

**Knoxville Urban Forest Master Plan**  
**Advisory Group (AG) Workshop #1: The Trees**  
**COMPILATION OF RAW COMMENTS RECEIVED**

February 23, 2023

**Attendees:** Total 75 total in attendance. Will be listed in the notes summary.

AG members participated in three 20 to 30-minute discussions. Raw comments are recorded below from small group facilitators and larger group discussions. A summarized and themed set of notes have been developed in a separate document.

## **Discussion #1: Priorities and Goals**

Where do we want to be? What are our future goals? What does it look like when we succeed? Raw comments across all breakout groups:

- Everyone lives within ½-1 mile of Urban Forest
- At least 30 canopy cover from you house
- Look at all public lots and plant trees
- Better metrics of tree size vs. simply canopy cover
- Improve canopy
- Every school should have more trees on campus
- Subdivision should have more trees
- Heavy tree canopy
- More trees
- Better tree canopy on campus
- Increase tree coverage and reduce turf coverage
- More trees downtown
- More trees
- Increase on public land
- Grow tree canopy
- Increase healthy tree canopy at schools
- Initiatives for planting trees
- Right tree/right places
- More edible fruit trees in public spaces
- Indicators for canopy quality
- Placement of trees on streets
- Purpose of trees - placed in good location and consider bikers
- Avoid conflicting with biking sidewalks
- Having better street tree conditions
- Edible landscapes

- Suitable for the space
- Quality forest over quantity
- Improving planting practices to decrease canopy failure
- Tree ban list
- Managing full life cycle of trees - knowing how to care for large, aging trees
- Taking care of trees on private property; education and awareness of value for trees on private property
- Tree promotion public perception
- Public education on benefits in dogwood
- Increase community engagement
- Continued education about tree benefits, species, etc.
- Increase education for community “right tree, right place”
- Educating public on the value of tree canopy
- Encourage landscapers - natives
- More educated about trees
- Educate community (Equitable)
- More education on what we plant and diversity
- Outreach/education plan
- Development plans going around trees
- Requirements & incentives for private property owners. Better tree preservation.
- Tree Care - rewards for residents for diversification, planting
- Money Incentives for city from developers, private incentives for developers
- New developments that have wooded areas and mature trees
- Focus on private property
- Empower private landowners to understand the trade-offs of tree management - street tree reqs a good step
- Expand to private areas
- How to reach the private trees, way to incentivize
- New development clearing
- Matching/balancing new development w/ greenescapes
- Strategic replanting at construction sites, more in-depth requirements
- Organization that can help homeowners take care of trees
- Funding incentives to protect existing trees
- Partner that would do tree assessments on private property
- HOA approach to managing private trees
- Arborist resources for citizens
- Citizen involvement
- Better stewards to connect communities
- Climate plan adaptability - continued diversity
- Limit invasives, mimosa issue is hard to control

- Reestablish denser canopy, diversity, sustainable future with enough young trees to replace old ones aging out
- Higher native vs non native food for wildlife
- More beautiful interstates/landscaped
- Suitable habitat for trees
- Reduction of invasives (trees and vines on trees)
- Utilize natives when possible
- Better grouping of similar species (groves)
- Increase use of native trees and grasses, but also protect open space
- Consider non-native - NOT invasive
- Ecological goals - some plant species don't do well under trees. Diversity of habitat. Consider shrubs as well as trees
- Fewer invasives, more natives
- Connectivity between cover for animals
- Groupings of trees - more habitat
- Prepared for climate resilience
- Right tree, right space (native) species site compatibility
- Invasive impact inventory (& severity)
- Cohesive plans, paring with creek restoration, results in overall better
- Initiatives/bounties for removing invasives; more opportunities for invasive removals and weed wrangles
- More broad tree equity
- Cooler neighborhoods and commercial corridors
- Equitable distribution of trees and accompanying socioeconomic benefits in lower income neighborhoods
- More equitable distribution of canopy
- Equity distribution of trees - heat equity
- Prioritize replanting equitably
- More involvement with community (particularly redlined neighborhoods)
- Increase even distribution over entire city
- Preserve tree canopy desirable cover. long way is ordinance - better ordinances
- Conservation-based neighborhood development standards
- Atlanta has better tree ordinances as incentives
- Mature tree retention through development - better policy
- City landscape goals - required 20 plans - better enforcement of existing ordinance
- Codes for property development
- Expand plan to county
- Rooftop gardens
- Streetscaping - road diet, way to mitigate existing roadways
- Rooftop green space

- Unorthodox/nontraditional plantings to increase canopy (rooftop greenspace, alternative urban vegetation options)
- Community gardens
- More support for rooftop gardens
- Morningside park certain trees have information signs
- Dogwood trails - need more biking and walking trails
- Decrease impervious surfaces
- Protect existing canopy (damage from construction/compaction)
- Improve quality of recreation areas on campus and surrounding area
- Drive for future residence - attraction of trees and parks
- An attainable plan in place - what can work for the community, and incentivize people?
- Identify the “must save trees” fight to keep. UT has a model for this - labeled green, yellow, red and preservation plan with this - pre-programming of site-making assessment
- Missed opportunities to add vegetation without planting trees adding to canopy (Nines, shrubbing)
- Maintain where we are
- Preserving larger trees - environmental services
- Balance sustainable development for future generations - parks, greenspace
- Suburban areas are needed, but not sustainable in how they're built
- Balance long term management for when trees are a maturity
- Balancing housing needs with trees
- Having a metric tool for assessing tree conversation and replanting in development
- Adding more parks to Knoxville
- More staff for city

## Discussion #2: Challenges

Based on the goals and priorities that were shared, what are going to be the roadblocks to solving them? What challenges do we have now and in the future?

Raw comments across all breakout groups:

- Money for programs
- Staffing on public trees
- Funding - more money
- Enforcement
- Cost - to developers, and public cost, in taxes
- Challenges of on-the-ground sampling of existing trees
- Money (funding, education for homeowners)

- Time frame
- Lack of funding and incentives
- Lack of resources
- Even if you have funding still get hung up with 1 person opposed
- Resources
- Funding
- Money
- Time - immediate results
- Lack of funding for planting
- Funding and Money
- Lack of knowledge
- Full time organizations for education purposes
- Public education - perception
- Perception
- Education - people don't know what to do
- Public education - one of bigger changes
- Education convincing public and developers
- Public education and awareness (lack of want to change)
- Fear of trees (safety, security, maintenance)
- Lack of openness to change (mowing practices, green roofs, etc)
- Fear! Better education: proper planting, selection, maintenance
- Where education stops - how to reach a broader audience
- Who is delivering education?
- How to reach a universal awareness, how to get everyone to feel included
- Different perceptions of trees, things (trees) being unsafe
- Challenge to educate public
- Education - care for trees
- Lack of education on trees
- Changing public perception
- Lack of awareness of incentives available to developers and government agencies, homeowners and communities
- Re-evaluate aesthetics BEST practice - not tree topping
- Invasive education is needed - people don't know how bad it is because it's still green
- How to educate on a large scale
- West knoxville and trying to educate
- Educating developers on how to plant trees
- Nothing compelling about planting trees, not a priority
- Hard to show true economic benefit to the public with trees
- What people value (what is more important, housing or vegetation?) - conflicting values
- Hard to get folks involved - apathy

- Understand value of trees
- Undervaluing trees as a society
- Trade-offs - does canopy have enough umph to make it a priority
- Lack of engagement/buy-in
- Include all people - right people with resources
- Not having access to people
- Encourage all folks to participate
- Access to people
- General lack of caring about trees
- How to achieve ownership in the project
- Challenges barrier to meetings (like this one)
- Outsider coming in - gentrification
- How to get people from the neighborhood to advocate for themselves (the project)
- Poverty
- Unorganized neighborhoods without good leaders
- Change in mindset
- Buy in from local government
- Can't tell homeowners what to do
- Developers not wanting to develop differently
- Developers - lot/cost
- Tight development code
- Variances make it easy to skip rules
- Low development fees makes it too easy
- Tension between development pressure and green space protection
- Large lots desire versus need for housing; private development property rights
- Overdevelopment
- Attitude of developers
- Development standards, variances, code
- Ordinance improvement
- Balance development with vegetation
- Balancing economic growth/development
- Buy in - from private property owners and developers
- Managing development
- Bevernticies, laws, etc. government administration
- Politicization of development
- No incentive to retain mature trees in existing ordinances
- Zoning - how to make houses fit the land instead of vice versa
- Land use? Zoning single family big lots
- More responsible home ownership - checking on your trees
- Opposing government policies, zoning codes
- Property is too valuable for development for trees to be prioritized

- Lack of data on private property, difficulty to get data
- Keeping it not political
- Need continuity with government
- Difference between city and county
- Political climate and funding
- Politics
- Government policies, lack of goals
- Capitalism
- State law
- Liberal agenda, politicization of trees
- Getting the county involved - is there will?
- Backlash/disagreement with community
- TDOT - interstate and netland
- UT- Urban forestry program - tough to integrate
- Balancing green space with housing needs
- Conflicts of different public needs
- Coordinating action with county on neighboring cities
- Conflict value
- Limited space
- Low utility lines
- Competing priorities - trying to live and need groceries
- Farmland competing with canopy in the county
- Parking competes with canopy
- How the population/housing shortage and transportation impact ability to plant trees
- Retroactively right-sizing oversized parking lots
- Streetscapes - sight design for safety
- Not in my backyard - lot sizes NO ROOM!
- Everything is getting denser - space valuable - space constraints
- Utility locations - limit shade and ROW development
- Figuring out how to balance development with greenscapes
- Existing infrastructure (how to work around?)
- Maintenance of public trees
- Invasives
- Mature trees - poor maintenance
- Better maintenance where people are
- Safety and maintenance for street trees
- Eastern TN climate conduciveness to invasives
- Clay
- How to best plan for future climate
- Climate change and account for declining species - adapt planning for the future

- Difficulty maintaining young trees in urban areas (lots of people)
- Leaves in the fall how they are used
- Economic canopy
- Process for updating, expired plan
- How to incentivize landscapers to proper care/maintenance
- Diversity of smaller trees
- Replanting trees after construction
- City to prioritize on public land and receive funding
- The 25% of city property should lead by example
- Landowners more concerned about negative impacts of trees and not replanting when removed
- Neighbors want trees removed (schools)
- Younger generation wants to live downtown which increases density
- Protecting existing trees
- Poor practices from contractors

## Discussion #3: Solutions/Ideas

Knowing our goals and priorities and considering the many challenges identified, what are some solutions we could use? Raw comments across all breakout groups:

- Dedicate part of property tax to trees
- Program similar to KUB energy audit for trees and maintenance
- More assistance from utility companies
- Stormwater utility fee
- Infrastructure stormwater bill funding for urban forest
- Stormwater impact fee, disincentivizing impervious surfaces
- Apply for grants, corporate sponsorships (rooted here) through TreesKnoxville
- Corporate sponsors for \$
- Memorial trees - an example funding strategy
- Allocating more tax money to tree initiatives
- More neighborhood meetings
- Network our current/future resources (Dogwood Ants, Trees Knoxville, NPNS, KKB) - my knoxville app
- City needs some branding for more trees
- Community outreach on a door-to-door level offering tree planting and maintenance
- Social outreach, knowing who can help
- Marketing - utilizing social media - saturate the media will message
- Figuring out mechanism to reach the low canopy , underserved communities, finding a better approach



- Using non-profits, groups that are already in place within a variety of neighborhoods
- Corporate recruitment, prioritize groups that also value, willing to work with canopy goals
- Improve communication with stakeholders (developers, code enforcers, public) - all on the same page with the same goals
- Mass media campaign
- Building ambassador program - volunteers
- Engage - forestry inventory and analysis
- Ambassadors for trees
- Get on everyone's agenda
- Compelling narrative about value of trees that brings people on board
- Addressing security concerns with forests (people hiding in trees) with proper management
- Tree giveaways
- Tree matching making program
- Stronger requirements for property owners & incentives
- Making trees a requirement as part of policy
- Consistency with public policy and government
- Code update - more low-hanging fruit (City landslide area), Plans review change - LA's at the beginning
- Performance bond for commercial development
- Code update - commercial vs. residential
- Improve ordinance & better enforcement
- Flexible ordinance - stormwater example
- Aligning zoning with the plan
- Ordinances/incentives to keep existing trees and funding for enforcement
- Stronger code enforcement requirements (if a developer agrees to not cut down a tree but then does, have more punitive fees)
- Policies that promote smart development to include green space
- Meaningful regulations
- Quality over quantity in the initial design phase of planting
- Design requirement to plant quality trees
- Tree protection plan
- Clarify city policies to protect trees
- Meaningful regulations
- Regulatory incentives/enforcement w. Developers
- Policy changes with city and county
- Stronger enforcement of policies with additional personnel
- Requirements for contractors to operate within the city
- Reduction in taxes to preserve or add trees
- NWF - sign for doing good city could do and add tax incentive

- Tax breaks on if you do inspections or maintenance
- Keeping incentives in place, mindful of their change
- Address issue of gentrification concerns when looking at formerly red-lined areas (ex: property tax freezes)
- Incentives, non-monetary, 3-1-1 app
- Incentives for trees to developers
- Aligning incentives with other stakeholders, like KUB
- Incentives for existing housing to assist in maintaining trees
- Financial incentive for residents to plant, care for trees. Funds to help people in poverty
- Incentivizing private land conservation for trails and canopy (property tax reduction)
- Calculating \$\$ value of trees and using that for incentives/enforcement
- Initiatives and incentives for contractor and private property owners
- Invasive management services like goats
- Native plant rescue squad, non-city non-profit for CANE
- Sheep crew for invasives/ city crew
- Go after invasives - weed wrangles
- Native landscape program
- More education in school curriculum
- Comprehensive approach to public education to include young and old
- Change political attitudes about the environment
- Hone in on how it impacts the individual - make it important to you
- Build and collaborate with trusted community partners to educate
- Add tree canopy metric on home sale data (realtor.com or zillow)
- Demonstration area for showing tree benefits (sequestering of carbon, cooling effect, health benefits)
- Unified message & education program provided by county, city, utilities, agencies
- Community not aware of services like the extension
- Educate neighborhoods about trees
- Educate kids at school
- Education and outreach on value of trees to (developers, natives)
- Build stakeholders educate
- Outreach and Education
- Public education on value of trees and importance - local champions and partnerships
- Maintenance education for contractors (certification program)
- Public education campaign
- Education for the public through UT extension and similar organizations
- Obtain better data about existing trees on the ground level
- Get more info about 75% private property

- Remote viewing - identify areas - proactive
- Identifying planting locations
- Collecting data on areas we could increase canopy financial incentives
- Underground utilities
- New rule for utilities - go underground? Mindful with new development (funding and incentives)
- Town Center Concept - less sprawl, green space, not a subdivision
- Building up with green roofs
- Increased density - especially across transit corridors
- Developer information
- Hire more staff
- Focus on canopy to plans using coverage heat island data
- Deliver leaf litter as mulch
- Add focus to formerly industrial areas
- Tree canopy is X=get this (could be inequitable)
- Comprehensive plan to help keep tree canopy
- City takes lead on 25%, works with partners
- Public land management setting the example for private
- Legacy parks model (donating land for parks and rec)
- Protection to maintain property values

## Comment Form

For topics that didn't make it to discussion, or required extra follow-up, we provided an open comment form. Additional comments included:

- Revisiting building codes to support green architecture such as living roofs that can reduce albedo, reduce runoff, improve insulation & reduce energy consumption; Rescuing Neyland drive from T-DOT & build a beautiful green waterfront; Rescuing the South waterfront from excessive development to promote public greenspace along the river
- 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
- Develop street tree guidelines - KAT bus sheltered need cooling tree canopy but difficult due to proximity to street and utility lines
- We can host a meeting for East Knoxville at the Botanical Garden if interested

- 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

Interested in small group presentation

- Knoxville Volunteer Rotary Club
- Nicholas St. Sauveur (Kiwanis Club of Knoxville)
- For University TN Students, faculty and staff