



## TREE COMMISSION

September 18, 2024

**TO:** Tree Commission Members and Staff  
**FR:** Curtis Hart, Chair, Jacksonville Tree Commission  
**RE:** **Task Force on Jacksonville Urban Tree Planting Best Practices**

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The Jacksonville Tree Commission is charged as a coordinator for programs, projects, and activities related to planting projects and the health of the tree canopy between all public and private entities in the City of Jacksonville. Chapter 94, *Ordinance Code*. A healthy, sustainable tree canopy requires adherence to the principle, “right tree, right place”. The restoration of Jacksonville’s tree canopy necessarily includes the planting, or re-planting, of trees in urban areas, including downtown, which often requires enhanced site preparation and planting specifications that may not be supported by current Ordinance Code or City landscape design requirements. As such, to escalate the effective planting of trees in urban Jacksonville, certain planting policy and Ordinance Code provisions may need to be revised.

For these reasons, pursuant to §94.104(b), *Ordinance Code*, I am hereby creating a Jacksonville Tree Commission Task Force on Urban Tree Planting Best Practices (“Urban Tree Task Force”).

As used herein the term, “urban”, refers to planting in an environment that is within or otherwise constrained by hardscape, including but not limited to, concrete, asphalt, pavement or brick.

The Urban Tree Task Force shall address the following:

1. Review current code provisions and related procedures and policy affecting the planting of trees in urban environments, including but not limited to, Chapter 656, Part 12, Subpart C (Landscaping Requirements), *Ordinance Code*, and the Land Development Procedures Manual, to identify and make recommendations to encourage the planting of trees and improve the outcome of planted trees. Consideration should be given to findings related to urban tree planting made by the Subdivision Standards and Policy Advisory Committee (SSPAC) LDPM Subcommittee, and the findings by the Context Sensitive Streets Standards Committee. The recommendations of this Task Force are not bound by findings of these Committees/Subcommittees.
2. Review and provide recommendations on initiatives and strategies on the planting of trees on urban public land in the City, including recommendations on practices, policy and procedure within the City of Jacksonville, Public Works, regarding the planning and

design of tree plantings to promote the maintaining of existing trees, the planting of additional trees, and to improve the outcome of planted trees.

3. Review and provide recommendations on initiatives and strategies on the planting of trees on urban public land in the City, including recommendations on practices, policy and procedure within JTA regarding the planning and design of bus stops to promote the maintaining of existing trees, the planting of additional trees and to improve the outcome of planted trees.
4. Consider methods to incorporate the Tree Commission in the planning and design process of agencies or entities of the City, including but not limited to the above named, to promote the planting of urban trees and to appropriately apply Tree Fund dollars to enhance and promote a healthy, sustainable tree canopy in the City.

The Task Force is NOT tasked to create or implement an Urban Forestry Master Plan, rather to consider current obstacles and best practices for the City to accelerate the appropriate planting of trees in urban Jacksonville and to enhance the stewardship role of the Tree Commission in the development of a healthy, sustainable tree canopy in the City.

Pursuant to §94.104(e), *Ordinance Code*, The Urban Tree Task Force includes the following:

**Members (3 required for quorum):**

Susan Fraser, Tree Commission Member, Chair  
Nina Sickler Tree Commission Member, Vice-Chair  
Curtis Hart, Tree Commission Member  
William Burke, Tree Commission Member

**Non-member recommended attendees/advisors (non-voting; non-quorum):**

Jonathan Colburn, Urban Forestry Manager, Tree Commission Advisor  
Anne Coglianese, Chief Resilience Officer, COJ  
Kathleen McGovern, Parks Development Coordinator, COJ  
Jill Enz, Chief of Natural and Marine Resources, COJ  
Representative, Scenic Jacksonville, Inc.  
Representative, Greenscape of Jacksonville

I would like to thank Tree Commission Member Susan Fraser for chairing this Task Force.

**Staff:** All meetings of the Urban Tree Task Force shall be noticed and open to the public. Meeting frequency, dates and times shall be decided by the Task Force Chair. The Director of Public Works shall designate a Public Works employee as the staff person who shall be responsible for all meeting notices and minutes. At the discretion of the Task Force Chair, an allotment of time for public comment (up to three minutes per person per meeting) may be provided at each meeting.

**Deadline:** A report describing recommendations for policy, practice or law amendments, or a request for an additional term shall be delivered to the Tree Commission Chair on or before **December 31, 2024.**

Cc: Tree Commission Members and Staff / Mayor's Office / Electronic Notice Kiosk – 1st Floor City Hall

TO: Task Force Members, Advisors and Interested Members of the Public  
FROM: Susan Fraser, Chair, Task Force on Urban Tree Planting Best Practices  
RE: Welcome and First Meeting Goals

Thank you for supporting the Task Force on Urban Tree Planting Best Practices in fulfilling its charge with your time, experience and expertise.

The Urban Tree Task Force (UTTF) was created by the Tree Commission's Chair, Curtis Hart, on September 18 to address four specific tasks in pursuit of increased efficiency in project review, development of clear, consistent and appropriate design standards for the planting of trees in urban environments and, consistent with the assigned duties in its enabling legislation, in support of an enhanced stewardship role for the Tree Commission in the development and maintenance of a healthy, sustainable tree canopy in the City.

The *first task* assigned to the UTTF is the review of current code provisions and related procedures and policy affecting the planting of trees in urban environments. The Charge Memo recognizes that the planting or re-planting of trees in urban areas often requires enhanced site preparation and planting specifications to achieve a healthy canopy in urban areas (over non-urban areas), inferring additional cost may be incurred. The term "urban" is defined in the Charge Memo as "planting in an environment that is within or otherwise constrained by hardscape, including but not limited to, concrete, asphalt, pavement or brick." An initial effort of the UTTF should be to clearly define what "constrained by hardscape" means, as this will establish the applicability of any standards considered by the Tree Commission. "Constrained" can mean something that results in reduction in longevity, a reduction in mature size, changes to canopy that adversely affect tree strength, etc. Constraints are likely to differ by tree species. The UTTF should clearly identify the expected and data supported benefits of enhanced site preparation and planting specifications in relation to the cost of such enhancements.

In its search for appropriate standards to apply, in addition to review of the City's current code provisions and related procedures and policy affecting the planting of trees in urban environments, the UTTF should also review a wide range of professional sources for recommended standards, including the standards of other local governments. Because many projects reviewed by the Tree Commission are located in road rights of way, standards developed and implemented by the FDOT, FHWA and JTA should be researched for appropriate application by the Tree Commission. While parks in Jacksonville have historically been non-urban spaces, the public park spaces within the downtown and adjacent to the St. John's River are urban. Sources such as the City Parks Alliance should be included. Each of you bring personal and professional experiences with both successful and unsuccessful planting in urban environments; you are asked to add your experiences to those sources cited above and expose the UTTF to the best (and not best) practices you have encountered.

Completion of the first task will produce recommendations of the Task Force to the Tree Commission for the adoption of existing, modified or new standards for potentially enhanced site preparations and planting specifications applicable to projects seeking to utilize Tree Mitigation

Funds for the planting of trees in the urban environment. It is not the intent to create additional standards where existing practices are sufficient; each standard recommended should be supported by the benefits and value it provides to the urban environment. Benefits and value may differ by location or project goal. The UTTF should define what benefits and values are to be considered to support its recommendations.

The **second task** assigned the UTTF speaks to a review of current initiatives and strategies for the planting of trees on urban public land within the City with a goal to identify if current practices may be improved in three areas:

- the maintaining of existing trees;
- the planting of additional trees; and
- the outcome of planted trees.

Initially, the UTTF should increase its understanding of the current initiatives and strategies employed by the City; it is anticipated that the Public Works Department staff will lead this discussion for areas of the City outside the downtown. The Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) has jurisdiction over the downtown area; the UTTF should engage the leaders and staff of the DIA in this UTTF task to understand how the three areas are considered by the DIA when considering redevelopment projects in the downtown. Urban parks are an increasing part of the downtown quality of life; these projects can be managed entirely by the Parks & Recreation Department (parks) or jointly between the DIA and Parks. The UTTF should hear from Parks about how it currently considers and applies initiatives and strategies to the three areas.

The UTTF should review and compare the current initiatives and strategies of Public Works, Parks and the DIA in its development of recommendations for the Tree Commission to continue, modify or add new initiatives and strategies to increase the success of the project applications it considers and the number of applications it considers with a goal to increase the quantity of successfully implemented projects funded by the Tree Mitigation Fund.

The **third task** focuses the UTTF's efforts on the pilot project approved for the installation of trees to increase shade at JTA Bus Stops to include initiatives and strategies not only for the planting of additional trees but also for the maintenance of existing tree canopy and an improvement to the outcome of planted trees at Bus Stops. While this third task builds on the UTTF's definition of urban environments; the specific environment at a Bus Stop may require the development of additional standards, initiatives and strategies. The UTTF should engage the JTA staff to understand its current initiatives and strategies, share the UTTF's findings and recommendations under task one with JTA and develop a consensus for initiatives, strategies, planning and design of bus stops that will positively affect the maintaining of trees, planting of additional trees and improve the success of planted trees.

The **fourth task** seeks to increase the Tree Commission's early (planning and design stage) partnership with the agencies or entities of the City that plant trees in urban environments and where projects are eligible for Tree Mitigation Funds, identify methods to offer technical, policy and financial resources to enhance, maintain and expand the urban tree canopy. The UTTF should identify those agencies and entities that plan, design and implement projects within the City's

urban environment. The UTTF should identify the technical, policy and financial resources of the Tree Commission in written form suitable for presentation in support of education about its initiatives, strategies and successful projects. The UTTF should recommend strategies for ongoing engagement with the staff and leadership of each agency and entity identified to promote coordination and support for the maintenance, planting of additional trees and success of the urban tree canopy.

The first meeting of the UTTF is anticipated to be an organizational meeting. In addition to the introduction of the Task Force members, it is anticipated that the UTTF will:

- review and modify as needed the above description of the tasks assigned to the UTTF;
- identify the order/priority of each of the tasks to be undertaken by the UTTF;
- create the agenda for the second meeting of the UTTF;
- request the compilation of information to support the agenda for the second meeting; and
- based on an understanding of the effort associated with the compilation of information, set the date for the second meeting.

By establishing standards the tasks assigned to the UTTF will serve to increase the efficiency with which projects seeking Tree Mitigation Funds to plant trees are prepared and reviewed. The review of existing initiatives and strategies employed by the City, with an expanded review to include agencies and entities other than just Public Works, serves as an audit of existing practices with a goal to reduce discrepancies and increase efficiencies. Sharing the technical, policy and financial resources, combined with coordination at the planning level will reduce redundancies and increase synergy between programs, amplifying the benefits of eligible Tree Mitigation Fund investments on adjacent properties.

Many of you participated in a meaningful way to the Tree Commission's development and adoption of its Strategic Plan and went on to support funding of the development of an Urban Forest Master Plan for the City. Your active participation in the Task Force meetings is another important investment in the successful planting and replanting of the City's tree canopy in urban areas.

**Jacksonville Tree Commission**

**TASK FORCE ON URBAN TREE PLANTING BEST PRACTICES**

**Friday November 8, 2024, 1:30 – 5:00 PM**

**Ed Ball Building, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Conference Room 5  
and Zoom Webinar**

**Task Force Members:**

Susan Fraser, Tree Commission Member, Chair  
Nina Sickler Tree Commission Member, Vice-Chair  
Curtis Hart, Tree Commission Member  
William Burke, Tree Commission Member

**Non-member recommended attendees/advisors:**

Jonathan Colburn, Urban Forestry Manager  
Justin Gearhart, City Arborist, Tree Commission Advisor  
Kathleen McGovern, Parks Development Coordinator, COJ  
Jill Enz, Chief of Natural and Marine Resources, COJ  
Anne Coglianese, Chief Resilience Officer, COJ  
Representative, Scenic Jacksonville, Inc.  
Representative, Greenscape of Jacksonville  
Representative, DIA

**Staff:** Charles Hayes; Shannon MacGillis

**AGENDA**

*Order of Agenda is Subject to Change*

1. **Call to Order - Chair**
2. **Roll Call and Verification of Quorum - Chair**
3. **Welcome Message and Goals – Chair**
4. **Submittal of Speaker’s Cards - Chair**
  - a) A raised hand icon will be acknowledged by the Chair.
  - b) For those attending in person, paper speakers’ cards will be available.

**5. Public Comment: (up to 3 minutes, allotted at discretion of Chair)**

**6. Action Items:**

- a) Identify Task Force Scope of Work
  - i. Identify scope of task based on Charge Memo;
  - ii. Identify need for clarification / amendment to Charge Memo;
  - iii. Identify the order in which tasks should be addressed (prioritize)
  - iv. Based on initial assessment of effort and resources, identify preliminary estimate of time to accomplish tasks.
  
- b) Identify applicability of proposed Urban Environment Design Standards
  - i. Define the term / phrase “constrained by hardscape”.
  - ii. Identify other terms to define.
  - iii. Formulate list of agencies and entities potentially affected by the development of Urban Environment Design Standards for the planting of trees; expand the Non-member recommended attendees /advisors to the UTTF as applicable.
  
- c) For the first priority task, identify the background materials (codes, standards, policies and procedures affecting the planting of trees in urban environments) necessary to support the UTTF’s review of same.
  - i. Identify those attendees (or others) best qualified to assemble and present the background materials to the UTTF.
  - ii. Agree on dates due and location of collection.
  
- d) Identify date for the next UTTF meeting.

**7. New Business:**

**8. Old Business: none.**

**9. Adjournment.**