

COLUMBUS URBAN FORESTRY MASTER PLAN

Advisory Group Workshop #2 (The Players) *Meeting Summary & Emerging Themes*

Thursday, March 5, 2020, 8-10 a.m. at the Westgate Shelterhouse
www.ColumbusUFMP.org

Meeting Summary

On March 5, 2020, the Advisory Group convened its second of three workshops with community stakeholders, staff and the consultants from Urban Canopy Works, Davey Resource Group and Designing Local to discuss the human element of urban forestry -- the Players that impact the urban forest. Eighty-one (81) 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, March 5, 2020

This second workshop focused on the human element (termed The Players) across the community of Columbus that impacts the urban forest. City Councilmember and President Pro Tem Elizabeth Brown welcomed the group, thanking everyone for giving their time and expertise to this work. She reminded the group that we can't lose sight of the critical public health and equity components to tree canopy as we move forward in this process.

A 15 minute presentation covered the UFMP project as a whole and the topics of discussion. A main point is that Columbus is spearheading this master plan now to unify the city and address specific challenges such as predicted rapid expansion and the fastest-growing heat island in the country. While the City is leading this project, we know that 70% of Columbus' trees are privately owned, so true progress will only come from a fully engaged community.

The presentation included an explanation of the 9 indicators of a sustainable urban forest related to the players. Unlike the first workshop, where the performance level in each indicator was determined ahead of time based on quantitative data, the topic of this workshop is more qualitative and subjective. The advisory group was tasked with deciding and scoring how Columbus is doing in each category by individual votes.

The results showing the scores of each indicator are in Figure 2. The remaining 90 minutes were used for two group discussions.

TWO 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.

COLUMBUS Indicators of a Sustainable Urban Forest		Assessed Performance Level		
		Low	Mod.	Good
The Trees	Urban Tree Canopy Cover			
	Equitable Distribution			
	Age Distribution			
	Condition of Publicly Owned Trees			
	Condition of Publicly-Owned Natural Areas			
	Trees on Private Property			
	Diversity / Pest Vulnerability			
	Suitability - Overhead			
	Suitability - Ground Level			
	Suitability - Soil Conditions			
	Suitability - Invasives			
Suitability - Climate Change Adaptability				
The Players <i>(vote counts included)</i>	Neighborhood Action	24	36	2
	Large Private & Institutional Landholder Involvement	52	9	1
	Green Industry Involvement	23	28	12
	City Department/Agency Cooperation	45	16	0
	Funder Engagement	44	18	0
	Utility Engagement	33	26	1
	Developer Engagement	51	12	0
	Public Awareness	31	30	1
	Regional Collaboration	23	33	5
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				

Figure 2: Cumulative Results of the Workshops 1 & 2 - Indicators of a Sustainable Urban Forest performance levels on The Trees (8 indicators evaluated) and The Players (9 indicators evaluated). The numbers in the Players indicators correspond to the votes awarded by the advisory group members.

Small Group Discussion #1: Performance Level Determination

QUESTIONS POSED TO EACH GROUP: How are we doing in each of the 9 indicators of an urban forest related to the players? What level of engagement do we have today? Low, Moderate or Good? How do we improve? What do we need to do to achieve the next performance level?

Each team was asked to vote on the performance level for each indicator, describe the reasoning for that score, brainstorm on ways to improve, and report back their results to the larger group along with 3-5 highlights. Detailed notes on each small group conversation were handed in at the conclusion of the meeting.

Overall, the majority graded Columbus in the Low category across the indicators, except for Neighborhood Action, Green Industry and Regional Collaboration, which scored Moderate.

Themes and detailed comments turned in under each indicator follows.

Indicator #1: NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION

Overall Objective: Citizens understand, cooperate, and participate in urban forest management at the neighborhood level. Urban forestry is a neighborhood-scale issue.

Overall Score: Moderate

What are the current issues / reasoning for performance level?

- **Education Needed.** Lots of education and advocacy needed. Action groups reach out to educate and advocate.
- **Levels Vary by Neighborhood.** Different engagement per neighborhood (2). Unequal community action- Clintonville. We have networks, how do we capitalize on them? How much of Columbus has area commissions? Some local groups are doing well.
- **Conflicting Policies / Lack of Information.** Planning policies seem to be remiss. Utilities are in conflict with our tree canopy operations. Miscommunication by the government on neighborhoods. Lack of information.
- **No Central Goal.** Some neighborhoods plant trees in parks to add green space (though may not have a plan for canopy). Those scoring higher (Moderate) cite quite a few active groups working on this issue. However, there is no unified set of priorities.
- **Other Priorities.** There are many other household priorities. Until this project, neighborhoods have not been high on anyone's list. Groups seem to get involved when the city has projects.

How do we improve?

- **Need Room.** Need space to plant trees.
- **Need Resources/Expertise/Advocates.** A lot of people want to plant trees, but need info and resources on where to plant. Acknowledging feedback from neighborhoods. Could be more advocates to talk to neighborhood groups. City must be proactive and encourage public input.

- **Need Education.** Education piece ongoing - Rosalie making presentations. Education and outreach. Communication. Organizing the effort. Targeted messages for different groups.
- **Engage the Schools.** Schools have a big place- an opportunity to increase education about trees (also groups like the Boy Scouts).
- **Utilize and Improve Our Network.** There is a robust Area Commission network - need to engage them (2). Engage and leverage their position. Get property owners and landlords engaged. Need a champion at each level, in each neighborhood. Need to connect groups, commissions, councils. Web link with city groups within a neighborhood and activities like Next Door. Can FLOW have a link on the Linden web site?

Indicator #2: LARGE PRIVATE & INSTITUTIONAL LANDHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Overall Objective: Large, private, and institutional landholders embrace citywide goals and objectives through targeted resource management plans.

Overall Score: Low

What are the current issues / reasoning for performance level?

- **Each Site Varies.** Overall varies so much.
- **Education Needed.** Lots of education and advocacy needed. Action groups reach out to educate and advocate. Many are not knowledgeable. Lots of room for improvement and education. What are preferred types of trees and shrubs?
- **Minimal Incentives/Regulations.** Developers only care in communities that care. Little in the way of incentives or requirements. May be an awareness issue. Zoning issues.
- **Lack of Room.** Some entities cannot increase canopy.
- **Lack of Interest.** Not doing anything or doing their own thing. Disinterested because trees get in the way of development.
- **Other Priorities/Conflicts.** Some have goals and objectives that are antagonistic with canopy cover. Trees messing up the sidewalk. Line of sight. Educational materials are available, but other things take priority. Land management on private property waivers- may have a plan, but the maintenance doesn't happen.
- **No Central Goal.** Establish goals. Lack of a common goal.

How do we improve?

- **Regulation.** Regulate the type of trees that may be planted. Better policy framework with carrots and sticks (2).
- **Education.** Tell property owners how much their trees are worth and how it adds value to their property. Education on trees vs landscaping. Make the business case for tree canopy. Education and communication consistency. Be more like Greenlawn.

- **More Resources/Tools.** More tools available to help them meet their goal. Cost associated with planning at city schools. Some entities that have numbers could improve. Maybe create plans for organizations.
- **Targeted Engagement.** Increased engagement. Should each entity have their own type of targeted engagement? Prioritizing who we approach, looking at compatibility.

Indicator #3: GREEN INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT

Overall Objective: The green industry works together to advance citywide urban forest goals and objectives. The city and its partners capitalize on local green industry expertise and innovation.

Overall Score: Moderate

What are the current issues / reasoning for performance level?

- **Current Engagement.** All the representatives at this workshop show the existing support - Green Columbus, FLOW, Franklin Soil and Water. Conversely, there is little green industry involvement in the tree subcommission for the City of Columbus. Commitment is strong. This group shares some of the same goals in general. Will is there; execution is not--depends on the company, but we have good companies. Territorial issues between city and public and private businesses- who is the expert? Some companies help with community gardens. Russell Tree has a 1 for 1 tree replacement program.
- **Other Priorities.** A lot of activity but not enough focus on forestry.
- **No Central Goal.** Dysfunctional because there's no comprehensive plan. Current goals are nebulous.

How do we improve?

- **More Incentives, Better Regulations.** Tax breaks. More and better policy. Better parking lot tree requirements. Re-planting requirement for public and private construction. Bureaucracy is killing us.
- **Partnerships.** Identification of green industry players - who can and will help with education and outreach. Developing: communication, respect, partnerships, resources.
- **Engagement.** Having workshops like this. Being able to advocate.
- **No Central Goal.** Define goals.
- **Knowledge.** Knowing what species are invasive.

Indicator #4: CITY DEPARTMENT & AGENCY COOPERATION

Overall Objective: All city departments and agencies cooperate to advance citywide urban

forestry goals and objectives.

Overall Score: Low

What are the current issues / reasoning for performance level?

- **Size of Columbus.** 8,000 employees. Columbus is huge and spread out! Need time to collaborate. Smaller government easier. Change is difficult to implement.
- **Lack of Resources.** Some departments on fire--inconsistent. No greenspace.
- **Lack of Communication.** No communication between departments.
- **Other Priorities/Conflicts.** It's not that the departments do not want to cooperate; they all have their own priorities. Definitely not all departments but some. Current engagement in the city is encouraging. Too much compartmentalization. Roadblocks. Rec Center: large trees cut behind McGuffey. Conflicting goals as observed as zoning chair. Subdivision/agency goals for neighborhoods are not shared. Policy, tools, and best practices need to align (Cooper Stadium). Departments don't always view trees the same- different policies. Constant battle with sidewalks and trees- other infrastructure improvements. Not on people's radars. Too many other competing critical priorities and high-profile initiatives. Conflicting goals, competing goals.

How do we improve?

- **UFMP.** The Urban Forestry Master Plan! UFMP is already raising awareness!
- **Secure High-level Buy-In/Engagement.** Mayor, City Council involvement. Need to know players to talk to. Master plan key to helping--need buy-in from Mayor and City Council. More money needed to plant. Leadership issue. Top-down understanding. Make it work better. Build a better mousetrap.
- **Improve Coordination Efforts.** Setting an explicit goal/priority and creating cross-departmental groups and communication mechanisms (2). Working across departments to understand needs so they can keep them in mind as they work on projects. Working group. Understanding each department's needs. Reduce compartmentalization.
- **Improve Policy/Regulations.** Tree protection ordinance like Dublin. Develop specifications for proper planting.

Indicator #5: FUNDER ENGAGEMENT

Overall Objective: Local funders are engaged and invested in urban forestry initiatives.

Funding is adequate to implement a citywide urban forest management plan.

Overall Score: Low

What are the current issues / reasoning for performance level?

- **Lack of Sources.** The money is not there. Cities not recovered from actions taken during recession. Funding available but not on scale that we need. Columbus does not have industrial history and funding structure.
- **Lack of Unified Need/Goals.** No strategic plan to encourage support.

- **Sources.** Private grants. Capital improvements. Budget and urban infrastructure. Revitalization funds. Corporate landowners?

How do we improve?

- **Have We Asked?** We need to ask the questions: Are people being asked? Who is being approached? Giving input to City Council and soliciting private grants and UIRF funds.
- **Make the Case.** We need a compelling “why”. Promote the cost-benefit. Quality of life, aesthetics, attractiveness for attracting and retaining people/talent, tourism. Communicate to funders the need and accomplishments. Must have a good plan. Educate people about the social benefit of trees, social justice, social responsibility of funders, and the health of the neighborhood. SW Area air pollution is #1 concern, trees would be tremendous.
- **Unified Strategic Next Steps.** More money. Strategies from an action plan. Marketing plan. More money. Include trees that our corporations and foundations invest in. Hope this plan can be a catalyst for this.

Indicator #6: UTILITY ENGAGEMENT

Overall Objective: All utilities are aware of and vested in the urban forest and cooperate to advance citywide urban forest goals and objectives.

Overall Score: Low

What are the current issues / reasoning for performance level?

- **Listening.** Utilities make an effort to talk to residents. Listen to requests. Have done really well with metro parks. Columbus/Gahanna 5G installation- working with metro.
- **Other Priorities/Conflicts.** Not currently working together- city planting incompatible species in utility ROW, utilities are cutting down trees left and right. Cooperation is there. Coordination is not there. Conflicting competing goals. Trees are not a priority when excavations are made in the ROW.
- **Communication.** Communication necessary to protect canopy and street trees, but not all companies do so.
- **Funding & Replacements.** Low acting independent. When trees are damaged, replacement is planned but not enough effort to research out to citizens. Need more green space utilities funded, Grange Audubon.
- **Awareness.** More aware than in the past. Administration is aware and involved, but it doesn't always trickle down to the workforce.

How do we improve?

- **Build a relationship.** It's not easy. Need a phone number to call. City/agency must reach out to them. City work permit.
- **Regulations/Policies.** Planting plans and tree lists that are more than just "recommended". Be explicit about what you want from them, don't leave it open. "No net loss" policy. Contractor education! And consequences.
- **Improve Communication.** Better communication with the community.
- **Process Development.** More formalized process. A matter of asking and working with utilities. Having a plan.
- **UFMP.** This effort should help. Communication permitting.

Indicator #7: DEVELOPER ENGAGEMENT

Overall Objective: The development community is aware of and vested in the urban forest and cooperates to advance citywide urban forest goals and objectives.

Overall Score: Low

What are the current issues / reasoning for performance level?

- **Other Priorities.** Developer working with the city if required but not a top priority. Is seen as a cost not a priority for the developers or the people reviewing projects. Minimal engagement for approvals. Developers don't take initiative. Moderate when going through commission. Some put profits ahead of trees. Developers value parking spaces and not green scapes. Developing not helping.
- **No Clear Goals/Reason.** Nobody is telling them why they should. City does not have goals for developers to follow.
- **Poor Existing Code.** When developers want to do the right thing, the current codes and regulations circumvent right action. There are developers who are interested in wetlands, trees, etc., because financially they make sense. No consequences for not doing what they said they were going to do.

How do we improve?

- **Define Goals.** Have goals. Get goals on each developer's radar.
- **Better Regulations.** Enforce ordinances. Improve ordinances. Work with developers to work with codes. Change codes in a positive way. Enforcement of commissions conditions. Tree protection ordinance. Need to be better policies and requirements and consequences. Mitigation fund to pay into. Stop awarding variances! Repercussions for not following code. Code with teeth and mandatory fines. Tree preservation code.
- **Create Incentives.** Tax incentives for green space. Financial incentive for developers to keep trees or add trees (instead of punishment).
- **Better Planning.** Land use plans for neighborhoods.

Indicator #8: PUBLIC AWARENESS

Overall Objective: The general public understands the benefits of trees and advocates for the role and importance of the urban forest.

Overall Score: Low

What are the current issues / reasoning for performance level?

- **Nuisance Perception.** Many people find trees a nuisance but also beneficial. Trees require maintenance, pick up leaves, sidewalks, roots getting into pipes. People acknowledge generally the benefits of trees but are not at front of mind and often seen as more a burden than benefit. Can't see big picture benefits past the small-scale burden.
- **Lack of Awareness/Knowledge.** Not aware of benefits. Low public education/knowledge. People don't know what trees to plant. There is awareness, but not understanding. In Dublin, foresters can go to people's homes to provide advice.
- **Neighborhood Scale Issues.** Awareness/engagement is different in each neighborhood. Community outreach relies on who and where is on the receiving end. It takes neighborhood activism.
- **Other Priorities.** There are people who do, but the general public in Central Ohio...? Is this on their radar, if basic needs are not met?

How do we improve?

- **Better Outreach.** Social media campaign! Create a better message to residents. Targeted messages and understand concerns. City to better communicate, use their leadership to push messages. Outreach. Education. Public service announcements. Educating on all important benefits.
- **Technical Assistance/Knowledge.** Help from forester on what to plant in the backyard. Tree list for area commissions. What trees are quality trees for residences heating and cooling?
- **Other Comments.** Always have different opinions. Plant the right tree in the right place. Help them see the big picture, the inequity from one neighborhood to another. More opportunities to connect with nature and to build appreciation.

Indicator #9: REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Overall Objective: Neighboring communities and regional groups are actively cooperating and interacting to advance the region's stake in the city's urban forest.

Overall Score: Moderate

What are the current issues / reasoning for performance level?

- **Engaged Organizations.** MORPC is great! Metro Parks/ODNR. City Foresters- UA, Gahanna, Westerville, Dublin, etc., are all in support. Metro Parks- collaborate with Westerville and Dublin and Columbus, anyone who asks.
- **Lack of Communication.** Neighborhoods do not communicate about this issue.

- **Poor Developer Engagement.** Developers do not buy-in to neighborhood plans (SW Area- key location for park).
- **Cooperation.** Everyone is working in their own space. Low collaboration. Some cooperation is happening.
- **Lack of Unified Goal.** Not a comprehensive resolve. MORPC, for example, has a big problem with old plans that are not connected and out of date.

How do we improve?

- **Continued Communication.** Talk to other people in the Green Industry- they are on the same page. Passionate and very willing to share. Opportunity for area commission to share. MORPC needs to look in real time.
- **Incorporate Trees into Plans.** Incorporating tree canopy and urban forest into Regional Sustainability Agenda and participation from more local governments.
- **Develop a Unified Goal.** Master planning. Could use models adopted by other regions to create more collaboration. Regional goals. Regional/county leadership.
- **Improve Communication.** Keep lines of communication open.
- **Seek Partnerships.** Look for opportunities to partner. Grants. Shared services. Professional involvement. There are conferences and meetings that would help support this effort. Need to bring together groups more often.

Discussion #2: Education & Awareness Efforts

QUESTIONS POSED TO EACH GROUP: What are the five most important points or messages the public needs to hear (or be asked to do) first to really create positive change in this tree canopy effort? How would you word them to appeal to real people?

Each team was asked to brainstorm on 3-5 points or messages and report back to the larger group. Detailed notes on each small group conversation were taken and handed in at the conclusion of the meeting.

Categories of Messaging

There were four main categories of messages that emerged from the participants group discussions, as gleaned from the outreach messaging ideas submitted by each group. Some groups submitted actual slogans; other submitted categories of topics that should be covered. All suggestions have been recorded. Ideas could be categorized into the following:

1. **Education on Value of Trees / Why Trees are Needed** (tree benefits focused) (39)
2. **Encouragement to Plant a Tree** (3)
3. **Concept that YOU Can Make a Difference by doing your small part** (3)
4. **Education for tree care, survival, proper technique** (1)

Amongst the Value of Trees, the messages can be broken down into the following subcategories:

Tree Value Aspect Highlighted in Messaging	Frequency
Property value	8
Health - Mental	7
Health - Physical	6
Air / Breathing	6
Temperature / Heat Island Relief	6
Energy Savings	5
Sense of Community / Better Neighborhoods	5
Social Aspects	5
Water Quality (includes stormwater mgmt)	4
Overall Quality of Life	4
Safety	3
Traffic Calming	3
Flood Prevention (stormwater mgmt)	2
Other: Trees stimulate creativity. Trees increase in value over time.	2
Wildlife / Pollinators	1
Aesthetics	1

Other Notes submitted with suggested messaging:

- Message to kids and adults separate (4).
- Educate entities that don't want trees.
- Social equity- need to advance socialization of trees to high need areas.

Not every group submitted actual slogans. The ones that did include:

- Money DOES grow on trees. (3)
- Breathe easy.
- Stay cool.
- Trees suck! (stormwater focused)
- One tree can make a difference.
- Decrease depression- plant a tree!
- Escape politics- plant a tree!
- Breathe easy, breathe deep, trees are on the job.
- Grow your property, plant trees.
- Plant a tree, so your kids don't climb on the house.
- Trees make neighborhoods better.
- Less screen time; more green time.
- It's hot!

Parting Reminders

Before the group departed, the following reminders:

- **Last workshop is April 2nd** - The topic will be “The Management Approach”.

Attending Organizations

5th by Northwest Area Commission
AEP Ohio
American Society of Landscape Architects
Builders' Exchange
City of Columbus - City Council
City of Columbus - Development
City of Columbus Land Bank
City of Columbus - Nature Preserves
Advisory Council
City of Columbus - Neighborhoods
City of Columbus - Mayor's Office
City of Columbus - Planning
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 and Franklin County Metro Parks
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 Land Bank
Franklin Park Conservatory
Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District
Greater South East Area Commission
Livingston Avenue Area Commission
Midwest Area Commission
Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
Milo-Grogan Area Commission
Ohio Department of Natural Resources -
Urban Forestry
Ohio Environmental Council
Ohio State University
Ohio State University Extension
South Linden Area Commission
Southwest Area Commission
The Columbus Foundation Green Funds
University Area Commission
Urban Canopy Works, LLC (consultant)
US Green Building Council - Ohio Chapter
Westland Area Commission