

ANN ARBOR Urban Forest Management Plan

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PUBLIC WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Overview

Two public workshops were held by the city and facilitated by JJR to begin the planning process for Ann Arbor's first Urban Forest Management Plan. The first workshop, held May 20 at Tappan Middle School and the second workshop was held June 1 at Forsythe Middle School. Both workshops utilized the same format, and 24 residents participated across the workshops.

The purpose of these workshops was to provide an overview of forestry activities and planning efforts to-date in the city, present general background information relative to urban forest planning, and gather feedback from residents to inform the scope and direction of the planning effort. Feedback collection was organized across four topics, using a combination of written feedback sheets and group discussion. The four topics were

1. Plan direction
2. Tree planting issues and opportunities
3. Tree maintenance and removal issues and opportunities
4. Public engagement

In addition, participants were given time for general comments and remarks, towards the end of the workshop, to further the urban forest planning effort.



Results Summary

Both workshops demonstrated that Ann Arbor residents are passionate and concerned about the health and long-term sustainability of Ann Arbor's urban forest. Residents provided a wide range of feedback on why the urban forest is important to them, highlighting the fact that the urban forest is critical to the health of the city.

Benefits most mentioned by residents included aesthetic/therapeutic benefits of trees, as well as shade and microclimate moderation and water quality/stormwater benefits. Participants acknowledged that maintaining a healthy urban forest was critical to ensuring that these benefits can be sustained into the future.

The discussion of issues and opportunities relative to both tree planting and maintenance/removals highlighted a number of key points:

- Funding for city staff and resources for tree planting and tree maintenance appears to be inadequate, and participants are highly concerned about funding availability. There was a feeling that the city's leadership could better understand the value and benefits of the urban forest, and should give trees stronger consideration when establishing funding priorities.
- Participants want additional tree plantings to continue (or accelerate), but recognize that funding for maintenance is limited. Participants noted that the city departments and agencies should better coordinate their tree maintenance efforts.
- Participants felt that pruning practices often cause un-warranted damage to trees and better practices should be considered and implemented to protect the health of trees.
- The process for determining when to remove a tree is unclear and needs to be refined. Participants were worried that often trees are too easily removed. A decision process needs to be established to clearly identify when a removal is to occur.
- Participants felt that the city needs to explore other funding sources and/or volunteer mechanisms for both planting and tree maintenance. Partnerships with neighborhood groups, schools, or non-profits could provide resources to better manage the urban forest.
- Education about tree issues, practices, policies, and maintenance is important to the sustainability of the urban forest. This includes better notification of changes, as well as teaching people about maintenance practices and clarifying city policies. Participants felt that strengthening partnerships with other agencies, institutions, organizations, and operations that impact the urban forest is highly important. This includes DTE, the U of M, the DDA, and others. Written or stronger agreements could be pursued to ensure long-term cooperation.
- Overall, participants felt that the urban forest management plan should consider programs/policies/strategies that apply to trees on private property (both residential and commercial) in addition to public trees. These strategies could include incentive programs or updated ordinances. Enforcement is important to success.
- A number of participants discussed the role of trees in providing food sources (i.e. food forests).

Next steps in the in the urban forest planning process is to develop a more detailed public engagement strategy to aid in developing the plan documents. These initial workshops have provided insight into how this pubic engagement effort can be structured, including:

- Identifying a range of potential stakeholders and interest groups that can be involved with the longer term planning process. This includes potential partner organizations such as the DDA, U of M, and utility companies and gaining an understanding of their practices and policies.
- Highlighting key points that will be vital for the plan to consider (above).
- Demonstrating that the public needs to continue to be involved in the process. In addition, more ways to "spread the word" about the planning effort should be explored and implemented.
- The public engagements effort needs to include education, discussions of broad goals, and detailed sessions that discuss particular issues or set the stage for implementation.
- The process needs to engage city leadership, raising awareness of issues affecting urban forest and advocating for its improvement and long-term sustainability.

The following pages provide aggregated results from both workshops, combining written comments (from the feedback sheets) with comments recorded during the group discussion. The numbers after a comment indicates how many times that comment, or a very similar comment, were recorded during the workshop.

TOPIC 1 – Plan Direction

What benefits of trees are most important to you?

Overall/Collective Benefits (9 total)

- All benefits equally important (8)
- They (trees) are there

Habitat (13 total)

- Habitat functions (6)
- Habitat value (wildlife and people) (5)
- Homes for native plants and wildlife.
- Increases biological/ecological diversity

Water Quality (18 total)

- Watershed protection/runoff management (7)
- Water quality/cleaning/decreased runoff/stormwater benefits (6)
- Hydrological improvements (3)
- Stormwater cost reduction (1)
- Flood reduction

Sustainability/Air Quality (8 total)

- Carbon sequestration/CO₂ uptake (3)
- Air quality/pollution mitigation (2)
- Sustainability of trees, balance with urban development
- City sustainability
- Important resource/source of clean air and water

Resource Value/Food (9 total)

- Food source for people (fruits + nuts). "Food Forest." Urban forest gardening. (7)
- Can provide compost materials
- Urban wood/re-use/harvesting

Aesthetic/Therapeutic (31 total)

- Beauty/aesthetics (20)
- Therapeutic/psychological benefits (10)
- Seasonal changes

Shade/Heat/Microclimate/Energy Savings (19 total)

- Moderates local climate/provides shade/summer cooling (12)
- Shade and heat control/cost savings (7)

Recreation/Walk-ability (3 total)

- Improves community walk-ability (2)
- Recreational benefits (1)

Community Character (7 total)

- Traffic calming (added after voting) (2)
- Sense of place/landmarks/orientation (2)
- Welcoming/softening of the environment
- Attracts people/visitors
- Community asset

Property Values (2 total)

- Contributes to real estate/property value (2)

On a scale of 1-5 how important to you is improving the quality of the urban forest and/or better managing the urban forest? (Circle below)

From feedback **BOARDS**:

not at all important	1	2	3	4	5	very important
				4	19	

On a scale of 1-5 how strongly do you feel the urban forest plan should explore or consider policies or strategies for trees on private as well as public land? (Circle below)

From feedback **BOARDS**:

not at all consider including private land	1	2	3	4	5	strongly consider including private land
		1	1	6	12	

TOPIC 2 – Tree Planting

What ISSUES do you see as important for the plan to consider relative to tree planting?

Benefits (2 total)

- Mature trees vs. young. Mature trees are not equivalent to young trees
- Trees are small when they are planted – how long until they provide benefits?

Numbers of Trees (2 total)

- Rate of plantings
- Appropriate rate compared to removals

Tree Diversity/Selection (7 total)

- Need to increase species/diversity (3)
- Age class relative to site
- Need to have the “right” tree mix
- No invasive species, need to use local natives
- Need to replant Ann Arbor with larger shade trees

Planting Considerations (6 total)

- Hydrology and soil type
- Important to replace and fill gaps
- More choices for under wires
- Overhead wires are an issue
- Spacing of new street tree plantings appears to be inconsistent (15' to 80')
- Plant trees that require less maintenance

Follow-up Care/Maintenance (3 total)

- Excellent follow up care is needed to ensure survival. Is there money for this? (2)
- Focus on maintenance of what we have.

Funding Related (10 total)

- Funding is critical (2)
- Need proper resources and staff (2)
- Use Dean Fund as intended
- What funds are available for staff and planting?
- Political issues – need to advocate for trees’ place in the city budget
- Dean Fund provides ~\$80k/year – how can the fund grow?
- Accomplishing goals with minimum increases in taxes or fees
- Not enough staff + funding available for planting. What % of staff time is dedicated to forestry?

Balancing Priorities/Competing Interest (5 total)

- Consideration of solar and wind installations/balance plantings (2)
- City priorities – budget.
- Managing conflicts with other goals like increasing density or removing invasive species or non-native.
- Manage conflicts between tree planting and other city plans/initiatives

Visual Impacts/Traffic Safety (4 total)

- Visibility in lawn extension, right-of-way/some trees have a canopy that is too low (2)
- Site clearance + viewing at intersections can be impacted by poorly placed trees (2)

Using Forestry Knowledge (2 total)

- Use forestry expertise in plan reviews
- Need forestry expertise/input on road projects

Incentives/Legal Mechanisms (4 total)

- Use positive rewards/incentives to encourage plantings
- Avoid forcing individuals/private home owners to plant, use incentives
- Residential different from developer requirements
- Shopping centers, commercial property --> provide incentives for owners to plant trees

Partnerships (6 total)

- School sites have been used for plantings in the past – many trees removed during a utility project and not replaced
- Work with others who do maintenance around trees (i.e. mowing) to limit damage
- DTE/U of M/ DDA policies
- Relationship between city and U of M concerning trees is not formalized
- Relationship between city and DDA relative to trees
- Relationship between city and Washtenaw County relative to trees

Need for Action (4 total)

- Do it now – it is time
- Need to act on opportunities
- Asian longhorn beetle infestation – planning needed?
- Focus on public lands first.

What OPPORTUNITIES do you see as important for the plan to consider relative to tree planting?

Planning Process (5 total)

- Have individual plans for individual neighborhoods – develop with neighborhood input (3)
- Neighborhood identity
- Lack of involving residents in decision making

Tree Farm (3 total)

- Establish a tree farm – was once a nursery at the Ann Arbor airport (2)
- Municipal tree farm – don't buy trees from commercial businesses

Tree Planting/Quantities (3 total)

- Replacement of removed trees/Accelerate replacement of ash trees (2)
- Establish replacement to removal ratios

Tree Planting/Mix/Conditions (15 total)

- Choose/establish the proper density and mix of trees (5)
- "Right tree for the right place"/Plant appropriate to the condition (hydrology, soils, location, wires) (3)
- Emphasize native trees and local genotypes (3)

- Reduce habitat fragmentation – trees can help (2)
- Consider life-cycle of trees
- Spacing of trees, no large gaps, enough room for each tree

Funding (6 total)

- Pursue grant opportunities/seek alternative funding sources (2)
- Use other kinds of funding resources – utilize collective generosity in our community and volunteer involvement for raising trees, planting trees, caring for trees
- Lobby council to keep adequate tree funds in budget
- Don't put tree funds in general fund and rely on Dean Fund

Resident Volunteers/Stewards (8 total)

- Develop a stronger volunteer network. Work with volunteers and "stewards" to aid in planting and planning efforts (2)
- Engage residents in follow-up care/volunteer planting and maintenance activities (2)
- Educate people (2)
- Major citizen involvement – including school kids
- Provide resources to help residents proactively care for trees

Partnerships/Programs (9 total)

- Forge better relationships with partners (U of M, DDA, MDOT). Have written agreements (3)
- Partner with schools and natural areas to establish nurseries (2)
- Funding partnering between private/public.
- Public aware of issues due to ash borer.
- Partner with other entities/non-profit/schools/community groups/in kind services
- Leverage forestry expertise in other planning realms

Incentives/Ordinances/Requirements (4 total)

- Set standards that will endure beyond political leadership and personnel changes (2)
- Enhance tree ordinance. Developers to pay/offset for plantings they don't put on-site
- Provide incentives

Sustainability/Resilience (2 total)

- Trees can increase local community resilience – encourage a move away from fuel consumption.
- Consider planting enough trees to minimize automobile impact on air quality.

Food Supply (3 total)

- Fruit + nut trees (Bloomington, Indiana) (2)
- Compost can be a source of income from trees

Improve the look of entryways to city (State, Jackson, Ann Arbor-Saline) (1 total)

TOPIC 3 – Tree Maintenance + Removal

What ISSUES do you see as important for the plan to consider relative to tree maintenance + removal?

Maintenance around trees (7 total)

- Mowing and weed whacking girdles trees (4)
- Identify invasive species (Buckthorn) that compete with good trees
- Leaves clog gutters
- Leaf pick-up coordination

Pruning/utility or sight clearance (8 total)

- Conflict between utility pruning + community goals – need better pruning practices (3)
- DTE + street paving equipment – coordinate efforts better to protect tree health
- Bury utilities to avoid aggressive cutting of trees
- Improve tree pruning practice, use best practices
- Safety issues with trees that are not maintained properly
- Low hanging branches

Tree removal process (8 total)

- Trees are removed too easily (sometimes just at request of homeowners) – need a better process to determine removals
- Good trees are sometimes removed when poorer condition trees are not
- Don't cut big trees if possible, trim and maintain
- Need to discuss with residents why a tree is slated for removal
- Citizens must have input regarding tree removals
- Do not remove healthy trees even if homeowner wants them removed
- A philosophy of preserving trees first, removal only when necessary
- County Drain or Road Commission has removed trees

Funding/prioritization for maintenance (11 total)

- How is maintenance paid for? Need more funding (5)
- State of urban forest is declining – need more resources to maintain/avoid removals (3)
- Right equipment and personnel (2)
- Maintenance needs to be prioritized to protect the trees

Tree + sidewalk conflicts (3 total)

- Need more careful consideration of sidewalk conflicts/roots
- People have to repair their own sidewalks, but not manage street trees, confusing
- Sidewalk replacement – cost of tree versus cost of sidewalk

Ordinances/Regulations (2 total)

- City does not have the ordinance needed by the Arbor Day Foundation to be a "Tree City"
- Not enough enforcement of current codes (i.e. planting/landscaping ordinance)

Education, public and volunteers (2 total)

- Educate residents about maintenance practices + maintenance activities
- Residents not involved with maintenance + removal activities enough, engage them

Other concerns

- Pollen
- Messy trees
- Expanding management to private trees might spread out resources too much
- Maintenance of new trees - Water and prune newly planted trees

What OPPORTUNITIES do you see as important for the plan to consider relative to tree maintenance + removal?

Plant trees in groves, mow around the entire grove, not individual trees (2 total)

Reduce external impacts to trees (3 total)

- Encourage burying of utilities
- Reduce use of deicers on roads
- Stop trimming trees to accommodate street resurfacing plan

Maintenance approaches (7 total)

- Plan to make "fair" condition trees into "good condition" trees/improve health (2)
- Care for existing fruit + nut trees properly (2)
- Plant trees that require less maintenance (2)
- Move beyond a "minimize liability" approach to tree maintenance

Utilize volunteers/partnership opportunities (7 total)

- Train/educate volunteers (2)
- Involve other groups (i.e. Parks Advisory Council)
- Use volunteers for maintenance
- Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner – coordinate to prevent unwarranted removals
- Train/educate property owners to maintain trees up to 20' in right-of-way
- Forestry students/high school/community college students

Maintenance funding (4 total)

- Fundraise to provide money for maintenance (2)
- Allow homeowners to help pay for maintenance directly
- Special assessments for trees (similar to those for street lighting/improvements)

Removal opportunities /approaches (3 total)

- Find uses for removing invasive species (i.e. recipes)
- Other municipalities (i.e. Carmel, CA) don't allow trees to be cut down on private property without just cause
- Better notification system for removals – include in water bills

Other opportunities

- Use rubber sidewalks
- Consider obtaining easements to move sidewalks away from trees when in conflict
- Forestry can defend trees against other departments

TOPIC 4 – Public Engagement (Feedback Sheet)

What groups, organizations, or individuals do you feel should be represented on a stakeholder group?

Specific entities/organizations/groups

- Parks Advisory Council (PAC) (4)
- Neighborhood organizations (4)
- Ann Arbor Public Schools (3)
- Sierra Club (3)
- Audubon Society (2)
- Natural Areas Preservation (NAP) and volunteers
- Washtenaw County Road Commission
- Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner
- Engineering department (city)
- DNR
- Dean Fund
- Transportation Safety Committee (TSC)
- Native foresters: people who have no agenda but to help make a plan for the urban forest management.
- Ecology Center
- Urban Wood Collaborative
- SEMIRCD (Jessica Simmons)
- Allen Creek Watershed Group
- Tree lovers (AATC – Ann Arbor Tree Conservancy)
- Virginia Park Neighborhood
- Michigan Botanical Club
- www.seekids.org

General groups/representation

- Utility companies
- Ann Arbor residents
- Ann Arbor visitors
- Citizens from each ward
- Certified or professional arborists
- Representatives from city entities with possible conflicts, planning, transportation.

Which public outreach options do you want to participate in?

E-mail notifications	14			
Websites:	City website	Facebook	Other	Online surveys
	9	1		4

Public Meetings:	City-wide	Area Specific	Interviews
	8	5	3

Other planning considerations

- Open process with public volunteers - not government appointees.
- Include those who feel that trees should be controlled by property owners

Other Comments

- Urban Tree Canopy Analysis (UTC) does not account for quality/condition of trees
- Need public input on how tree condition is determined/qualified
- Need better assessment/considerations for invasive trees
- Plan must encourage burying utilities, reduce deicers, balance sidewalk costs.
- Educate the community
- Enforce ordinances consistently, chapter 40.
- Empower individuals to help care for urban forest, making correct decisions with education.
- Protection/management of trees on riverbanks and levees (i.e. millrace embankment below Argo Pond). I serve as a consultant to Sac. Area Flood Control Agency on this issue. Cutting down all trees and leaving roots in embankment that will eventually become seepage conduits is very bad idea.
- Put city “rules” related to trees on forestry website, not just reference to entire book of city codes.
- I was part of the Virginia Park tree planting group fall of 2009, which I would like to see repeated fall 2010.
- Some of my neighbors were not aware of the project and would like to participate this fall.