Oshawa

Public Report

To:	Community and Operations Services Committee
From:	Kevin Alexander, Commissioner, Community and Operations Services Department
Report Number:	CO-24-48
Date of Report:	September 11, 2024
Date of Meeting:	September 16, 2024
Subject:	C.P.T.E.D. Analysis and Cleanup at Oshawa Creek Valley
Ward:	Ward 5
File:	03-05

1.0 Purpose

On, June 24, 2024, City Council considered Report SF-24-33 from the Joint Meeting of the Community and Operations Services and Safety Facilities Services Committees concerning crime prevention through environmental design ("C.P.T.E.D.") analysis at the Oshawa Creek Valley. Pursuant to Report SF-24-33, City Council authorized staff to coordinate the C.P.T.E.D. analysis and the cleanup of debris, trees and brush to improve the visibility into the Oshawa Creek valley at the following six (6) named streets: Quebec, Fairbanks, Royal, Avenue, Hall, and Mill Street.

The purpose of this Report is to provide an update on the progress of said C.P.T.E.D. analysis and request authorization to proceed with the recommendations from the C.P.T.E.D. report.

2.0 Recommendation

That the Community and Operations Services Committee recommend to City Council:

That based on CO-24-48 dated September 16, 2024, concerning crime prevention through environmental design (C.P.T.E.D.) analysis and cleanup at Oshawa Creek valley, Council direct staff to coordinate with C.L.O.C.A. and the Region of Durham in an effort to implement the work outlined in Section 4.4.1 and monitor the impacts for a period of one (1) year and report back to Council.

3.0 Input From Other Sources

- Commissioner, Safety and Facilities Services Department
- Commissioner, Corporate and Finance Services Department

- Director, Legislative Services

4.0 Analysis

4.1 C.P.T.E.D. Review

The C.P.T.E.D. approach focuses on modifying the physical environment to reduce crime and enhance community safety. This initiative aligns with the City's commitment to maintaining safe and welcoming public spaces.

In July and August 2024, City staff from Safety and Facilities Services visited the terminus of Quebec Street, Fairbanks Street, Royal Street, Avenue Street, Hall Street, and Mill Street on multiple occasions to conduct a C.P.T.E.D. analysis and refine recommendations on remedial and proactive actions that could be undertaken by the Community and Operations Services Department.

The C.P.T.E.D. analysis prepared by Safety and Facilities staff resulted in the following recommendations, focused around four themes:

1. Natural Surveillance and Increase Visibility: Develop a vegetation management plan that includes regular pruning of the trees and brush to maintain clear sightlines. Remove invasive species and replace them with low-growing, native plants that do not obstruct visibility.

2. Maintenance Management: Establish a routine maintenance schedule to keep the transition zone clean and well-kept. Regularly inspect and promptly address any signs of vandalism or illegal dumping. Provide adequate waste disposal options at the end of streets and along forest paths. Conduct regular patrols by bylaw officers and security or volunteers to monitor activity and maintain a visible presence. Encourage community involvement in regular clean-up efforts and forest stewardship programs.

3. Territorial Reinforcement: Use landscaping, signage, and physical barriers to clearly define the boundary between the street and the forest. Install features such as low fences, hedges, or decorative markers to signal the transition while maintaining aesthetic appeal. Encourage community involvement in the maintenance and surveillance of the area.

4. Lighting: Install adequate, vandal-resistant lighting to illuminate the transition zone between the street and the woodlot.

It is important to note that the woodlots outside the right-of-way on Quebec Street, Fairbanks Street and Royal Street are privately owned. The implications of each theme listed above are further described in Section 4.4 of this Report.

4.2 Policy Review

In order to understand the constraints involved in implementing the C.P.T.E.D. recommendations, City staff recommend that a review of City Policies, Standards and Practices must be undertaken.

The City of Oshawa has a “Woodlot and Ravine Management” quality standard that states:

> “Naturalized wooded areas should be left in their natural state and not manicured. The benefits of leaving woody material to decompose include habitat for wildlife, recycling of nutrients and organic material, and regeneration sites for plant life, water reservoirs, and tree roots.”

Furthermore, the area adjacent to the woodlot is governed by Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority (“C.L.O.C.A.”). C.L.O.C.A.’s protected land policies and standards state significant tree, brush and vegetation removal work can be subject to an Environmental Impact Study. Several of the recommendations, if implemented by staff, would involve further consultation with C.L.O.C.A. to get a fuller understanding of the studies and permit costs that will be required to undertake the suggested works involving vegetation removal in a C.L.O.C.A. regulated area.

Finally, the Regional Municipality of Durham Woodland By-law 30-2020 (“Regional Woodland By-law”) must be taken into consideration for removal of trees on privately owned land. Where multiple trees are to be removed from a Woodlot or Sensitive Natural Area, a permit may be required from the Durham Region to do so.

A copy of the Regional Woodland By-law is available on the Durham Region website: https://www.durham.ca/en/doing-business/tree-by-law.aspx#Do-I-need-a-permit-to-cut-down-trees

4.3 Environmental Impact

The City is in the early stages of creating a new Forestry Master Plan that will outline our goals, ideas, and objectives, including updating the City’s tree canopy targets. Natural areas need to remain highly protected as they offer extreme value to the environment and the people living around them.

There are numerous negative impacts associated with disturbing a natural woodlot area. At a time where our tree canopy is decreasing and impacts from pests and disease are becoming more prevalent, we need to be more conscious around removals. Removing mass amounts of undergrowth from natural areas will decrease biodiversity and accelerate the spread of invasive species. If proper care is not given to ensure that desirable species are given adequate water, light and protection from invasive species until they are able to outcompete them on their own, these once natural areas will be filled with thickets of invasive species, noxious weeds and other undesirable vegetation that may require even more management than what is currently needed now.

4.4 Operational Activities

Each of the four (4) themes of recommended approaches will result in various operational activities and associated costs to undertake the initial work, and ongoing maintenance, as further described below.

4.4.1 Natural Surveillance and Increased Visibility

Managing the City-owned dead-end road sections to allow for better sightlines into the wooded areas can be done and would come with a yearly maintenance cost. This process would see under-story/low vegetation removed at the buffer zones between the woodlot and road-ends only and would not result in significant vegetation removal from the natural wooded area. Visibility from the road into these spaces would increase and have a lower impact on the natural woodlot area than clearing the woodlot down to the creek. These areas will require additional oversight throughout each year as many forest edge areas provide ideal habitat for invasive species and noxious weeds.

Grounds Maintenance staff would also be required to maintain visibility by cutting grass, low growing vegetation and remove noxious weeds during the growing season resulting in additional maintenance costs to the City. There are approximately 1,300 square metres of grounds that would require maintenance once the road-ends were cleared. The initial cost to undertake the above-described work would be approximately $13,000. Ongoing maintenance costs would be approximately $32,500 per year.

4.4.2 Maintenance Management

To meet the intent of the C.P.T.E.D. recommendations, a weekly routine maintenance schedule will be implemented to keep the transition zone clean and well-kept. This will include regular inspections to promptly address any signs of vandalism or illegal dumping. The initial cost to undertake the above-described work would be approximately $5,000. Ongoing maintenance costs would be approximately $17,000 per year.

4.4.3 Territorial Reinforcement

A fence on the road segments that the City owns along the adjacent woodlots (Royal Street, Avenue Street and Hall Street) could be erected to act as a deterrence and could protect landowners/residents' properties from acts of trespassing.

City staff are concerned with the future maintenance of the fences at these locations as it is believed the users of this valley area will continue to try and make use of the location, which could have a detrimental impact on the state of the fence. Furthermore, the area behind the fence will not be maintained and could pose as a potential hiding spot for the users of the valley if the area behind the fence becomes ingrown with vegetation. The initial cost to undertake the above-described work would be approximately $18,000 plus HST.

4.4.4 Lighting

To have additional lighting installed at the end of each road section would require the City to retain a Consultant to review the sites and make recommendations based on layout, site photometrics, power requirements/supply, Electrical Safety Authority (“ESA”) approvals and construction documentation.

Well-lit areas can discourage unruly behaviour and eliminate areas adjacent to the lights for hiding. The disadvantage to this approach is that light pollution can disrupt local residents, wildlife and affect the natural environment. The cost to retain a Consultant to complete an electrical light design is estimated to be $5,000 per location for a total cost of $30,000 plus HST. City staff could commence with a design in 2025 and present Council with a construction cost for the 2026 Capital Budget submission once the design is complete and construction costs can be better estimated.

4.4.5 Recommended Approach

Based on the above analysis Community and Operations Services staff suggest advancing the natural surveillance and increased visibility works described in Section 4.4.1 as the recommended approach to enhancing community safety along the Oshawa Creek Valley at the terminus of Quebec, Fairbanks, Royal, Avenue, Hall, and Mill Street:

- Least impact on natural woodlot
- Easier to implement, maintain and monitor
- Less significant upfront costs and least impact on privately-owned properties

Staff would implement the recommended approach and monitor the results and report back to Council if it is deemed necessary to implement any further measures.

5.0 Financial Implications

If approved, the recommended approach of natural surveillance and increased visibility will result in financial implications to the City.

To complete the initial work described in Section 4.4.1 would cost $13,000. In 2025 and each subsequent year, additional visits to prune the trees, cut grass, remove noxious weeds and perform any other required maintenance at a cost of $32,500 will be required.

6.0 Relationship to the Oshawa Strategic Plan

This report responds to the Oshawa Strategic Plan Priority Area “Care: Safe and Sustainable Environment” with the goal to collaborate and advocate for effective services, programs, and community safety and well-being support.

Mike Harrington, P.Eng., PMP, Director,
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