

WHAT DO WE WANT?

Outreach Campaign

The public outreach campaign, Tell Us Your Tree Story, played a crucial part of Pittsburgh’s Urban Forest Master Planning initiative. This campaign was designed to engage a wide range of stakeholders in the planning process, to learn what we want, and to give the public a means to communicate. The Outreach Report included in Appendix E provides an overview of the outreach campaign as well as a summary of outcomes of outreach efforts. [32]

The campaign’s goal was to develop an identity and brand for planning work that would resonate with a broad group of stakeholders and that would be more accessible than marketing the initiative as an urban planning process. Marketing materials (including posters, fliers, table tents, buttons, and tote bags) were distributed at outreach events, community meetings, and in neighborhood businesses throughout Pittsburgh.

This intensive community outreach campaign and education initiative included reaching out to tree volunteers, surveying the public and key stakeholders, obtaining tree stories, and conducting community meetings.

Outreach started with a series of four Tree Lover volunteer meetings. Tree Tenders and other dedicated supporters were invited to learn more about the plan and how they could contribute and support outreach efforts.

Tree Stories

Throughout the public involvement process, residents were asked to provide their tree stories, to share their favorite tree memory through video, photography, artwork, or writing (poetry or prose). Video testimonials were obtained at the tree volunteer events and community meetings.

Community Meetings

Nearly 100 residents participated in three community meetings that were designed to provide an easily understandable overview of the data collected for the Master Planning process and to gather specific information from the public. During an interactive session, attendees were asked to complete public surveys and to answer questions specific to their neighborhoods. The results were grouped as tree assets, tree needs, communication, and sustainable funding ideas.



Tree Assets: included Tree Pittsburgh and staff, Tree Tenders, parks and green spaces, undeveloped land, riverfront trails, committed volunteers, individual neighborhood tree projects, private property owners, and cemeteries.

Tree Needs: included coordinated maintenance and accountability, removing and replacing dead trees, additional outreach and education, neighborhood and business district planning, invasive species education, homeowner assistance and resources, and sidewalk repair.

Communications: included word-of-mouth, electronic and social media, and print media.

Sustainable Funding Ideas: included taxes, small consumer donations, annual fees, grants, codes, and tree-related product sales.

Campaign Components

A comprehensive campaign was developed to engage a large number of people by leveraging existing community relationships and networks. Outreach efforts included:

Tree Volunteer Meetings for existing Tree Tenders, Tree Lovers, and other volunteer groups were conducted throughout the City to launch the campaign and to recruit additional volunteers.

Partner Surveys were collected from key stakeholders, including Steering Committee representatives and local elected officials.

Public Surveys were distributed online, at key community events, and by social service organizations. The goal was to survey 1,000 people during January 2012, and a total of 1,699 were completed.

Tree Stories were testimonials using various forms of personal expression to describe what people like about trees.

Community Meetings were held to update the public on the state of Pittsburgh’s urban forest, to collect survey data, and to gather detailed input regarding community assets and needs.

Community Meeting Questions

What are your goals for the urban forest?

What is your vision?

What is the best way to communicate information regarding trees to you?

What funding options make sense?

Mayor Luke Ravenstahl’s Tree Story

Hello everybody, this is Mayor Luke Ravenstahl, and I am here today to share with you my tree story. When we grew up on the north side of Pittsburgh, we had a huge tree in our front yard. We had a very small front yard. My brothers and I would always play in that yard and we would always use the tree as a prop whether it was throwing a ball off of it or playing in the sandbox next to it. That is my first memory of a tree and using a tree. That tree still stands there in that front yard and it’s bigger than ever, and I remember it as a young kid seeming like it was larger than life. That’s my tree story.

Public Survey Overview

Jackson/Clark Partners, Davey Resource Group, and Tree Pittsburgh developed a brief, widely accessible survey to gather significant public input and quantifiable data on key factors from interested members of the general public. Responses were collected from online computer surveys, person-to-person surveys, and survey form collection boxes. The online survey was promoted from e-mail list servers, partner organization websites, and news media. On-site surveys were conducted at public events, community meetings, the Penn Avenue Arts Initiative’s monthly UnBlurred event, the Pittsburgh Children’s Museum, the Kingsley Association’s Urban Green Growth Collaborative, and Operation Better Block’s monthly Homewood community meeting. Survey form collection boxes were placed in noticeable locations at 15 businesses and nonprofit organizations with significant levels of foot traffic.

Key areas targeted for public input included benefits of trees, problems with trees, specific needs for additional support public action points, and a 20-year vision for Pittsburgh’s urban forest. A total of 1,699 people took the survey. The final survey data were captured in a single on-line database and is included in Appendix E.

Survey Responses – Tree Benefits

Respondents were presented with a list of the benefits of trees and were asked to select the three that were most important to them (“other” was a free-form option).

- Improve the quality of life and help define Pittsburgh’s character: 891 (52% of responses).
- Provide shade and cool their surroundings: 615 (36% of responses).
- Provide wildlife habitat: 606 (37% of responses).
- Protect water quality and reduce stormwater runoff and flooding: 570 (34% of responses).
- Create safer, more pleasant neighborhoods and business districts: 538 (32% of responses).
- Clean the air: 521 (31% of responses).
- Provide relaxation and enjoyment: 458 (27% of responses).
- Reduce erosion and stabilize hillsides: 382 (22% of responses).
- Increase property values: 183 (11% of responses).
- Lower my energy use and bills: 169 (10% of responses).
- Reduce noise pollution: 161 (9% of responses).

Survey selections on the benefits of trees can be grouped into three overall categories:

- Quality of life (city character, shade, habitat, safety, and enjoyment) : 3,108 total responses (61% of collective responses).
- Pollution mitigation (water, air, noise, and erosion): 1,634 total responses (32% of collective responses).
- Economic benefits (energy savings and increased property value): 352 total responses (7% of collective responses).

Public Survey Questions

Trees provide many benefits to our community. What are the most important to you?

What problems do you encounter with public trees?

What does Pittsburgh's urban forest need the most?

What would you be willing to do to ensure Pittsburgh's trees are maintained and protected for future generations to come?

Survey Responses – Tree Problems

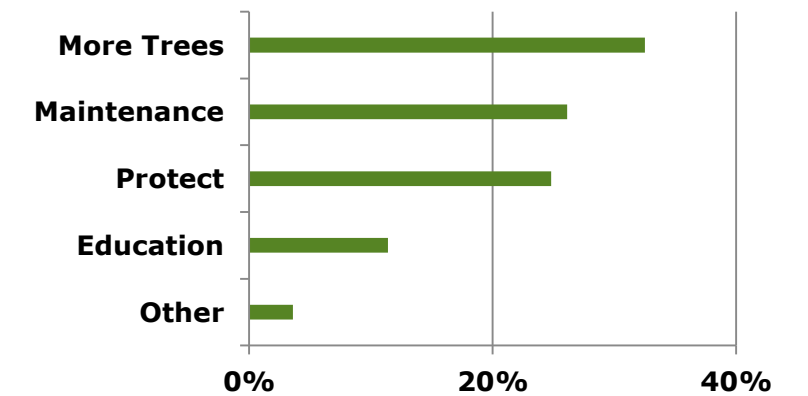
Respondents were given a list of common problems they might encounter with public trees (street or park trees) and were asked to check all that apply (“other” was a free-form option):

- Sidewalks and pavement cracking: 878 (52% of responses).
- There aren’t enough trees in my neighborhood: 743 (44% of responses).
- Leaves and fruit dropping: 467 (27% of responses).
- Tree roots and underground pipe problems: 428 (25% of responses).
- Blocking traffic, sidewalks, signs, and/or street lights: 377 (22% of responses).
- Safety problems created from trees and limbs falling: 321 (19% of responses).
- Attract bugs and other pests: 168 (10% of responses).
- Trees cost too much money: 34 (2% of responses)
- “Other” responses most frequently noted problems with harmful utility pruning practices.

Survey Responses – Tree Needs

Respondents were asked to identify from a given list what they considered to be the single most critical need of Pittsburgh’s urban forest (“other” was a free-form option):

- More trees: 569 responses.
- Better maintenance and care: 469 responses.
- To be protected for future generations: 445 responses.
- More community education about trees: 215 responses.
- “Other” responses most frequently noted issues with limiting harmful utilities pruning practices and issues with tree species selection.



Survey Responses – Tree Action

Respondents were asked to indicate what they would be willing to do to ensure Pittsburgh’s trees are maintained and protected for future generations. They were presented with a list of suggested actions and were asked to check all that apply (“other” was a free-form option):

- Support new legislation or rules about planting and tree protection: 1,083 (64% of responses).
- Plant new trees on my property when trees die or need to be removed: 959 (56% of responses).
- Support the city dedicating more funding to support Pittsburgh’s trees: 946 (56% of responses).
- Volunteer to plant and maintain trees on public property: 847 (50% of responses).
- Support a 1% fee or tax, similar to the recent library tax, dedicated to tree care and maintenance: 622 (37% of responses).

Vision

The multiple quantitative and qualitative studies outlined so far shaped the 20-year vision statement for Pittsburgh's urban forest by helping us understand what we have and what we want. Definitions of key words that form this vision statement are presented to refine the expression of this understanding. The stated keystones—connect, engage, manage, plan, protect—were developed from the shared vision in order to guide how we get there. Our shared vision and stated goals will be used to measure how we are doing.

Over the next 20 years, Pittsburgh's urban forest will be a vital and well-managed asset that is locally valued and nationally recognized for its positive social, environmental, economic, and public health impacts on the community and the greater region.



The vision and goals established in this plan will guide urban forestry across the City for the next 20 years.

Definitions

Vital (adj): full of life and vigor; of the utmost importance

Pittsburgh's urban forest is vital to the character and everyday functions of the City, including human and ecological health. To remain vital, the urban forest must be protected and managed.

Well-managed (adj): administered in a successful manner

Pittsburgh's urban forest must be well managed across all public and private entities. The community must be engaged so that both the public and private urban forest needs will be proactively managed and protected. This will require that all entities that care for the urban forest are connected through a shared vision.

Social (adj): tending to form cooperative and interdependent relationships with others

Pittsburgh's urban forest offers valuable social opportunities and health benefits to the community. Recognizing and promoting these benefits will engage and inspire the community to play their role in managing the urban forest.

Environmental (noun): the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors (as climate, soil, and living things) that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival

Pittsburgh is an urban ecosystem and its trees provide ecological functions and benefits to the community that help minimize the negative impacts of urban land use. This resource must be protected and managed with a coordinated vision and purpose.

Economic (adj): of or relating to economics or the economy; justified in terms of profitability

Our urban forest is a sound investment for the future of the community; the benefits derived from maintaining and protecting this resource far outweigh the costs.

Public Health (noun): the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through the organized efforts and informed choices of society, public and private organizations, communities, and individuals.

Pittsburgh's urban forest plays an important role in human health. Trees provide environmental, social, and economic benefits to residents and visitors of Pittsburgh alike. Careful management, protection, and planning of the urban forest will sustain these benefits and provide for direct connection and opportunities for all to engage with trees.