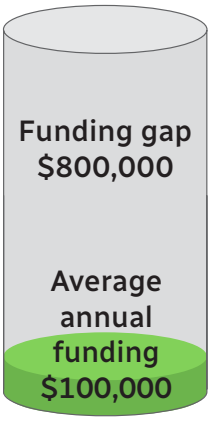


Forestry

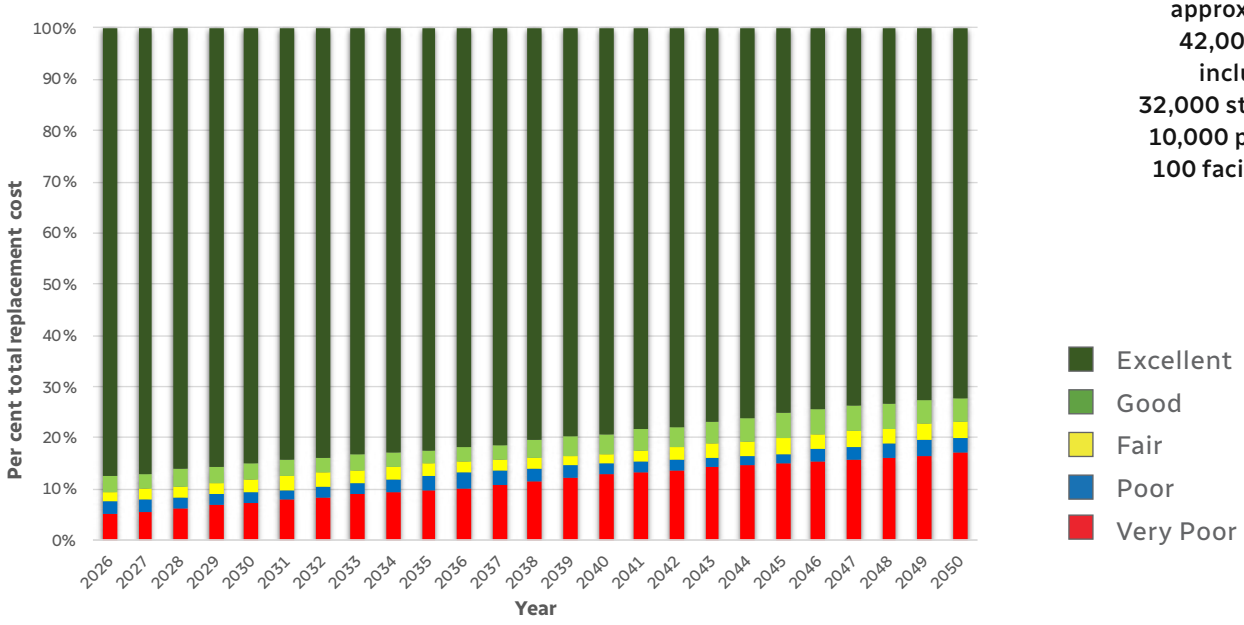
Total asset replacement value	**$127 million**
Current condition	**EXCELLENT**
Projected condition in 25 years	**EXCELLENT**
Annual funding needed to meet target performance	**$900,000**
Annual average funding	**$100,000**
Annual funding gap	**$800,000**
Funding source	**Tax base**
Data maturity level	**Medium**



Annual funding needed $900,000

Assets include approximately 42,000 trees including 32,000 street trees, 10,000 park trees, 100 facility trees.

Projected annual performance of forestry assets



A FEATURED STORY

Trees are essential to city infrastructure

The City's Forestry team is using trees to help mitigate flooding, shade buildings during extreme heat and build climate resilience across Waterloo. The City is also identifying opportunities to plant additional trees throughout neighbourhoods and public spaces. In 2025, more than 3,300 trees were planted across the city to help maintain Waterloo's urban canopy. At the same time, tree care efforts continue to protect and proactively maintain existing trees.

CURRENT STRATEGY



The City's urban forest includes trees planted along streets, and trees on City-owned lands like open spaces, parks, tree grates and woodlots. Trees located within City cemeteries are captured under the cemetery asset class. The useful life ranges from 38 to 200 years and varies depending on the species of tree and whether the tree is located within the road right-of-way or in a park setting. It is important to note that forestry fleet vehicles and associated equipment (e.g. aerial lift trucks, gators and pick-up trucks) is captured under the fleet asset class.

Forestry is a tax-supported asset program. Approximately 40% of the annual forestry funding is dedicated to the planting, maintenance and replacement of street and park trees, while the remaining 60% is allocated to the management of City-owned woodlots to support long-term forest health, restoration and replacement activities and risk mitigation.

ASSET PERFORMANCE

Tree assets' lifecycle is modelled differently than that of engineered assets. As trees mature and appreciate over time, they are considered to stay in excellent condition until they reach the end of their estimated service life by species, at which point they degrade very rapidly.

92%

Forestry assets with a fair or better performance

As trees are a living organism, they are more susceptible to environmental factors when compared to built or "grey" infrastructure. This susceptibility includes, but is not limited to the quantity of rain, severity of wind, and winter temperatures.

Street or boulevard trees located in the road right-of-way face a more challenging growing environment due to increased salt exposure and limited available topsoil volume compared to typical trees located in parks. As a result, the anticipated life of a street or boulevard tree is considered to be 75% of that of the equivalent park tree.

Forestry asset performance is evaluated using historical knowledge, age, and observed conditions. The quality and availability of our asset data (data maturity) are continuously evolving. The current data maturity level for forestry assets is assessed to be medium. The city is continuously working to improve asset data quality. Currently 92% of our forestry assets are considered in fair or better performance. With the current level of funding, we anticipate the percentage of forestry assets with a fair or better profile to decrease to 80% by 2050. Based on the best available forestry asset data, deterioration rates and 2026-2033 capital funding forecast, it is estimated that forestry assets have an infrastructure funding gap of $800,000.

LEVELS OF SERVICE

The following tables show the levels of service established by the city for forestry assets. These metrics include the technical and community level of service required as part of the Ontario Regulation 588/17. Service metrics are reported for the prior year ending on December 31.

COMMUNITY LEVELS OF SERVICE

The following table outlines the qualitative descriptions that determine the community levels of service for forestry assets.

SERVICE ATTRIBUTE	QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION
Scope	Manage and maintain the urban forest including scheduled and emergency tree maintenance, tree assessment and tree planting throughout the city
Customer Service	The average number of days to replace a street or park tree is 6 months although emergency tree maintenance is undertaken with 24 hours. Scheduled maintenance can take up to one year.
	The average number of days to respond to a tree inspection request is 2 to 3 days.

TECHNICAL LEVELS OF SERVICE

The following table outlines the quantitative metrics that determine the technical level of service for forestry assets.

SERVICE ATTRIBUTE	QUANTITATIVE METRICS	2024	2025
Quality	Number of street trees receiving preventative maintenance	5%	5%
	Per cent of forestry assets that are in fair or better condition	92%	92%
Environmental Stewardship	Per cent of diversity of the tree canopy. To reduce the risk of catastrophic tree loss due to pest, the City plans to keep the urban tree population to no more than 10% of any one species and 30% of any one genus.	Species – Norway Maple exceeds 10% target, currently at 15% Genus – Maple exceeds 30% target, currently at 37%	Species – Norway Maple exceeds 10%, currently at 14% Genus – Maple exceeds 30%, currently at 34%

Note: Species and genus diversity reduction from 2024 to 2025 is because of the 10,000 trees for Waterloo grant tree planting rather than removal.

The information presented here is based on the best available asset inventory and condition data as of March 2026, as well as funding details from the 2024-2026 approved capital budget and the 2027-2033 capital forecast.

The forecasting model allows staff to project the condition of City assets over a 25-year timeframe and therefore all funding is based on a 25-year average.

Woodlots are currently not captured within the urban tree inventory in DSS.
The average annual funding represents total allocated funding including woodlot restoration and replacement activities. Currently 60% of the funding is directed to Woodlots while 40% is directed to street and park trees.