

Urban Ecology Framework
SAC Recommendations Meeting Summary
135 Auburn Ave.
Tuesday, December 11, 2018

Following is a summary of the key issues and ideas discussed by the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) members. SAC members were alerted to the availability of interactive Urban Ecology Framework (UEF) maps (<https://arcg.is/1ejPq1>).

Key Issues:

- More **education** needed at all levels, from developers to private citizens, to highlight ecological benefits and values
- Nonnative **invasive species** an important issue to be addressed
- Concern for **tree loss due to development**, lack of teeth or incentives in current ordinance
- **Tree protection on private property** needed, through education, incentives and neighbor to neighbor stewardship
- **Coordination, partnerships, and collaboration** across city agencies, nonprofits and the philanthropic community
- A **UEF** that provides a framework for protection of natural resources
- A Tree Protection Ordinance (**TPO**) that focuses on incentives to protect
- **Funding** mechanisms that support acquisition of most valuable resources for protection, partnerships, neighborhood collaboration, and education
- **Connecting zoning update** to UEF findings and TPO rewrite
- Need to create **mitigation strategies that benefit** the wider community

Summary Recommendations:

- 1. Urban Ecology Framework (regulation, education and engagement, incentive, capital projects)**
 - Use areas identified as high value to guide protection, to inform a long-term land acquisition and maintenance plan
 - Create an overlay district for valuable areas of canopy and natural resource areas (streams and wetlands) to support protection, enhancement, education; highlight small oases in neighborhoods
 - Highlight streams – at the heart, buffers - removal of invasive species, restore stream buffer and channels, rebuild soils
 - Protect the city’s 95% private/5% public lands, and establish/confirm City’s goal of percentage tree canopy citywide
 - Connect open space to transportation (mass, low-impact, pet-friendly transit)
 - Support development of conservation easements on private property, tax breaks for community groups and neighborhood groups that share contiguous lands
 - List early action items for implementation
- 2. Tree Protection Ordinance/Tree Recompense Funds (regulation, education and engagement, incentives)**

- Use simple language that is easily understandable.
- Focus tree ordinance on protection, then on incentives like tax breaks or other support to homeowners to reward preservation and protection. In current ordinance trees are not sufficiently valued to deter removal or for the ecological benefits they contribute
- Increase education related to the values and benefits of trees as stated in TPO
- Assign greater value to mature trees and native trees (more focus on protection)
- Include protection of native soil and seed banks, to support function and regeneration
- Tree recompense focused on achieving a broader common good – e.g., builder creates a community park, does stream buffer restoration, or provides other accessible community space or conservation actions.
- Recompense funds go to support acquisition, prioritizing protection of high value areas
- Connect to zoning rewrite- new connections between affordable housing and access to green space (mature tree canopy)

3. Education and Messaging (process, education and engagement)

- Identify the “Ahaa!” message to garner and maintain public support and participation
 - Streams and water have inherent public appeal and can be used to raise awareness (e.g., daylighted streams; South River Conservancy, WAWA)
 - Cross cutting benefits of tree conservation: public health, economic
- Combine active and passive education campaigns; for example, encourage behavioral change by making ecological processes visible, such as price tags on trees, signs on creeks, native species markers, etc.
- Promote a more expansive approach to protecting mature wooded areas on private forested land, through promotion of an ethic of “landkeeping”
- Leverage existing opportunities to spread the message and encourage greater involvement: Rec Centers, APS, NPU, UEF technical and stakeholder committee members.
- Create new Urban Ecology Center - access to nature becomes non-political and has a whole-city focus
- Provide materials (maps and talking points) for community members to use to reach out to their neighbors, for neighbor to neighbor engagement
- Identify apps that help facilitate community reporting of issues associated with city’s natural resources.
- Partner with Urban Youth Corps on training and outreach programs
- Encourage and facilitate urban farming
- Use social marketing and media to educate and monitor on a community level; encourage demonstration sites and ensure successes are shared
- Require the development and landscaping industries to learn tree valuation and protection during construction
- Provide communications materials to SAC and TAC members to share with their networks and elected officials, including action oriented talking points.

4. Invasive Species Control (regulation, incentives, education and engagement, capital projects)

- Major factor, more prevalent than ever in public and private lands
- Need program to remove and manage on public lands, see Mayor’s pilot program

- Need education – from public to private nurseries on invasives and their impact on the landscape
- Need incentives and financial resources to empower residents to take action on private lands

5. Agency Coordination (process, regulation, education)

- City to begin with maintenance of its properties following guidance outlined in UEF and TPO, provide a model for private owners
- Increase coordination between departments, agencies; e.g., stream buffer variance application should trigger meeting between arborist and hydrologist; other site development activities should trigger meetings as well
- Create standard Reforestation Detail to ensure sufficient diversity in species, size, maturity of replacement trees – working across agencies to ensure all arborists are providing same guidance to the public
- Leverage other existing partnerships; eg. Groundwork Atlanta, Park Pride, Greening Youth, etc.

6. Zoning Policy and Legislation (process, regulation)

- Incorporate a common good incentive to support developers who incorporate green roofs, green walls, or similar beneficial regenerative design features.
- Address affordable housing goals as well as increasing green space requirement; part of required education for developer/builder/homeowner in the construction and variance application process
- Look at areas where improper zoning lessens ability to enforce protections. For example, change zoning for churches and schools from commercial to community facilities category (eg. Fulton County)

7. Funding (process, regulation, incentive)

- Use recompense money to buy high value lands (forest canopy, wetlands, streams, etc)
- Facilitate public-private partnerships and land ownership partnerships to acquire lands that need protecting and obtain easements for restoration and management
- Support new partnerships and funding opportunities to protect and maintain high value areas by leveraging private philanthropy and nonprofits
- Support nonprofit partnerships with city agencies, consider ways to support orgs all vying for the same set of resources
- Grant small easements and funding/technical assistance for restoration, naturalization on homeowner properties, maintenance and management of resources (invasive species)
- Connect parks via low impact mass transit options (for example, gondolas) can generate the revenues to pay for maintenance