

## Advisory Committee Meeting #6 – Meeting Notes

December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Time: 9:00-11:00 AM

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

**Meeting Attendees:** **Ann Lund** (Broadway Neighborhood), **Lynn Borset** (Ann Arbor Tree Conservancy), **Jeff Plakke** (University of Michigan Botanical Gardens and Arboretum), **Rita Mitchell** (Neighborhood Alliance), **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), **Paul Bairley** (Former City Forester), **John Lawter** (Parks Advisory Commission/UM Grounds), **Kris Olsson** (Huron River Watershed Council), **Kathy Stroud** (Northside Neighborhood).

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

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

### Review agenda + Announcements

- Meeting minutes from AC meeting #5 will be passed out at the next meeting.
- AC #8 will be on January 10<sup>th</sup> from 1:00-3:00 PM. Location: Washtenaw County Lower Level Conference Room (200 N. Main, Ann Arbor)

### General Outreach + Education with Forest Promotion

#### **Benchmarking**

- This topic contains a lot of ideas for specific outreach *activities*. The key question for the Advisory Committee is to determine who will be tasked implementing the outreach strategy (i.e. City units, non-profit, partnerships, etc.).
- The benchmarking cases highlight communities with outreach programs managed through non-profits.
- **Q:** Were the non-profits/volunteer groups in the case studies created independently of the City or did the city identify a need that led to their formation?  
**A:** Both –note that Ann Arbor’s Clean Energy Coalition was originally a city program that later became an independent non-profit

#### **Recommended Approach**

The Urban Forestry and Natural Resources Planning Coordinator with Systems Planning will implement/coordinate outreach activities and the creation/development/growth of partnerships.

Activities may include:

- o Developing/Growing- City/Field Operations Unit + Cross-Unit Partnerships (NAP, Stormwater)
  - A comment was made that with different units within the City working together more partnerships could form and evolve. It would be beneficial to utilize the resource we currently have and then work from there to grow.
  - **Q:** How does the outreach work in relation to the partnership between Forestry and Parks? Will there be outreach with parks and park stewards?
  - **A:** Yes, an overall outreach plan will need to be developed in order to understand the potential partners in conducting outreach and the major outreach activities.

- We should make a point of acknowledging the role of the Parks Department in the coordination.
- Developing partnerships with an existing non-profit organization
  - For example: Leslie Science Center, ReLeaf of Michigan, MI Botanical Club, Ecology Center, Sierra Club, Huron River Watershed Council, etc.
  - A comment was made that it would be a good idea to be involved with a group that already has a 501(c)3 designation in order to move forward, as opposed to trying to start a new non-profit, which can be time consuming
- Establish an Ann Arbor non-profit dedicated to urban forestry to manage outreach and special programs
  - Clean Energy Coalition formed in this manner, as a city-initiated program that separated and became an independent non-profit organization.

### **Additional Comments and Questions**

- **Q:** Does the Dean Fund stay within the City?  
**A:** Yes, it must stay within city, as Ms. Dean bequeathed her will to the City of Ann Arbor to manage and plant city trees.
- There should be organization around neighborhoods. Neighborhoods are more invested in the events immediately surrounding them. Schools could also be involved within neighborhoods.
- There is a lack of communication between neighborhoods. Rather than having each neighborhood linked to one specific person at the city level, there should also be a way that connects the neighborhood groups/associations to each other directly.
- Some neighborhood associations are stronger than others. We need to make sure that the policy that is developed is effective for all neighborhoods.
- In order to foster cross City unit partnerships there needs to be more of a connection between groups than one person. Needs levels of cross coordination.
- AC member are in favor of doing an art project that relates to trees. A festival or city wide event to engage people with art, education, and research related to trees could be quite successful in the city.
- **Q:** Are we still a Tree City?  
**A:** Yes

### **Partnerships with Organizations**

#### **Recommendations**

- Develop partnerships with non-profit organizations – carry out outreach/education/fundraising (see also Outreach + Education Topic)
  - **Q:** Could we use legacies or memorial trees as funding?  
**A:** We do have a memorial tree program. Parks Department oversees that program.
    - There was discussion about how this program works. Currently memorial plaques are not installed at the site of the tree for vandalism/maintenance concerns (except for in a few locations like Gallup Park). Consider other approaches for relating names to trees in the future.
    - **Q:** Could we somehow mention that a non-profit could be involved in some kind of a memorial program?  
**A:** There is a possibility to coordinate this.
- Develop partnership with Utility Companies to fund tree maintenance and tree planting programs on public and/or private property. Tie in with energy conservation mandates/goals
- Create partnership/program with institutions for tree plantings and carbon offset programs
  - Potential tie in with UM and offsetting carbon from UM football games

- A group member commented that they liked the idea of having a carbon offset program for football games.

**AC comments regarding carbon offset program:**

- A comment was made that when the AC was presented with early tree research, the research states that the ability of trees to absorb carbon is very low.
- Planting trees not going to solve climate change. However if we create local carbon offset program that ties in with climate change. If someone wants to offset their use, it would be better to have them invest in a city program rather than going to another carbon offset program.
- Recommendation: Develop local carbon offset program.
- Develop a corporate partnerships with employee volunteer programs for labor and fundraising
  - Encourage corporations to help cover volunteer costs
- Public School Partnerships
  - PTSO and School Improvement Teams
  - Opportunities for skills development of students (i.e. pruning practices, planting, etc.)
- Streamline/enhance private sponsorship programs for open or park areas.

**Additional Comments and Questions**

- A suggestion was made to create a relationship with local tree care companies.
  - As the City we do not promote working with certain companies. However, if companies are volunteering their services or products in certain circumstances we will acknowledge that.
- Although it is important to develop partnerships, it is also important to decide what the goal of having these partnerships actually is. What do we want to accomplish with these partnerships?
  - This plan is going to take a number of years to fully implement. We need to prioritize what we want implemented.

**Resident Volunteering/Stewardship**

**Recommendation**

- Develop a volunteer program that clearly identifies what urban forestry activities volunteers can participate in to support a sustainable urban forest.
  - Special planting programs/activities
  - Expanded citizen pruner programs
  - Outreach/communication activities
  - Option: charge for training to recoup training and program costs.
  - A comment was made that it is important to care for new trees as well. This could potentially be added- care for small trees by watering and mulching.
    - Staff commented that Citizen Pruner does train volunteers to not only prune but provide general young tree care (watering, mulching). We may need a better name than Citizen Pruner to describe volunteer- any suggestions are welcome.
    - AC member: there should be a piece in the plan to the effect that the amount of tree planting needs to match the amount of tree care we are available to provide. Need a balance of planting and maintenance.
      - AC Member: So often trees are planted but then there is not enough care given to them. There needs to be a separate way to engage volunteers to maintain areas where there are no residents to care for them. For example: S. Seventh north of Scio Church.
  - **Q:** Is there an organization at the moment that would be a candidate for growing some of these volunteer activities?

- **A:** Possible organizations: Leslie Science Center, neighborhood associations, the Watershed Council, the Ecology Center, Ann Arbor 350

### Additional Comments and Questions

- Perhaps this plan may help it become clear that a non-profit needs to be formed.
- It may be too early to identify a particular organization to be given the task of coordinating volunteer activities.
  - Master Gardeners program
    - If the program does not continue, perhaps they could provide a list of volunteers
  - Wild Ones

### Tree Board: Recommendation

Engage Environmental Commission in urban and community forestry management.

- **Q:** How big is the Environmental Commission? How does it work?  
**A:** The Environmental Commission was established in 2000. It must have two council members, a representative from Parks Commission, a representative from the Energy Commission, and a representative from the Planning Commission, remainder appointed from the community at large. 13 total members.
  - Issue-focused committees can be created under the Environmental Commission. These committees can have members that are not appointed to the Environmental Commission. These committees can make recommendations to the Environmental Commission, which would then make recommendations to City Council. Recommendations are usually policy recommendations, and do not directly affect operations.
- **Q:** Does the Environmental Commission have any effect on operations?  
**A:** The Environmental Commission was designed as a way for citizens to be able to make policy recommendations to council on key policy issues. Operations can be affected by changes in policy.
- An AC member commented that although they support the idea of working with the Environmental Commission, they would like to have more impact operationally.
  - The purpose of creating the Urban and Community Forestry Management Plan is to make changes in operations and Forestry priorities. The development of this plan is the opportunity to affect operations based on community opinions.
    - A group member commented that they see this as the initial stage; they do not see that as an ongoing way to be involved in operations.
- A comment was made that a board of neighborhood representatives would be a way to connect neighborhoods together as well as to the city.
  - This could happen as a committee to the Environmental Commission.
  - **Q:** If a committee came up with a recommendation, is it possible for the Environmental Commission to decide to not move forward with the recommendation?  
**A:** Yes, however in general if one committee feels strongly about something the Environmental Commission will pass it on to be decided on by council.

### Resident Community + Notification of Forestry Activities

#### Range of Recommended Options:

- Provide letter/door hanger notification of upcoming forestry activities
- Post list of upcoming removal on City website and why tree is being removed

- Provide appeals form and process to appeal a tree removal
- Develop Urban Forest Annual Report
- Pre-notification about removals. Send letters/postcard to all homes where there is a priority removal to let them know that the tree in front of their home has been identified as a priority removal and it will be removed in the coming months/years.
- If residents want to save a tree slated for removal (not a priority removal), have them pay for care (ex: pruning, cable and bracing) and require a yearly report from a certified arborist on the condition and care of the tree.
  - o The Working Group wants to make sure there are no legal issues with this recommendation (i.e. increased liability or risk from not removing at-risk trees).
  - o The group is interested in pursuing possibilities for allowing residents to pay to have their tree cared for rather than removed.
- Develop good relationships with homeowner associations and utilize them to publicize about tree work occurring in the neighborhood.
- Create standard presentation that can be given to homeowner associations about the Forestry program. Advertise that this presentation is available. Videotape and post on YouTube (General Outreach Action)
- Create student film competition where students develop a short film about tree benefits - Film Festival (General Outreach Action)
  - o A committee member suggested we use the Public Art Fund to sponsor Film Festival
    - Ordinance does not allow the Art Fund to be spent on temporary art or performing art.

#### **Additional Comments and Questions**

- **Q:** When trees are slated for removal, is only the resident directly in front of the tree being notified of its removal?  
**A:** No, the entire block is notified.
- There needs to be a way to measure public satisfaction. Some way to get feedback.
  - o We have baseline information from the survey the City conducted in 2010 that asks how informed residents are. These questions could be repeated after outreach + notification strategies are put into place to measure any changes in satisfaction.
- **Q:** How are removals happening in parks property notified?  
**A:** NAP handles this, primarily for trees at the edge of woodlands adjacent to open park areas. Need to check with them on how they notify. Forestry operations handles removal of trees in managed park areas.

#### **Amenity Uses for Trees**

##### **Recommended Options**

- Develop a fruit/nut tree orchard program (trees are grown on city property in designated areas)
  - o Working Group recommends having a designated space for fruit and nut trees
  - o Based on an AC member's experience edible gardens are a lot of work to maintain. Volunteers that may have initiated the garden do not necessarily continue to maintain. It takes a lot of energy and skill to maintain them.
  - o Taking care of edible trees takes more care and skill than many other trees.
  - o A comment was made that although it is good to have a recommendation to explore fruit and nut tree orchards it may not be the best solution. The purpose of developing this plan is to get more use out of the urban forest; we may not want to have the unintended consequences of having an orchard to maintain.
  - o A group member suggested having a demonstration edible forest.

- Leslie Science Center as a venue possibly
- Develop a partnership with local non-profit (ex: Food Gathers) to harvest fruit/nuts from trees
  - A committee member suggested Project Grow as another potential partner
- Investigate opportunities for wood utilization partnerships that are cost neutral
  - **Q:** Why are we looking for wood utilization partnerships that are cost neutral only? Would the wood not be sold for a profit?  
**A:** By recommending a cost neutral solution we are suggesting a utilization option that does not cost more than what we pay now for wood disposal. Further, that public funds aren't being used to directly benefit a private enterprise.

#### **Additional Comments and Questions**

- The way trees are cut down is different if the end goal is mulching compared to utilizing solid wood.

### **Ecological Value of Trees**

#### **Recommended Options**

- Develop a climate offset program for City Operations or other activities that will result in tree plantings and maintenance
- Update/standardize streetscape design standards for more diverse ecological benefits, including habitat/pollination, stormwater management, and healthier growing mediums
- Identify potential sites/locations across the city where more structured understory plantings can be incorporated and are desired.
- Promote Back Yard Habitat programs
  - National Wildlife Federation Backyard Habitat Program
  - Wild Ones (Local Chapter)
- Promote/pursue schoolyard habitat programs
- Identify and promote urban forestry management activities that can have a positive impact on stormwater/rainwater management.

#### **Additional Comments and Questions**

- There is concern over the white-tailed deer population in the City. Would like this mentioned in the plan because this issue may fall between cracks and the deer population will grow. Hard to have trees survive where there are a lot of deer.
  - **Q:** What has NAPs involvement in this issue been?  
**A:** What NAP has done about this issue thus far is unknown.
  - UM Botanical Gardens are in the early stages of conducting a flyover to assess deer population in the Botanical Gardens in partnership with the county. Before a solution can be suggested we need to get a better handle on how many deer there are. Winter counts
  - Other wildlife issues in relation to the urban forest?
    - Rabbits
  - The best solution could be education
    - Included in the plan: ecologically monitoring that involves wildlife, trees, and shrubs. Describe the health of the forest from an ecological standpoint.
- Urban forests need to be monitored and looked at carefully. There is potential for pests such as the Asian Longhorned Beetle to invade.

- A suggested recommendation may be to conduct more research to find out what our best options really are. Maybe there are more options to consider.
- Suggestion to look at things that we can actually have some control over and be prepared for things that we cannot.
- Climate change needs to be captured in this plan somehow.
- AC member: The plan needs to reflect an open mind approach. The ability to be flexible and take into consideration new research as it arises is important.

### **Next Steps**

- Prior to the next AC meeting the group would like sample Ordinances.
- The next meeting from **January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011 from 1:00-3:00 PM**. Location: Washtenaw County building- Lower Level conference room (200 N. Main).
- Subsequent Topics
  - o Species selection + invasive management
  - o City policies/coordination for public tree management
  - o Tree planting incentives + protection measures
  - o Ordinances/requirement for managing private trees