

OURS-Winnipeg Questions for Candidates

City of Winnipeg 2022 Election

Today, all great cities have a commitment to urban greenspaces, natural areas, river corridors and the urban tree canopy. The urban green infrastructure provides mitigation and adaption to climate change.

It is the responsibility of the City of Winnipeg elected officials to build a healthier and more resilient urban environment for all residents.

Sustainable cities must prioritize environmental conservation and invest in increasing, protecting and restoring greenspace, natural areas, river corridors and the urban forest. A heightened awareness of the climate crisis and the negative impacts of climate change support the urgency to invest in these assets that are essential to a livable city.

The global pandemic is an on-going health crisis that confirms the value of large outdoor greenspaces that enable people to safely gather for recreation and leisure activities.

Growing knowledge shows greenspaces, urban forests and natural areas are important climate change mitigation tools, contribute to the mental and physical health of the community and biodiversity.

Planning for greenspace and natural areas is necessary for us to make the transition to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Urgent action is needed before land and nature are gone.

The success of the Master Greenspace Plan and Urban Forest Strategy rests on public input and buy-in.

Question 1- Master Greenspace and Natural Corridors Plan By-law and Biodiversity Policy, City of Winnipeg Planning Documents

Describe your commitment to ensure the Master Greenspace and Natural Corridor Plan (includes river corridors) By-law and Biodiversity Policy will be completed and implemented in a timely manner?

BACKGROUND

- Winnipeggers consistently rate greenspace and natural areas high on surveys and have told their Mayor and Councillors that Greenspace Matters. The upcoming municipal election will be a chance for Winnipeggers to make a choice based on the importance candidates place on greenspace.
- Transformative green amendments to City planning documents - OurWinnipeg 2045 and Complete Communities 2.0 - were approved by City Council with a near unanimous vote in June 2021.^{1 2}
- OurWinnipeg 2045 contains direction to create a Master Greenspace and Natural Corridors Plan By-law and Biodiversity Policy. It will be an overarching plan that guides and coordinates all manner of plans, bylaws and regulations that intersect with the environment including the Parks Strategy, Urban Forest Strategy and development.
- The Plan By-law will coordinate preservation and enhancement of the inherent and ecological functioning of parks and waterways, natural areas, support the environment, advance climate change adaptation and mitigation, and increase the quality of lands that can be accessed for recreation, social interaction, active living and connection of people with nature.
- Budget 2022 provided \$700,000 to fund creation of the plan over two years³
- The pre planning process has begun
- The Statistics Canada study *Urban Greenness 2001, 2011 and 2019* reported that Winnipeg had 38% coverage compared to the average of 70% coverage in large urban centres. Winnipeg was the lowest.⁴
- Investing in urban ecosystems and green infrastructure can provide lower-cost solutions to multiple challenges when compared to traditional infrastructure solutions.⁵

¹ Green amendments to OurWinnipeg 2045 Development Plan By-law No. 120/2019, (starting on page 3 and ending on page 8), Council Meeting June 24 2021

<https://clkapps.winnipeg.ca/DMIS/ViewDoc.asp?DocId=21053&SectionId=609806&InitUrl>

² Green amendments to Complete Communities Direction Strategy 2.0, secondary plan By-law No. 119/2020, (starting on page 6 and ending on page 16), Council Meeting June 24 2021

<https://clkapps.winnipeg.ca/DMIS/ViewDoc.asp?DocId=21053&SectionId=609812&InitUrl>

³ City of Winnipeg Supplement to the 2022 Adopted Budget, page 155

<https://winnipeg.ca/finance/files/2022AdoptedSupplement.pdf>

⁴ Urban Greenness 2001, 2011 and 2019, Statistics Canada, August 2021

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/16-002-x/2021001/article/00002-eng.htm>

Question 2 – *Acquire 1000 Additional Acres of Public Parkland*

ASK YOUR CANDIDATE:

Describe your commitment and timeframe to acquire 1000 additional acres of public parkland in the City of Winnipeg while greenspace is still available.

BACKGROUND

- OurWinnipeg 2045 includes “a commitment to increasing the public reserve land within the City of Winnipeg by taking steps to add another 1,000 acres of public park space ⁶ in addition to the already existing public reserve lands” to ensure that greenspace is preserved and enhanced for future generations.
- Winnipeg is below average in the amount of parkland at 6% of city area compared to the Canadian city average of 9%. ⁷
- The purchase of an additional 1,000 acres of greenspace over the planning documents’ 25 year duration must be budgeted with a plan to purchase at least 75% of the land within the next five years while it is still available as greenspace and does not require costly restoration.
- The City should buy a large majority of the 1000 acres of greenspace now while natural greenspace is still available at prices that are lower than future prices will be.
- When Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg was formed 60 years ago one of its initial pledges was to add over 1000 acres of parkland. It exceeded this goal by acquiring land in and around urban areas⁸ Thanks to this foresight we have beautiful parks such as La Barriere, Little Mountain, John Blumberg and its golf course, Maple Grove, Bonnycastle, and King’s Park. Surely we can do as much today starting with a greenspace vision and plan for 2022 and beyond.

⁵ Prairie Climate Centre, Building a Climate Resilient City, Urban Ecosystems p.1
<https://prairieclimatecentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/pcc-brief-climate-resilient-city-urban-ecosystems.pdf>

⁶ OurWinnipeg 2045 Development Plan By-law No. 120/2019, page 4, Council Meeting June 24, 2021
<https://clkapps.winnipeg.ca/DMIS/ViewDoc.asp?DocId=21053&SectionId=609806&InitUrl>

⁷ Park People, The Canadian City Parks Report 2020 <https://ccpr.parkpeople.ca/2020/>

⁸ Into the Archives, Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg 2020 <https://youtu.be/DIE3P361PPk>

Question 3 – Biodiversity Policy

Describe your commitment to implement a Biodiversity Policy for Winnipeg?

BACKGROUND

- City of Winnipeg Master Greenspace Plan by-law requires the inclusion of a Biodiversity Policy⁹
- The Biodiversity Policy as described in the city planning documents¹⁰ will detail an ecological network that is interdependent, reciprocal, healthy, connected and integrated with the built environment and life on land; one rooted in traditional knowledge of land, community and ecology. It is to include a commitment to report annually to City Council with the structure in line with the Durban Commitments Local Governments for Biodiversity.¹¹
- Seven of Canada’s 10 largest cities have Biodiversity plans
- The word Biodiversity is derived from the words “life” and “diversity”. Biodiversity includes all living things - humans, animals, insects and the tiniest microbes in the soil and water – Their interconnectedness makes possible the mutual existence of all living things.¹²
- Loss of biodiversity is a threat to
 - Our food supply
 - Our urban canopy
 - Our ability to adapt to climate change
 - Life on earthBiodiversity is most at risk in urban areas.¹³
- Urban areas host a surprising amount of biodiversity that contributes to urban ecosystems. Functioning urban ecosystems help clean the air and water, cool urban heat islands, and support our well-being by shielding us from hazards and providing opportunities for rest and play.¹⁴

⁹ Biodiversity amendment to Complete Communities Direction Strategy 2.0, secondary plan By-law No. 119/2020, pages 6 and 7, Council Meeting June 24 2021

<https://clkapps.winnipeg.ca/DMIS/ViewDoc.asp?DocId=21053&SectionId=609812&InitUrl>

¹⁰ City of Winnipeg Supplement to the 2022 Adopted Budget, page 155

<https://winnipeg.ca/finance/files/2022AdoptedSupplement.pdf>

¹¹ Durban Commitment <https://cbc.iclei.org/durban-commitment/>

¹² City of Winnipeg Supplement to the 2022 Adopted Budget, page 155

<https://winnipeg.ca/finance/files/2022AdoptedSupplement.pdf>

¹³ National Urban Parks <https://www.canada.ca/en/parks-canada/news/2021/08/government-of-canada-invests-130-million-to-work-with-partners-to-create-a-network-of-national-urban-parks.html>

¹⁴ UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, Urban Areas <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/types-ecosystem-restoration/urban-areas>

Question 4 – Greenspace and Natural areas benefit Public Health and contribute to Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

Explain how you would address the public health and climate change issue facing Winnipeg?

BACKGROUND

- Protecting, improving and increasing green space can help address both major issues of climate change and public health.
- The Canadian prairies, including Winnipeg are experiencing more climatic events of heat waves, drought and flooding and these events are forecast to increase in severity. Health and climate change are increasingly addressed together, and this was this accelerated by the global pandemic.
- A special report from the Prairie Climate Centre ¹⁵ states “the changing climate is having effects right here and now, impacting the everyday lives and health of Canadians”. Mental health, heat related illness, infectious diseases and reduced air quality are highlighted.
- The 2021 report of the Lancet Countdown “finds a world overwhelmed by an ongoing global health crisis, which has made little progress to protect its population from the simultaneously aggravated health impacts of climate change.” ¹⁶
- The health benefits of accessible greenspace and natural areas are well documented for their contribution to social and mental health, longer lives and lower blood pressure, improved cognition and development in children. Manitoba doctors are now able to write “nature prescriptions” for their patients to spend time in nature to improve their mental and physical health.¹⁷

¹⁵ SPECIAL REPORT ON Connecting Climate Change and Health, Guidebook of health and climate change content on the Atlas of Canada <https://climateatlas.ca/topic/health>

¹⁶ The 2021 report of the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: code red for a healthy future p.35 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)01787-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)01787-6/fulltext)

¹⁷ UM medical student promotes nature prescription program November 15, 2021 https://news.umanitoba.ca/um-medical-student-promotes-nature-prescription-program/?fbclid=IwAR3_i24TMhG1wHGtRoxHwi9HIFaxeSdgo-mOhqt2ZWufJRsg78QeW8cytU

Question 5 – *Nature and River Corridors*

What steps would you take to acquire, restore, and enhance nature and river corridors including the water and riparian zones?

BACKGROUND

- The Winnipeg planning documents call for a Master Greenspace and Natural Corridors Plan By-law“ that includes “A corridor plan to protect and enhance Winnipeg forests, greenspaces, natural environment and natural area corridors including Winnipeg’s connecting riverbank corridors”.¹⁸
- Natural corridors connect green spaces and make that greenspace infinitely more valuable, productive and biodiverse. Riparian areas and waterways are inherently connecting corridors.
- “all riverbank areas proposed for development shall be strongly considered for protection as ESNL (Ecologically Sensitive Natural Land) irrespective of their natural heritage grade. Riverbank areas are extremely important for aesthetics, erosion control, water quality, aquatic and terrestrial habitat, corridors, greenways and maintaining ecosystem health.”¹⁹
- The draft plan for the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region establishes a path toward building a sustainable, climate-resilient region positioned to meet the challenges of the future and includes the following
 - Sustainable cities prioritize environmental conservation; and invest in protecting, restoring, and maintaining green spaces, urban forestry, and local ecosystems
 - Limit the fragmentation of habitat and support wildlife corridors through the protection, conservation, and enhancement of connectivity between natural areas²⁰

¹⁸ Green amendments to Complete Communities Direction Strategy 2.0, secondary plan By-law No. 119/2020, (starting on page 6 and ending on page 16), Council Meeting June 24 2021

<https://clkapps.winnipeg.ca/DMIS/ViewDoc.asp?DocId=21053&SectionId=609812&InitUrl>

¹⁹ Ecologically Sensitive Land Strategy ESNL p. 17

<https://winnipeg.ca/publicworks/parksOpenSpace/NaturalistServices/PDF/ESNL.pdf>

²⁰ Draft Plan 20-50 Regional Growth and Servicing Plan, Winnipeg Metropolitan Region June 2021 p. 93

Candidate Question 6 – *Tree Protection By-law*

Explain what you see as the benefits of implementing a tree protection by-law for both public and private trees.

BACKGROUND

- The urban tree canopy is one of Winnipeg’s defining features. It is under threat from disease, development and climate change. It must be protected and enhanced.
- Trees provide essential climate adaption and public health benefits - shade on hot days carbon storage, storm water retention, reduced localized flooding, habitat, clean air, mental and social health benefits
- Some areas of the city with little to no tree canopy and abundant impermeable road and building surfaces tend to be hotter and are most likely to experience the Urban Heat Island Effect, a situation that can be lethal, especially in vulnerable populations.
- The draft Urban Forestry Strategy *Urban Heat Island Effect Map* shows areas of the City that are coolest and warmest on summer days.²¹ The coolest areas tend to be areas with high tree canopy cover.
- To obtain the benefits of the urban forest both public and private trees must be included. Not having a tree bylaw that extends to both public and private trees to help manage and maintain the tree canopy is a critical barrier to preserving the urban forest in the face of climate challenges²²
- The majority of Winnipeg’s trees are located on private land. Of Winnipeg’s three million plus trees, 300,000 of those are inventoried as City-owned street and park trees, and the remainder grow in natural areas and on private land.
- Large, long-lived tree species provide many times the benefits of small tree species over a much longer timeframe when planted in the right place.²³

²¹ Draft Winnipeg Urban Forest Strategy, May 2022 <https://engage.winnipeg.ca/urbanforest> p.36

²² Draft Winnipeg Urban Forest Strategy, May 2022 <https://engage.winnipeg.ca/urbanforest> p.32

²³ Winnipeg State of the Urban Forest page 2 https://ehq-production-canada.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/3b2c717f7bea689303a701e75ac0484066e117972/original/1620669219/171ad24dc65cbd649d0a2f5e05fd777c_FINAL_State_of_the_Urban_Forest_at_a_Glance_Report_20210507.pdf?X-Amz-Algorithm=AWS4-HMAC-SHA256&X-Amz-Credential=AKIAIBJCUK4Z04WUUA%2F20220626%2Fca-central-1%2Fs3%2Faws4_request&X-Amz-Date=20220626T225242Z&X-Amz-Expires=300&X-Amz-SignedHeaders=host&X-Amz-Signature=216df11eabf834ce66a551e4313a1cea307d82ab87e92c13545f358d508832c1

Question 7 – Golf Courses are nature preserves and greenspace

Explain how you see the municipal golf courses fitting into the city's masterplan for greenspace and natural corridors and biodiversity?

BACKGROUND

- The Master Greenspace and Natural Corridors Plan by-law includes “consideration of municipal golf courses as major nature preserves and greenspace”.²⁴
- It does not make sense to sell or develop golf lands when the city is in the process of acquiring 1000 additional acres of greenspace
- Municipal Golf courses are large greenspaces that provide ecosystem services of stormwater retention, cool surrounding areas on hot summer days, provide wildlife habitat including for endangered species.
- Golf Courses have positive effects on biodiversity (i.e, pollination, and seed dispersal) by providing the functional connectivity or bridge between different green spaces and wildlife refuge.²⁵ With proper management courses can minimize impacts and make positive contributions to ecology and biodiversity.
- Golf Course lands can be used year round and provide access to nature for a growing population.
- Golf courses are greenspaces that are economical as they generate revenue for the city.

²⁴ Green amendments to Complete Communities Direction Strategy 2.0, secondary plan By-law No. 119/2020, (page 6 and 11), Council Meeting June 24 2021

<https://clkapps.winnipeg.ca/DMIS/ViewDoc.asp?DocId=21053&SectionId=609812&InitUrl>

²⁵ Biodiversity Audit of Vancouver Golf Courses https://sustain.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/2020-54_Biodiversity%20Audit%20of%20Vancouver%20Park_Oyunkhishig.pdf