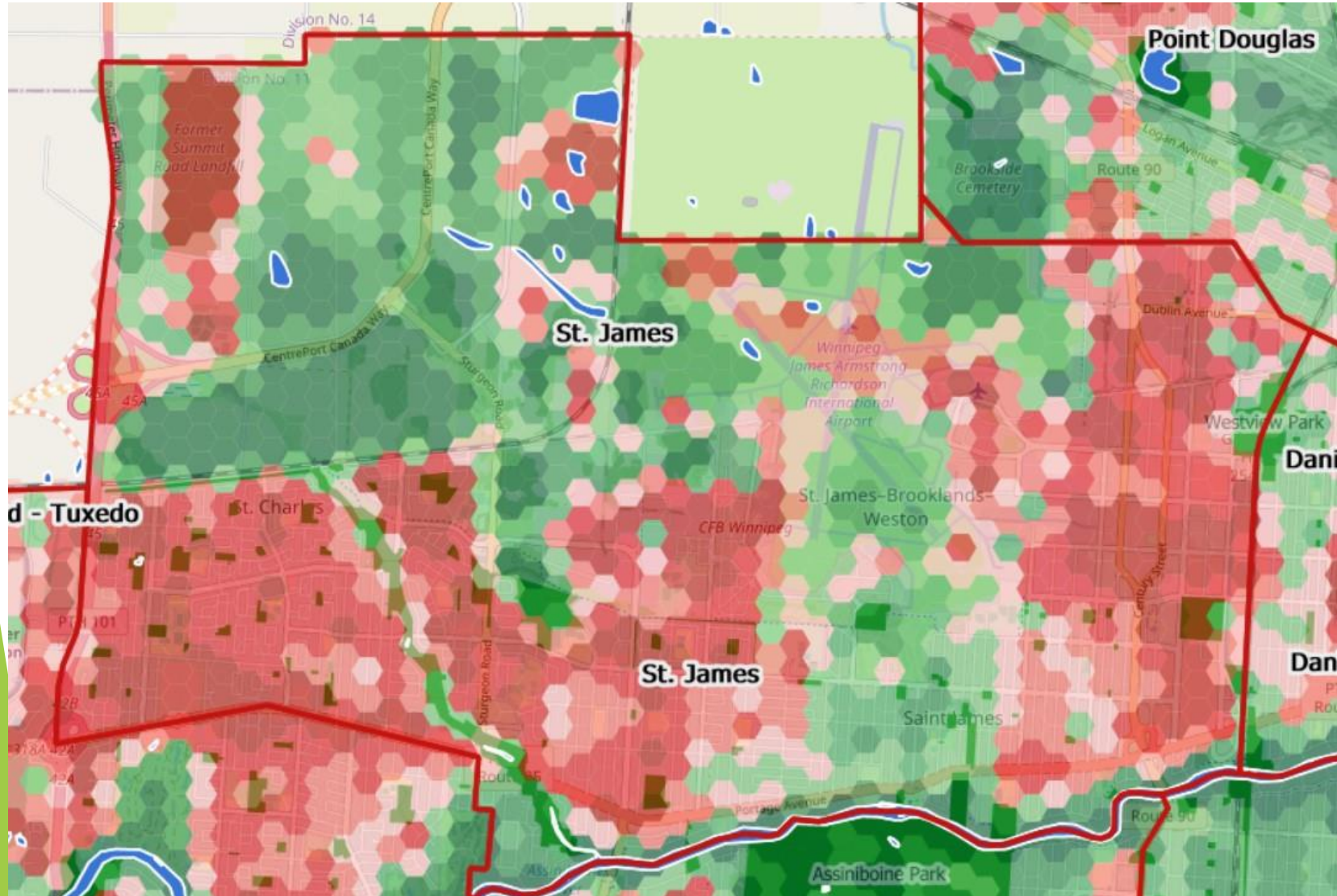


McMillan Avenue in Fort Rouge-East Fort Garry Ward



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

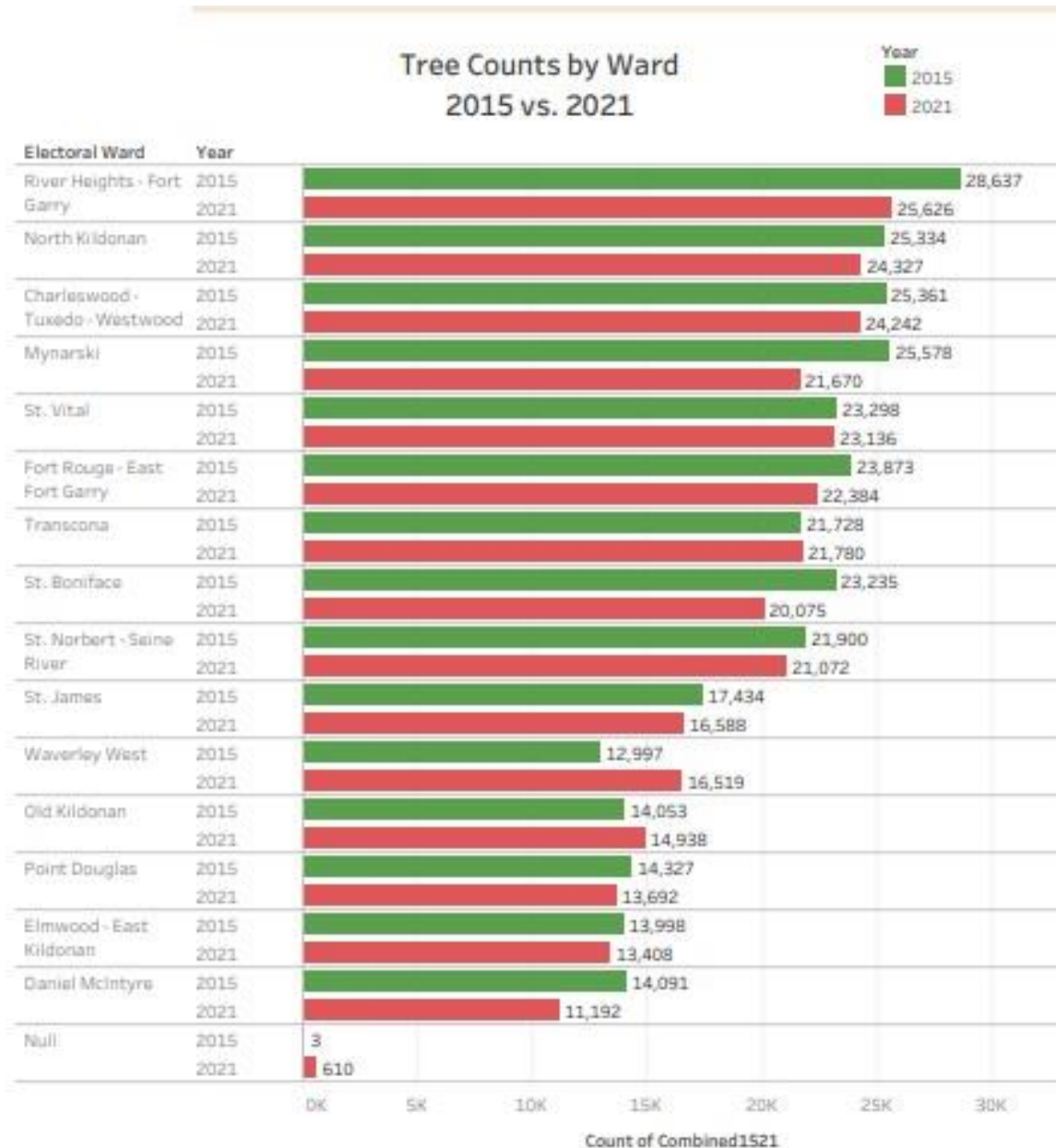
Heat map of the St. James Ward (typical hot day in July 2017).



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 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 relatively large increase in # of trees in Waverley West Ward in 2021 are due to new plantings in new developments.

Note: There are an estimated 3 million+ public and private trees in Winnipeg. Public tree numbers account for maybe 10% of our canopy and it is not known what we may be losing from private property. As the CUFS notes, it will be a concerted effort through partnerships with citizens and a variety of organizations to achieve the vision and goals of the strategy.

In Conclusion:

- ▶ **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....”**
- ▶ **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