

HRM Urban Forest Master Plan

Workshop

Thursday 28th June, 2012

The HRM Urban Forest Master Plan for the serviced area of HRM is being prepared by a team led by John Charles, Planner and Peter Duinker of the School for Resource and Environmental Studies, Dalhousie University

Background studies have included:

- tree inventories
- environmental benefit assessments
- the development of objectives, targets, actions
- public consultation -research on best practices, climate change effects, carbon sequestration, etc.
- current canopy coverage and land use

Representatives of several groups, including HRM councillors, advisory committees and staff, federal and provincial agencies, professional organizations, development companies, organizational land owners and conservation groups were invited to the workshop to help set broadly acceptable priorities for plan implementation.

After a brief introduction, the attendees broke into smaller groups for round-table discussion on three main themes:

- priorities for trees on streets and parks
- trees on private lands
- regulatory and policy environment

Some of the points raised were:

1. Because of the network of underground pipelines – and overhead wires which have to be avoided, as well as regulatory set-backs and community issues, the placing of trees on the street can be extremely difficult.
2. The importance of local soil conditions in selecting tree types.
3. The providers of services (water, power, etc.), and developers are willing to cooperate in the planting of trees – but suggest that this should be done at later stage in the development process, after the houses are constructed – to insure that the young trees are not damaged by heavy machinery.

4. Post planting maintenance is extremely important – but often neglected.
5. The idea of “tree rangers”: private citizens provided with simple equipment to water and maintain city trees on a voluntary basis. (as in Bath, Maine)
6. Ways to encourage the planting of trees on private property (free seedlings, low cost seedlings with proceeds going to charity)
7. The effect of 4 and 5 on the existing planting and tree maintenance job market.
8. Inclusion of valuable tree inventories in watershed plans.
9. Introduction of a policy of tree replacement (as wetland replacement), whenever a city tree is cut.
10. The high cost of tree planting: \$375 -500 for the tree, about \$500 to cut down an old tree, \$300 to remove the stump. Trees planted in parks cost less as they can be smaller and planted in groups.

While the notes above represent only the discussion in one of the small groups, the general feeling at the end of the workshop seemed to be that a useful exchange of information and views had taken place and a greater understanding of the wide-ranging issues involved in the provision and maintenance of the urban forest had been achieved.