



Advisory Group Workshop #2 Summary & Emerging Themes

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

Meeting Summary

On March 23, 2023, the Knoxville Urban Forest Master Plan Advisory Group (AG) convened for its second workshop to discuss the players, or human impact on the urban forest. Sixty-five (65) people attended the workshop, held at the Public Works Service Center. 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.

Dale Madden (Trees Knoxville) made introductions, then Rachel Comte (UCW) gave a presentation covering the project process, a recap of the last meeting and findings, information on the role of trees, and a primer on today's topic - the players that impact the urban forest.

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. For this reason, the AG was tasked with deciding and scoring how Knoxville is doing in each category by individual votes. This was done in the first group discussion session. The results showing the scores of each indicator are found in the chart below. The second group discussion topic covered messaging and outreach.



	KNOXVILLE (TN)		Assessed Score		
Indicat	tors of a Sust	tainable Urban Forest	Low	Mod.	Good
	Urban Tree Canopy Cover				
The Trees	Equitable Distribution				
	Streets & Parks (public, landscape)	Age/Size Distribution			
		Condition			
		Diversity / Pest Vulnerability			
		Suitability - Overhead	No data.		
		Suitability - Ground Level	No data.		
		Suitability - Soil Conditions	No data.		
		Suitability - Invasives			
		Suitability - Cllimate Adaptability			
	Natural Areas / Woodlands (public or private)	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 - Cllimate Adaptability	No data.		
	All Other Lands (primarily private)	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 - Cllimate Adaptability	No data.		
The Players (with AG Voting Results)	Neighborhood A	ction	37	26	0
	Large Landholder Involvement		16	46	7
	Green Industry Involvement		16	35	9
	City Department/Agency Cooperation		4	56	2
	Funder Engagement		22	32	9
	Utility Engagement		21.5	32.5	8
	Developer Engagement		57	5	0
	Public Awareness		24	33.5	0.5
	Regional Collaboration		51	10	0
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				

Figure Above: Cumulative Results of the Workshops 1 & 2 - Indicators of a Sustainable Urban Forest performance levels on The Trees and The Players. The numbers in the Players indicators correspond to the votes awarded by the AG members.



The group discussions resulted in wide-ranging comments and ideas. Raw comments from each group have been recorded, and can be found in a separate document. A summarized version, highlighting the themes that emerged are presented below.

Discussion 1: Scoring Each "Player" Indicator

Questions Posed for Each Indicator

For each indicator, small groups were asked the following questions: How are we doing today, with what level of engagement - Low, Moderate or Good? How do we improve? What do we need to do to achieve the next performance level?

Overall, Knoxville was scored as Low in 3 indicators, and moderate in the remaining 6 indicators.

Themes and detailed comments turned in under each indicator follows.

Indicator #1: Neighborhood Action

Overall Score: Low

Votes: 37 low, 26 moderate, 0 good

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

Themes from group discussions on current performance levels:

- Varying Circumstances in Neighborhoods. Each neighborhood has different demographics and character that can play a role in determining their levels of action or engagement. Some households are more worried about putting food on the table, have more time constraints, etc. Additionally, some neighborhoods are more transient in nature (ie students), some have more renters than owners. Typically, renters have little incentive or power to be involved. Level of engagement of neighborhoods can also be influenced by avg incomes (and thus available time) and age of neighborhood (older tend to be more cohesive).
- **Education/Awareness Needed.** There is a lack of understanding on the value of trees, which impacts the public's willingness to engage. Generally, there isn't conversation around trees unless they are causing a problem. Their benefits and value is not well known (and can be hard to quantify). There is also a lack of general information on how to get and maintain free street trees.

How do we improve?

Create unified goals.



- Increase education and engagement. Targeted messaging and action steps educating on the value of trees. These can be tailored messages for different groups with different constraints. Tell people what's in it for them.
- **Better communication.** Not all have email or social media access/usage. Target neighborhoods less engaged currently. Consider neighborhood meetings or town hall meetings, especially where neighborhoods are not currently organized.
- **Incentives or regulations.** Tree protection, zoning changes, planting "right tree right place."
- Connect with landlords.

Indicator #2: LARGE LANDHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Overall Score: Moderate

Votes: 16 low, 46 moderate, 1 good

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

Themes from group discussions on current performance levels:

- **Schools set the example.** Stakeholders acknowledge that many of the schools, especially UT, are engaging in a lot of proactive forestry practices, but there is space for improvement, especially in relation to development projects. Schools largely doing well due to strong leadership.
- Other developments are largely more interested in building space than green space. They don't understand that there's value, so it seems easier to clear cut and replant than preserve in the building process. Often the trees replanted are cookie-cutter ornamentals.

- **Education.** Communication to large landowners on the benefits of trees, and how they are exponentially larger in mature trees.
- **Development regulations.** Better regulations for tree preservation. Development should include entire project (ie: not landscaping as an afterthought, but preservation or intentional green space)
- **Increase incentives.** Desire for incentives, tax credits or otherwise, to increase tree preservation.
- Bring in more stakeholders. While some landholders like UT are already beginning to lead by example, other stakeholders are still absent from forestry conversations.
 Outreach could include hospitals and other local healthcare facilities and Knox County Schools.



Indicator #3: GREEN INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT

Overall Score: Moderate

Votes: 16 low, 35 moderate, 9 good

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.

Themes from group discussions on current performance levels:

- A lot of providers means a lot of variance in quality. Many green industry partners are doing a pretty good job, and have made a lot of progress in the last few years, but there are still a few bad players.
- Challenge of communication. There are so many different organizations and potential partnerships that it can be difficult to make sure everyone is informed and on the same page. Add to that the complication of the need for English interpretation, which isn't always easily available, and it can be hard to be sure everyone is getting the same message.
- Lack of public awareness. Public doesn't know about the kind of work or progress the green industry is making, and sometimes has a desire for bad green industry practices (ie: will you top my tree?)

How do we improve?

- **Education.** It's the responsibility of the green professional to educate the client and lead them to choices that maximize green/tree benefits
- Training and systems in place to lead by example. These efforts would be supported by a tree ordinance/stronger enforcement and providing training using tangible examples.

Indicator #4: CITY DEPARTMENT & AGENCY COOPERATION

Overall Score: Low

Vote: 4 low, 56 moderate, 2 good

Overall Objective: All city departments and agencies cooperate to advance citywide urban forestry goals and objectives.

Themes from group discussions on current performance levels:

• Lack of cohesiveness. There are many different city departments that are successful in carrying out their separate goals, but there is a lack of coordination and common goals. Few departments have bandwidth for "extra" tasks outside of their existing scope.



• Improvements needed in execution. Forestry division is good. There is, however, a need for better enforcement of existing codes and development that results in projects that meet community expectations. Better communication by the city with the community on projects is needed.

How do we improve?

- **Create common goals.** Create city wide goals and priorities that include forestry goals/tree benefits. Better collaboration between city and county is needed as well.
- **Better enforcement & review.** Someone to spearhead review of development designs and be sure that they include greenspace and preservation from the beginning with green industry expertise (ie. landscape architect). A centralized system of policy/procedure at the city is needed.
- **Improve communication.** Both interdepartmental for city communication, but also improve communication to the public and between other local players.

Indicator #5: FUNDER ENGAGEMENT

Overall Score: Moderate

Vote: 22 low, 32 moderate, 9 good

Overall Objective: Local funders are engaged and invested in urban forestry initiatives. Funding is adequate to implement a citywide urban forest management plan.

Themes from group discussions on current performance levels:

- **Not enough funders.** It doesn't seem like there is enough funding to meet all our needs, limiting us to reactive instead of proactive. Not attracting a wide enough variety of funders, but building some good momentum.
- **Trees aren't a priority to fund.** Private funders don't naturally navigate towards trees, and sometimes have objectives counter to tree preservation. Other "bigger issues facing the community.
- Lack of understanding. The lack of understanding of the role of trees and landscaping in healthy communities can mean that when things get tough, this is the first area that experiences budget cuts. Other groups related to health and transportation could be engaged if they understood the connection.

How do we improve?

• Improve communication to funders. Make sure to reach the right groups, show how their needs/interests are connected to trees. Create narratives that connect to funders' objectives. Set up meetings or regular lines of communication with funders to increase involvement



- **Grow funder base.** Broaden support outside the typical funding scope, engaging public health, transportation, large corporate investors, small financial donors, Chamber of Commerce, etc.
- **Provide easy wins.** Provide specific projects for funders, in differing manageable sizes. This can help create a narrative to go along with the project that provides more tangible motivation. Short term wins that relate to long term goals and make for easy engagement.

Indicator #6: UTILITY ENGAGEMENT

Overall Score: Moderate

Vote: 21.5 low, 32.5 moderate, 8 good

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

Themes from group discussions on current performance levels:

- Existing solid partnerships in place. KUB is largely recognized as being a positive and responsible forestry partner, only pruning trees when necessary to ensure continued access to power, and are engaged with the broader tree community and planting initiatives. TVA has been supportive as well.
- **Not all utilities are engaged.** Not all utilities are aware of goals, and sometimes the community is unaware of work utilities do on the other side to preserve canopy or power. Cable and internet are not as engaged with tree preservation/care best practices. Agencies act independently rather than collaboratively.
- Challenges with utility subcontractors. Utilities hire many subcontractors, and some have shown to be untrained, not local, and performing poorly.

- **Higher quality of work.** Subcontractors and other utilities should all be responsible for adhering to tree pruning BMPs. Hire and train certified arborists.
- Continue to push for buried power lines. Many suggested burying overhead wires when possible, ex. when a developer tears down a house to put in condos, etc.
- **Public engagement.** Help homeowners determine which is the right tree for the right place so they don't interfere with lines or require heavy long term maintenance. Look into support for low income households for proper tree care via utility funds?



Indicator #7: DEVELOPER ENGAGEMENT

Overall Score: **Low**

Votes: 57 low, 5 moderate, 0 good

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

Themes from group discussions on current performance levels:

- No weight to code protecting trees. No code to prevent clearcutting, no requirement
 for mitigation of trees cut, enforcement of runoff or stormwater reduction mitigation.
 Grading (hillside) plan is not great, and no enforcement exists to be sure trees planted
 per code are planted correctly/sustainably.
- **No incentives for tree preservation.** It's much cheaper to clear cut and replant the minimum afterward. Focus is on creating as many units as possible. Priority is building/bottomline, not preservation.
- Trees are an afterthought. Minimum requirements aren't providing the desired result, and are more like a box to check than an actual part of the project.
 Landscaping is the first thing to get cut when the budget is strained. Plants installed are often the least expensive, least creative option.

- **Educate developers.** Not only are trees a great way to attract interested buyers, but they can also be a solution to stormwater mitigation and a number of other challenges. Educate developers on the role and benefits of mature canopy and provide tree-friendly alternatives to existing stormwater plans.
- **Create incentives.** Incentivize developers (financially or with variances) who keep existing mature trees and incorporate greenspace. Tax incentives or density bonuses for developers to keep trees or add trees (instead of punishment).
- **Better regulations.** Increase systems to result in plans that preserve trees and increase enforcement of existing regulations. Zoning changes that include loss of tree planting requirements should have tree preservation written into rezoning.



Indicator #8: PUBLIC AWARENESS

Overall Score: Moderate

Votes: 24 low, 33.5 moderate, 0.5 good

Overall Objective: The general public understands the benefits of trees and advocates for the

role and importance of the urban forest.

Themes from group discussions on current performance levels:

- Lack of awareness / knowledge. The public doesn't fully understand the benefits that trees bring to their community, nor their function in the city as a whole. Some legitimate concerns from forest fires or recent tree failures involving homes or injury.
- **Nuisance perception.** Many have more concerns over the damage that trees cause, than knowledge of their benefits. People are not willing to be inconvenienced by maintenance activities such as raking leaves. In addition, those with allergies or other respiratory issues often view trees as detrimental to health. Even excluding debris, trees sometimes need pruned or removed and that can be very costly.
- Lots of variance across audiences/neighborhoods. Many understand the
 importance of trees, some of which came here specifically for access to green space
 and outdoors. Each neighborhood can vary greatly in built environment,
 socioeconomics, and existing levels of tree cover currently.

- More education. Create a big education campaign, targeting all demographics.
 Utilize images instead of words in messaging whenever possible, and utilize multiple platforms to spread the message. Reach contractors as well.
- Focus neighborhoods most in need. Target red-lined neighborhoods and other neighborhoods in need with both planting and support programs like financial assistance for pruning, tree giveaways, or arborists that offer free tree assessments.
- **Create a compelling story.** We need more trees not for the sake of trees, but for better health. Consider local news coverage.



Indicator #9: REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Overall Score: Low

Vote: 51 low, 10 moderate, 0 good

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

Themes from group discussions on current performance levels:

- **Unsure of any collaboration happening currently.** Participants weren't confident, but felt like there wasn't much regional cooperation on the whole. Neighboring counties are very rural so have very different concerns.
- Lack of common goals between city and county. Variation between regulations between the county and various cities internally make it difficult to cohesive efforts.

How do we improve?

- Consider the target audience. Messaging is going to be different depending on the audience West vs. East Knoxville, urban Knoxville vs rural Knox county, education levels, etc. Focus on health aspects and other relatable messages (not necessarily the trees).
- Support regional efforts. County-wide or regional non-profit that can help with funding education or maintenance, or create a tree board or informal regional meetings to start the conversation. Consider utilizing the goals of this urban forestry master plan to incorporate trees into broader regional goals. Consider an overall unified plan for code development between city and county.

Discussion 2: Messaging for Education/Awareness

SCENARIO PROPOSED TO GROUPS: Imagine you are tasked with convincing people in the community to preserve, plant, care and prioritize trees.

- What are the most important points or messages the public needs to hear (or be asked to do) first to really make a difference.
- What messages will resonate most?
- How would you word them to appeal to real people?

Each team was asked to list as many messages as possible and report back their top 5 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 themes for outreach:

Trees Make/Save Money. Increasing property values and decreasing energy consumption. Trees can boost the economy by increasing tourism, streetscape beautification, and increasing customer spending. Economic enhancement and potential for employment opportunities. Trees are a positive return on investment/bottom line. Greener city, greener wallet.

Trees For Better Health. Between heat reduction and pollution, trees are important for a healthy lifestyle. Also help with mental health, like reducing anxiety and general well being. Breathe cleaner air.

Value of Mature and Diverse Forest. Encourage species diversity for size constraints doesn't always have to be a large shade tree. Plant the right tree, right where you are. Celebrate good trees/properties. - champion trees. Tree diversity is important - benefit to animal communities, sustainable forest, protect against disease/pests. Large legacy trees are exponentially more beneficial in terms of mitigating stormwater or pollution.

Tell the Story. Trees bring urban areas down to human scale. Connect to childhood memories, sitting on the porch, home values. Are trees part of our Southern hospitality? Capitalize on the fact that people move here for forest/canopy/outdoors space. The story of trees and people, and how they depend on each other. Establish pride in what we have and can be as an urban forest destination.

Trees Solve Problems. Trees can cool down heat islands, provide shade and cooling. Trees reduce stormwater impact. Trees clean air pollution. Trees clean water. Trees absorb carbon, helping with climate resilience.

Engage in Diverse Messaging Strategies. Messaging needs to be delivered in different ways for different audiences. Could include tree info on utility bills, or television messages, or online. Focus on the short term. Address people's fears and dreams. If we didn't have trees how much worse would our lives be? Could also engage with groups like insurance companies, health, and utilities - include messaging about trees on their bills.

Other Comments Received

- One challenge will be avoiding temptation to preach to the choir. Need to target groups not expecting to already be on board
- Connectivity of forest is important, so regional collaboration/cross-agency collaboration very important
- Education elementary school programs, neighborhood outreach/conference, PSA campaign on local tv
- Great group ... good conversation. Thoughtful process



- Need more time to talk with homeowners about the value of trees. One time a year for neighborhood conferences is simply not enough. There is a need for organizing outreach
- Dislike of out-of-area developers! Developer engagement negative. No reward for
 preservation because ordinances don't have teeth. If they aren't going to respect trees
 then the least they can do is mandatory green building design like green roofs, side
 planters, and other designs that incorporate vegetation in lieu of tree removal. All of
 this is great work! But without enforceable policy can this be upheld?
- Thanks. Are there options for bringing all the large landholders to the table? Maybe another opportunity
- Too much to cover too fast, but got great input
- I believe that there would be a lot more community/homeowner involvement if there were more resources. That being an arborist to come out to areas and help diagnose and give treatment plans for unhealthy trees and advice on trimming/maintenance.
- We drilled down on some ideas from last time and built on justification for the master plan and taking action on and investing in the urban canopy

Parting Reminders

Before the group departed, the following reminders:

- Last workshop is on April 20. The topic will be "The Management Approach," same time and place.
- Additional Comments: rachel@urbancanopyworks.com

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.

Breyauna 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