

Public Tree Removal and Compensation Program

July 2026

To achieve the goal of 30% canopy cover in each Ward by 2050, the City of Kitchener has enhanced its compensation for planting efforts when City-owned trees are removed due to public or private development and infrastructure projects.

Compensation for tree removal is not based on a 1:1 replacement or the financial value of the tree that is removed. The removal of an established tree has significant impact on canopy cover, which can take decades to restore. To address this, the compensation ratios outlined below increase with the tree's DBH range, ensuring that replacement efforts account for both the loss of the individual tree and its overall canopy contribution to the City of Kitchener.

Prioritizing a project design that incorporates retention and protection of existing trees is the most effective and preferred approach for maintaining overall tree canopy. The design should minimize impacts on existing trees before considering compensation options for any City-approved public tree removals.

If the affected proponent is someone other than the City of Kitchener or its agent, only the cash-in-lieu options apply. Cash-in-lieu will offset the costs of the City arranging for planting to be completed on the proponent's behalf.

The compensation requirements outlined in this program also apply to unauthorized removals of City-owned trees; however, compensation is in addition to any penalties or enforcement actions that may be applied under the Public Tree Bylaw.

Contents

Definitions.....	2
Planting Details and Stock Quality.....	3
Notes and Exemptions.....	3
Application of Compensation Requirements	4
Section A – Right-of-Ways, Boulevards, Center Medians, or Park Area Where Regular Turf Maintenance Occurs (Maintenance Around Trees).....	4
Compensation Option A.1 – Replanting	4
Compensation Option A.2 – Cash-in-lieu	4
Table 1: Section A Compensation Ratios and Cash-in-lieu Options	4
Section B – Park or Natural Area (No Maintenance Around Trees)	5
Compensation Option B.1 – Replanting	5
Compensation Option B.2 – Cash-in-lieu.....	5
Table 2: Section B Compensation Ratios and Cash-in-lieu Options	5

Definitions

Amenity Trees: Trees located in public spaces such as rights-of-way, boulevards, center medians, and park areas where regular turf maintenance occurs around a tree.

Caliper Tree: Caliper shall be the determining measurement when the caliper exceeds 40 mm. Measured 15 cm (6 in.) above the soil line for trees with a caliper less than or equal to 100 mm (4 in) and at 30 cm (12 in) above soil line for trees with a caliper greater than 100 mm (4 in). **Amenity Trees** are planted as large **50mm Caliper Trees**.

Caliper Tree Acceptance Criteria: City standards defining the required characteristics for trees planted on City property.

Container Grown Tree: A plant grown and marketed in a container. As it pertains to this document, when trees are planted into a Naturalized Area where mowing does not occur, the minimum tree replacement size is 150 cm (1gal-5 gal) Container Grown Tree (CGT).

50mm Caliper Tree: A deciduous tree with a trunk caliper (diameter) of 50 mm at the time of planting, typically used for tree replacements in maintained turf areas. For coniferous trees, the replacement size is a 180 cm tall tree.

Diameter at Breast Height (DBH): Diameter at breast height is measured in the following ways:

- (a) the diameter of a trunk of a tree from the outside bark at a height of 1.37 meters above the existing ground adjoining its base;
- (b) where there are multiple trunks, means the square root of the sum of each stem diameter squared measured from the outside bark at a height of 1.37 meters; or
- (c) where a tree has been removed or damaged, means the diameter of a tree measured at the best available location of the tree or the stump of the tree.

Hazardous Tree: A tree that is structurally compromised or destabilized to the extent that it poses an imminent risk of property damage or personal injury, as determined by a **Qualified Arborist** with Tree Risk Assessment Qualification.

Naturalized Area Trees: Trees located in natural areas where there is no regular turf maintenance, allowing for natural ecosystem processes to occur.

Urban Forestry (UF) Staff: Staff within the City of Kitchener Infrastructure Services Department responsible for the long-term planning and management of the urban forest.

Woodlands: Woodlands as defined in the *Forestry Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.26 that are one hectare or more in area with at least:

- a. 1,000 trees of any size per hectare;
- b. 750 trees measuring over five centimetres in diameter, per hectare;
- c. 500 trees measuring over 12 centimetres in diameter, per hectare; or
- d. 250 trees measuring over 20 centimetres in diameter, per hectare,
- e. but does not include:
 - (a) a cultivated fruit or nut orchard;
 - (b) a tree nursery; or

(c) a plantation established for the purposes of producing Christmas trees.

Qualified Arborist: Means an expert in the care and maintenance of trees and includes staff on the Urban Forestry team, or an arborist qualified by any of the following: the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (Skilled Trades Ontario 444A), a Certified Arborist qualified by the Certification Board of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), a Registered Consulting Arborist registered with the American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA), a Registered Professional Forester designated pursuant to the *Professional Foresters Act*, 2000, S.O. 2000, c. 18 or a person with other similar qualifications as approved by the Director.

Terminally Diseased: Advanced and irreversible decline in tree health, that has resulted in the majority of crown dieback or failure, due to severe insect infestation, infection by a pathogen, or other causes.

Planting Details and Stock Quality

Planting on public lands can only be completed by contractors hired by the City of Kitchener.

Any **Caliper Tree** compensation planting must meet the requirements of the **Caliper Tree Acceptance Criteria** from Urban Forestry. If the replacement stock is a **Container Grown Tree**, stock quality shall adhere to the Canadian Nursery Landscape Association (CNLA) **Canadian Nursery Stock Standard (latest edition)**.

Compensation plantings will be completed according to the following City tree planting details:

- **UF.4.1 Standard Tree Planting Detail** – February 16, 2024 (or latest edition)
- **900.10.5 Typical Potted and Bareroot Planting Detail** – January 29, 2024 (or latest edition)
- **900.10.6 Typical Potted and Bareroot Planting Detail** – January 29, 2024 (or latest edition)

Notes and Exemptions

1. As determined by a **Qualified Arborist** and subject to approval by UF Staff, exemption from the compensation identified in **Table 1: Section A Compensation Ratios and Cash-in-lieu Options** and **Table 2: Section B Compensation Ratios and Cash-in-lieu Options** will apply in situations where trees are:
 - Dead or in very poor condition (i.e., <30% live crown)
 - **Terminally Diseased**
 - **Hazardous Trees**
 - European Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)
2. Trees subject to **Table 1: Section A Compensation Ratios and Cash-in-lieu Options** assessed to be in poor health may qualify for compensation at a reduced rate of 50% of the standard amount, pending review and approval by UF Staff.
3. For projects involving affordable housing, UF staff are willing to discuss and negotiate the need for reduced rates. In situations where alternative designs which promote tree preservation are not possible, tree compensation rates can be reduced to a 1:1 compensation ratio following evaluation by UF staff.

Application of Compensation Requirements

Compensation for each tree will be determined through the following assessment process:

1. Is the proposed removal taking place on public land, right-of-way, boulevard, center median, or park area where regular turf maintenance occurs around the tree in question?
 - i. Yes: Proceed to **Section A – Right-of-Ways, Boulevards, Center Medians, or Park Area Where Regular Turf Maintenance Occurs (Maintenance Around Trees)**,
 - ii. No: Read 2.
2. Is the proposed removal taking place on public land, right-of-way, in a park or natural area where there is no regular turf maintenance around the tree in question?
 - i. Yes: Proceed to **Section B – Park or Natural Area (No Maintenance Around Trees)**,
 - ii. No: Contact UF team for support identifying which compensation method applies to your project at trees@kitchener.ca.

Section A – Right-of-Ways, Boulevards, Center Medians, or Park Area Where Regular Turf Maintenance Occurs (Maintenance Around Trees)

Compensation Option A.1 – Replanting

If **Amenity Tree** removals on public land must take place to accommodate project designs, and the removals are approved by the UF Staff, replanting compensation standards are to be followed as listed in **Table 1: Section A Compensation Ratios and Cash-in-lieu Options**. These apply for replanting where the tree removal took place and/or along the adjacent public property as approved by UF Staff. If the affected proponent is someone other than the City of Kitchener or its agent, only the cash-in-lieu options apply.

Compensation Option A.2 – Cash-in-lieu

The purchase, installation, establishment, and 2-year warranty and maintenance cost per **Amenity Tree** for the City of Kitchener is \$1,800. If tree removal on public land must take place to accommodate the project design, and there is insufficient room to plant all required compensation trees on site, cash-in-lieu requirements are to be followed as listed in **Table 1: Section A Compensation Ratios and Cash-in-lieu Options**.

Table 1: Section A Compensation Ratios and Cash-in-lieu Options

DBH Range (cm)	Compensation Ratio Factor: Using 50mm Caliper Trees	Compensation Cash-in-lieu
0-9	1 tree / tree removed	\$1,800
10-19	2 trees / tree removed	\$3,600
20-39	3 trees / tree removed	\$5,400
40-59	5 trees / tree removed	\$9,000
60-79	7 trees / tree removed	\$12,600
80-100	9 trees / tree removed	\$16,200
>100	12 trees / tree removed	\$21,600

NOTE: A combination of Options A.1 and A.2 may be acceptable if there is insufficient room to replant caliper trees on-site, subject to approval by the City of Kitchener.

Section B – Park or Natural Area (No Maintenance Around Trees)

Compensation Option B.1 – Replanting

If **Naturalized Area Tree** removals on public land must take place to accommodate project designs, and the removals are approved by the UF Staff, for every tree removed with a DBH >10cm, the compensation standards are listed in **Table 2: Section B Compensation Ratios and Cash-in-lieu Options**. These apply for replanting where the removal took place and/or along the adjacent natural area or park as approved by UF Staff. If the affected proponent is someone other than the City of Kitchener or its agent, only the cash-in-lieu options apply.

The composition of **Container Grown Trees** replacements must be 50% 1-2 gallon and 50% 3-5 gallon, unless otherwise approved by UF Staff. A list of preferred native species can be found in **Kitchener Species Selection Matrix** (can be found on the City's website and will be updated as needed). If the compensation trees are proposed to be planted in a park or Natural Area please contact UF Staff to discuss planting a combination of **Caliper Trees** and **Container Grown Trees**.

Compensation Option B.2 – Cash-in-lieu

The purchase, installation, establishment and 2-year warranty and maintenance cost per **Container Grown Tree** for the City of Kitchener is set at \$122.50. If tree removals on public land must take place to accommodate project designs, and there is insufficient room to plant compensation trees on-site, cash-in-lieu requirements are to be followed as listed in **Table 2: Section B Compensation Ratios and Cash-in-lieu Options**.

In natural areas where no trees larger than 10 cm DBH are removed, but existing **woodland** (approximately one or more trees of any size per 10 m²) is cleared in increments greater than 10 m², compensation will include **container-grown trees** and a **native seed mix** (species mix to be identified by UF staff upon request) for disturbed soil areas. Cash-in-lieu options for these conditions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis with UF staff.

Table 2: Section B Compensation Ratios and Cash-in-lieu Options

DBH Range (cm)	Compensation Ratio Factor: Using Container Grown Trees (CGT)	Compensation Cash-in-lieu
0-9	None	None
10-19	8 CGT / tree removed	\$980
20-39	12 CGT / tree removed	\$1,470
40-59	20 CGT / tree removed	\$2,450
60-79	28 CGT / tree removed	\$3,430
80-100	36 CGT / tree removed	\$4,410
>100	48 CGT / tree removed	\$5,880
Area where no trees >10cm DBH are removed, but Woodland habitat is removed in increments >10m ²	8 CGT / 10m ² of area removed with a native seed mix added to any disturbed soil areas	Contact UF Staff

NOTE: A combination of Options B.1 and B.2 are acceptable if there is limited room to replant on site.