

Branching Out: Trials and Successes in Implementing Fort Erie's Tree Bylaw as a Local Conservation Tool

Improving the Town's Urban Canopy and Building
Climate Resilience

Who We Are

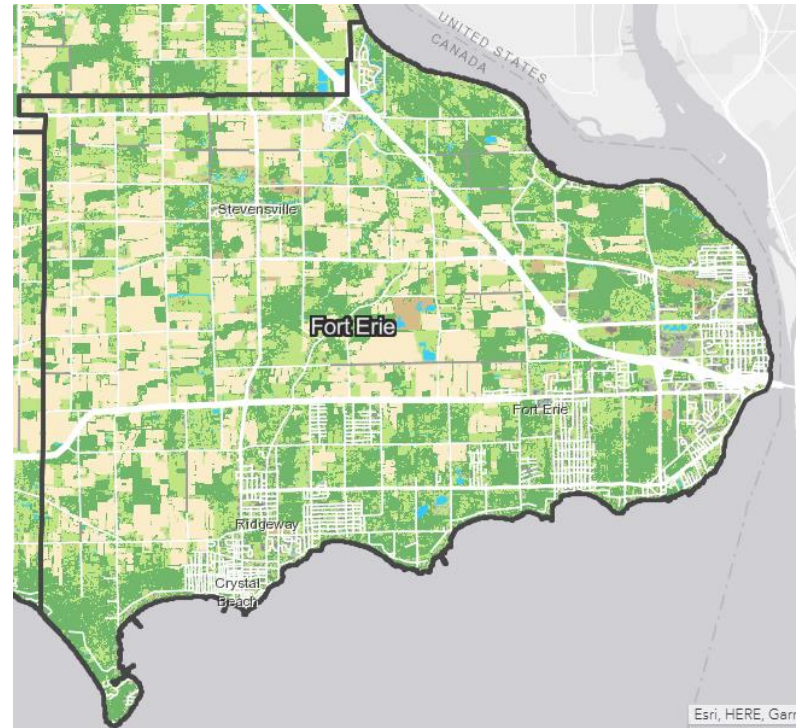
- * Zach – Junior Environmental Planner for the Town of Fort Erie.
- * Jessica - Senior Environmental Planner for the Town of Fort Erie.

Background

- * April 2024 – Fort Erie passes a tree protection bylaw in response to clear cutting.
- * May 2025 – One year after establishment, several updates were added to the bylaw to stop loopholes and help enforcement.
- * Present – Staff continue to enforce the bylaw, frequently discovering new pros and cons.

The Fort Erie Story

- * One of Niagara's fastest-growing municipalities.
- * Fort Erie has the one of largest tree canopies in the Niagara Region at approximately 35%.
- * Rapid infill and subdivision development.



The Fort Erie Story

- * Before 2024 – no dedicated tree protection on private lands.
- * Rising community pressure after high-profile clearings.
- * April 2024 – Fort Erie passes a tree protection bylaw in response to clear cutting.
- * May 2025 – One year after establishment, several updates were added to the bylaw to stop loopholes and help enforcement.
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Why Implement a Tree Bylaw?

- * Municipalities are front-line defenders of natural heritage.
- * Urban forests = key climate tools (carbon sink, cooling, stormwater management).
- * Tree bylaws translate conservation goals into local action.
- * Compensation for removal of mature trees.
- * To maintain and increase the Town's urban canopy.



Fort Erie Tree Bylaw Content

- * Regulate trees both inside the urban boundary and outside (if within the natural heritage system).
- * Different scales of compensation ratios. Made it more palatable for residents. Recently amended in May 2025 to make procedural changes and to modify the invasive species list.
- * Tree stump removal has been added as an offence to prevent evidence tampering.
- * AMPS per tree, with escalating amounts for certain offences.
- * Complimentary to the Region's woodlot bylaw. Collaboration occurs when jurisdiction overlaps.

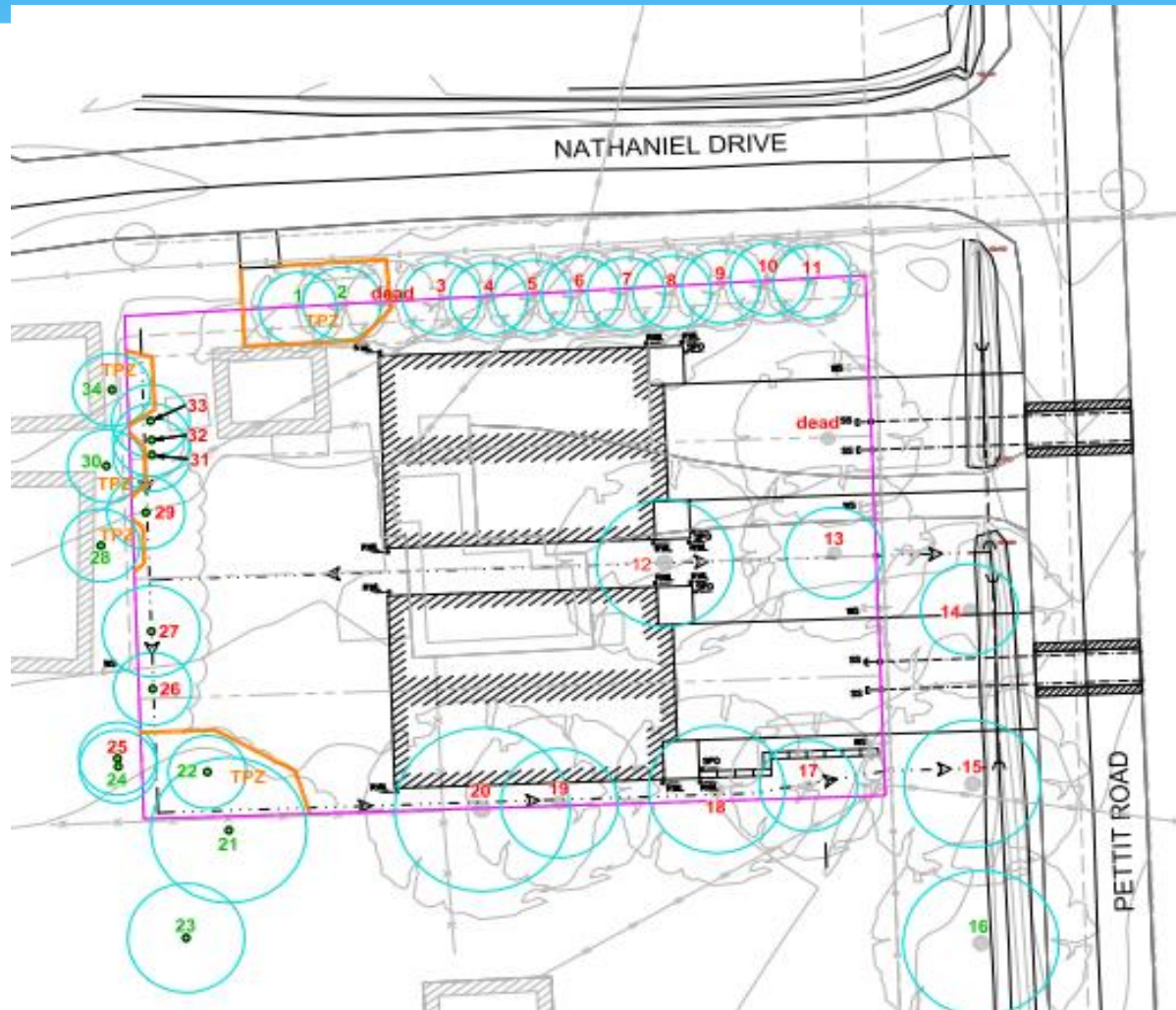
The Challenge: Policy Meets Reality

- Limited staff and enforcement resources.
- Confusion among residents and developers.
- Overlapping jurisdictions (Region, Conservation Authority).
- Political pressure to “not slow down development.”

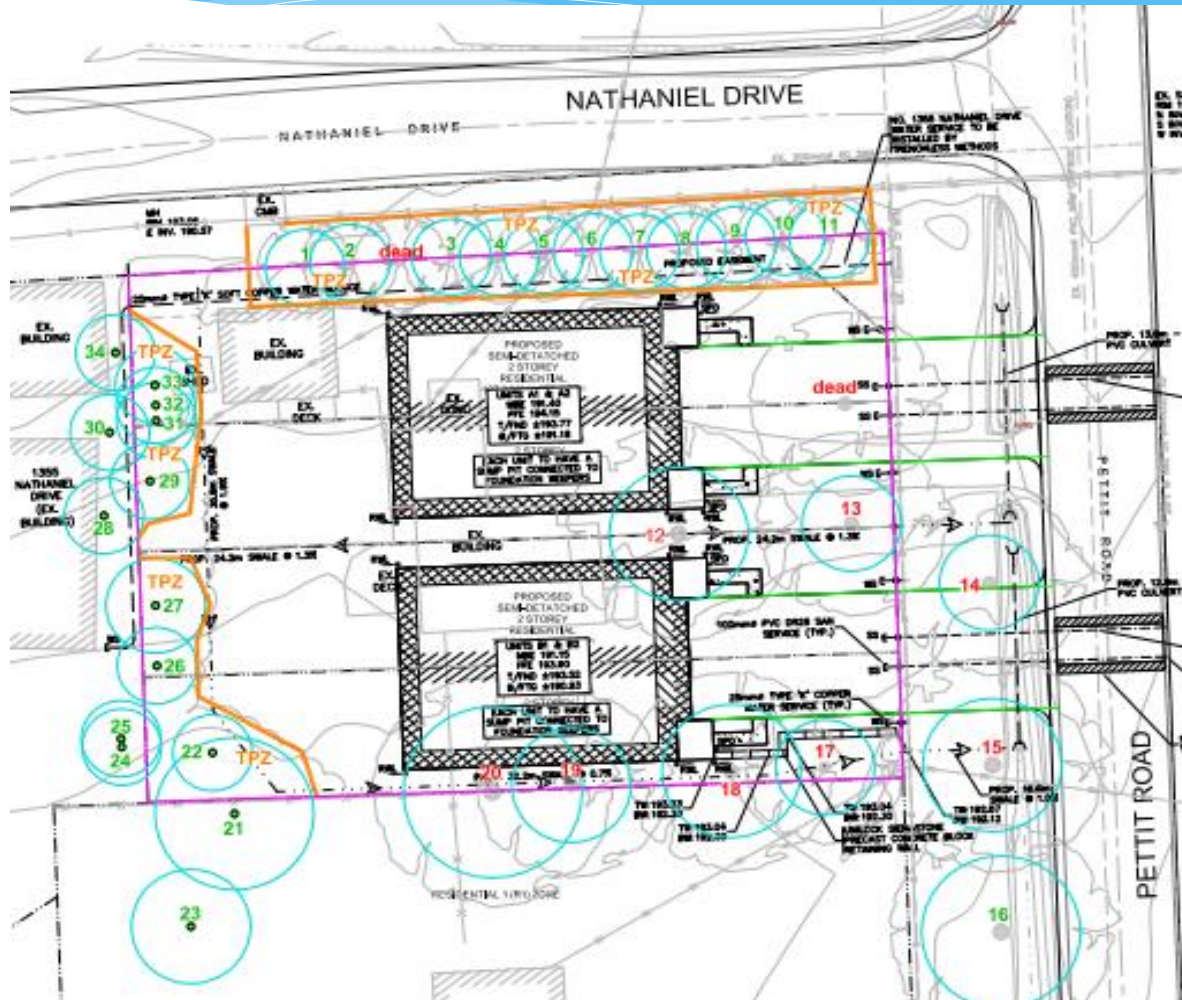
Key Tools and Strategies

- * Partnerships: Educating local arborists, schools, developers.
- * Community education: Tree giveaways, planting days, info sheets. Staff prepared a Tree Preservation and Replacement guide for applicants and arborists.
- * Replanting/Landscape plans: As mitigation for removals.
- * GIS tracking: For monitoring canopy change and compliance.

Case Example – 1169 Pettit



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Integrating with Climate Action

Function	How the Tree By-law Supports Climate Goals	CCAP Reference
Adaptation	Protects tree canopy and biodiversity to manage stormwater, heat, and erosion	“Tree By-law” & “Stormwater Management Improvement” sections
Mitigation	Reduces GHGs through canopy preservation and funding for new planting	“Tree Planting Plan,” “Free Tree Giveaway”
Engagement	Encourages resident participation in stewardship and planting	“Encouraging Biodiversity and Community Engagement”
Policy Integration	Aligns natural heritage protection with Town’s Strategic and Official Plan	“Council Strategic Direction”

Positive Outcomes

- * Since the initial clear cutting complaints, there has not been a return to the level of tree removal that prompted the creation of this bylaw.
- * In development scenarios where tree removal is unavoidable, the Town receives funding to boost its urban canopy elsewhere.
- * Developers are now considering tree removal in the design of their proposals.

Thank You,



- * We're happy to answer any questions.