

Town of Gibsons Urban Forest Plan Phase 1 Engagement Summary

March 2024



Submitted to:

Town of Gibsons

474 S. Fletcher St.

Box 340, Gibsons, B.C.

VON 1V0



DIAMOND HEAD

3559 Commercial Street
Vancouver, BC 604.733.4886

Contents

- SCOPE OF THE ENGAGEMENT1**
 - Objectives for public engagement1
 - Engagement activities1
 - Communication tactics used2
- WHO WE HEARD FROM.....2**
 - Survey demographics2
- WHAT WE HEARD3**
 - Understanding how the urban forest is valued and the vision for the next 20 years4
 - The urban forest on your street6
 - Priorities for urban forest management and tree regulations.....8
 - Urban forest service levels10
 - Tree removal11
 - Community stewardship12
- SYNTHESIS OF FEEDBACK16**
- NEXT STEPS18**
- APPENDIX 1 SAMPLE COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS19**

Scope of the Engagement

The Town of Gibsons is developing an Urban Forest Plan (UFP) to guide the management and preservation of its urban forest over the next 20 years. The UFP will strive to create an urban forest that supports healthy ecosystems crucial for climate adaptation and aligns with the Town’s Official Community Plan and other relevant policies.

The UFP will involve two phases of public consultation. The Phase 1 occurred in early 2024 and collected the community’s input on a long-term urban forestry vision and supporting goals for protection and management. Phase 2 will take place after the UFP is drafted, focusing on gathering opinions about the draft UFP.

Objectives for public engagement

Objectives for the Phase 1 of public engagement are:

- To inform the public about:
 - The status of our urban forest
 - The role of our urban forest in the community, including the unique environmental, economic, and social values of trees in Gibsons
 - The opportunities and challenges for urban forest management, particularly due to ongoing urban development and climate change
- To consult the community to:
 - Identify and acknowledge their concerns and aspirations for the Town’s urban forest
 - Develop a long-term vision and goals for the UFP that capture the community’s perspective on the Town’s urban forest

Engagement activities

The public was invited to provide input through a 15-min online survey hosted on the project page and an online open house. Details on engagement opportunities for Phase 1 in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of engagement opportunities in Phase 1 Engagement

Date	Engagement Activity	Participants
January 26 – February 16, 2024	<i>Survey</i>	184
January 30, 2024	<i>Public Open House</i>	40

Communication tactics used

Information on engagement opportunities was communicated via several online platforms to reach as many people as possible. Promotional materials used are in the appendix. The platforms used included:

- Town of Gibsons' website
 - Dedicated UFP project page
- Town of Gibsons' social media accounts: X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram
- Town of Gibsons' newsletter
- Newspaper advertisements, posters, ads

Who we heard from

We have engaged 200+ people in Phase 1 of engagement, including 184 survey respondents and 40 people who attended the online open house.

Survey demographics

Of the 184 survey respondents:

- 78% reside within the Town of Gibsons
- Most respondents live in Bay Area/Georgia View (18%) and Gibsons Landing (17%) (**Figure 1**)
- 54% are 35-64 years old (**Figure 2**)
- 76% are homeowners (60% having freehold ownership and 16% owning condo/strata or leasehold) while only 6% are renters

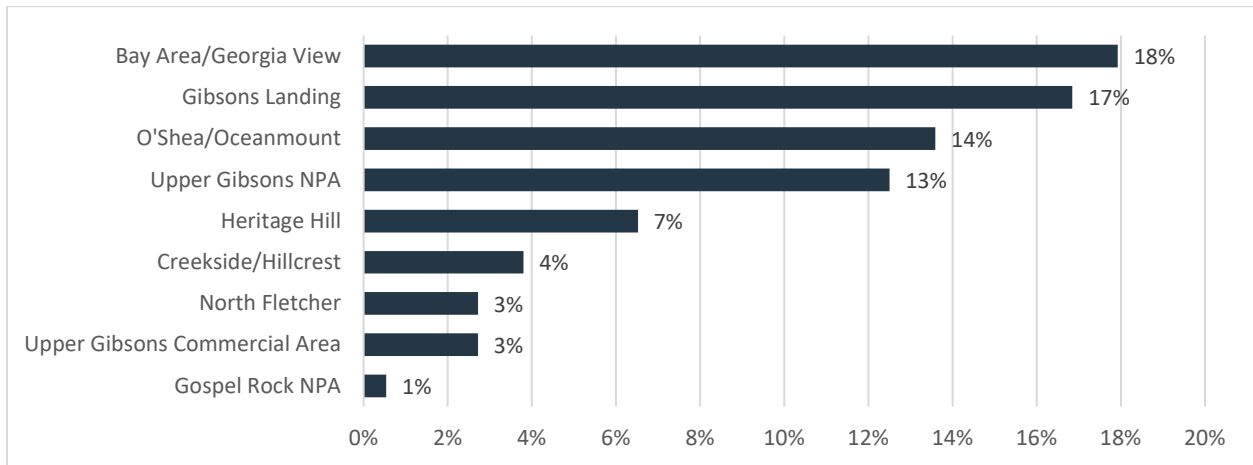


Figure 1. Where survey respondents reside (Answered: 142 | Skipped: 42)

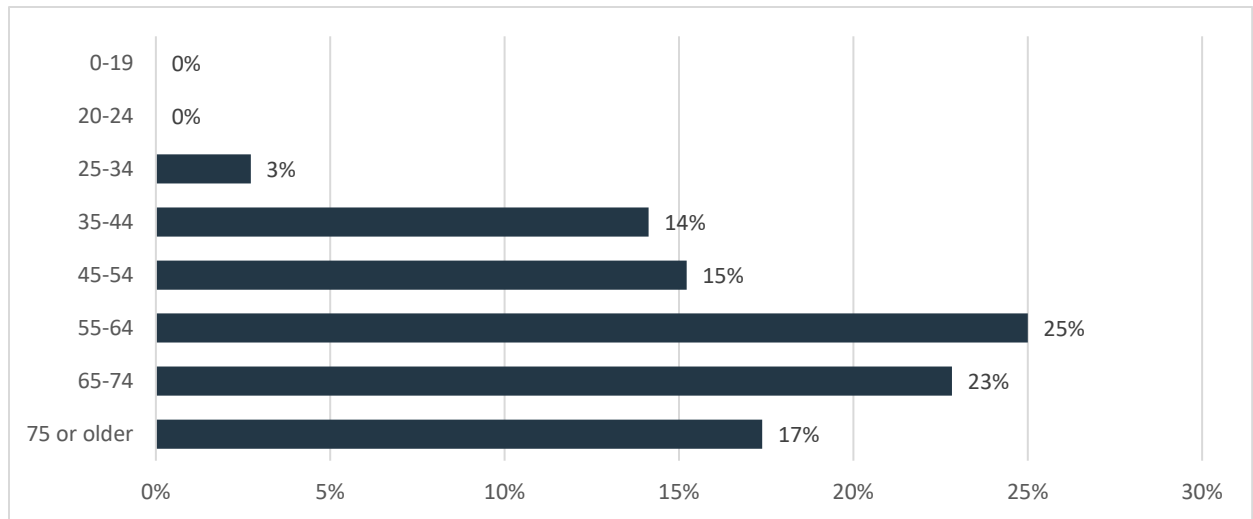


Figure 2. Respondents' age distribution (Answered: 179 | Skipped: 5)

What We Heard

Results from Phase 1 of public engagement are summarised in this section and structured around the following topics:

- Understanding how the urban forest is valued and developing a vision for the next 20 years
- Preferences for street trees (size and distribution)
- Priorities for urban forest management and tree regulation
- Satisfaction with and preferred urban forest levels of service
- Community stewardship of the urban forest

Understanding how the urban forest is valued and the vision for the next 20 years

Survey respondents were asked to rank the benefits they valued in the urban forest (Figure 3). The top 3 benefits were **environmental** (such as rainwater management, cleaning the air, protecting drinking water), **ecological** (habitat and food for native plants and animals), and **climate change resilience** (shade and cooling of streets and buildings, flood protection, and role in carbon storage). **Health** benefits, **cultural** interests, and **economic** benefits were ranked lower in importance.

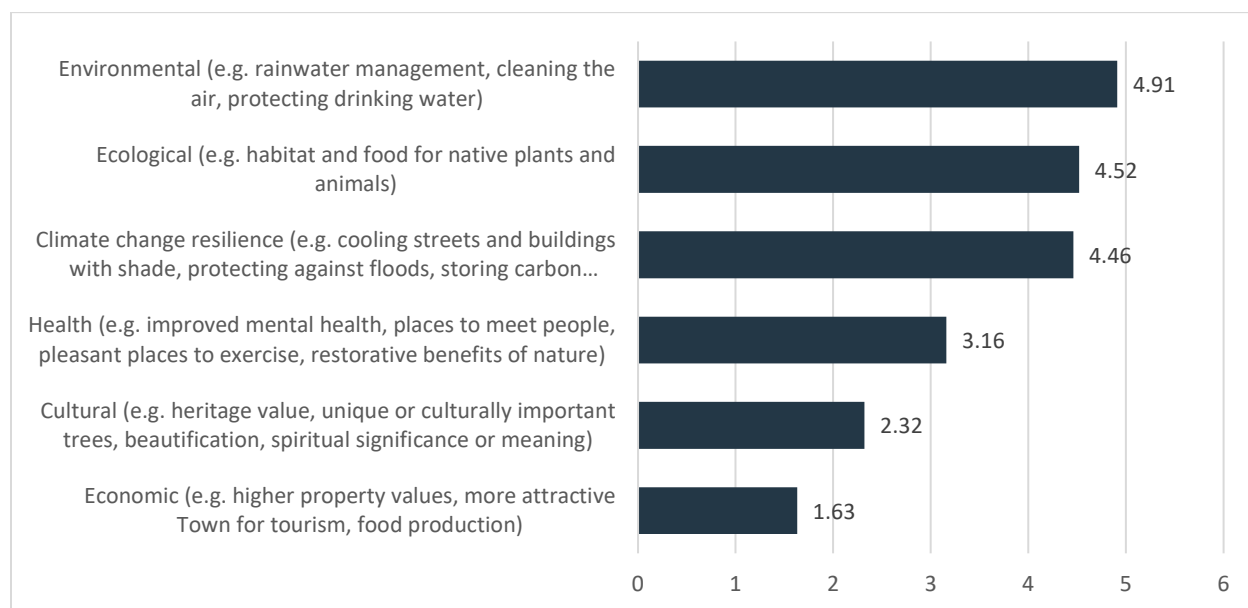


Figure 3. Respondents’ ranking of urban forest benefits (Answered: 173 | Skipped: 11)

Survey participants were asked to share their vision for Gibsons’ urban forest over the next 20 years (Figure 4). Respondents envisioned an urban forest that is **climate resilient** (36 mentions), **healthy** (16 mentions) and capable of **supporting ecological functions and biodiversity** (56 mentions). There was a focus on **maintaining tree canopy** (44 mentions), with emphasis on implementing **policies** for tree protection and replacement (12 mentions). There was large consensus around having **more trees** in the Town (38 mentions). Respondents emphasized **strategic planning and intentional integration of trees** throughout the Town (28 mentions), especially before redevelopment. Respondents called for proactive **tree management** (24 mentions), also expressing interest in a **minimum tree retention requirement** for private property development and incentives for tree preservation.

Respondents envisioned an urban forest that is **rich in species diversity** (24 mentions), **aesthetically pleasing** (15 mentions), **naturalized in appearance** (12 mentions), **provides food** (10 mentions), is **free from invasive species** (9 mentions), and **managed for wildfire risks** (4 mentions). The urban forest was highly valued for the **recreation opportunities** it provides to residents (20 mentions), **shade** (21 mentions), with storm-water management and carbon storage also recognized. Respondents advocated for the maintenance and expansion of **forest belts and corridors** (37 mentions) for wildlife, as well as establishing greenways for recreational purposes by planting more trees on streets. **Accessibility** was

another key theme (14 mentions), including an expansion of the trail system with amenities like benches with vistas, interpretive signage, and more facilities such as drinking stations and washrooms. **Community engagement and educational opportunities** were also highlighted, with respondents expressing a desire to participate and learn about their urban forest (10 mentions) and engaging with **Indigenous practices** to care for trees and the forest (3 mentions).

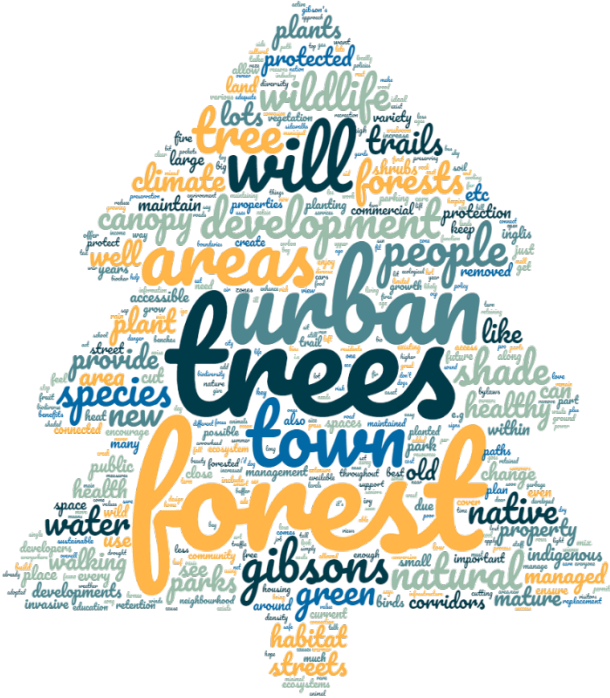


Figure 4. Word cloud showing the most common words used to describe respondents’ vision of the urban forest over the next 20 years (Answered: 152 | Skipped: 32)

During the public open house, questions from the public covered a wide range of topics that reflect the community’s diverse interests in the management of Gibsons’ urban forest. Attendees inquired about the integration of policy recommendations, tree canopy targets by neighbourhood, emphasizing the importance of biodiversity, habitat, and connectivity. Questions were also posed about the existing Tree Preservation Bylaw, its prescriptiveness, and integration with new plans, alongside inquiries about urban wildfire management and FireSmart practices. The community expressed concern over the costs associated with maintaining older trees, potential tree cover loss under current plans, and promoting native species while avoiding the introduction of non-native species. The North Vancouver Green Necklace was mentioned as a model worth adapting to improve urban forest connectivity in Gibsons.

The urban forest on your street

Survey respondents were asked to identify photos that most resembled their street and their preference for how they would like their street to appear (Figure 5).



A. Few or no trees



B. Regularly spaced small trees



C. Regularly spaced, medium-sized trees



D. Mixed spacing and species, medium-sized trees



E. Regularly spaced, large trees



F. Mixed spacing and species, large trees

Figure 5. Types of street planting presented to survey respondents.

Currently, respondents live in a diverse range of streetscapes (**Figure 6**). Most respondents live on streets resembling **Option A – few to no trees** (28%) or **Option F – mixed spacing and species, large trees** (24%). The rest of respondents live on streets resembling **Option D – mixed spacing and species, medium-sized trees** (15%), **Option B – regularly spaced small trees** (13%), **Option E – regularly spaced, large trees** (10%), or **Option C – regularly spaced, medium-sized trees** (8%).

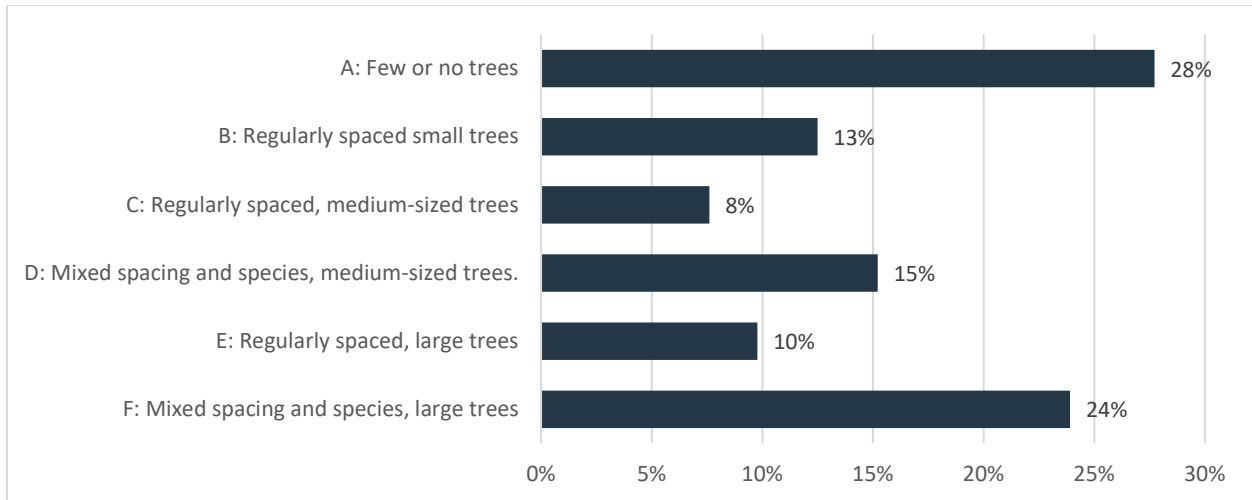


Figure 6. Respondents’ current streetscape (Answered: 178 | Skipped: 6)

When asked which street respondents would prefer to live on (**Figure 7**), 50% indicated preference for **large trees (Options E & F)**, while 37% would like to live on streets with **medium-sized trees (Options C & D)**. Regardless of tree size, respondents displayed a stronger inclination towards **mixed spacing and species**, with 26% preferring **Option D** compared to 11% for **Option C**, and 36% favouring **Option F** compared to 14% for **Option E**. Only 5% indicated a preference for streets with **small trees (Option B)** and a smaller proportion (3%) expressed preference for streets with **few or no trees (Option A)**.

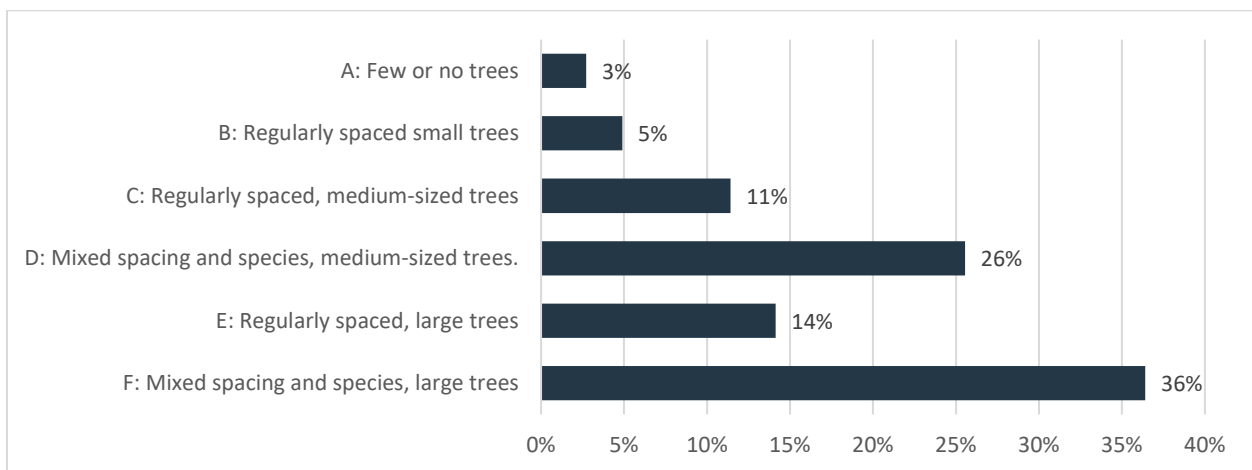


Figure 7. Respondents preferred streetscape (Answered: 175 | Skipped: 9)

Priorities for urban forest management and tree regulations

Survey respondents were asked to prioritize locations for tree planting (**Figure 8**). The top ranked locations were new developments (average ranking at 6.39), urban parks, playgrounds, and schoolyards (6.30), and established residential areas (6.14). Respondents also prioritized planting in downtown streets (5.74) as well as natural/ecological restoration areas (5.65). Lower on the priority list were commercial/industrial areas outside of downtown, waterfront areas, parking lots, and rural/agricultural areas. Open ended responses suggested planting trees in areas with unhealthy trees to prepare for their replacements and along watercourses and watersheds.

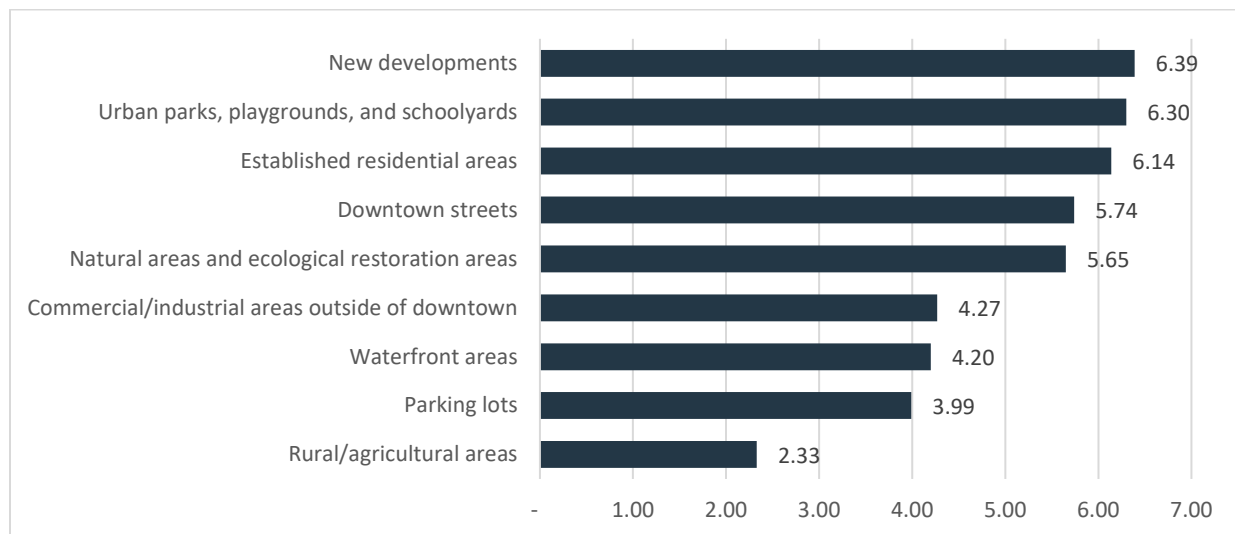


Figure 8. Areas where trees are missing (Answered: 175 | Skipped: 9)

Tree regulations on public property

Survey respondents were asked to prioritize actions the Town can do to better support trees on Town-owned lands (**Figure 9**). Highest on the list of priorities is the need to increase species diversity for climate resilience. Actions with similar levels of priority are planting trees where canopy cover is lacking, improving engineering standards for soils to support street trees, investing in invasive species management and ecological restoration, and planting more trees in urban areas. The lowest on the list of priorities are increasing public spending on urban forest activities, using capital projects to plant trees, creating new planting sites where canopy is lacking, and creating more volunteer stewardship opportunities for residents. Open ended submissions included maintaining existing trees, implementing FireSmart landscaping, promoting climate-resilient species, and controlling invasive species on Town-owned lands.

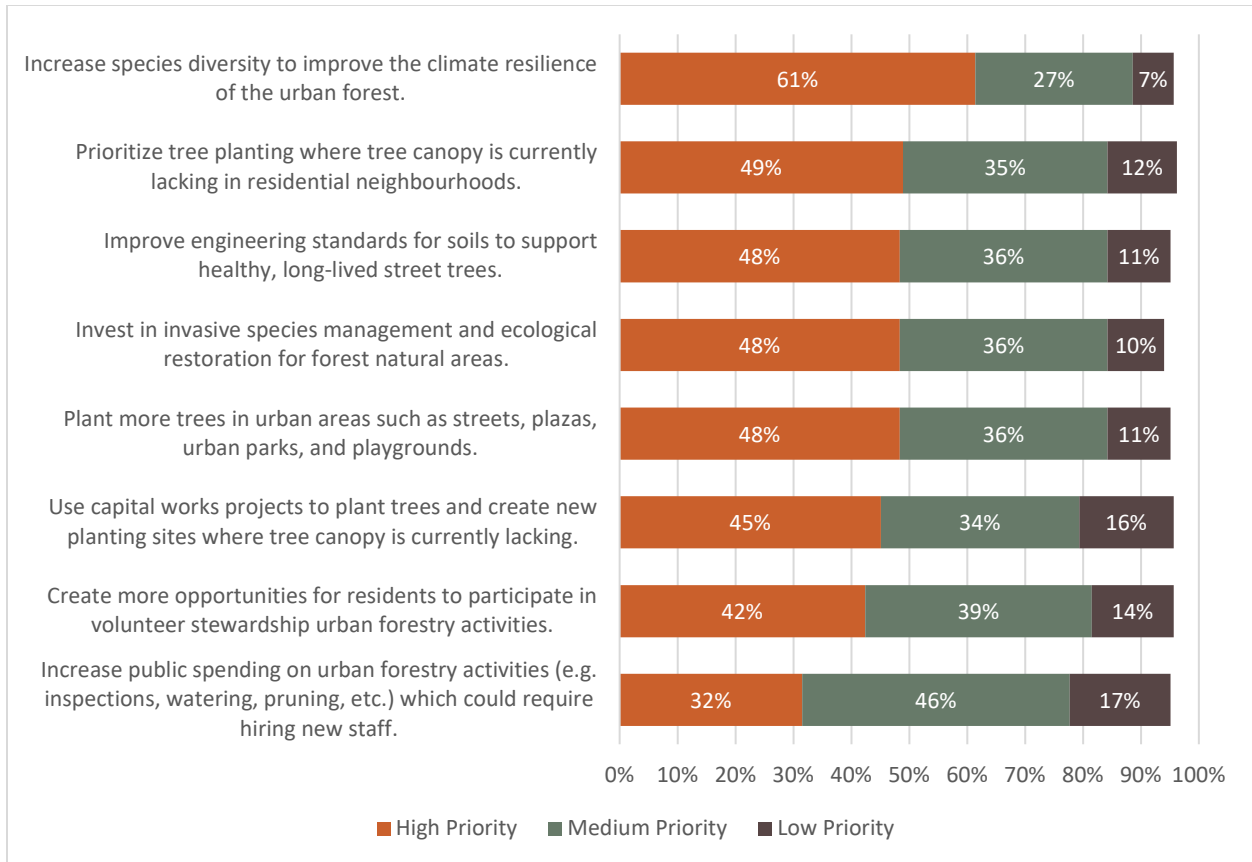


Figure 9. Respondents’ levels of support for eight tree regulations on public property (Answered: 175 | Skipped: 9)

Tree regulations on private property

Respondents were asked to share thoughts on actions the City can take to support the urban forest on private property (Figure 10). Respondents were generally supportive of all proposed actions. They were most supportive of increasing the number of trees planted with development (72% support) and improving guidelines for tree species selection to ensure the right tree is planted in the right place (71% support). Less support was shown for introducing a tree “target” for tree retention and planting (16% do not support) and offering a program for residents to get and plant trees on their property (15% do not support). Open ended submissions included preserving trees and more stringent enforcement of tree protection requirements during construction.

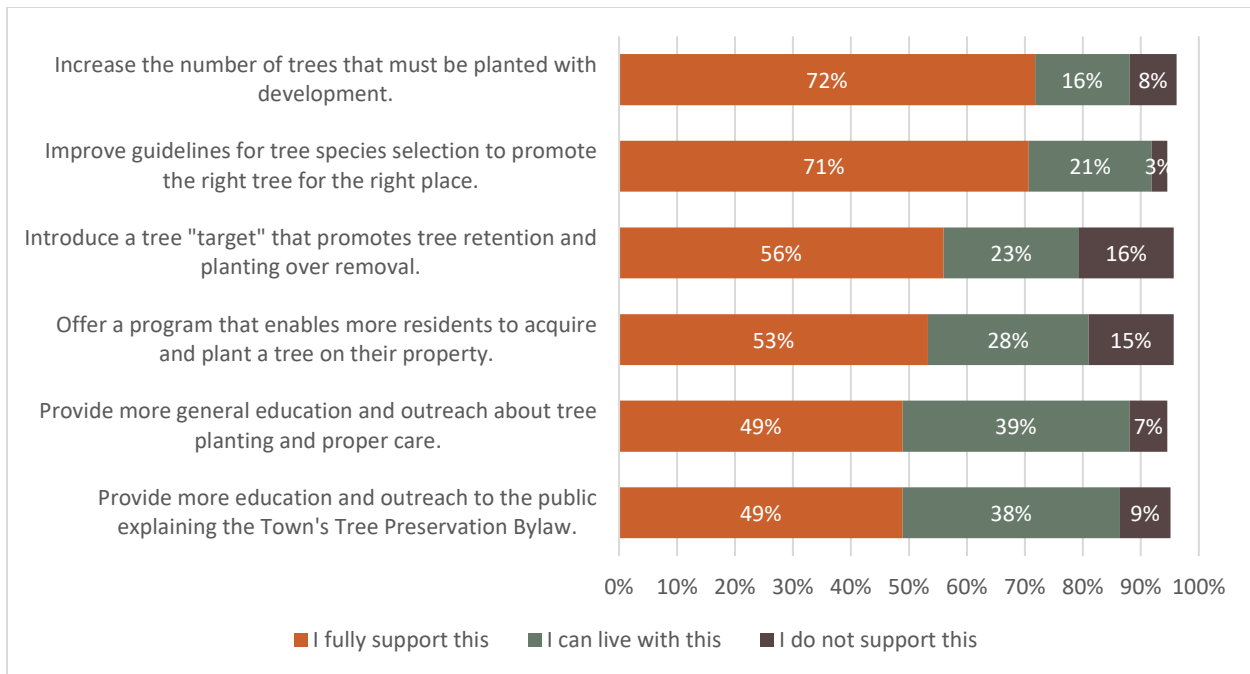


Figure 10. Respondents' preference for tree protection on private property (Answered: 174 | Skipped: 10)

Urban forest service levels

Service levels describe how the Town maintains Town-owned trees. Survey respondents were asked to rank satisfaction levels with current service levels. The overall feedback indicates varying degrees of satisfaction with the urban forest service provided by the Town (Figure 11).

Respondents expressed the highest level of satisfaction with the Town’s response to **storm response and debris clean-up** (61% satisfied) as well as **dangerous tree removal** (45% satisfied). Respondents were more neutral but still satisfied with **tree maintenance** like pruning (37% satisfied, 28% neutral). Respondents held a neutral stance regarding **pest and disease control** (40% neutral) as well as **wildfire prevention and forest fuel management** (34% neutral). **Tree planting** received the lowest satisfaction rating (37% dissatisfied). Additionally, respondents were dissatisfied with the Town’s **public education and outreach** (30% dissatisfied), and **tree preservation bylaw enforcement** (26% dissatisfied).

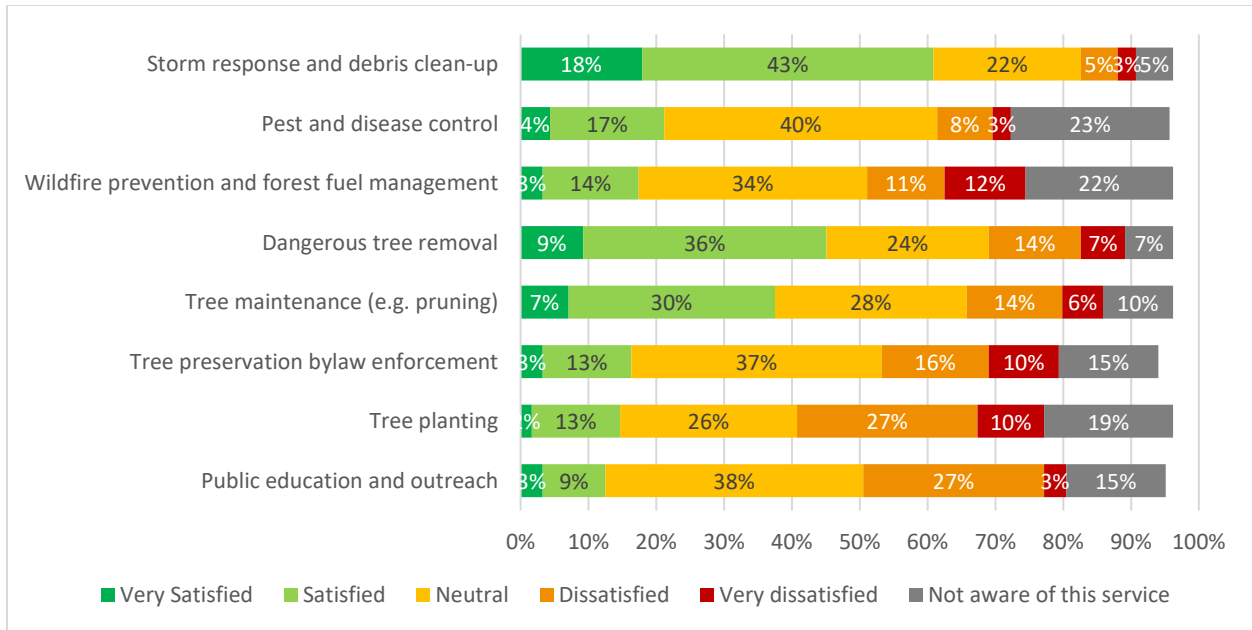


Figure 11. Satisfaction levels with current service levels for Town-owned trees (street trees, trees in parks, and trees in conservation areas) (Answered: 164 | Skipped: 20)

Respondents were asked to share ideas for improving the Town’s urban forest service levels. Suggestions included having adequate maintenance budgets, a comprehensive tree inventory, and maintenance practices like pruning and wildfire fuel treatments. Respondents recommended involving the community to get trees inventoried, especially students.

Tree removal

Respondents were asked to rank their biggest concerns regarding tree loss in Gibsons (Figure 12). The most significant concern is the removal of large mature trees from private property during development (average ranking score at 4.66). Respondents were also concerned with the removal of trees from Town-owned property for nearby development (3.93), inadequate tree planting and replacement (3.75), and loss of trees due to wildfire, drought, climate change, and forest health issues (3.39).

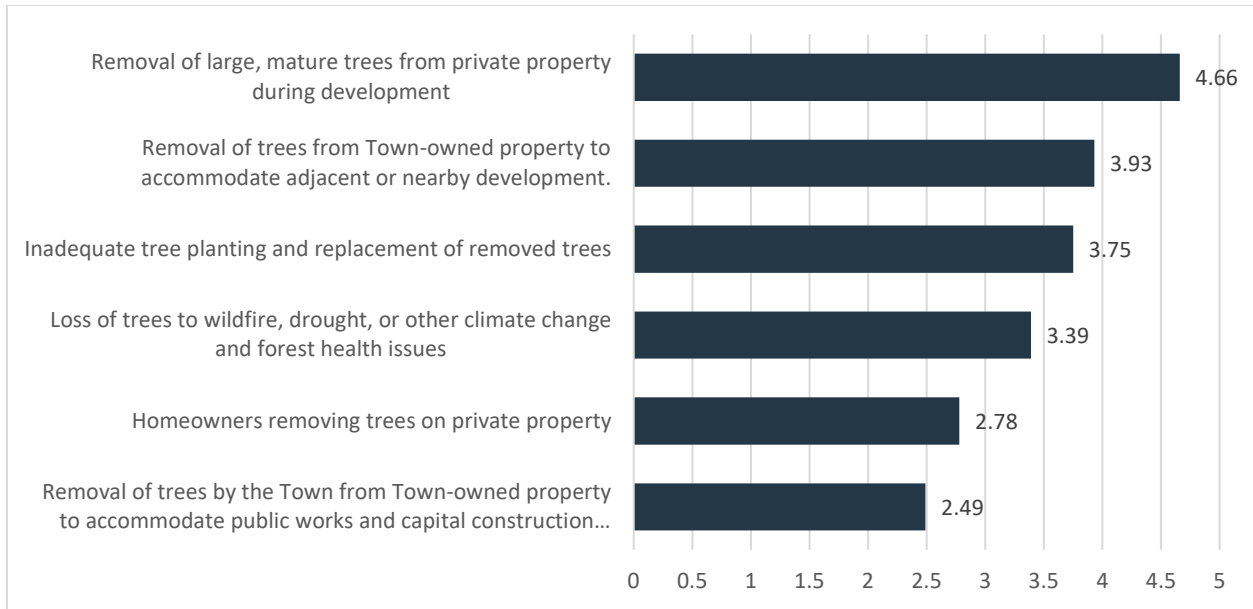


Figure 12. Concerns regarding tree loss in Gibsons (Answered: 164 | Skipped: 20)

Other concerns regarding tree loss in Gibsons were the effects on wildlife habitat, destabilization of slopes in new developments, and insufficient protection for newly planted trees. Several respondents emphasized the importance of promoting education for both the public and developers regarding tree care and the ecological value of trees.

Community stewardship

Community stewardship refers to the involvement of community members in caring for the urban forest on Town or private lands. Most respondents (92%) had participated in at least one urban forest stewardship activity in the past 5 years (Figure 13). The top stewardship activities were maintaining trees on personal property (85%) and planting trees on personal property (62%). Other activities that respondents have participated in included watering street or park trees (26%), participating in tree planting or ecological restoration on public property as a part of a volunteer programs (17%), and others not specified (16%).

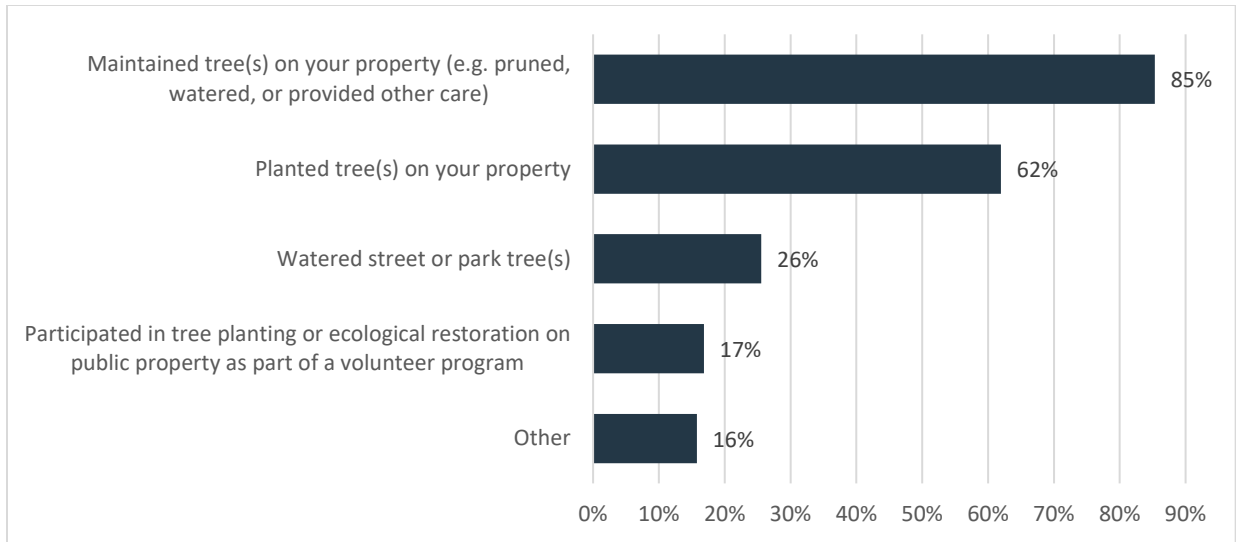


Figure 13. Stewardship activities that respondents have participated in the past 5 years (Answered: 170 | Skipped: 14)

Barriers to participating in stewardship activities

Respondents were asked to identify barriers restricting participation in urban forest stewardship activities (**Figure 14**). The most common barrier was the lack of space to plant (37%), followed by financial concerns (14%), lack of knowledge about trees (14%), requiring permission from external authorities (14%), and safety concerns related to fire hazards and falling branches (12%). Less common barriers were nuisance concerns (5%), requiring too much maintenance (4%), not wanting trees on private property (4%), and requiring too much physical effort (3%) and time (2%). Open ended submissions included having insufficient sunlight for trees to thrive, impact on views, and challenges in watering during summer droughts.

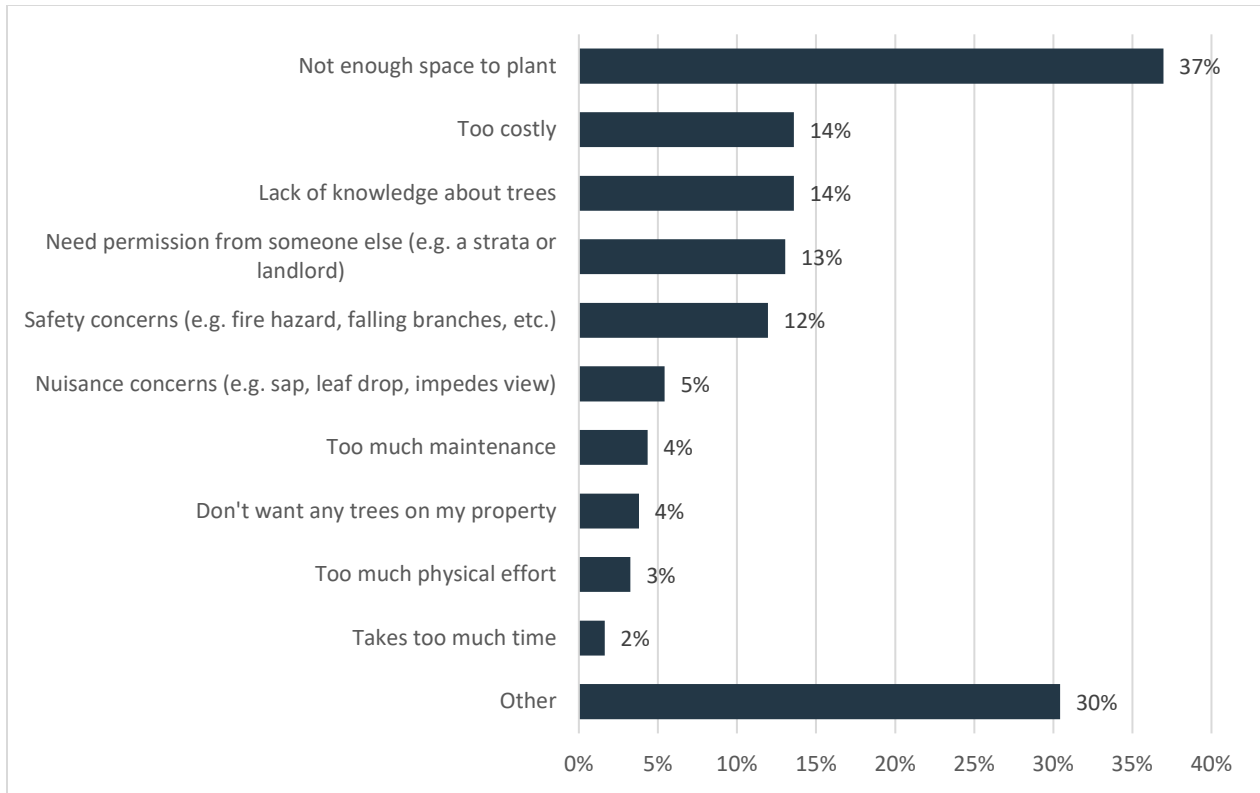


Figure 14. Barriers preventing respondents from planting and maintaining trees on their property (Answered: 153 | Skipped: 31)

Public interest for urban forest stewardship activities

Respondents expressed interest in supporting and nurturing the urban forest in Gibsons (**Figure 15**). The top influencing factors that would encourage participation are having adequate space (39%), understanding tree selection (36%), and receiving subsidies to reduce the cost of buying trees (36%). Tree planting information such as knowing what trees are suitable for the climate (30%), how to select optimal locations within yards (28%) and having access to resources guiding the process of tree planting and maintenance (19%) would also help incentivize tree planting.

Town of Gibsons Urban Forest Plan – Phase 1 Engagement Summary

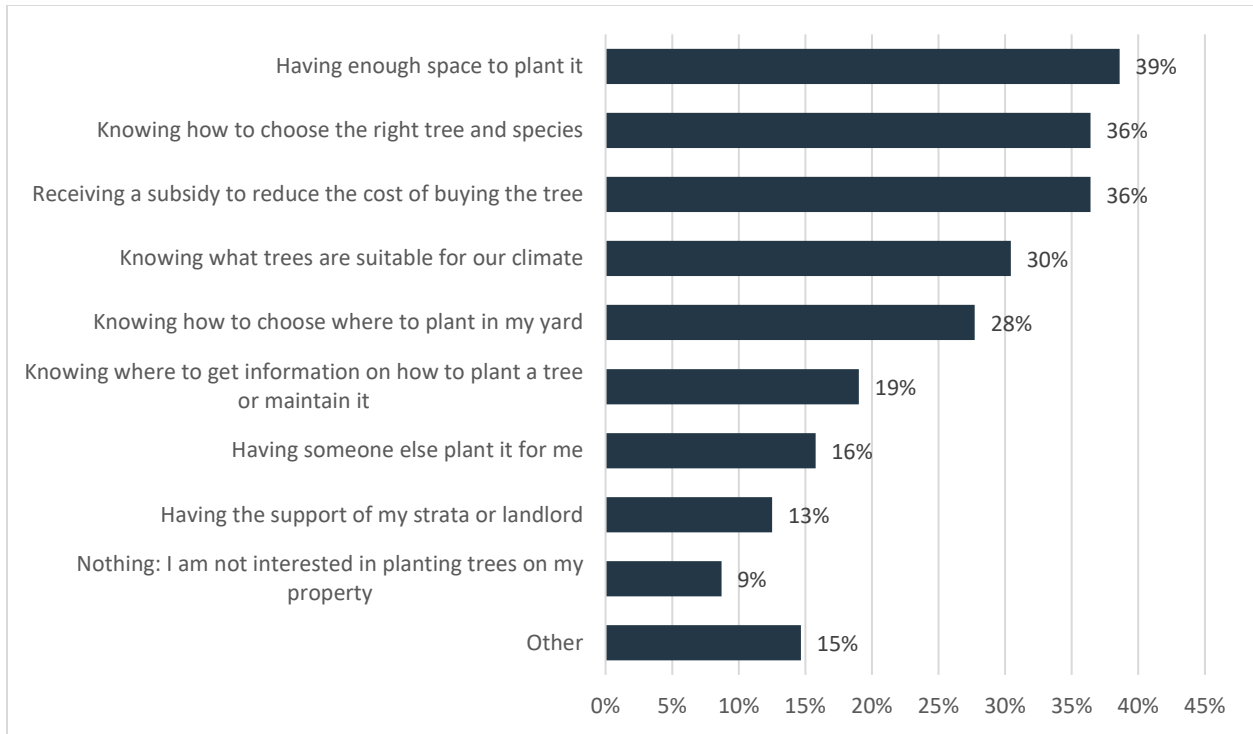


Figure 15. Respondents' interest in supporting the urban forest (Answered: 162 | Skipped: 22)

Synthesis of Feedback

The feedback collected from the survey has been compiled into key statements in the 5 tables below. Each key statement (“What we heard”) is followed by an explanation of how the feedback will inform the ongoing development of the UFP for the following urban forest themes:

- Plan
- Plant/grow
- Protect
- Manage
- Engage and Partner

Summary of feedback for the urban forest planning and long-term vision

What we Heard	How it will be considered
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents value their urban forest as a biodiversity habitat for wildlife and native plants. • Respondents value their greenspaces. They appreciate the accessibility to their recreational sites. • Survey respondents envisioned Gibsons to have healthy and mature trees of diverse, climate-resilient, and native species. 	<p>The project team will incorporate these inputs when drafting the UFP vision and goals to emphasize the benefits most valued by the community.</p>

Key themes for implementing and adapting the urban forest for enhance efficiency and resilience

What we Heard	How it will be considered
<p>Respondents are unsatisfied with the current levels of tree protection.</p>	<p>The project team will consider strategies aimed at enhancing tree protection and preservation.</p>
<p>Many respondents are advocates for the retention of large and healthy trees.</p>	<p>The draft UFP will consider including a canopy target for the next 20 years as a policy objective into the OCP and in new and existing local area plans. The draft UFP will also make recommendations about policy updates for improved tree retention outcomes.</p>

Key themes for protecting and expanding the urban forest to maximize benefits and enhance resilience

What we Heard	How it will be considered
<p>The top 3 locations respondents prioritized for tree planting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new developments • urban parks, playgrounds, and school yards • established residential areas 	<p>The draft UFP will consider strategies to expand the urban forest in identified locations.</p>
<p>More respondents were dissatisfied to neutral about current levels of tree protection and preservation efforts. Respondents were dissatisfied about service levels regarding Town tree planting.</p>	<p>The draft UFP will include recommendations to update bylaws and other policies, and new guidelines on retention/removal decisions, and protection requirements and procedure.</p>

Key themes for managing and sustaining the urban forest to maximize benefits and enhance resilience

What we Heard	How it will be considered
<p>Respondents had mixed levels of satisfaction for current urban forest service levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents were satisfied with storm and debris cleanup • Respondent expressed dissatisfaction for public education, tree planting and tree preservation bylaw enforcement • Respondents were mostly satisfied about pest and disease control, and mostly neutral for wildfire and forest fuel management, and hazard tree removal 	<p>The draft UFP will share information about services provided by the Town and consider recommendations to improve services with the greatest dissatisfaction. Trying to align service levels for urban forest with best practices and prioritizing tree risks for tree health and community safety.</p>

Key themes for engaging and partnering for inclusive urban forest management

What we Heard	How it will be considered
<p>Respondents are eager to learn! They are seeking opportunities to learn how to plant trees and manage them.</p>	<p>The draft UFP will reassess the platforms best used to share information on potential public education opportunities.</p>
<p>Most respondents have participated in urban forest stewardship activities in the past five years. However, there are barriers hindering more support for stewardship activities. The top 3 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of space for a new tree • Maintenance costs • Lack of tree planting information 	<p>The draft UFP will consider ways for the Town to encourage urban forest stewardship, including education on tree planting and tree care, and offer incentives.</p>

Next Steps

The findings from Phase 1 of community engagement will inform the development of the draft UFP, including a long-term vision and priorities for implementation. Phase 2 of public engagement is expected to occur in June of 2024 to gather feedback on the draft UFP.


Appendix 1 Sample Communication and Promotional Materials



Town of Gibsons
**URBAN
FOREST
PLAN**
Online Open
House & Survey

The Town of Gibsons is developing an Urban Forest Plan that will assess the current condition of Gibsons' tree canopy and provide a strategic roadmap to help guide urban forest management for years to come.




WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

How to provide feedback:

- > Take the survey.**
Share your thoughts through the online survey, open from January 26 - February 16.
- > Attend a virtual open house**
Hear about our work so far, share your thoughts, and ask questions. Registration can be found at the link below.
January 30, 2024
7:00 pm - 8:30 pm
- > Email us**
communications@gibsons.ca

gibsons.ca/urban-forest-plan



URBAN FOREST PLAN

Virtual Open House & Survey

The Town of Gibsons is developing an Urban Forest Plan that will assess the current condition of Gibsons' tree canopy and provide a strategic roadmap to help guide urban forest management for years to come.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Attend an online open house to hear about our work so far, share your thoughts and ask questions.

Jan 30 | 7-8:30 PM

Take the survey to tell us what is important to you about trees in Gibsons. **Open from Jan 26 - Feb 16**

More information: gibsons.ca/urban-forest-plan

