

**Knoxville Tree Board
2018-2021 Strategic Plan
Final– Adopted by Board 7/12/2018**

Introduction

The Knoxville Tree Board is created in Knoxville City Code (Sec 14-55) to advise the city council on urban forestry issues and to educate citizens about the importance of and care for urban trees in the city. The eleven members of the Knoxville Tree Board are nominated by the mayor and approved by the city council. The members include citizen volunteers and natural resource professionals representing a diverse cross-section of the city. The Tree Board works closely with the Knoxville Urban Forester to fulfill its duties in accordance with city code.

This plan is the result of a strategic planning process that enables the Tree Board to focus on the steps necessary to enhance and maintain the quality of life in Knoxville through planting and management of city trees. From this three-year road map, annual plans of work will be developed by the Board to address the items listed.

Goals and Objectives

The first three goals listed in this plan have been developed in alignment with the purposes of the Knoxville Tree Board as outlined in city code - serving as an advisory body, conducting educational activities, and being a healthy organization. The fourth goal relates to the external partnerships that Tree Board has with other urban forestry entities in the East Tennessee region and across the state.

The objectives listed under each goal are divided into two categories – *on-going* activities that the Board engages in on a year-to-year basis, while *new initiatives* are activities that represent a strategic commitment of time and resources to increase the Board’s efficiency, effectiveness, and impact.

Goal 1: ADVISORY	<i>Actively advise and make recommendations to city leaders on issues impacting green infrastructure, growth, and development</i>	
Objectives	On-Going Activities	New Initiatives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive a monthly report from the City Urban Forester • Support City Urban Forester’s annual reporting process • Respond to information or advice requests from the city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule biannual meetings with Mayor/Council to gauge opportunities • Publish annual report of Board activities • Develop a plan to meet and greet new city councilors after elections • Create brand awareness with neighborhood associations

Goal 2: EDUCATION	<i>Increase public awareness on educational resources available for the care and benefit of the urban canopy</i>	
Objectives	On-Going Activities	New Initiatives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an Education Committee that helps plan and implement the Board’s education program • Promote Knoxville’s Urban Forest through events and media outlets • Celebrate Arbor Day • Participate in the annual Knoxville Neighborhood Conference • Distribute educational materials such as the Top Ten Places to See Trees brochure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain a new social media initiative to promote Knoxville’s trees • Develop a communications calendar/schedule for Board issues, events and interests • Develop news release templates for events to provide Board perspective • Increase the number of events the Board considers or participates in each year. Use monthly meetings to assess event opportunities • Create a tracking mechanism for Board outreach (numbers, demographics, etc) and reporting process • Develop a “rack card” or brochure that describes the Board and drives traffic to website

Goal 3: ORGANIZATION	<i>Ensure effective organizational practices that support defined roles and constructive member development and engagement</i>	
Objectives	On-Going Activities	New Initiatives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold regular meetings that stay on track and on time • Help recruit new board members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a training/orientation plan for new Board members • Hold a Q&A session for new board members to provide historical perspective • Add space on agenda for Ex-officio reports so they have a more active role in meetings • Develop a transition plan to keep ex-members engaged after they leave the Board • Create a mentoring/transition plan for new Board members • Improve ability to distribute member assignments and track them in between meetings

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Goal 4: PARTNERSHIPS	<i>Identify, establish and maintain strategic partnerships to leverage our collective efforts to improve Knoxville's urban forest</i>	
Objectives	On-Going Activities	New Initiatives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the activities of Trees Knoxville and KUB, UT, UT Extension, Knoxville City Engineering Section, MPC, Ijams, Parks and Recreation, Knox County Schools, Knoxville Botanical Garden Participate in Tennessee Urban Forestry Council and Tennessee Division of Forestry programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a new partnership with Knox County Stormwater Management Department and Knox County Parks and Recreation Department Expand partnership with City of Knoxville Communications Office Engage with local media outlets to promote the Board Explore opportunities to engage other utility providers besides KUB Develop a strategy to connect with other non-profits such as Dogwood Arts, Legacy Parks, Aslan Foundation, Appalachian Bike Club, and other outdoor recreation groups

Implementation Strategies

The following section details actions that will increase the efficiency or effectiveness of the organization.

GOAL	INCREASING EFFICIENCY	INCREASING EFFECTIVENESS
ADVISORY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go before the mayor or council in conjunction or prior to with City Forestry report – annually or biennially Planning ahead to get on people's radar Create annual timeline for reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose the right person to deliver the message Invite a city councilor to attend a Board meeting
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an annual calendar of events in order to plan ahead Create a standing list of educational partnerships – who and why Delegate tasks over more members Use city communications department more strategically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent follow-up and evaluation of event participation Recruit past board members and potential future board members to help spread the workload Establish a strategy for communicating with the media to increase visibility

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use calendar planning for events to track progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading recognition for Arbor Day award winners (t-shirt example) to extend outreach
ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish new member orientation plan • Place ex-officio members on agenda for updates • Identify programs and opportunities in neighborhoods – quarterly agenda item • Establish plan to engage former members • Streamline housekeeping activities such as minute review • Develop a record of motions spreadsheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign members as mentors • Use ex-officio updates for future program planning • Use former members to provide education to Board • Quarterly social interactions
PARTNERSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Categorize and prioritize existing partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define parameters of partnership interaction and have written plan for them

Conclusion

An important but often over-looked aspect of strategic planning is evaluation. It will be important for the Knoxville Tree Board to develop metrics and a regular monitoring system to ensure that this plan is implemented over the next three years. The plan is designed to be flexible enough for the Board to continue being opportunistic as urban forestry activities or community engagement options arise.

This plan has been developed by the members of the Knoxville Tree Board with the support of the Knoxville Urban Forester and with strategic planning and facilitation support from Insightful Nature LLC (www.insightfulnaturellc.com). The end result of implementing this plan will be a healthier community canopy that contributes economic, environmental and social benefits leading to an improved quality of life for all Knoxville residents and visitors.



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Consulting Report for Knoxville Tree Board

May 2, 2018

Dear Dale and Tom,

Thanks for the opportunity to lead the City of Knoxville Tree Board's recent planning retreat and to develop your draft strategic plan for 2018-2021. This report details some additional observations for your consideration as you proceed in this process.

Recommendations

1. After the Tree Board has approved the Strategic Plan, you would benefit from a prioritization exercise whereby you take the **new initiative** objectives and decide which ones are most important and/or most suitable to tackle for the first year. That will allow you to develop an annual plan of work for the first year of the three-year plan.
2. Towards the end of the first year, it would be worth your time scheduling a one-day Board retreat. The first half of the retreat should be an evaluation session where you look back at the prior year and assess the progress you've made on the new initiatives. The second half of the day should be developed to adjusting the priorities for the second year and determining the plan of work for the second year. At the end of the second year, you will want to repeat this process for the third year. Towards the end of the third year, I suggest you consider holding another strategic planning session to write a new three-year plan. At that point, Board member turnover could impact ownership of the plan, and it would be good for newer Board members to participate in the process.
3. Based on our conversations and information discussed at the workshop, it appears that your Board mechanics are in order as far as meeting management goes. My only suggestion would be that you include an item in your minutes that recaps assignments that individual Board members or committees have agreed to work on during the time between meetings. Then, when a call for agenda items is issued prior to a meeting, those items can be included as a reminder for members to come to the meeting prepared to report on their progress.

4. It would be beneficial to develop a New Member Orientation process as new people join the Tree Board. This might include both a process for getting people up to speed, and a product (like a notebook) that would help them understand their role as a Tree Board member. There are a number of resources out there such as the Tree Board University training (www.treeboardu.org) and the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree Board Member Handbook that should be useful.
5. An annual calendar would be a tool that could increase the efficiency of the Tree Board. This doesn't have to be anything elaborate; just develop a list by month of the things the Tree Board does and needs to do to keep on track.
6. The Tree Board should consider developing a Communications Plan. During the planning session, we discussed a number of items including branding and marketing the Tree Board, both of which are items that could be included in such a plan. It appears that the Tree Board has historically been rather opportunistic when it comes to communications, and being strategic as well will be a way for the Board to have greater influence.

These recommendations aren't something the Tree Board can tackle all at once; again, you may wish to engage in a prioritization discussion and figure out which ones are most logical for you to implement and in what order.

Thanks again for the opportunity to assist you. If I can be of further assistance as you implement this plan, please do not hesitate to call on me.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul D. Ries".

Paul D. Ries, Ed.D
Principal Consultant