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TREE SUMMIT REPORT

12.5.19

Urban Forest Strategic Plan
Stakeholder Engagement Event

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SYNOPSIS

On December 5th, 2019 members of over 50 non-profit and/or community organizations, City departments, and government agencies attended a meeting at the *Discovery Center* in the city's Fairmount Park (see Appendix A for a list of organizations). Hosted by Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and members of the project team for the Philadelphia Urban Forest Strategic Plan effort, the *Philadelphia Tree Summit* brought together a broad spectrum of stakeholders and urban forestry experts representing the various needs and interests of their respective constituencies. The goals of the event were to: respond to the newly-released *Tree Canopy Assessment* report which analyzes the current tree canopy in the city, and change over 10 years; and to identify the key challenges facing Philadelphia's urban forest that should be addressed in the upcoming Urban Forest Strategic Plan effort, including steps for prioritizing equity in that process.

Participants worked together in cross sectoral groups of 10-12 to gather the information in this report. Below is a synopsis of their responses.

CANOPY ASSESSMENT REPORT REACTIONS

There were mixed reactions to the *Tree Canopy Assessment* report in which some participants felt it captured assessments many of them already held regarding the state of the tree canopy in the city, while others were left surprised at the results (see Appendix B for full list of transcribed responses).

Of the responses, these were the most common:

- Further study is needed to address the relationship between residential tree removal and new development construction.
- There is a need for more city data in which tree removal can be overlapped with other neighborhood data such as Heat Index Maps for a deeper analysis of impact, obstacles and opportunities.
- Partners want to clearly identify who is responsible for the maintenance of current trees and the role of city government in this.

URBAN FOREST STRATEGIC PLAN INPUT

Of all the questions asked during the summit, those pertaining to the strategic plan had the most agreed upon responses. **"Community Involvement"** and **"Collaboration"** were by far the most popular:

What is the most important thing to be addressed in the Urban Forest Strategic Plan?

1

Community Involvement

- Must engage a diverse group of stakeholders (youth, POC, etc.) in conversations regarding tree planting, maintenance, neighborhood health concerns and planning.
- Initiate a citywide campaign to build respect for trees that includes neighborhood specific outreach and engagement.
- Issues are different for homeowners, developers, and renters. All play key roles in tree canopy but require different approaches.

2

Collaboration

- Build collaboration among both “disenfranchised” community members and different city departments/agencies.
- Make space for diverse group of leaders to participate in planning projects and assessments of needs (youth, POC, renters, etc.)
- Collaborate with other city departments and non-profit partners to go after joint funding.
- Engage city departments in Philly and outside the city, to share best practices for scaling up and sustaining projects.
- Address barriers that exist pertaining to costs of owning trees for homeowners, or lack of opportunities for renters.
- Work with community members to pilot local initiatives and set specific goals by management unit and area of the city based on local factors.

Funding was a common theme that was mentioned in different points of this process. The need to “prioritize stable and long-term funding” was seen as necessary for the project to be successful in the future. There was an acknowledgement that funding needed to also be distributed equitably to “vulnerable communities”. There were various ideas for where the funding could come from (ex. Taxes, parking permits, etc.)

Infrastructure and *city responsibility* was another common theme. The groups identified a number of different needs and approaches the city could take to address these issues:

- Evaluate all existing policies pertaining to trees. Assess their impacts on low-income communities, equity, their obstacles to success, etc. and then develop new structures, policies, etc. to rectify trouble areas.
- Review and revise “street guidelines” and developers’ requirements and responsibilities pertaining to tree planting and removal.
- Explore having the City take on primary responsibility for the maintenance and protection of [large] trees through policy, as well as liability for the infrastructure that trees affect, like sidewalks and sewer laterals.

EQUITY INPUT

Across all the questions and suggestion areas, the theme of *Equity* was evoked regularly. Participants recognized that not only was there a significant gap in their work due to a lack of diversity of voices in the room and field as a whole, but that decisions moving forward should not be done without the input of marginalized communities and identities. Equally important was the need to acknowledge the impact of class in regards to the preservation and planting of trees. Understanding the differences in power and accessibility between homeowners and those who rent their homes is vital to addressing how all community members can fully participate in the overall project. Recognizing that each community has different issues and challenges in regard to trees, the groups came up with a broad spectrum of ideas for how to address this problem of equity.

How do we prioritize equity in the Urban Forest Strategic Plan process?

1

Incentives

- Incentivize participation in focus groups and planning meetings by providing material support to residents so they can attend meetings (i.e. childcare, food, etc.) and valuing their time.
- Meet communities where they are already congregating (churches, schools, etc.).
- Provide resources to build community capacity for tree plantings and care and equitably distribute resources to neighborhoods that need it most.
- Create incentives for residents to participate in focus groups, provide feedback throughout the RFP/planning process, and plant trees (Property tax abatements, PWD water runoff tax abatement, PECO model).

2

City Involvement

- Create employment opportunities for community members to participate in tree planting and maintenance work (ex. PWD Water Ambassadors program).
- Incentivize the preservation of large trees for developers. [Facilitator's note: Participants raised the issue of gentrification in their neighborhoods and how due to displacement and an inability to compete with development lobbyists, there are no mechanisms in place to hold developers accountable for the removal of trees from their communities.]
- Promote tree planting and care by offering monetary incentives for homeowners, renters and developers.
- Pursue holistic cross-sector approach to building out youth employment opportunities in the urban forest.

3

Education

- Create materials and learning opportunities for residents to learn the impacts of tree removal on their health, the environmental importance of trees, and how they can become actively involved.
- Inform the community of programs that exist to support tree planting and maintenance on private property (water pipe insurance, free tree programs).
- Address the connection of tree planting to gentrification and
  the history of racist urban planning policies.
- Engage more youth through intergenerational conversations and planning.
- Coordinate messaging across departments/ organizations that addresses the real-life impacts and concerns of tree removal on marginalized communities.

Recommendations:

The summit raised a wide range of urban forestry obstacles and potential solutions. What was clear was that future success depends on the group's ability to diversify the voices in the planning and decision-making process, engage city officials and leaders in redefining their roles and responsibilities in regard to tree maintenance and protection, and securing long-term sustainability for urban forestry efforts in the city. Recommendations for moving forward are:

- Hire a consultant for the Urban Forest Strategic Plan with experience in developing equity frameworks and implementation plans.
  - The consultant should be able to adequately assess the impacts of both race and class in the goals and outcomes of the plan
- Hire a consultant who also understands the role and development of public policy.
- Develop a rubric for assessing and ensuring that an equity lens is applied throughout each step of the planning process.
- Prioritize local civic engagement during plan creation and through implementation.
- Coordinate efforts with local education institutions (School District of Philadelphia and other public education resources for all ages) to develop opportunities for young people.
- Apply a cross-sectoral approach to urban forestry efforts in the city (funding, learning, data, education).
- Examine the range of policies affecting the urban forest in Philadelphia, including tree protection, planting and maintenance requirements and liability structures. Identify and secure a diverse set of funding sources and develop innovative fundraising techniques for urban forestry efforts.
- Secure City commitment to the project through policy, maintenance responsibilities, and resourcing.
- The final Urban Forest Strategic Plan should include achievable benchmarks with short and long-term goals by using diverse metrics such as health and happiness, etc.

APPENDIX A:
PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations

Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha

Bartlett Tree Experts

City of Philadelphia, Rebuild Initiative

Corajus, Coalition for Racial Justice

Delaware River Waterfront Corporation

Drexel University

East Falls Tree Tenders

Fairmount Park Conservancy

Free Library of Philadelphia

Friends of Pennypack Park, TreeNortheast

Friends of Poquessing Watershed

Friends of the Wissahickon

Heritage Community Development Corporation

Lower Moyamensing Civic Association

Morris Arboretum

Nueva Esperanza, Inc.

Old City Green

Passyunk Square Civic Association/PHS Tree Tenders

Penn State Extension Philadelphia

Penn-Del Chapter of the ISA

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

Pennsylvania Energy Company (PECO)

Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS)

Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations (PACDC)

Philadelphia City Council

Philadelphia City Planning Commission

Philadelphia Department of Public Health

Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation

Philadelphia Managing Director's Office (MDO)

Philadelphia Office of Licenses & Inspections (L&I)

Philadelphia Office of Sustainability (OOS)

Philadelphia Orchard Project (POP)

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation (PPR)

Philadelphia Water Department (PWD)

Philly Tree People

PowerCorpsPHL

Riverfront North Partnership

Ryerson University

Schuylkill River Development Corporation

SEPTA

South Kensington Community Partners

Temple University

The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

The Trust for Public Land

Tree Tenders Advisory Committee

UC Green

University of Pennsylvania

University of Vermont

USDA Forest Service

William Penn Foundation

Urban Forest Strategic Plan Project Team:

- **Erica Smith Fichman**
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  Philadelphia Parks & Recreation
- **Lori Hayes**
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  Philadelphia Parks & Recreation
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  Philadelphia Office of Sustainability
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- **Stephanie Chiorean**
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  Philadelphia Water Department
- **Elizabeth Svekla**
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- **Lindsey Walker**
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  US Forest Service Philadelphia Field Station
- **Bill Elmendorf**
  Joseph Ibberson Professor of Community and Urban Forestry
  Penn State University

APPENDIX B:
PHILADELPHIA TREE SUMMIT AGENDA

Wednesday, December 5, 2019

The Discovery Center
3401 Reservoir Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19121

Welcome

Commissioner Kathryn Ott Lovell, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation

Introduction

Erica Smith Fichman,
Community Forestry Manager,
Philadelphia Parks & Recreation

Saleem Chapman,
Deputy Director,
Office of Sustainability

Presentation on Tree Canopy Assessment Report

Jarlath O'Neil-Dunne, Director, Spatial Analysis Lab, University of Vermont

Facilitated Discussion

Michaela Pommells and **Hiram Rivera**, Facilitators, Coalition for Racial Justice

- Share your initial reaction to the Tree Canopy report.
- What do you feel is you or your organization's role in responding to the new UTC information?

BREAK

Urban Forest Strategic Plan Presentation

Erica Smith Fichman,
Community Forestry Manager,
Philadelphia Parks & Recreation

Saleem Chapman,
Deputy Director,
Office of Sustainability

Facilitated Discussion

Michaela Pommells and **Hiram Rivera**, Facilitators, Coalition for Racial Justice

- What is the most important thing to be addressed in the strategic planning process?
- How do we prioritize equity and inclusion in this plan/process?

Close/Next Steps

Erica Smith Fichman,
Community Forestry Manager,
Philadelphia Parks & Recreation

APPENDIX C:
FACILITATED DISCUSSION NOTES

Methods

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation staff identified common themes that emerged for each prompt from the Tree Summit's table notes and comment sheets. Under each theme they listed the number of notes that pertain to the theme and at how many tables it was mentioned, and if they were mentioned in the comment sheets. They summarized the concepts that fell under each theme in bullets beneath the themes. Some of these summaries contain partial quotations. Due to the similarities between the answers given to the prompts "What changes would help?" and "What is the most important thing to address?" they combined these sections and the number of mentions under each theme.

Initial Reactions to Tree Canopy Assessment Report

EXPECTATIONS VS REALITY

12 mentions across 7 tables

NOT SURPRISED
reflects a lot of the conversation and experiences around the city.

VERY SURPRISED
and expected different results because of the known effort that has gone in to prevention of loss

DEVELOPMENT

10 mentions across 6 tables

- Residential trees are removed in new developments due to construction conflicts when developers/realtors do not understand the importance of trees

DATA

9 mentions across 7 tables

- Overlay canopy data with street tree and other data for more analysis
- Tree map lines up with heat index map

COMMUNICATION/EDUCATION

9 mentions across 5 tables and commentary

- Legacy of troublesome trees influences perception of trees in community
- Change the language so that it is more relevant to people's lived experience

FUTURE IMPACT

8 mentions across 6 tables

- Build on successful models already in place
- There would be greater loss without the greening efforts that have taken place experience
    - — TreePhilly/Tree Tenders efforts not showing on data yet

LARGE TREES

8 mentions across 5 tables

- Need to preserve existing large trees—largest loss in canopy was of large trees

STRUCTURAL ISSUES

8 mentions across 5 tables

- Certain sites can't be replanted because of existing codes
- Strong political will is necessary

VARYING FACTORS (STORMS, PEST, CLIMATE CHANGE)

5 mentions across 4 tables

- A lot of loss due to new pests and diseases and climate change
- Perception of storm risk prompts many residents to remove trees

RESIDENTIAL

4 mentions across 4 tables

- Concern that most loss is of residential and street trees
- Residential incentives are needed where we see largest concern

MAINTENANCE

2 mentions across 2 tables

- Tools like asset management systems, but need to coordinate across partners

WEEDY TREES

2 mentions across 2 tables

- Weedy trees make up a large component of canopy, but are not replaced with better trees when removed

NATURAL AREAS

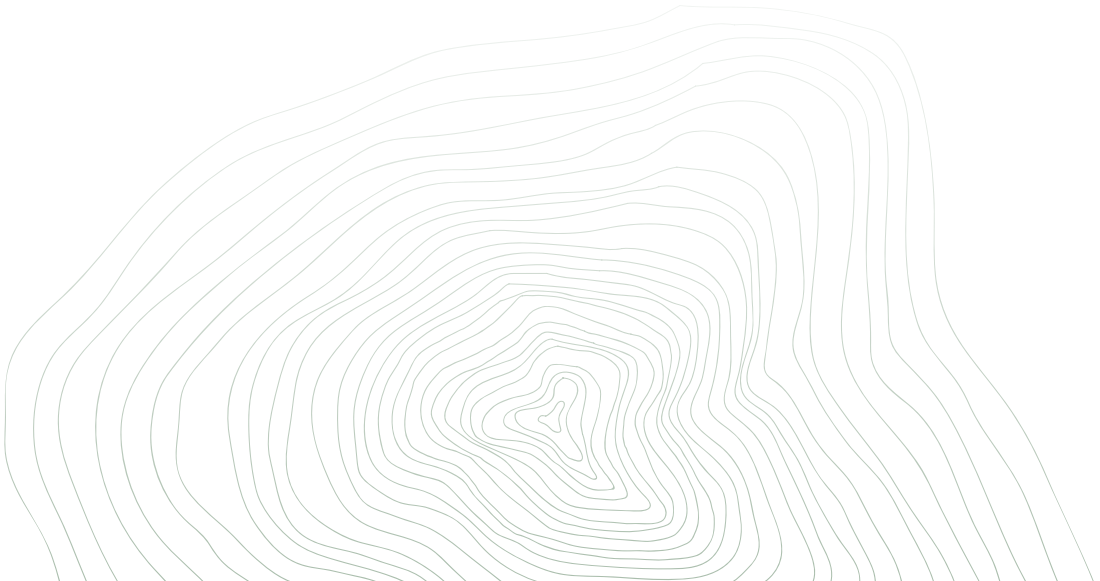
2 mentions across 2 tables

- Park Lands not a passive process - nature needs more nurture

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

2 mentions across 2 tables

- Need specific targets to meet to know we're working toward our goal



What is the most important thing to be addressed in the Urban Forest Strategic Plan?

POLICY NEEDS

86 mentions across 11 tables and comments

IDENTIFY, EVALUATE, AND ENFORCE EXISTING POLICIES

5 mentions across 4 tables

- Identify and evaluate all existing policies related to trees and create structure for enforcement, paying attention to impact on lower socio-economic neighborhoods

TREAT TREES AS NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE

20 mentions across 6 tables and commentary

- Require developers to plant trees at new developments and seek permits to remove trees
- Rewrite Complete Street guidelines to require trees

MAKE TREES CITY RESPONSIBILITY

18 mentions across 8 tables and commentary

- Have City provide maintenance and removal resources for trees on public and private land
- Take liability of sidewalks, alleyways and sewage laterals off homeowners

PROTECT BIG TREES AND REPLACE LOST TREES

13 mentions across 5 tables

- Tree preservation/protection policy needed for the city, especially on residential land especially heritage and large trees (ex: Fines/retributions for removal of large trees)
- If large tree is removed, replace it with adequate number of small trees (1 large tree equal to environmental services of 1200 small trees)

SOIL AND TREE PITS

6 mentions across 5 tables

- Incorporate larger tree pits and improved soil (structural soil, amended) in street tree plantings

VACANT LAND

4 mentions across 3 tables

- Protect and use vacant land for tree plantings

OPT IN/OPT OUT

4 mentions across 3 tables

- Only institute “opt out” if proper policies that remove homeowner’s liability are in place, otherwise it will face major public resistance

CREATE PROCESS FOR GETTING TREES ONTO SCHOOL, GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRIAL LAND

2 mentions at 1 table and commentary

COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

51 mentions across 10 tables and commentary

- Engage a diverse group of stakeholders (including youth) in two-way conversation about trees, listening to experiences, address public health concerns, acknowledge grievances (broken sidewalks, sewers, etc.) and provide information on tree benefits and plan process
- Launch a city-wide campaign to build excitement and respect towards trees

COLLABORATION

50 mentions across all tables and commentary

- Ensure community leaders from all over the city, especially disenfranchised communities, are on the strategic plan's steering committee (ex: Urban Agriculture plan)
- Pool funding and resources across departments and organizations; apply for larger amounts of funding as a coalition
- Learn from and scale-up existing policies, programs, and best practices in other departments/organizations and cities

GOALS

40 mentions across 10 tables and commentary

- Plan should include achievable benchmarks with short and long term goals by using health and happiness metrics, etc.
- Work with community members to pilot local initiatives and set specific goals by management unit and area of the city based on local factors

PAY FOR CANOPY CREATION AND MAINTENANCE

19 mentions across 8 tables

- Promote tree planting and care by offering monetary incentives for homeowners, renters, and developers
- Pay people instead of relying on volunteers to do tree planting and maintenance
- Create opportunities for graduated Power Corps members

FUNDING

14 mentions across 5 tables

- Prioritize stable and long term funding sources, with funds being equitably distributed to low-income, low-canopy, and climate vulnerable communities
- Source funds through parking permits, taxes (Pittsburgh model), fines for removals, etc.
- Use funds to improve staffing and resourcing in natural lands work

BARRIERS

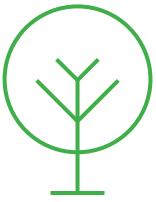
14 mentions across 5 tables

- Rentership is a major barrier to planting trees
- Costs of owning a tree (e.g. maintenance costs) are a deterrent to planting and keeping trees (especially yard and street trees)

ADVOCACY

7 mentions across 5 tables

- Advocacy efforts are needed (Use the Park Stewardship program to build an advocacy campaign)



CITY INVOLVEMENT AND SERVICES

80 mentions across all tables

INCENTIVES

18 mentions across 6 tables

- Create incentives for residents to participate in focus groups, provide feedback throughout the RFP/planning process, and plant trees (Property tax abatements, PWD water runoff tax abatement, PECO model)
- Incentivize tree planting and retention of large trees by developers

TREE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND ALLOCATING RESOURCES

15 mentions across 9 tables

- Subsidy-based tree maintenance program that funds maintenance and removal of sidewalk-busting trees, alley trees, and other tree-related high costs that lower income residents can't afford
- Provide resources to build community capacity for tree plantings and care and equitably distribute resources to neighborhoods that need the most

EXPANDING CURRENT PROGRAMS AND COLLABORATE

13 mentions across 7 tables

- Build on, engage, and learn from existing programs that have intersectional approaches (Urban Ag Plan, Beat the Heat, Tree Tenders,etc.)

PAYING PEOPLE FOR WORK

8 mentions across 6 tables

- Hire community members to do tree work (see PWD Water Ambassadors Program and maintenance crews)
- Create green job pathways and forestry jobs for youth and Power Corps
- Lift burden of community engagement by providing food and childcare and paying people for time during planning process

INFRASTRUCTURE

6 mentions across 3 tables

- Thoughtful tree placement as Philadelphia changes/develops (ex: incorporate trees into Community Design Collaborative program)

MAINTENANCE

4 mentions across 3 tables

- Maintenance is an opportunity for workforce development

LIABILITY

4 mentions across 3 tables

- Shift sidewalk and sewer lateral liability to the City
- Strategic protection for uses that are not development based

ENFORCEMENT

3 mentions across 3 tables

- City is not great at enforcing laws to maintain tree canopy, and the laws themselves are complicated (Address short dumping)

DEVELOPERS

3 mentions across 2 tables

- Enforcement of retributions/developers for example paying the cost of the entire tree including indirect costs like environmental benefits
- Design standards tied to permitting

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

53 mentions across all tables

- Valuing and honoring community members time (ex: meeting/survey fatigue, childcare at meetings, varying meeting times, food, translation)
- Decisions should be made jointly with community members, but be aware of overplanning as some communities planned to death (Build culture of trust)

NEIGHBORHOOD SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS

20 mentions across 10 tables

- Be aware that each community has different issues, challenges, impediments to actual planting
- Flexibility with tree selection and cultural affinities with different species

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

17 mentions across all tables

- Hire equity and inclusion consultant as part of plan team that will acknowledge historic and current culture of whiteness in forestry
- Include more diverse populations in planning process at every stage by creating a panel of community members to hold the plan accountable, making sure everyone has a voice at the table before the plan is finalized
- Provide translation during planning process and implementation
- Make plan intergenerational by holding youth-led conversations

OUTREACH/EDUCATION

35 mentions across 9 tables

- Address how trees can impact real-life concerns so people understand why they shouldn't remove trees and Inform people on programs that can remove barriers (Water pipe insurance, free tree programs, etc.)
- Meet communities where they already gather(Places of worship, police district meetings, etc.)/liaisons in schools
- Give residents many ways to provide feedback by utilizing multimodal engagement (Major city events, social media, radio, TV, print, etc.)

MESSAGING

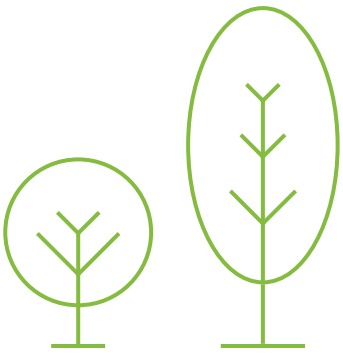
12 mentions across 6 tables

- Make issues relevant and in plain language to the individual by acknowledging past mistakes and recognize extant barriers
- Coordinate messaging across departments/organizations

LIVED EXPERIENCE

7 mentions across 4 tables

- There is real and justified fear in some communities of government and nonprofits delivering because trees are often a sign of gentrification
- It is vital to acknowledge historical racist urban policies; listen to and acknowledge actual desires of every community



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