



Advisory Group Workshop #1 Summary & Emerging Themes

Thursday, February 23, 2023, 8-10am
KnoxvilleTreePlan.org

Meeting Summary

On February 23, 2023, the Knoxville Urban Forest Master Plan Advisory Group (AG) convened for its first workshop to discuss the plan, known statistics and characteristics of Knoxville's urban forest, and community goals and priorities. Seventy-five (75) people attended the workshop, held at the Public Works Service Center on <road>. A list of the AG members in attendance is included at the end of this report.

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

Welcome and introductory remarks were made by Dale Madden, Chair of Trees Knoxville. The effort is possible thanks to four organizations that have partnered with TK to fund this project. Project consultant Urban Canopy Works will provide subject matter expertise and will assist with guiding the process and development of the plan.

Presentation. Rachel Comte with Urban Canopy Works (consultants hired for this project) explained the approaches for this UFMP effort, which is a combination of an adaptive management process, together with a known framework to comprehensively assess the sustainability of Knoxville’s urban forest. This framework identifies over 30 indicators of an urban forest, which can be categorized into three areas: indicators on the trees themselves, on the players that impact the urban forest, as well as on management practices. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be explored, as detailed in the presentation.

Stakeholders then participated in three 20 to 30-minute discussions on various topics regarding the trees. A summary of the discussion topics and Advisory Group comments follows. Further comments were turned in via facilitator notes.

This first workshop focused on the data based on the trees themselves. A 15-minute presentation covered the UFP project as a whole: basis,

process, timeline, and detailed information on the indicators of a sustainable urban forest based on available tree data. The results showing the scores of each indicator are shown in Figure 1. The remaining 90 minutes were used for group discussions.

KNOXVILLE (TN) Indicators of a Sustainable Urban Forest		<i>Assessed Score</i>			
		Low	Mod.	Good	
The Trees	Urban Tree Canopy Cover				
	Equitable Distribution				
	Streets & Parks <i>(public, landscape)</i>	Age/Size Distribution			
		Condition			
		Diversity / Pest Vulnerability			
		Suitability - Overhead	No data.		
		Suitability - Ground Level	No data.		
		Suitability - Soil Conditions	No data.		
		Suitability - Invasives			
	Suitability - Climate Adaptability				
	Natural Areas / Woodlands <i>(public or private)</i>	Age/Size Distribution	No data.		
		Condition	No data.		
		Diversity / Pest Vulnerability	No data.		
		Suitability - Overhead	No data.		
		Suitability - Ground Level	No data.		
		Suitability - Soil Conditions	No data.		
		Suitability - Invasives	TBD		
	Suitability - Climate Adaptability	No data.			
	All Other Lands <i>(primarily private)</i>	Age/Size Distribution	No data.		
		Condition	No data.		
		Diversity / Pest Vulnerability	No data.		
		Suitability - Overhead	No data.		
		Suitability - Ground Level	No data.		
		Suitability - Soil Conditions	No data.		
		Suitability - Invasives	No data.		
	Suitability - Climate Adaptability	No data.			
	The Players	Neighborhood Action			
		Large 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					

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

THREE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS & EMERGING THEMES

After the initial presentation, the AG broke into ten small groups to discuss three topics. Each breakout group had 6-10 people, including a pre-arranged facilitator from the UFMP project team. In a set amount of time (approximately 20 minutes), each small group explored the topic introduced by Rachel, and reported back to the larger group their priorities. The discussions resulted in wide-ranging comments and ideas about the status and future of both the public and private tree canopy.

For ease of consumption and understanding, the notes from each discussion group were combined into themes heard. This summary of themes that emerged is found in the following pages. A full recording of all raw notes from each group can be found in a separate document.



Discussion #1: Determining Goals & Priorities in Knoxville

QUESTION PROPOSED FOR FIRST BREAKOUT DISCUSSION: Where do we want to be? We know we have 38% tree canopy cover, and that there is no current canopy goal. So what ARE our future goals and priorities? What does your neighborhood look like on that day you can say “We did it.” How will we measure success in the coming years? Help us define an end game - we need to define what success looks 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:

More trees. One overarching theme was the need for more trees. Suggestions included raising canopy and more trees overall, as well as targeting specific areas such as schools, downtown, and subdivisions. Ideas included tree planting initiatives, making sure greenspace is within walkable distance for everyone, strategically planting trees to shade areas used by bicycles and pedestrians, and creating edible landscapes.

Better quality tree canopy. Beyond tree quantity, participants also mentioned the need for tree quality to ensure longevity of trees. This included proactive care and maintenance, the importance of planting the right trees in places with enough room to grow, and removal of invasives.

Development that accounts for and preserves trees. Concern was raised about the quantity of trees removed during development. Many comments cited that current regulations do not preserve/conservate enough canopy, and/or lack effective enforcement. Development should be sustainable for future generations by including parks, greenspace in new suburban areas.

Focus on equity & environmental justice. It is important to ensure that all in the Knoxville community have access to the benefits trees provide. Specific comments related to equitable tree canopy centered on reducing the effects of heat islands, equitable distribution of tree benefits, and focusing resources on redlined neighborhoods.

More awareness on the role of trees. Many attendees cited the need to increase awareness regarding the benefits/role of trees in a community. People are not connecting trees to the things they care about - health, economic prosperity, resilience to heat, strong communities. Suggestions on incorporating this into a wide range of audiences - schools, realtors (home sales), neighborhoods, including signage on trees in parks, and more.

Use trees in ecosystem restoration and climate resilience. Trees should be part of a broader strategic effort to improve and utilize natural systems in Knoxville. Ecosystem restoration requires a wide range of efforts. Comments cited the desire for more



natives, needing to prioritize invasive species removal and habitat restoration, and using trees to prepare for climate change.

Utilize partnerships. There is a need to leverage partnerships that would extend the reach of this effort. Suggestions included involving HOAs or other stewards that can connect directly with the communities, churches and faith based organizations, healthcare focused groups, schools, universities, among many others.

Financial assistance for tree care. Low income homeowners struggle to maintain trees on their property, largely due to the high cost of tree care. Consider funds to aid homeowners in need of assistance in care and protection of existing trees.

Find creative and alternative spaces to add tree canopy. In urban areas, space for trees can be limited. Explore other alternatives for greenspace - rooftop gardens, community gardens, decreasing impervious surfaces and adjusting roads and sidewalk infrastructure make room for trees and other green infrastructure.

Discussion #2: Challenges

QUESTION PROPOSED TO GROUPS: We've just heard some top goals/priorities from the group. Next discussion topic is how do we get there? What other challenges are we likely to face in reaching these goals? Do not problem solve yet - just list out challenges we are likely to face.

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:

Not enough resources. There is an overall lack of resources currently related to the urban forest. This includes lack of funding, time, and staff for planting, care and enforcement of tree protection regulations.

Lack of knowledge. There is a lack of knowledge on proper care of trees, as well as the value of preserving trees. Who is responsible for educating, and how can we reach everyone? Perceptions of trees being a hassle, fear of trees, planting trees correctly so they will last. These are all topics brought up that need to be addressed in outreach. Without seeing the value of trees, it's hard for people to understand why trees should be a priority.

Lack of engagement. There is a sense of a lack of advocacy or engagement in efforts related to trees in Knoxville, perhaps because of the lack of knowledge about the value of trees mentioned above. Challenges in both accessing the right people, getting buy-in from all partners, poverty, unorganized neighborhoods and concerns about gentrification were raised.



Lost canopy in development. Variances and ineffective tree protection regulations result in significant lost canopy in development.

Conflicting priorities and space constraints. There is limited space in any community for incorporating trees. Other interests that are also important to communities that can compete with trees include utilities, housing needs, interstate and other street/parking needs, and farmland can make creating space for trees challenging.

Trees on private property. The majority of the tree canopy in Knoxville is on private property. Comments were made about the difficulty of influencing what happens on private property. How to incentivize industrial or commercial landowners, homeowners, contractors, builders, and other private property owners to plant and properly care for and maintain trees.

Political climate. Challenges in governing bodies (city, county), lack of government policies related to trees, and the overall political climate make advocating for trees difficult.

Climate change. How do we best prepare Knoxville for the changing climate? Are we accounting for declining species and adapting plantings for the future? Are we creating space for trees in the hottest areas?

Discussion 3: Solutions/Ideas

QUESTION PROPOSED TO GROUPS: Start to brainstorm solutions or approaches to some of the challenges you've just described from the last discussion - resources we could be utilizing better, crazy ideas are great too! All to get us thinking about options.

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:

More engagement and better communication/education. Extending and improving outreach on tree initiatives is critical. Tell a better story on the role of trees in a health community. Involve neighborhoods, consider community outreach on a door-to-door level, utilize non profits, get developers/code enforcement/public on the same page with the same goals. Focus the message on the value/importance of trees to the individual/community and proper maintenance of trees.

Assistance in tree care. Lack of resources available to low income homeowners is a barrier to tree protection on some private lands. Consider tax breaks, monetary and other incentives, as well as financial aid or assistance in tree care.

Better policy/enforcement. A stronger and more consistent tree protection policy and meaningful efficient regulations are needed. Enforcement could be improved by



adding staff, as well as better interdepartmental communication (at both county and city level).

Funding. Ideas on utilizing stormwater utility fees, allocating some of property taxes to trees, corporate sponsorships, and preparing for the incoming federal funding that will be available.

More space for trees. Creativity is needed to find space for trees. Consider burying overhead utilities, adding green roofs, considering a town center concept (vs. traditional sprawling subdivisions, and more).

More data. Access to more data on existing trees in Knoxville (public and private), new planting locations, and areas with the greatest need will help direct efforts.

Other Comments Received

- Excellent set up. Great discussion. Excited to be part of this forum.
- Very informative. Also met people I didn't know in my group session.
- Great workshop! Excellent planning to allow input and brainstorm. Looking forward to the future and the results from our efforts.
- Too many people/groups in too small of an area - difficult to hear discussions when in individual groups.
- Presentations have been a little too wonky. Need compelling storytelling about the value of this plan.
- Loved the format/structure. Would love to know more about why the draft indicators were chosen, and how those shown have been useful in assessments in other cities.

Parting Reminders

Before the group departed, the following reminders:

- **Second workshop is on March 23** - The topic will be "The Players," same time and place.
- **Third workshop is on April 20.** The topic will be "The Management Approach," same time and place.
- **Additional Comments:** rachel@urban canopyworks.com
- **Engage your Network.** Help spread the word to your networks to provide their input too.
 - www.KnoxvilleTreePlan.org
 - Invite Us Over! (available through July) We can come to your next event to talk about this project.
 - Give Input on website online form.
 - Information on events open to the public are coming very soon.



Advisory Group Members

The following are members that accepted the invitation to the Urban Forest Master Plan Advisory Group. Those that attended this first workshop are marked with an asterisk.

Garfield Adams, Knoxville County Schools (Operations)
Sam Adams, University of Tennessee (Arborist)
Andrea Bailey, Aslan Foundation
*Cheryl Ball, City of Knoxville (Mayor's Office)
Vicki Baumgartner, Dogwood Arts
*Ben Bentley, Knoxville Community Dev. Corp (housing authority)
Karin Beuerlein, Trees Knoxville
*Katherine Bike, Knoxville County Schools (Board)
Rick Blackburn, Blackburn Development Group
*Brian Blackmon, City of Knoxville (Office of Sustainability)
Angel Bowman, Neighborhood Rep - Lonsdale Neighborhood Assoc.
*Kali Burke, University of Tennessee (Student Rep)
*Ashley Burnette, Home Builders Association of Greater Knoxville
*Jayne Burritt, Knoxville Public Building Authority
*Rachel Butzler, City of Knoxville (Public Service)
*John Cadotte, Neighborhood Rep - Scottish Pike Neighborhood
*Khann Chov, Keep Knoxville Beautiful
JoAnn Coakley, Knoxville Garden Club
Gordon Coker, Neighborhood Rep - Fourth and Gill Neighborhood
*Martin Cordell, Neighborhood Rep - Old North Knoxville
*Jason Cottrell, University of Tennessee (Facility Services)
*Carl Courter, University of Tennessee (Student Rep)
Greg Easterly, Neighborhood Rep - Norwood Community Assoc.
*Carol Evans, Legacy Parks
*Joyce Feld, Scenic Knoxville
*Jennifer First, University of Tennessee (College of Social Work)
*Bob Graves, Carex Design Group / East TN ASLA
*Duane Grieve, East TN Community Design Center
*Avery Hawkins, University of Tennessee (Student Rep)
*Tim Hester, City of Knoxville (Parks and Recreation)
Tim Hill, Knoxville-Knox County Planning Commission
*Jessie Hillman, Knoxville -Knox County Planning
*Melissa Hinten, University of Tennessee (Sustainability)
*Philip Hipps, Neighborhood Rep - Norwood Homeowners Assoc.
Breauna Hollaway, Neighborhood Rep - Mechanicsville Community Association
*Jim Holleman, Avison Young
Monty Howard, Neighborhood Rep - Historic Gibbs Drive
*Michele Hummel, Downtown Knoxville Alliance



*Dylan Jackson, City of Knoxville (Civil Engineering)
*Sharon Jean-Philippe, University of Tennessee (Urban Forestry)
Josh Johnson, Knoxville Utilities Board
*Kelsey Jones, City of Knoxville (Tree Board)
Rebekah Jane Justice, City of Knoxville (Mayor's Office)
*Matthew Kellogg, Appalachian Mountain Bike Club
Barbara Kelly, Knox/Knox County Community Action Committee (CAC)
*Allison Kelly, Trees Knoxville
*George Kemp, Citizens Cemetery
*Lindsey Kimble, Bike Walk Knoxville
*Kasey Krouse, City of Knoxville (Forestry)
*Charles Kwit, University of Tennessee (Forestry, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology)
*Emily Laird, University of Tennessee (Student Rep)
*Jon Livengood, City of Knoxville (Engineering & Transportation)
Joseph Mack, Knox County Parks and Recreation
*Dale Madden, Trees Knoxville (Chair)
*Cross McCallie, Tate & McCallie Realtors, Inc.
Gerry Moll, Native Plant Rescue Squad
*Bethany Morris, University of Tennessee (Landscape Architect- Facility Services)
*Ben Nanny, Ijams Nature Center
Jason Periard, Knox County Schools (Operations- Security)
Andy Pulte, University of Tennessee (Gardens)
*Elaine Reed, Knoxville Utilities Board
*Jim Richards, Knoxville Botanic Garden
*Mark Riehl, City of Knoxville (Plans Review & Inspections)
*Liz Riester, TN Riverline
*Charlotte Rodina, Beardsley Farm
*Jessica Rodocker, Knox Area Association of Realtors / Trees Knoxville
*Lee Rumble, Knox County Extension/ TN Landscape Association
*Hancen Sale, Knox Area Association of Realtors
Jason Scott, CAC Americorps
*Wade Seifert, University of Tennessee (Health and Wellness)
*Debbie Sharp, City of Knoxville (Office of Neighborhoods)
*Randy Short, Tennessee Valley Authority
*Doug Shover, Knox County Schools (Operations - Facilities)
*Kinsey Simmerman, Knox County Health Department
*Charles Sims, University of Tennessee (Baker Center)
Tommy Smith, City of Knoxville (City Council)
*Wes Soward, Urban Wilderness Coordinator
*Nick St. Sauveur, Cortese Tree Specialist
Dan Steinhoff, City of Knoxville (Tree Board)
*Kayla Stuart, City of Knoxville (Tree Board)
*Tiffany Sutton, Aslan Foundation



- *Rylan Thompson, Knox County Master Gardeners
- *Jerry Thorton, Sierra Club Harvey Broom Group
- James Tomerlin, Neighborhood Rep - Cumberland Estates Neighborhood
- *Chris Towe, Knox County Schools (Operations - Maintenance)
- *Paige Travis, City of Knoxville (Communications)
- *David Vandergriff, GriffArbor Consulting
- *Diane Warwick, Tennessee Division of Forestry
- *Brent Waugh, Neighborhood Rep - Historic Fourth and Gill
- *Tom Welborn, Trees Knoxville (Past Chair)
- *Chris Welsh, TN Ornithological Society - Knoxville Chapter
- *Chad Weth, City of Knoxville (Public Service)
- *Curtis Williams, City of Knoxville (Engineering)
- *Belinda Woodiel-Brill, Knoxville Area Transit