

WINNIPEG URBAN FOREST STRATEGY

Phase 2 Public Engagement Summary

January 2023

Background

The Winnipeg Urban Forest Strategy will provide a 20-year vision for the City's urban forest. It identifies policy recommendations and strategic actions to help protect, preserve, and grow the canopy well into the future. The Strategy was rooted in an engagement process that invited input from stakeholders and community members through two engagement phases.

Engagement

In fall 2020, Winnipeggers were asked about their long-term vision for the city's urban forest and their satisfaction with its current and future urban forest management priorities. What we heard during this phase of engagement helped our project team create the draft Winnipeg Urban Forest Strategy, including the vision and strategic directions that will set the stage for future urban forest management in Winnipeg.

In spring 2022, Phase 2 engagement informed the public of the draft strategy and solicited input on targets and priorities for implementation. Winnipeggers were invited to provide feedback through a survey, a comments tool, and two online open houses. Stakeholder organizations were also invited to an online stakeholder workshop. Trees Please Coalition, Trees

Riverview, and Winnipeg Regional Health Authority provided written responses to the draft outside this formal process. Details of Phase 2 engagement are outlined in Table 1.

Input collected during Phase 2 will be used to finalize the draft strategy for Council's consideration.

Promotion

Public engagement opportunities were promoted using the following methods:

- News release – May 23, 2022
- Email sent to 335 subscribers – May 23, 2022
- Media coverage in the Winnipeg Free Press, Winnipeg Sun, CTV, and CBC – May 24 - 29, 2022.
- Online advertisement – May 25, 2022
- Newspaper advertisement in Winnipeg Free Press Community Review and La Liberté – May 25, 2022
- Public engagement newsletter to 3,300+ subscribers - June 2 & 16, 2022
- Facebook posts to more than 33,000 followers – June 10 & 16, 2022
- Twitter posts to more than 113,000 followers – June 10 & June 22, 2022

Table 1 - Public and Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

Date	Activity	Details
May 23 – June 22, 2022	Webpage	1,667 unique visitors
May 23 – June 22, 2022	Survey	838 respondents
June 14, 2022	Online open house #1 (presentation and Q&A)	19 participants
June 15, 2022	Online open house #2 (presentation and Q&A)	20 participants
June 15, 2022	Online Stakeholder Workshop	21 participants

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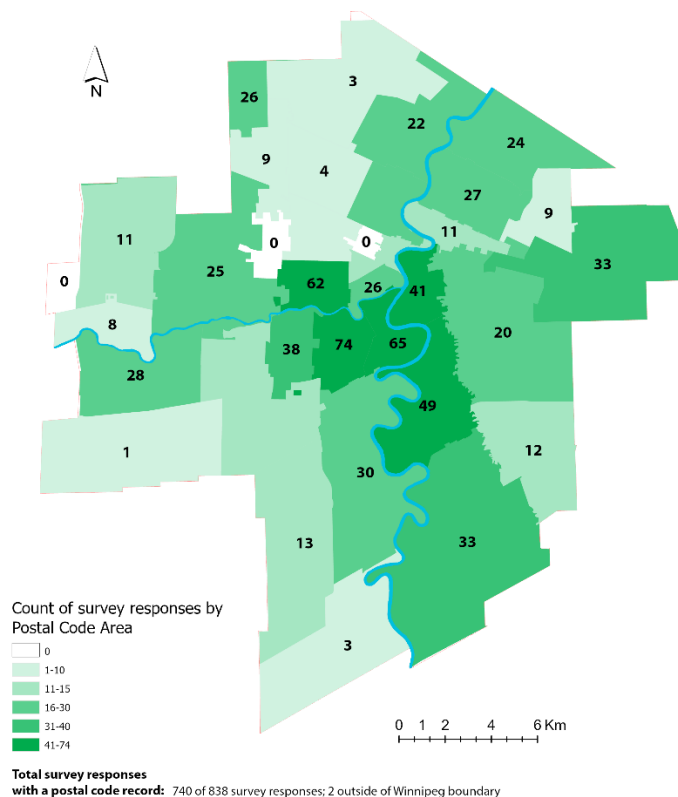
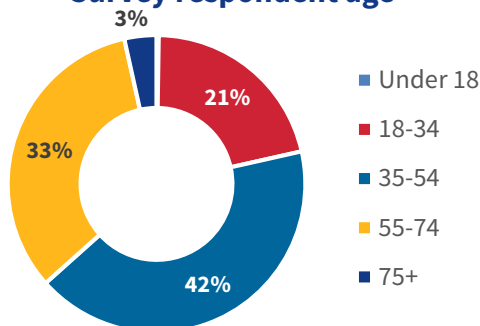
Who we heard from

Over 1,600 unique visitors engaged with the project webpage, and we heard from 838 survey respondents. We had 42 participants at online open houses and 21 in the online stakeholder workshop.

Survey respondent demographics

- 42% of respondents are aged 35-54
- A large proportion of respondents reside in central areas of Winnipeg (see postal code map)
- 81% of respondents own their own home
- Most participants heard about the survey through Twitter (43%), in the news (33%), Facebook (32%), and the public engagement newsletter email (32%)

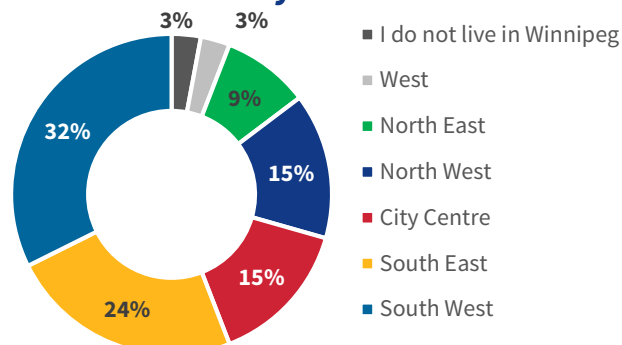
Survey respondent age



Open house & stakeholder workshop attendees

- 65% of open house attendees did not participate in any Phase 1 engagement activities
- 21 stakeholders represented 17 organizations at the workshop
- 53% of stakeholder workshop attendees participated in Phase 1 of engagement

Open house participants: Where do you live?



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What we heard

The purpose of the second phase of engagement was to inform community members about the draft Winnipeg Urban Forest Strategy and hear their thoughts on proposed policies and targets. Public input was collected through an online survey and two open houses that included a presentation and a question-and-answer period. Stakeholders were engaged through an online workshop.

Key findings from community engagement are organized under the five urban forest management goals outlined in the draft strategy: **planning, planting, managing, protecting, and partnering**. Each section presents key highlights from Phase 2 engagement and ends with a summary table outlining what we heard and how it will be considered in the final draft strategy. Detailed results and additional information can be found in the appendices.

Section 1: Plan

Plan aims to equitably distribute connected tree and forest assets to improve the health of people and their communities. Five policies associated with this goal were presented in the draft strategy.

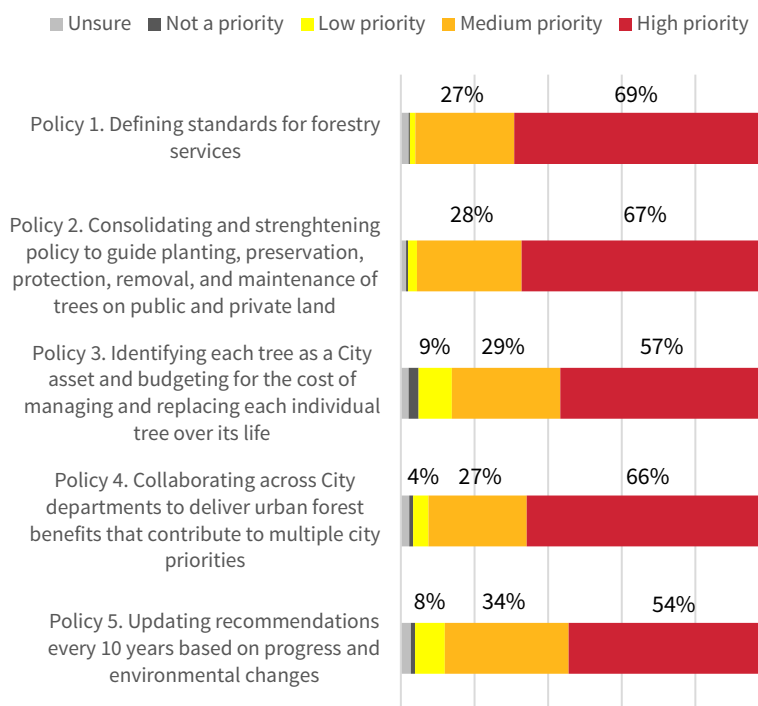
Prioritizing policies

When asked to prioritize policies related to long-term planning of the urban forest, most survey respondents (54% to 69%) ranked **Plan** policies similarly high.

Workshop participants prioritized Policy 2, Policy 3, and Policy 4. They highlighted the importance of advocating for changes to the Winnipeg Charter under Policy 2 because it drives many private tree protection actions. Stakeholders also generally wanted the City to prioritize short-term actions that would more quickly achieve results.

Gaps and implementation challenges

Workshop participants identified gaps and challenges in implementing Goal 1 – Plan policies. They were mainly concerned with a lack of funding, competing priorities between trees and city infrastructure, and the need to prioritize shorter-term actions to avoid losing them in the details of the strategy. Some stakeholders also thought the strategy did not adequately stress the urgency of investing in and prioritizing the urban forest and requested that the vision statement more strongly and communicates the urgency. There were concerns that the canopy cover target was not high enough and that there should be a better explanation why the overall target was chosen. Some stakeholders noted interim canopy cover targets would be useful to ensure actions are prioritized based on their importance to achieve targets and ease of implementation.



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Summary Table 2 – Key themes from public engagement about planning

What we Heard	How it was considered
Survey respondents considered all five policies under this area to be a priority. Some stakeholders highlighted Policy 2, focusing on changing the Winnipeg Charter to enable private tree protection.	Implementing Policy 2, action 2B as it relates to the City of Winnipeg Charter was changed from a long- to medium-term priority.
The Strategy must highlight short-term actions that will have the most significant impact on achieving urban forest targets.	A summary of short-term actions was integrated into a fact sheet to highlight recommendations with the most significant impacts on Winnipeg's urban forest.
The strategy must more clearly emphasize the urgency of investing in Winnipeg's urban forest and the negative impact that maintaining the status quo would have on canopy cover over the coming decades.	Information about the potential canopy cover outcomes (Figure 21) was integrated into the executive summary to highlight the impacts of inaction on Winnipeg's future canopy cover.
A more robust vision is required to emphasize the essential nature of the urban forest to the health and well-being of all Winnipeggers.	The strategy's vision was updated to highlight the essential nature of the urban forest for the health and well-being of Winnipeggers.
Increase the canopy cover target to 24% by 2040 (instead of 24% by 2065) and provide more detailed information about the implications of the current target for tree planting and resource investments.	The draft strategy now provides a more detailed breakdown of the rate of tree planting and budget investments required to achieve the target. It better explains the relationship between tree planting and canopy cover growth over time to relate planting rates to changes in canopy cover.
Emphasize the Urban Forest Program Sustainability section and its findings about resourcing.	More specific references to those findings have been added to the executive summary.
Develop a financial plan with specific dollar values associated with actions.	A breakdown of costs related to each action has been added to the Winnipeg Urban Forest Strategy.

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Section 2: Planting

Plant aims to strategically grow a robust and sustainable urban forest that will maximize benefits for human health and ecological function. Seven policies were presented in the draft strategy.

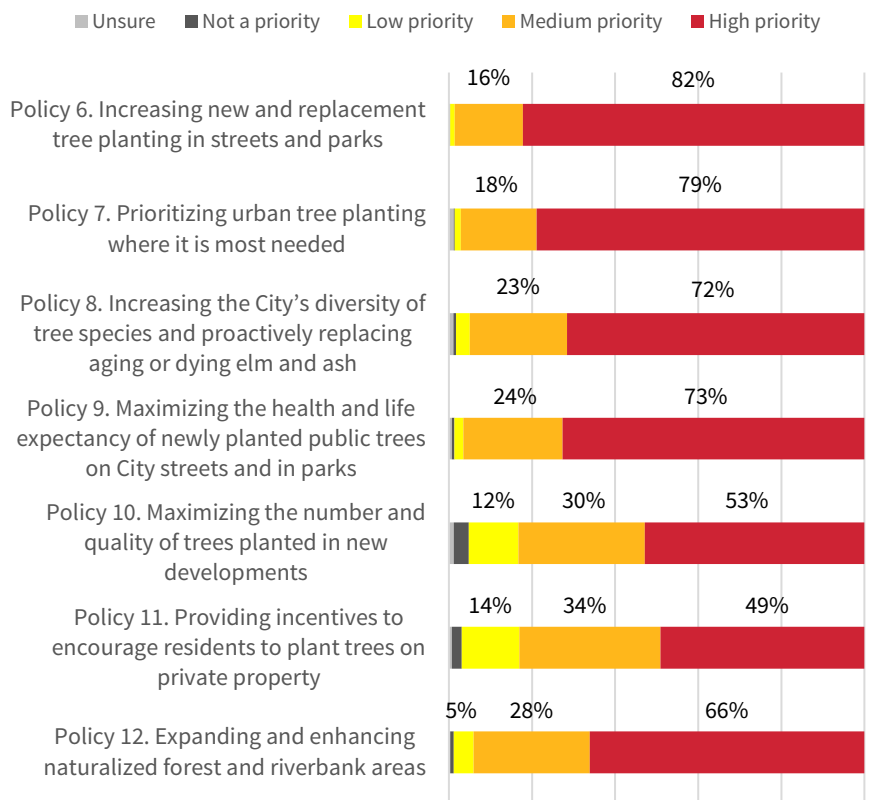
Prioritizing policies

When asked to prioritize policies relative to tree planting, most survey respondents ranked Policies 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 12 as high priorities, with the highest being Policy 6 (82%) and Policy 7 (79%). Participants in the workshop prioritized Policy 6, Policy 9, and Policy 12.

The lowest priority policy for survey respondents was Policy 11 (just 49% ranked it as a high priority).

Gaps and implementation challenges

During the workshop and open house, participants expressed concern about the 1:1 tree replacement target being inadequate to fill the backlog of planting sites and keep pace with potential losses. For tree planting on private land, stakeholders wanted to improve opportunities for renters interested in private tree planting who experience limitations from their property's owner/landlord. For tree planting on public land, stakeholders wanted to make the size of tree stock planted by the City more flexible, such as decreasing the size of stock to decrease costs and increase successful stock establishment.



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Summary Table 3 - Key themes from public engagement for the urban forest planting

What we Heard	How it was considered
Survey respondents and workshop participants would most like to prioritize: • Increasing new and replacement tree planting in streets and parks (Policy 6) • Planting urban trees where they are most needed (Policy 7) • Maximizing the health and life expectancy of newly planted public trees (Policy 9) • Expanding and enhancing naturalized forest and riverbank areas (Policy 12)	Actions 6A, 6B, 7A, 7C, 7D, and 9A were identified for short-term initiation.
Workshop participants were concerned that the 1:1 replacement target was insufficient to plant the backlog of vacant sites and compensate for the annual rate of tree loss on public land and wanted to increase the replacement ratio to 2:1.	The strategy was updated to clarify that the 1:1 target means every tree removed should be replaced going forward (i.e., no net loss of existing trees). That additional targets exist to plant out currently vacant sites (i.e., a net gain of trees) on public land. The fact sheet also communicates how the 1:1 replacement target and the planting site vacancy target work together to drive no net loss of existing trees and to fill the backlog of potential planting sites on public land. The strategy also now highlights the number of new trees that will need to be planted to achieve the proposed canopy cover target and replace the trees removed.

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Section 3: Management

Manage aims to adapt tree management processes to improve tree health and public safety, respond to challenges and opportunities, and achieve planned service levels. Six associated policies were presented in the draft strategy.

Prioritizing policies

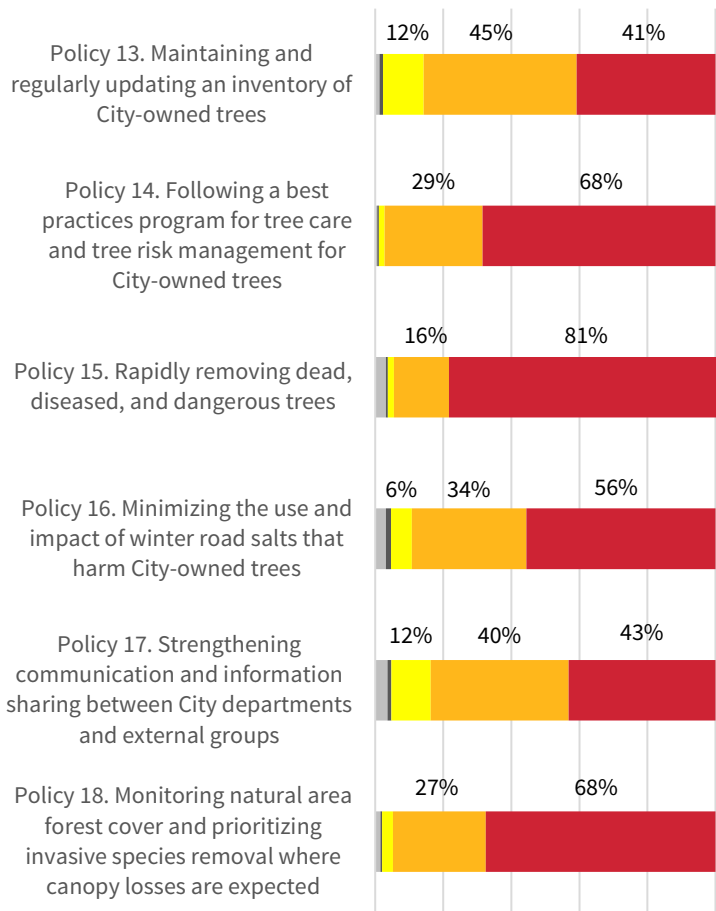
When asked to prioritize policies related to managing the urban forest, survey respondents prioritized Policy 15 (81% ranked it as a high priority) more highly than other policies. Policy 14 and Policy 18 were also relatively highly prioritized (68% ranked both policies as a high priority). In the workshop, stakeholders also identified Policy 15 as a top priority but also emphasized the importance of Policy 14 for pruning particularly, Policy 16 to reduce impacts from road salts, and Policy 18, particularly for the removal of buckthorn along the Seine River.

The lowest priority policies were Policy 13 (41% ranked it as a high priority and Policy 17 (43% ranked it as a high priority).

Gaps and implementation challenges

During the workshop, stakeholders identified gaps in policies and actions addressing developer practices that harm trees, suggesting more robust arborist report standards and more rewards and penalties for trees removed for development. Some participants mentioned observing damage to City trees from mowing and suggested that the City raise awareness of the issue and reallocate efforts from mowing to tree maintenance. Stakeholders also identified the lack of watering as a concern and emphasized the importance of young tree pruning. One stakeholder highlighted a preference for investing in the maintenance and protection of trees already in the landscape before investing in new trees.

■ Unsure ■ Not a priority ■ Low priority ■ Medium priority ■ High priority



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Summary Table 4 - Key themes from public engagement about urban forest management

What we Heard	How it was considered
Survey respondents and workshop participants would most like to prioritize: • Rapidly removing dead, diseased, and dangerous trees (Policy 15) • Following a best practices program for tree care and risk management (Policy 14) • Monitoring natural area forest cover and prioritizing invasive species removal (Policy 18) • Minimizing the use and impact of winter road salts that harm City-owned trees (Policy 16)	Policies were all identified for short-term implementation.
Reduce tree harm caused by City activities such as mowing and infrastructure installation/renewal, and improve the education, resources, and enforcement that accompany private development.	Actions under policies 19 and 20 provide better approaches to protect trees during development and city-owned trees. Actions 19E/F/G were identified for short-term implementation.

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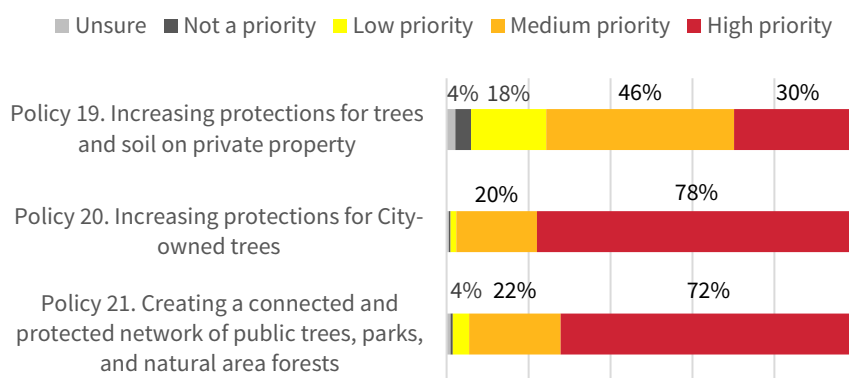
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Section 4: Protect

Protect aims to sustain Winnipeg's urban tree canopy, where it will maximize benefits for human health and ecological function. Three associated policies were presented in the draft strategy.

Prioritizing policies

When asked to prioritize policies related to tree protection, more respondents prioritized Policy 20 (78% ranked it as a high priority), followed by Policy 21 (72% ranked it as a high priority). During the workshop, stakeholders identified Policies 19 and 21 as top priorities for implementation.



The lowest prioritized policy was Policy 19 (only 30% of survey respondents identified it as a high priority).

Gaps and implementation challenges

During the workshop, stakeholders identified challenges with the impact of infill development projects on the tree canopy, including a lack of developer regulations and a need for more contractor accountability. They suggested that the Urban Forestry Branch should provide more detailed guidance to the Planning department on how to follow up on the implementation of arborist recommendations to avoid damage to trees. A key priority for many stakeholders and a recurring question from open house attendees related to a tree protection bylaw for private properties.

Summary Table 5 – Key themes from public engagement about urban forest protection

What we Heard	How it was considered
Survey respondents and stakeholders would most like to prioritize: - Increasing protections for City-owned trees (Policy 20) - Creating a connected and protected network of public trees, parks, and natural area forests (Policy 21) Stakeholders also prioritized: - Increasing protection of trees and soil on private property (Policy 19)	Actions under Policy 20 were already prioritized for shorter-term implementation. Actions under Policy 19 are dependent on implementation of Policy 2. Actions in Policy 21 are influenced by the approved Winnipeg Parks Strategy. Actions 21A/B were identified for short-term initiation to align with the Winnipeg Parks Strategy.
Improved guidance is required, and arborist recommendations for tree protection should be enforced.	Many of the actions set under Policy 19 are expected to contribute to resolving those issues.
The City should create an arborist position in the Planning Department to administer tree-related permit requirements.	Action 19D already recommends the creation of a development arborist position for that purpose.
Adopt a private tree protection bylaw with arborist reporting requirements and bonding for tree planting.	Action 19A already recommends that the City considers creating a private tree bylaw. The City's ability to do so depends on the province allowing it under the Winnipeg Charter.

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Section 5: Partner

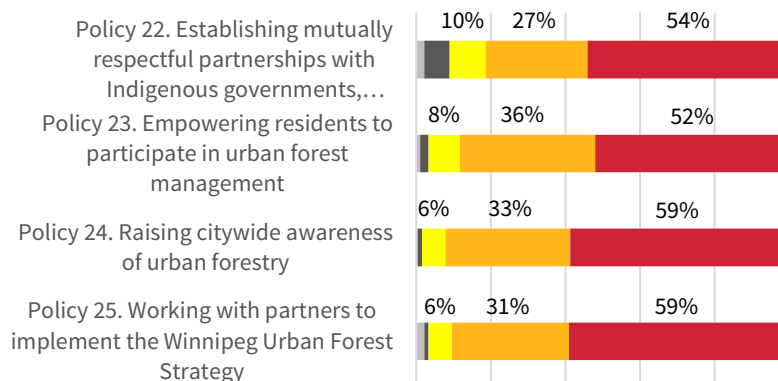
Partner goal aims to build operational capacity and adaptability through reconciliation and stewardship. Four associated policies were presented in the draft strategy.

Prioritizing policies

When asked to prioritize policies related to partnering for urban forest management, respondents ranked all partnership policies similarly.

Stakeholder discussion during the workshop reflected all policies as a high priority, with a particular emphasis on Policy 23 and an interest in a citizen forester program to engage residents.

■ Unsure ■ Not a priority ■ Low priority ■ Medium priority ■ High priority



Gaps and implementation challenges

During the workshop, stakeholders suggested partnering with neighbourhood organizations to reach individuals and encourage their participation in urban forest stewardship. Stakeholders also suggested using existing organizations and networks to plant more trees. Open house attendees raised questions about incorporating Indigenous partnerships and perspectives into the strategy. Stakeholders noted the underrepresentation of participants from low canopy cover areas of the city. They highlighted the importance of working to create more interest and engagement in urban forestry in those areas.

Summary Table 6 - Key themes from public engagement about urban forest management

What we Heard	How it was considered
Survey respondents would most like to prioritize: - Establishing mutually respectful partnerships with Indigenous governments (Policy 22) - Empowering residents to participate in urban forest management (Policy 23) - Raising citywide awareness of urban forestry (Policy 24) - Working with partners to implement the strategy (Policy 25)	Actions under policy 22 are already identified for short-term implementation. Actions 23A, 23C, and all actions under Policy 24 and 25 will be changed to short-term implementation.
Update action 23A for a citizen forester program to also involve engagement with: - Individual homeowners for tree planting on city boulevards - Neighbourhood organizations	Action 23A was updated to include a reference to a citizen forester program engaging homeowners and neighbourhood groups.
Add an action to enable homeowners paying for the cost of planting a boulevard tree to plant it themselves according to city guidelines and with rapid approval from the City.	The City has a mechanism in place for homeowners to plant trees under an agreement with the City utilizing approved contractors in accordance with legal and risk management requirements.
Update action 23C to provide financial rebates to homeowners paying for the approved pruning of their boulevard tree.	The City explored this idea; however, it will not be pursuing financial rebates because it would divert resources away from reaching the pruning cycle target in the Winnipeg Urban Forest Strategy.

Next Steps

The findings from Phase 2 will be considered along with considerations for the availability of resources, alignment with other City projects, and staffing capacity as the project team finalizes the draft strategy. The revised draft strategy is expected to be presented to Council for its consideration in November 2023. Implementation of the Strategy is subject to Council approval.

Appendices

Appendix A – Survey results
Appendix B – Polls from open houses & workshop
Appendix C – Stakeholder workshop mural boards
Appendix D – Open Houses Q&A