

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

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

Key Issues:

- Concern for **tree loss due to development**, lack of enforcement and incentives in current ordinance
- **Tree protection on private property** needed, through education, incentives, and neighbor to neighbor stewardship
- More **education** at all levels, from developers to private citizens, to highlight ecological value and benefit of natural resources
- Nonnative **invasive species** an important issue to be addressed through education, funding, and enforcement
- A **UEF** that provides a framework for protection of natural resources
- The Tree Protection Ordinance (**TPO**) that focuses on incentives to protect, maximum sustainable footprint and use of Tree Value Matrix (TVM)
- **Funding** mechanisms are needed to support acquisition of most valuable resources for protection, and for partnerships, neighborhood collaboration, & education
- **Connecting zoning update** to UEF findings and TPO rewrite
- **Improved coordination across agencies**
- Create **mitigation strategies that benefit** the wider community

Summary Recommendations:

- 1. Urban Ecology Framework (regulation, education and engagement, incentives, capital projects)**
 - Identify areas that should be protected including Chattahoochee River corridor, floodplains and riparian buffers, highest points in the City, land and riparian habitat corridors
 - Support public management approaches including forestry management, inclusive of invasive species management, and riparian buffer restoration and enhancement
 - Develop ecological strategies specific to urban core, e.g., increased diverse tree canopy on the streets
 - Establish a goal for tree canopy in the City integrated with stormwater management goals
 - Address park deserts, increasing opportunities citywide for a 10-minute walk to park or open space
 - After the completion of the UEF, initiate ground-truthing exercise to confirm areas of high value and function

- Establish metrics at watershed scale
- 2. Tree Protection Ordinance/Tree Recompense Funds (regulation, education and engagement, incentives)**
- Prepare a stronger TPO that has more teeth to control tree loss, especially high value canopy, and protect ecological assets like stream corridors
 - Incentivize ecological performance goals/metrics to promote creative approaches to development, encouraging tree preservation, soil protection, and the visual character of the “city in the forest”
 - Establish initial site review meeting/pre-app meeting with developers; include tree survey requirement of site
 - Develop a maximum sustainable footprint and use of TVM; avoid grading sensitive “green” zones of site; use new standards based on pre-development conditions; establish very high fee for increased impervious cover, over the maximum sustainable footprint
 - Create opportunities to develop mini-conservation easements to incentivize smaller lot owners to preserve contiguous backyard forest or to protect a portion of a lot from re-development, specifically the portion of a lot with quality trees.
 - When tree removal is warranted, require offsite mitigation of tree removal, purchase and maintenance of publicly accessible green space
- 3. Education and Messaging (process, education and engagement)**
- Increase educational messaging of:
 - Ecological value, benefits and function of tree canopy, native species, riparian corridors
 - Habitat needs for native wildlife species and their movement corridors (sandhill cranes, beavers, monarch butterflies, neotropical migratory birds etc.)
 - Process for determination of dead, dying or hazardous trees
 - To encourage ecological awareness
 - Ground community identity in watershed location
 - Grade NPUs for ecological value
 - Support community members as enforcers of ecological message, within their communities
 - Education on regulations especially important for out-of-town and overseas developers
- 4. Invasive Species Control (regulation, incentives)**
- City to enforce laws on public property regarding removal and maintenance of invasive and exotic species on City lands and waterways
 - Consider opportunities to create an economy to remove invasive plant species (job training, use of materials)
- 5. Agency Coordination and Enforcement (process, regulation, education and engagement)**
- Improve code enforcement of city and state laws on City-owned or maintained lands (review agency exemptions for tree removal)
 - Cross agency cooperation and collaboration with Zoning, DWM, Parks and Rec (e.g. updates in complimentary ordinances and plans, on forestry/canopy management)

decisions (tree removal, etc.); institute interdepartmental site review, facilitate cross-agency input

- Increase staffing of Arborist Division to meet required level of tree assessment and homeowner assistance
- Engage with Atlanta Public Schools (third largest landholder); discuss state-variance to avoid clear-cutting of mature tree canopy
- Support partnerships with local non-profits engaging with communities on tree removal and maintenance

6. Zoning Policy and Legislation (process, regulation)

- Promote zoning policies that level the playing field, encourage development that preserves trees and reflects the character of the City; include density bonuses for saving significant trees
- Integrate affordable housing and anti-displacement policies with TPO
- Establish a performance-based zoning approach, to compliment one suggested for TPO
- Encourage a diversity of housing stock that protects trees through incentives and tax reductions
- Addition of trees to citywide tax map

7. Funding (process, regulation, incentives)

- Use recompense or other mitigation funding mechanism to purchase most pristine areas, protect floodplain and mature tree canopy, high biodiversity parcels, or creation of new green space
- Increase available funding to support maintenance of natural resource areas for Parks, DWM, other agencies tasked with maintenance
- Create new incentives like tax reduction for maintaining existing footprint or adding high-value trees; density bonus; building diversity of housing stock
- Increase funding to public, especially low-income communities, to support invasive species control and maintenance (greenswards) as well as tree valuation on private properties