



City of Charlotte
Report on the Community Meetings to inform
the Urban Forest Master Plan
July, 2016

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Overview

Three public meetings were held the third week of July, 2016, to get citizen input for the creation of an urban forest master plan for the city of Charlotte, N.C. The City contracted with Davey Resource Group to create the master plan under the leadership of project director Rachel Comte. Gayle Hilleke Consulting was hired to provide assistance with designing and facilitating the community meetings. Erin Oliverio, Tree Canopy Program Manager with the City of Charlotte Engineering and Property Management Landscape Management Division participated in all of the public meetings. The meetings were held in three different regions of the city through the use of church facilities. The meetings were open to anyone interested in attending and were advertised through the City website, the TreesCharlotte website and on Facebook.

Observations

1. The community meetings provided the City with important information on the attitude of citizens toward the trees in Charlotte.

In all three of the community meetings, citizens who participated were passionate supporters of the trees in the City of Charlotte. The majority of participants came into the meetings with the attitude that the trees are very important to the city *and* that the status of tree care and maintenance is questionable. Concerns included the aging of many of the old large trees, the actions of developers in cutting down so many trees for building projects, and the seemingly weak policies and/or little action on the part of the city to protect the trees.

2. The participation of city staff played an important role in the meetings.

During each meeting, Erin Oliverio described her work with the trees in Charlotte and with partners such as TreeCharlotte. She also described why the work was important to her personally. In every meeting these interactions produced an observable attitude shift among the participants. At the end of the meetings, the participants were energized by what they heard and voiced their appreciation that someone like Erin was leading the effort to take care of the trees in Charlotte. Many of the participants expressed an interest in helping Erin further the work.

Some of the quotes from participants included:

- “I feel so much better knowing what the City is actually doing about trees. I had no idea that it was someone’s job to pay attention to this.”
- “Thank you, Erin, for the work you do on behalf of all of us who care about our trees.”
- “Now I know who to contact if I have a question about Charlotte’s trees – this is great!”

3. Information provided by Rachel Comte helped citizens understand the larger framework.

Rachel Comte provided participants with a basic overview of the Charlotte Urban Forest Master Plan and her work with the City of Charlotte staff to strengthen the City’s plan for the care and maintenance of the trees. Since Rachel does this type of work for the Davey Resource Group around the country, she was able to provide the participants with a perspective that the City of Charlotte has a great resource in their trees. In fact, Charlotte has a tree canopy that is on the high side compared to other cities of the same size.

Rachel also communicated that creating an Urban Forest Master Plan is a complex project and needs the input and support of many stakeholders, including the public. No one office can provide all the funding or person-power needed to ensure comprehensive services. Thus, active support from citizens is critical if the Master Plan is to be successfully implemented.

4. Participants in the meetings generally wanted to be more active in supporting trees.

After the meetings, several people talked about getting more involved, getting on the mailing list, and wanting to help their neighborhoods get the same education they just received.

Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions
- Goals
 - To inform the public about efforts on the part of the city to take care of the trees in Charlotte
 - To get input from the public on tree-related issues that are most important to them
- Video – Benefits of Urban Forests by American Forests https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilz_rZH1Yk
- Vision for Charlotte’s Trees
 - Erin Oliverio, City of Charlotte
 - Rachel Comte, Davey Resource Group
- Public Input
- Reflection
- Call to Action

Citizen Input

	Challenges	Ideas/Wish List
	Jefferson Park/Mammoth Oaks	
<p>Meeting 1</p> <p>Date: Monday, July 25, 2016</p> <p>Location: Good Shephard Presbyterian Church</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development & “clear cutting” ● Maintenance - \$\$\$ ● Expert Advice - \$\$\$ ● Lack of sunshine; mold/moss; sun/other vegetation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Codes & ordinances w/teeth & consequences for clear cutters; Penalties ● Money for advice & tree maintenance for private homeowners ● Help with banding; money, workers/time ● Free arborists ● Transplant trees whenever possible ● Duke – underground lines; subsidize ● Century trees – NO cut ● Education K-12 and in all neighborhoods, HOAs ● Tax break for tree owners per healthy tree

Time: 6:30 – 8 pm Public Attendance 7	Collinswood	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cankerworms ● Financial limits ● Aging canopy ● Gouging land w/Duke trucks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● City banding ● City take on dead wooding ● Immortal trees!
	Olde Providence	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aging Canopy ● Tree Selection is limited: prevalent is Bradford Pears & Silver Maple ● Many trees not cared for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Variety of trees ● Education; leverage social network ● Homeowner assistance ● Look at Hilton Head Island ordinances ● Help home owners get excited about the tree canopy & benefits

Citizen Input, cont'd

	Challenges	Ideas/Wish List
<p>Meeting 2</p> <p>Date: Thursday, July 28, 2016</p> <p>Location: Amity Presbyterian Church</p> <p>Time: 6:30 – 8 pm</p> <p>Public Attendance 15</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No maintenance; contributes to events such as power outages ● Replacement of old trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create incentives (e.g. tax credit) to maintain trees ● Help citizens get materials for maintenance (e.g. fertilizer, cankerworms, etc.) ● Education at all levels, especially children
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safety – how to protect people from falling limbs, falling trees, etc. without cutting down the trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong campaign (connect to global warming) ● Education in schools; break the idea that trees are only for parks ● Use toll money for environmental initiatives ● Developers should be required to keep a % of the existing trees ● More law enforcement (dumping, etc.) ● Advertise trees as part of tourism trade ● Trees on rooftops ● More trees along busy streets
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fear of trees falling ● Lack of education about trees ● Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Schools: hands-on learning outside; trees for students to take home ● At community centers hold neighborhood education events leading up to planting season (contact HOA companies to assist) ● Mental health services, rehabilitation incorporates cycle of life of a tree & peaceful relationship w/nature ● Cost...provide resources ● Precinct involvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No incentive for builders to keep trees when building houses, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some sort of financial incentive for builders ● New yards composted before new grass planted ● Some sort of recognition or award for builders who are best at preserving trees
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CPEC, Dept. of Harf. Tech., Sustain Charlotte 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Penalty or fines to residential (there are already fines for commercial)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Negative perceptions of people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Faith habitats

	<p>toward trees:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cost for rakes, bagging leaves 2. Cost to prevent pests 3. Cost of insurance for damage created by limbs falling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain a tall leaf canopy not a small/shrub leaf canopy ● Lack of education and values toward trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Market the positives about trees that outweighs the negative ● Mythbuster on bugs/pests, etc. ● Educate people to have less lawn, more natural mulched areas ● Require a ratio for public lands of tall and understory trees ● Have native regional plantings – endures climate extremes ● Duke Energy could place lines under ground on 4-lane roads ● Property purchase requires plant care ● Precinct incentives ● PTA school neighborhood incentives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tree maintenance ● Power outages ● Aging gap ● Lack of tree diversity ● Lack of native trees ● Lack of education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Education for property owners ● Plant diverse trees – require for rezoning ● Crop/tree mob ● Utility lines underground ● Endowment for tree maintenance

	Challenges	Ideas/Wish List
<p>Meeting 3</p> <p>Date: Saturday, July 29, 2016</p> <p>Location: Friendship Baptist Church</p> <p>Time: 8:30 – 10 am</p> <p>Public Attendance 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don't understand the policies that govern when trees can be cut down and when they can't. ● We see a lot of developers cutting down a lot of trees. ● I don't know who in my neighborhood I would go to in order to find out about tree initiatives. ● I don't know how I would find city resources to help me with tree projects. ● The older, larger trees seem to be in jeopardy and those are the ones we value so much. ● It is expensive to take care of the trees on your own property. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connect with the regional associations for providing educational events, service projects, and opportunities to advocate for trees. (The president of one of these associations attended the meeting and was interested in connecting with Erin.) ● Provide a tax break for taking care of trees. ● Create tree policies that are stricter. ● Get lots of money for the City to take care of trees. ● Find funding so each neighborhood would have its own arborist. ● Have more grant opportunities for neighborhoods to have tree projects.