



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Urban Forestry Board

**FROM:** Walter Passmore, Urban Forestry Program Manager  
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**DATE:** November 8, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Comprehensive Urban Forest Management Plan – Vision Process

This memorandum introduces seven unique themes which have emerged as a result of the Urban Forest Summit held in January '11 as well as an interdepartmental staff brainstorming session including representatives from 8 departments with direct urban forest responsibilities.

The seven Urban Forest Vision Themes are as follows:

- 1) Tree Canopy Coverage and Composition
- 2) Transportation, Connectivity and Human Health
- 3) Internal, Local and Regional Collaboration / Process Improvement
- 4) Urban Design
- 5) Site Design
- 6) Tree Health, Safety and Maintenance
- 7) Public Perception, Education and Involvement

Each Urban Forest Vision Theme listed below is accompanied by a vision statement which summarizes the vision components identified by both the Urban Forest Summit and the interdepartmental brainstorming session.

This information will be posted to the Comprehensive Urban Forest Management Plan section of Speak Up Austin! where we encourage the community to provide feedback and suggestions on these themes, vision statements and vision components.



## Theme 1: Tree Canopy Coverage and Composition

**Vision Statement:** A native, diverse urban forest canopy is equitably distributed and maximized according to site and ecosystem capacity to provide benefits and food to humans and wildlife.

### **Vision Components:**

- 90% of available planting space is occupied by trees/plants
- Meet or exceed canopy coverage goals, which vary by site/use/zoning and by ecosystem
- Diverse native species representation
- Trees species composition includes edible fruits and nuts (urban orchards)
- Tree species composition includes species important for wildlife, especially endangered, threatened, and/or rare species

## Theme 2: Transportation, Connectivity and Human Health

**Vision Statement:** The movement of people through Austin follows shady, cool tunnels of towering trees connecting community to commerce and services via multi-modal transportation.

### **Vision Components:**

- Congress Ave, Airport Blvd, Burnet Ave, and S. Lamar Ave, CapMetro lines and similar major arterials are pedestrian-friendly corridors that contain large trees and support alternative transportation and vibrant businesses
- Austin needs ‘Emerald Necklace’ of connected and contiguous walkable/bikeable green spaces and transportation corridors
- Austin is cooler because of shading effect and the air is easier to breathe
- All streets and bike lanes are lined with healthy trees

## Theme 3: Internal, Local and Regional Collaboration / Process Improvement

**Vision Statement:** Tree related decisions and rules on the local, regional and state level are consistent, based on scientific reasoning and frame a long-term sustainable forestry ‘voice,’ independent of responsive, short-term decision making.

### **Vision Components:**

- State/Regional/Local collaboration on urban forestry issues is smooth and consistent
- Urban forestry “voice” will be always present in planning and development permitting processes
- Governance structures have shifted to respond to whole-systems thinking (i.e decision-making in short term political cycles now requires life-cycle analysis/accountability).



- Policy-makers will implement a more science based urban forest decision-making matrix
- The development review and design process related to trees is simpler
- COA is carbon neutral

## Theme 4: Urban Design

**Vision Statement:** Planning of infrastructure respects and enhances the space required for the urban forest to ensure its integration with the fabric of urban life and trees are paramount to maintaining the integrity and function of natural systems as well as community and historic character.

### **Vision Components:**

- Neighborhood planning process has transformed into Eco District or Eco Density planning, modeled after City of Portland or City of Vancouver planning efforts, respectively.
- Big trees grow downtown
- Living design principles are incorporated into planning; the biological component of infrastructures are realized and utilized
- Bottomland hardwood forest exists along all major eastern creeks and rivers
- Community gathering spaces are shaded and trees accent the character of neighborhoods and the history of Austin
- Redevelopment at urban infill sites prioritizes tree preservation and planting space
- Access to parkland, preserves, and tree canopy is distributed evenly across city
- Forested land acquisition priorities have been established to meet urban forestry goals
- Wildlife habitat is abundant (endangered species are protected)

## Theme 5: Site Design

**Vision Statement:** Trees will be creatively incorporated into sustainable site designs, credited as green infrastructure elements and valued equally as a utility; the integration of site-appropriate, low-maintenance trees will complement the sites' functions with regard to water conservation and filtration, energy efficiency and air quality.

### **Vision Components:**

- Main emphasis of infrastructure is on user (walkable streets) as opposed to conveyance of utilities
- Proper tree selection principles (native, drought tolerant “Right tree—Right Place”) are being consistently utilized
- Trees will be incorporated and credited as an element of green infrastructure in site designs



- Small area plan and site development plan implementation measures will include a method to quantify the value of and impacts to the urban forest (aka triple bottom line analysis)
- Broad scale utilization of new water techniques for irrigating, including on-site water recycling and stormwater utilization
- Either utilities buried or energy generated on site
- All trees planted have room to grow to maturity
- Creative solutions based on site characteristics are incorporated into designs

## Theme 6: Tree Health, Safety and Maintenance

**Vision Statement:** Public trees are proactively managed as a utility for safety, health and longevity to increase the benefits they provide to the community and decrease their potential liability.

### **Vision Components:**

- Every tree on public property is on an appropriate maintenance cycle (ex young trees 3 years, street trees 5 years)
- Trees are managed on a proactive vs. reactive basis
- Trees are healthy and vigorous and reflect changing climate
- Urban canopy resilient to fire

## Theme 7: Public Perceptions, Education, and Involvement

**Vision Statement:** The City is a leader in demonstrating and encouraging feasible urban forest solutions, cultivating positive, realistic attitudes toward trees and fostering a cooperative attitude that strengthens stakeholder partnerships to inspire stewardship and community engagement.

### **Vision Components:**

- City Facilities, public property and schools showcase/demonstrate green ideas and latest green building practices
- Public perception is that trees/environment are assets, not liabilities
- Public expectations will be set appropriately, according to climate
- Citizens are well informed about tree benefits and are empowered to care for public trees
- Partnerships with business, non-profits and neighborhood communities are strong
- Businesses preserve and incorporate trees to stimulate revenue, attract visitors, and provide better workplaces

