

## ***Advisory Committee Meeting #5 – Meeting Notes***

November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Time: 1:00-3:00 PM

Location: Lower Level Conference Room, Washtenaw County Building  
200 N Main St

**Meeting Attendees:** **Peggy Sorvala** (DTE), **Ann Lund** (Broadway Neighborhood), **Lynn Borset** (Ann Arbor Tree Conservancy), **Mike Martin** (First Martin), **Kris Olsson** (Huron River Watershed Council), **Joan Doughty** (Community Action Network), **Jeff Plakke** (University of Michigan Botanical Gardens and Arboretum), **Rita Mitchell** (Neighborhood Alliance), **James D’Amour** (Alternate- Sierra Club of Huron Valley), **Harry Sheehan** (Office of the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner), **Matt Naud** (City of Ann Arbor- Environmental Commission), **Neal Foster** (Millers Creek Action Team, Orchard-Hill Maplewood Homeowners Association).

City Staff: **Kerry Gray** (Urban Forestry and Natural Resources Planner), **Lesley Rivera** (Water Resources Program Assistant)

Meeting facilitators: **Cheryl Zuellig** (JJR), **Oliver Kiley** (JJR)

### **Review Agenda + Announcements**

- **Discussion of where AC left off before the recess**
  - o Goals
  - o Objective Topics
  - o PAC Presentation
    - JJR presented to the Park’s Advisory Commission in July to brief them on the progress of the UCFMP progress and get feedback.
- **Benchmarking**
  - o Benchmarking Objective Topics
    - 15 objective topics
    - Topics for Nov. 30 – Tree Planting Overall/ Increase Tree Canopy, Tree Maintenance and Pruning, Assessment and Monitoring, Funding (Take 1)
  - o Comments
    - **Q:** In reference to Objective J- Ordinances / requirement for managing private trees, Ordinances apply to only private trees?  
**A:** No, this was a general heading given to the title. This may apply to both private and public trees.
    - **Q:** What does the term “stocking level” mean?  
**A:** Stocking level refers to the percentage of available street planting sites that are planted with trees.
    - Concern arose over using the word amenity in the title for the topic F- Amenity uses for trees. We will discuss this more in depth at the next meeting December 15<sup>th</sup>.

## **Tree Planting + Canopy Cover**

### **- Benchmarking**

- It was noted that the basis of the American Forest's 40% UTC goal is still being investigated.
- **Q:** All of the cities used for benchmarking are cities that are larger than Ann Arbor, are there any small municipalities doing this work?  
**A:** Canopy cover is a newer area in urban forest management, so it is mainly larger cities that have completed urban tree canopy analyses and are developing canopy goals.
- **Q:** Why is a 2:1 planting to removal ratio used?  
**A:** It is used as another method for measuring canopy increase.
- **Q:** At what point is a tree measurable in the tree canopy?  
**A:** Even small trees are visible in the UTC- trees as small as 2" showed up in the urban tree canopy analysis done in 2010.
- **Q:** Is a dead or have dead tree considered a part of the UTC?  
**A:** Only if the tree has canopy or leaves- if it is completely dead it does not show up on the UTC.

### **- Where does AA stand?**

- The green overlay on the maps of Ann Arbor displayed on the PowerPoint presentation is the urban tree canopy and includes both public and private trees.
- Maximum Possible Urban Tree Canopy (Max UTC) is the maximum UTC is all available tree planting locations are planted (pervious areas)
  - The group discussed the possibility of using the Max UTC to set goals for UTC
  - A comment was made that the Max UTC is important because it shows possibilities for plantings
  - Committee agreed that while this is good information to have, the use of Max UTC to set the canopy goals was not the direction they wanted to take.
- **Q:** How much of the available space for planting are we currently using?  
**A:** About 43% (Calculated by dividing existing UTC by the Max UTC)
- It was noted that the numbers within the slides are currently inconsistent. JJR will review the numbers and make them consistent.

### **- Option #1: Adopt a city-wide 40% canopy cover goal**

- Option 1 would be to adopt American Forests recommendations for 40% city-wide canopy cover goal
- An alternative option to Option #1 would be to recommend having an overall goal of 40% split up by land use. Each land use could have an individual goal that when combined with the other land uses makes for a total UTC goal of 40%. Also, the reverse could be done and individual goals for land uses could be set, and overall canopy goal for the city could be calculated.
- **Q:** Is there a downside to having a higher goal?  
**A:** Having too high of a goal could negatively impact other needs of the City (ex: planting in all available spaces in recreation areas would limit the room for recreation). A goal that is too high can also be unachievable.
- A suggestion was made that UTC goal could be measured by an amount or percentage to increase the UTC to, rather than a final end goal.

- A sustainable urban canopy is not only about tree planting, but about tree maintenance as well. New plantings are not the only concern. It is important to maintain (prune) the existing large trees to help improve and increase tree canopy.
  - Portland is a good example of this.
- **Q:** How is Ann Arbor currently in terms of tree count?  
**A:** Tree count and canopy is still down from the Emerald Ash Borer. We do not have any data on tree canopy loss, only tree count loss which does not equate to canopy loss.
- **Q:** Where do churches fall under the land use categories?  
**A:** Institutional

- **Option #2: Develop land use specific canopy goals**

- **Option 2 recommendation:**
  - 1. Determine the existing canopy cover percentage for each land use category
  - 2. Identify areas with above average canopy cover and below average canopy cover within each land use category.
  - 3. Determine canopy cover percentages in above average and below average areas.
  - 4. Prioritize tree maintenance in areas with above average canopy cover and look to balance maintenance and tree planting in below average areas.
  - 5. Set the net canopy cover goal for each land use category to the above average canopy cover percentage.
  - **Example:**
    - Residential existing canopy: **40.2%**
    - Above average canopy: **50.5%** (the average of the areas that are above the 40.2%).
    - Below average canopy: **27.5%** (the average of the areas that are below the 40.2%)
    - **New Canopy Goal: 50%** (above average canopy cover percentage)
- Using the average of the above averages might be a good idea for residential, but for other areas would this be setting the bar low?
- There are separate land uses for office and commercial, should these be separate or should we combine them?
- Members suggested that using quantity of trees needed could be a good tool for marketing and goal setting. People understand a number of trees being planted versus a percentage.
- Some members felt that it would be beneficial to focus on residential, as the majority of the city is residential land.
  - Concern over having such weight on residential is that it puts a lot of responsibility on land owners.
    - Planting incentives will be discussed in more depth in a subsequent objective topic (AC meeting 7 or 8)
- There is concern that as you ask different groups to meet different goals, some groups may be asked to do too much in comparison to other groups (commercial has to double while others most only increase by 25%).

- **A:** For this reason there can be specific strategies to aid in reaching goals in each land use type and that will work for each group.
- This option provides more logical reasoning that will make the goals more achievable, rather than placing an arbitrary number as a goal.
- **Q:** With no requirements for commercial areas before, how will commercial areas feel when we ask them to change?  
**A:** There are already Ordinances in place that require for landscaping and trees. This can be revisited in the ordinance conversation.

**AC recommends using the methodology in Option #2 to determine canopy cover goals, with the suggestion to continue to refine the numbers and complete the analysis for all land use types.**

- Consider exploring in greater detail realistic constraints/levels for planting in different areas. What will it look like 'on the ground'?

### **Tree Maintenance +Pruning**

Benchmarking for this topic was difficult. There is limited information on specific practices available online and few communities provide contact information for their urban forestry staff in order to ask them questions directly.

- **Option #1- Maintain Reactive Maintenance**
  - This maintenance approach will have limited capacity to reach and maintain a sustainable urban forest.
  - This maintenance approach may have the lowest budgeted cost, but also yields a low level of service. Relatively more forestry funds would need to be spent on emergency and responding to issues rather than proactively avoiding higher cost/higher risk situations.
- **Option #2- Shift to Proactive Maintenance**
  - A return on investment has not been calculated for reactive vs. proactive management, however it is assumed that there would be a higher return with a proactive management approach.
  - **Q:** Would there be a shock to the trees during pruning cycle 1? Will the increased pruning cause a greater risk of tree death?  
**A:** No, there will not be a higher risk of tree death. There will be standards for pruning to protect the trees.
  - **Q:** Will there be a loss in tree canopy due to the pruning?  
**A:** No, there will actually be an improvement. The pruning would be to remove dead/diseased limbs and to develop proper structure in the tree. This would allow the tree to put its resources into developing healthier/larger canopy.
  - There was a comment that the proactive approach seems like the best option, the only thing but understanding the total cost-benefit difference between the options is important.
  - Emergency call costs are very expensive. With the 7-year pruning cycle there will be less emergency calls.

- The costs estimated for the 7-year pruning cycle may not necessarily be in addition to current costs, but rather result in a shift of existing fund allocation.
  - The group would like to know the cost of our current maintenance program in order to see what additional funds would be needed.
- In order to have a more efficient proactive maintenance strategy, the City can work with DTE to combine cycles.

***AC recommends Option #2- Shifting to a Proactive Management system.***

### **Assessment + Monitoring**

This topic considers multiple potential recommendations, all of which could be pursued as part of the plan’s recommendations. Assessment and monitoring was broken down into three categories: public tree inventory; urban canopy monitoring, and threat assessment.

- **Category 1: Implement routine updates to the public tree inventory**
  - Option 1: The Public Street + Park Tree inventory could be updated every 3 years. This cycle would greatly benefit forestry operations and is regular enough to detect trees rapidly declining
  - Option 2: Implement “windshield surveys” on the city, assessing approximately 1/3 of the city per year
- **Category 2: Urban Canopy Monitoring**
  - A 10-year cycle would be used to re-assess the tree canopy and re-assess benefits. A more frequent cycle is not needed as the canopy grows slowly.
  - **Q:** What is i-Tree?  
**A:** i-Tree is a tool developed by the US Forest Service to quantify the benefits of trees.
- **Category 3: Threat Assessment**
  - Not much information for benchmarking
- **Additional Comments and Questions**
  - The group would like to know the costs associated with each of the three options.
  - A group member commented that they like Category 2 and 3 together.
  - A group member commented that they consider trees to be public art, and suggested using the Public Art Fund and the Stormwater Fund for funding.
  - **Q:** Do any of these options include training residents?  
**A:** Yes, they all could. Last year the City of Ann Arbor had a program training residents on pruning. The City will do this again this year on January 28<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully this can expand and the residents can become our eyes on the street monitoring and notifying the City of current tree issues on their street/neighborhood. Volunteer programming will be discussed more at a subsequent AC meeting.

AC members recommend that assessment and monitoring occur in all three categories. The mechanism for the assessment and monitoring has not been determined.

**Funding (Take 1)**

- Where does Ann Arbor stand?
  - o Forestry funding: Stormwater Utility, Parks Millage, Elizabeth Dean Fund (special projects)
- The concern for sustainable funding was mentioned, specifically related to fundraising
- The group suggested looking at what other cities around the same size of Ann Arbor are using as funding.
- The purpose of the AC is to decide the level of service and cost associated with the type of urban forestry management plan wanted. It would then be up to the City Council to determine funding.

**Activity**

- For a group activity, AC members were asked to rate funding priorities.
- The results from the Advisory Committee were =different than that of the Working Group in a few key categories.
  - o The biggest difference related to tree planting, which the AC members ranked the highest priority (lower numbers are higher) and the WG ranked third from the lowest (7<sup>th</sup>) in priority.
  - o The working group’s highest priorities included tree pruning and tree removals. Tree pruning was also highly supported by the AC members.
  - o Assessment + Monitoring and Communication/Education ranked highly among both groups, which is significant because little existing funding is directed towards these activities today.
  - o AC members were uncertain what “enforcement” meant in this context.

Activity	AC Priorities	WG Priorities
Planting	2.7	7.0
Tree pruning	2.9	1.0
Assessment + Monitoring	3.8	4.0
Communication/Education	4.0	3.0
Volunteer Coord.	5.6	6.0
Tree Removal	5.7	2.0
Fundraising	6.3	5.0
Stump Removal	6.7	8.0
Enforcement	7.3	9.0