

COLUMBUS URBAN FORESTRY MASTER PLAN

Advisory Group Workshop #1 (The Trees) Meeting Summary & Emerging Themes

Thursday, January 30, 2020, 8-10 a.m.

www.ColumbusUFMP.org

Meeting Summary

On January 30, 2020, the Advisory Group convened its first workshop with City staff and the consultants from Urban Canopy Works and Davey Resource Group, Inc. to discuss the known statistics and characteristics of the City's urban forest. Ninety-one (91) people attended the workshop, held at Westgate Shelterhouse. Advisory group members represented many stakeholder groups in Columbus, ranging from the Mayor's Office to utility companies to land developers to neighborhood groups and nonprofits. A complete list of organizations in attendance is provided at the end of this report.

These workshops are designed as a forum for the community to collectively explore current conditions in Columbus, and start to identify challenges and solutions to the most pressing issues. In other words, the workshops provide a systematic and facilitated method for the community at-large to self-evaluate the sustainability of Columbus' urban forest.



Figure 1: Urban Forestry Master Plan Advisory Group Workshop attendees, January 30, 2020

This first workshop focused on the data based on the trees themselves. A 15 minute presentation covered the UFMP project as a whole (basis, process, timeline, and detailed information on the 8 indicators of a sustainable urban forest based on available tree data). The results showing the scores of each indicator are in Figure 2. The remaining 90 minutes were used for group discussions.

THREE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS & EMERGING THEMES

Each table had approximately 8 people, including a pre-arranged facilitator from the UFMP project team. In a set amount of time, the group explored each topic and reported back to the larger group their priorities. The group discussions resulted in wide-ranging comments and ideas about the status and future of both the public and private tree canopy.

From each discussion topic, themes emerged and are presented below.

Figure 2: Results of First Workshop - Indicators of a Sustainable Urban Forest performance levels on The Trees (8 indicators evaluated)

COLUMBUS Indicators of a Sustainable Urban Forest		Assessed Performance Level		
		Low	Mod.	Good
The Trees	Urban Tree Canopy Cover	Green		
	Equitable Distribution	Green		
	Age Distribution	Green		
	Condition of Publicly Owned Trees		Green	
	Condition of Publicly-Owned Natural Areas	Green		
	Trees on Private Property		Green	
	Diversity / Pest Vulnerability		Green	
	Suitability - Overhead	Green		
	Suitability - Ground Level			
	Suitability - Soil Conditions	Green		
	Suitability - Invasives		Green	
	Suitability - Climate Change Adaptability			Green
The Players	Neighborhood Action			
	Large Private & Institutional Landholder Involvement			
	Green Industry Involvement			
	City Department/Agency Cooperation			
	Funder Engagement			
	Utility Engagement			
	Developer Engagement			
	Public Awareness			
	Regional Collaboration			
The Mgmt Approach	Tree Inventory			
	Canopy Assessment			
	Management Plan			
	Risk Management Program			
	Maintenance of Publicly-Owned Trees (ROWs)			
	Planting Program			
	Tree Protection Policy			
	City Staffing and Equipment			
	Funding			
	Disaster Preparedness & Response			
Communications				

Discussion #1: Determining Goals & Priorities in Columbus

The first discussion topic was presented to the full group.

QUESTION PROPOSED TO GROUPS: What do we have? We just went through a lot of data on what we have now concerning the trees themselves. We know we are at 22% canopy cover; we have achieved about 1/3 of what has been deemed possible. Where do we want to be? What are our future goals and/or priorities? What will the world look like when you can say - yes, we did it. What is the end game? What does success look like?

Each team was asked to list what was discussed and report back at least 3 goals or priorities. Detailed notes on each small group conversation were taken and handed in at the conclusion of the meeting. Discussions and notes revealed the following emerging themes:

Grow the Canopy. Increase the tree canopy cover percentage. Multiple canopy goal numbers were suggested, as well as the need to grow canopy to correct current unequal distribution, and serve as an example for other cities.

Ensure Longevity. Many comments on ensuring what is planted or is currently there lasts for the long term - right species, room to grow, level of care available, etc.

More Protection Measures. Better regulations, improvements to the land development codes, regulations and policies coupled with incentives to plant and protect trees.

Better Data Needed. Canopy data is from 2013 aerial imagery and the street tree inventory was last updated in its entirety in 1998. Need better data to make progress, and need to make that data available to the community.

Community Engagement. The community must be engaged and involved, from the highest levels of city and organizations to neighborhoods and individual citizens. Building trust in communities is key.

Dedication of More Budget/Resources. For public trees, have support "at the top" to ensure departments have the mandate and the staff and financial resources they need to work together, communicate, share data, and treat the urban forest as vital city infrastructure.

Education and Outreach. Many do not understand the value of trees and tree canopy. Education and awareness is needed at all levels.

Discussion #2: Challenges

The second discussion topic was presented to the full group.

QUESTION PROPOSED TO GROUPS: From what we heard from all the small groups (listed above), the next two discussions are centered on how to get there. What other challenges are we likely to face in reaching these goals? Groups were directed to spend the next period just listing the challenges (NOT solutions).

Each team was asked to list as many challenges as possible and report back their top 3 at the end of the discussion period. Detailed notes on each small group conversation were taken and handed in at the conclusion of the meeting. Discussions and notes revealed the following emerging themes:

Lack of Awareness. There is a great lack of awareness and understanding of the public about the importance of trees, and there is a lack of communication and trust in underserved communities. Much of today's political, business, and citizen culture doesn't appear to put a high value on trees. Many commented on a resistance to tree canopy efforts, much of which comes from lack of understanding value. Many renters aren't invested.

Protection Systems are Lacking. Comments made that land development codes and policies should be considered for revision (outdated, potentially slanted). Private land has no protections for trees. Together with lack of awareness (mentioned above), comments were made that trees are currently too easy to get rid of.

Budgeting / Staffing (Resources). There is a lack of sustainable and diverse sources of funding, data and expertise. Interdepartmental coordination isn't good (efforts, data, etc.). Bureaucracy.

Extensive Size/Scale of Work. The large size of the city, pattern of sprawl, and expected growth.

Available Data. Canopy data is 7 years old, inventory is significantly out of date. Need better data and make data available to the community.

Nursery Stock. Issue with available nursery stock for improved diversity.

Competing Interests. Trees are one factor of many in the city. Trees share space with utilities. Trees compete with efforts to address stormwater, affordable housing, and many more city priorities.

Expected Changes. Level of growth and climate change in the city will put more stresses on tree canopy.

Discussion 3: Solutions/Ideas

The third and final discussion topic was presented to the full group.

QUESTION PROPOSED TO GROUPS: We are continuing our discussion on getting to our goals. Now let's focus on solutions to consider. Pick a couple challenges and brainstorm on some solutions. All ideas are welcome (from expected to the unusual).

Each team was asked to list as many solutions as possible and report back their top 3 at the end of the discussion period. Detailed notes on each small group conversation were taken and handed in at the conclusion of the meeting. Discussions and notes revealed the following emerging themes:

Address Zoning/Land Development Regulations and Policies. Revisit, update or create regulations and policies that acknowledge citywide priorities and goals, but that also support a healthy, sustainable urban tree canopy. Do so not only with regulations but also incentives.

Engage Neighborhoods. Create grassroots support in the neighborhoods to affect change through tree planting and education. Develop a neighborhood leadership program; create a workforce development piece to this work; expand the capabilities of the Green Columbus Tree Stewards; and create a recognition program for those doing good work already.

Identify Available and Creative Funding Sources. Multiple ideas for funding sources, including considering authorizing the front foot assessment funding mechanism for street trees; creating a "tree bank" that can be used for urban forest management activities on other lands; explore canopy credit (ala carbon credit) type of program. Engage funders in the area.

Improve City Management. Improve interdepartmental cooperation, provide more resources for staff, address protection regulation challenges.

Partnerships. There are many city-wide initiatives going on (Vision Zero, Celebrate One, BluePrint, Neighborhood Services' safety strategy efforts, Complete Streets efforts, etc.). How can we partner with these initiatives to achieve our goals? What other partnerships can we explore?

Better Design. Design streets and new communities to better reflect and plan for tree canopy. Will ensure long term success, eliminate conflict with other infrastructure.

Parting Reminders

Before the group departed, the following reminders:

- **Next workshop is March 5th** - The topic will be "The Players," same time and place.
- **Reminder on opportunity to present to small groups.** We are offering to present to any groups interested across the city throughout the next few months. We can do a longer presentation or just make a 5 minute pitch at an existing meeting. If you would like us to come talk to your group, please let us know.
- **Public meeting set for March 4th.** We would like some help with getting information out for public meetings or submitting feedback online. Will you email and facebook your network to get folks to attend, sending them to our website for details? Help get each neighborhood represented? Will send out information for you to forward to your networks soon.

Attending Organizations

5th by Northwest Area Commission
AEP Ohio
American Society of Consulting Arborists & ISA
American Society of Landscape Architects
Building Industry Association
Builders' Exchange
Central Ohio Watershed Council & Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW)
City of Bexley
City of Columbus - City Council
City of Columbus - Development
City of Columbus - Neighborhoods
City of Columbus - Mayor's Office
City of Columbus - Public Health
City of Columbus - Public Safety
City of Columbus - Public Service
City of Columbus - Public Utilities
City of Columbus - Recreation and Parks
City of Columbus - Recreation and Parks Commission
City of Columbus - Tree Subcommittee
City of Dublin
City of Gahanna
City of New Albany
City of Upper Arlington
City of Westerville
City of Worthington
Clintonville Area Commission
COCIC-Franklin County Land Bank
Columbia Gas
Columbus Chamber of Commerce
Columbus City Schools
Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA)
Columbus Regional Airport Authority
Columbus State Community College
Dawes Arboretum
Defense Supply Center of Columbus
Designing Local (consultant)
Davey Resource Group (consultant)
Edwards Communities Development Co.
Far East Area Commission
Franklin County Engineer's Office
Franklin Park Conservatory
Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District
Franklinton Area Commission
Greater South East Area Commission
Green Columbus
Greenlawn Cemetery
Livingston Avenue Area Commission
Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks
Midwest Area Commission
Midwest Biodiversity Institute
Milo-Grogan Area Commission
Nature Preserves Advisory Council
Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Urban Forestry
Ohio Department of Agriculture
Ohio Environmental Council
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
Ohio State University
Ohio State University Extension
MKSK Studios
Southwest Area Commission
The Columbus Foundation Green Funds
Urban Canopy Works, LLC (consultant)
University Area Commission
US Forest Service
US Green Building Council - Ohio Chapter
Wagenbrenner Development
Westland Area Commission