



Louisville Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP)

Equity Council Meetings Summary

The following provides a summary of discussions held during three Equity Council meetings:

- Meeting 1: Project Introduction, First Discussion on Priorities: April 11, 2024
- Meeting 2: Mid Project Check In: June 13, 2024
- Meeting 3: Plan Goals: September 5, 2024

Themes

Meeting discussions can be summarized into the following themes:

Importance of Education: Participants emphasized the need for education at all levels, especially for younger generations, about the benefits of trees and proper tree care. This includes teaching people how to plant and care for trees, as well as the role of trees in human health and the environment.

What does education look like in your communities?

- *Educators need to look like the community members*
- *Reach kids through schools, summer camps (YMCA)*
- *Recognizes hurdles - raking, rent vs own, allergies*

Community Involvement: There's a strong desire for community involvement in tree planting and maintenance. Participants suggested partnering with schools, summer camps, and community centers to reach a wider audience and make educational efforts more accessible and engaging.

Environmental Equity: Concerns were raised about the unequal distribution of trees and green spaces, with some neighborhoods experiencing more pollution and fewer trees. Participants highlighted the need for equitable distribution of resources and tree-planting initiatives to address this disparity.

Full Government Support: Participants expressed a desire for government support in the form of funding, resources, and clear guidelines for tree maintenance and planting. This includes assistance with tree care for low-income residents and incentives for rental property owners to allow tree planting on their properties.

*Question: Public trees in Louisville are the responsibility of adjacent property owner. We've seen the difference between neighborhoods. How important is that to you? Is this true in your areas? What does your community think about this? **All agreed this is true and an issue in their communities.***

Tree Maintenance and Preservation: Concerns were raised about the cost and responsibility of tree maintenance, particularly for older trees. Participants highlighted the need for assistance with tree care and replanting after removal, as well as addressing safety concerns related to decaying trees.

Ranking Priorities

The group was asked to rank the themes that came out of the AG meetings so far:

Challenges (in order of importance, ranked by Equity Council)

1. Lack of Resources (4)
2. Lack of care = Lack of want (2)
3. Lack of awareness (1)

Solutions (in order of importance, ranked by Equity Council)

1. Funding & resources (3)
2. More space for trees (2)
3. More outreach and education (2)
4. Better leadership & organization (2)

Goals / Priorities (in order of importance, ranked by Equity Council)

1. *Equity and environmental justice:* ensure all have access to the services trees provide
2. *Better care.* For tree longevity, as well as removing one barrier from community members which hinders adding trees (citing not caring for existing trees).
3. *More awareness.* Need to increase awareness regarding the benefits/role of trees in a community to balance against costs. Education and outreach.

4. Secondary goals (not ranked as high) - trees need to deal with climate change, assistance in financial and expertise, better leadership and coordination of groups/efforts.

Question: If you had all the resources and funding you needed, what would you do first?

Education. Especially early education through summer camps and community centers. Take education to spaces where people already are. Make it easy and engaging with short videos.

Address immediate issues:

- Rental properties may prohibit tree planting, they need an incentive to allow planting.
- Maintenance costs are prohibitive for many.
- Some neighborhoods don't trust Metro and would be more receptive to hearing tree messaging from people who look like them, live in the neighborhood, etc.
- Address existing issues that feel more pressing to the community - install sidewalks, improve road maintenance, provide for other more priority needs.

Other Thoughts by Group

"Enjoyed the workshop a lot. Lots of good people, good discussion and conversation."

"Wonderful meeting, great to hear people's perspectives, good group."

"Having all these different people in the same room talking about the same things is so helpful."

"Have learned a lot so far, things I just never was aware of. The education so far has shown how much I didn't know."

Goals Discussion

The third and final meeting with this group was focused on setting goals for the UFMP. A number of questions were asked, with notes below. These notes will be used to set the urban forestry goals for the entire community.

Question: What does Louisville or my neighborhood look like that day we can say "we did it"? Note: this is NOT a question of HOW to get there. Just defining "there."

- Sounds like birds chirping, kids outside playing, people out walking. People outside because they aren't burning to death. More people walking.
- Open and accessible data.
- Better air quality. Need to deal with Swift (meat packing) - the smell is horrendous.
- Less concrete. Less unused parking spaces, vacant blacktop.
- Better able to breathe.
- We have so many possums, raccoons etc. because we took their habitat.
- Shaded pavement, fewer unused parking spaces and less open blacktop.
- Tree canopy at bus stops.
- How different it feels in the neighborhoods.
- What is community? We need more connection between people and nature.
- Outside classrooms with opportunities to connect kids and trees. Parkland plaza does it well. Program to have a space to play outside.

- Shade, windbreaks, food
- Clear and simple information - people get confused. Constant communication and check-ins are needed..
- Folks always sit on the side of the library that has windows facing trees.
- Increase areas of highest need first.
- Lofty goal - every West Louisville neighborhood gets to 30% .
- Each neighborhood should be equal.
- Hard to get community engagement on ANYTHING, sometimes you have to just do it (plant the trees).
- It's the neighborhoods that need fixing - as opposed to the whole city.
- 10-minute walk - cause even in neighborhoods that have more than 30% a lot of trees may have been lost recently and the walk is still brutal.
- Fruit trees. Some kind of walkability/accessibility. Maybe close to each school - shade and food access. Be considerate of the level of processing needed for the fruit/nut.
- Strategy of addressing soil conditions to make sure the trees thrive.

Question: How is it that you will know that we are moving in the right direction?

- More diversity in bird and animal species - see people out doing things.
- Clear and understandable information shared with the community. Two-way communication with each neighborhood - is this what you expect? What do you want to see?
- Build on existing work instead of trying to take over or rebuild from scratch.
- People need to be connected to the natural world - foraging, stargazing, butterflies, etc.
- When building, avoid pesticides and fill dirt that make these things non consumable or unsustainable.
- Financial support for people to plant and maintain trees, accessibility to trees for planting (nursery availability).
- More information sharing, and a clear understanding of who is responsible for what.
- Don't want to see:
 - Planting wrong cultivars
 - Greenwashing
 - Budget cuts.
 - Incomplete projects (not just planting, but a plan for caring for newly planted and existing trees).
 - Don't start a project that you can't or don't plan on completing
 - Don't boot out a youth organization to put in another golf course.
- Landlords don't take care of the trees - who will take care of this?
- Make sure goals are not siloed - example trees in bump-outs are transportation, safety, walkability and trees.
- Neighborhood group adopting Hill Street corridor has to call 311 to get giant weeds in sidewalks taken care of. Someone needs to take responsibility for care and beautification of the neighborhoods. Show examples of cleaning up streets, Want to see neighbors also pick up trash, take care of their streets. We have to show the value of what we're investing in - our communities.
- How can we involve/support the homeless population?
- Need to live in neighborhoods before you tell us what to do

Question: When you think of your neighborhood, what would it look like when you and your neighbors are able to reap the health, economic, and other benefits that trees provide? What does the lived experience of an equitable canopy feel/look like?

- Looks like my neighborhood - Taylor Berry. Kids pick fruit right off of his trees which are a stop along the way from the school. Plus central has a bunch of huge shade trees. Balance of fruit and shade options.
- Nothing like being on a shady street.
- Sections of old Louisville where there are sections of trees, and fruit trees.
- Tree canopy on Algonquin is beautiful - the result of years and years of investment.
- Maybe instead of a canopy percentage it's so many trees along the street, every XX feet.
- Shaded streets, trees everywhere there is space for them.
- Tree goals seem more important when you're in neighborhoods that are *missing the trees, not those with trees*.
- Parks for everyone - Alberta Jones park (23rd and Maple) has transformed the entire neighborhood. Elliott Park elders get together under the shade and keep an eye on the kids/community.
- What are the communities missing that we used to have? Talk to the elders, they know what we've lost.
- Urban forestry is very interdisciplinary and requires many different agencies / departments.
- Need some kind of information structure for all forestry/tree questions.
- 10 minute neighborhood goal; make spaces safe for bike riders.
- Walkability/comfort for those walking/biking/bus stops/kids able to play outside - needs to read as more important than *just comfortable - it's a necessity*.
- Green infrastructure needs to be included as necessary, not optional. Infrastructure for life.
- Maintenance/equity in parks for all neighborhoods. Inconsistency between blocks makes it hard. We see nice things happening, but don't know when it's coming to our neighborhood. Access to parks and trees for everyone, everywhere.
- Greater access to deadline dates so folks understand what to expect.
- Metro is cutting so much funding that we can't trust them to tell us what we need. People in the neighborhoods should get to decide what we need.
- Kentucky is a forest. This entire state is a forest. We shouldn't have to skip tree-to-tree to try and make it to the park without dying under the sun.
- 80% renters on some blocks - who cares for these? Who requests trees for these spaces? Houses are left vacant, uncared for. One 101-year-old neighbor says Garland was once so beautiful and canopied, there was no heat island. A lot of people have been told you can't get a tree because you rent, but if you have a relationship with your landlord you can.
- There is a lot of stigma around trees in black community (for obvious reasons), but if we can talk to each other about global warming etc. this perception can change.
- Collaborate with existing organizations doing similar work. Many groups/committees are working on things that overlap or could complement each other.
- Get other organizations on the same page with similar goals. Examples: Audubon Society, Vision Zero (trees support safe streets).
- Possible tagline - Infrastructure for Life

Next Steps: Developing Plan

Create Suggested Outline

Our next step is to use the goals set today to develop the recommendations that will be in the plan. This will be written up as a Narrative & Recommendations (N&R) document. It will be a 5-10 page document that will define the story for the plan and quick summaries on each strategy proposed. Only when this document is approved, will we move forward to write the full plan. Allows everyone to check in and know they are on the right track.

Review Outline

We will be going over the Narrative and Recommendations document together with the Steering Committee and are inviting the Equity Council to participate (optional). After that, attendees will have a couple weeks to provide feedback. At that point, once approved, we will start writing the plan itself.

Writing Full Plan

Plan writing will happen this fall/winter, with the public having an opportunity to comment on the plan in the first months of 2025.