



CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

Agenda Date:	November 4, 2019
Action Required:	None
Presenters:	Paul Josey, Chair, Tree Commission
Staff Contacts:	Mike Ronayne, Urban Forester & Todd Brown, Deputy Director Parks & Rec.
Title:	Annual State of the Forest Report

Background:

The Tree Commission Chair will provide an update on activities over the past year and some thoughts on issues the Commission intends to work on in the coming year.

Discussion:

The Tree Commission has continued to be the City's advocacy voice for trees and the urban forest, responding to citizen inquiries/concern and weighing in when tree related issues arose in the community. Highlights this year include hosting the City's Arbor Day celebration in Market Street Park, engaged in steering committees for E. High St., Barracks Rd., Fontaine Av. and advised on other development projects. The Tree Commission, in conjunction with the Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards, were also able to coordinate a tree planting project with volunteers in Belmont. The Tree Commission has also continued to advocate for trees throughout the Standards and Design Manual revision process.

Alignment with City Council's Vision and Strategic Plan:

The Tree Commission activities support the City Council's "Green City" vision.

Charlottesville City Council Vision 2025: A Green City :

"Charlottesville citizens live in a community with a vibrant urban forest, tree-lined streets, and lush green neighborhoods. We have an extensive natural trail system, along with healthy rivers and streams. We have clean air and water, we emphasize recycling and reuse, and we minimize stormwater runoff. Our homes and buildings are sustainably designed and energy efficient."

Community Engagement:

Tree Commission meetings are open to the public.

Budgetary Impact:

This report has no impact on the General Fund.

Recommendation:

Report only

Attachments:

Annual State of the Forest Report

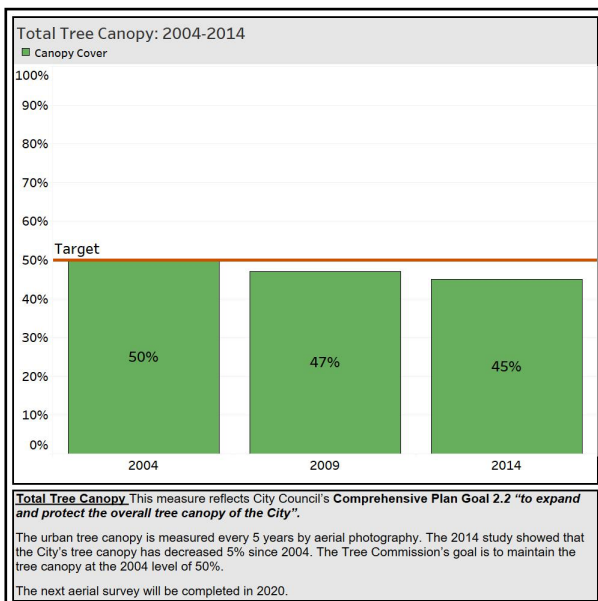
STATE OF THE URBAN FOREST

The Charlottesville Tree Commission FY2019 Annual Report

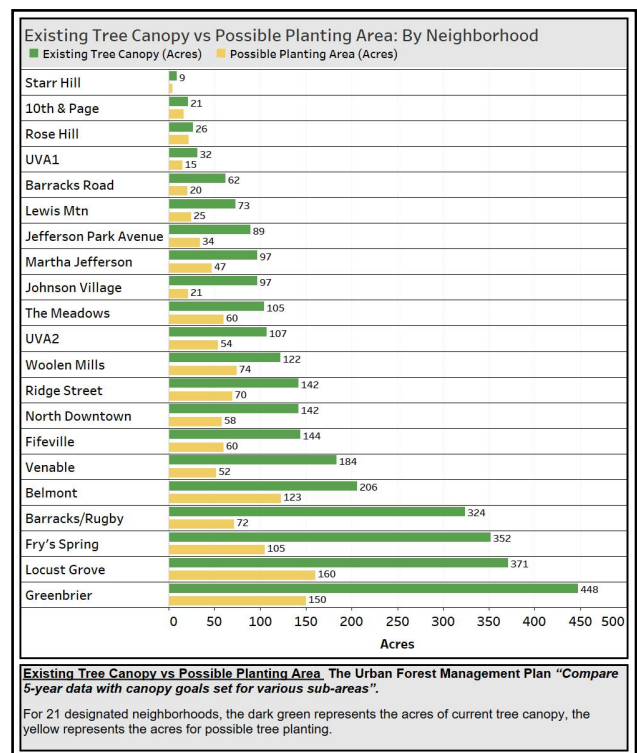
Tree Commission Charge. The Tree Commission is charged by City Council to “protect and improve the urban forest, which provides better quality of life for City residents and provides environmental and aesthetic benefits by preserving and monitoring all trees located on public right-of-ways and public property.... It will advocate for trees before City Council and the Planning Commission.”

The Urban Tree Canopy. Everyone loves trees, but does everyone know how much we need them for our health and well being? Cities all across the country are undertaking major efforts to increase their tree canopies because they recognize the benefit of trees to air quality, public health, climate change mitigation, and energy conservation, as well as the basic aesthetic appreciation of tree lined streets.

Although Goal 2.2 of the City’s 2013 Comprehensive Plan is to “expand and protect the overall tree canopy” of the City, the chart below shows that, in the years 2004 - 2014, the city lost 5% of its overall tree canopy, and it is anticipated that the next aerial survey to be completed in 2020 will show additional canopy loss.



Charlottesville’s Tree Canopy by Neighborhood. The 5-year aerial survey provides data for each of the 21 Charlottesville neighborhoods showing the number of acres of tree canopy (green) for each, as well as the number of acres available for possible for tree planting (yellow).

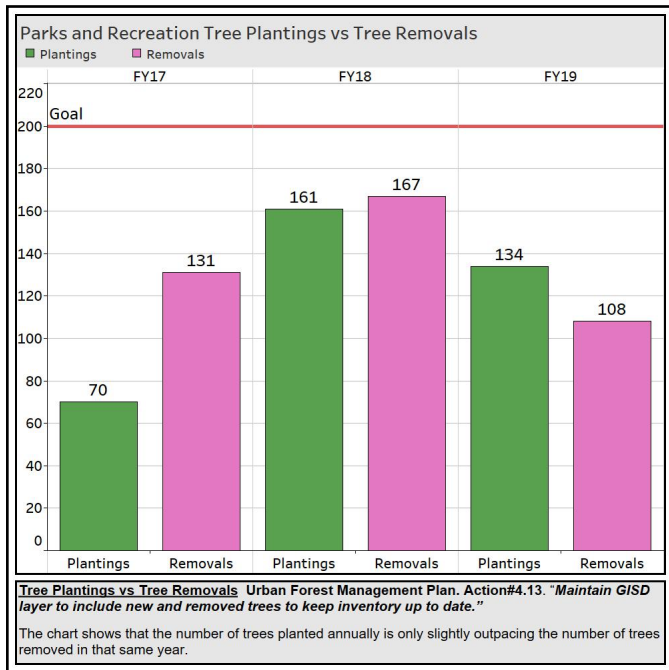


The chart above shows not only the low canopy cover in the most urban neighborhoods, i.e. Starr Hill, 10th & Page, Rose Hill, but also the lack of available land in those neighborhoods on which to plant additional trees. The Commission uses this data to help target specific neighborhoods for additional trees, such as Belmont, a neighborhood that has a sizable amount of available land on which to plant trees.

Maintaining/Expanding the Urban Tree Canopy.

The Tree Commission’s goal is, at a minimum, to maintain the City’s current tree canopy by planting at least 200 trees a year. This goal is not being met.

The chart below shows that the highest number of trees planted was 161 in FY18, well below the 200 tree goal. In both FY17 and FY18, the number of trees planted was less than the number of trees removed for a net loss of 67 trees over the two year period. Even with the tree gain in FY19, the City has lost, not gained, 41 trees over the last 3-year period. These numbers reflect only the trees the City is planting and removing on public land, but does not take into account any trees lost through private development.

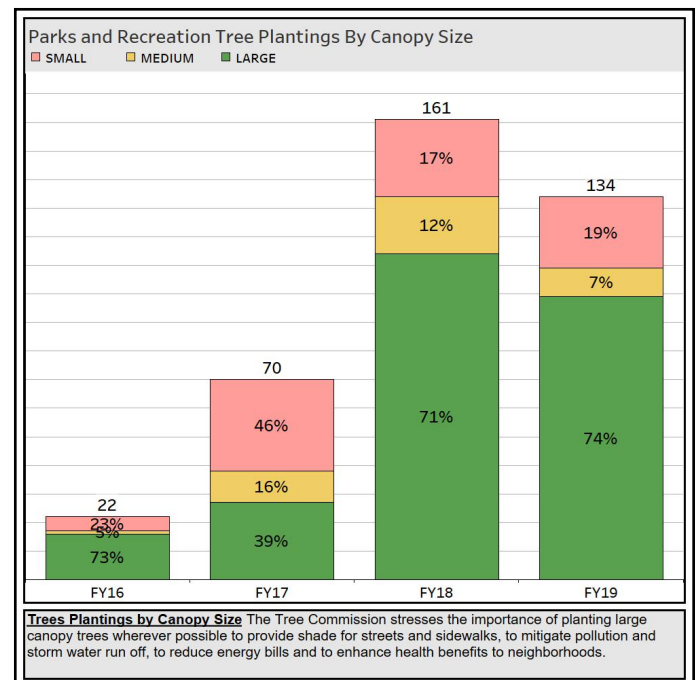
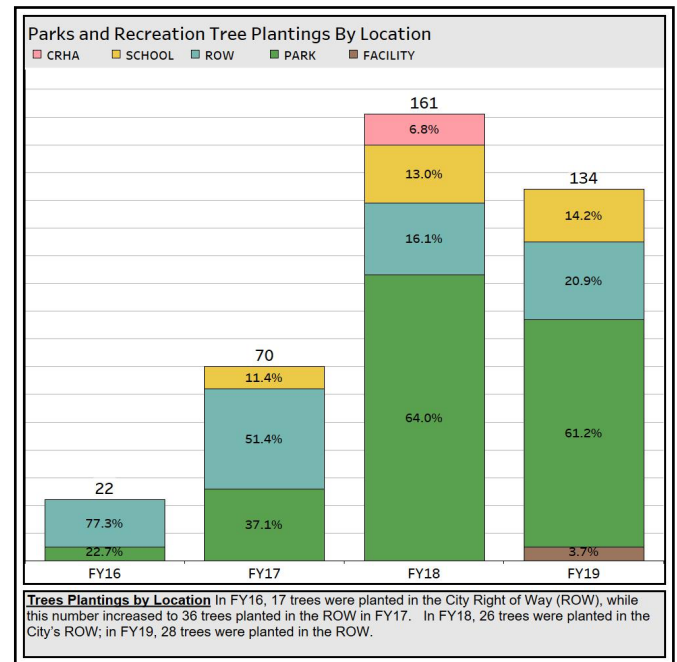


Planting Large Canopy Trees. Besides planting additional trees, another way to increase the city’s tree canopy is to plant larger canopy trees. The chart on the right shows the Commission’s priority to plant larger canopy trees that will provide shade for pedestrians, as well as for city neighborhoods to help save energy costs, mitigate pollution and foster a healthier environment. The chart shows the increasing percentage of larger trees planted by Parks and Recreation in the last two years.

Location of Trees Planted on Public Property.

The chart below shows that despite a priority to plant street trees (ROW on the chart), the majority of trees planted by Parks and Recreation are in the city parks.

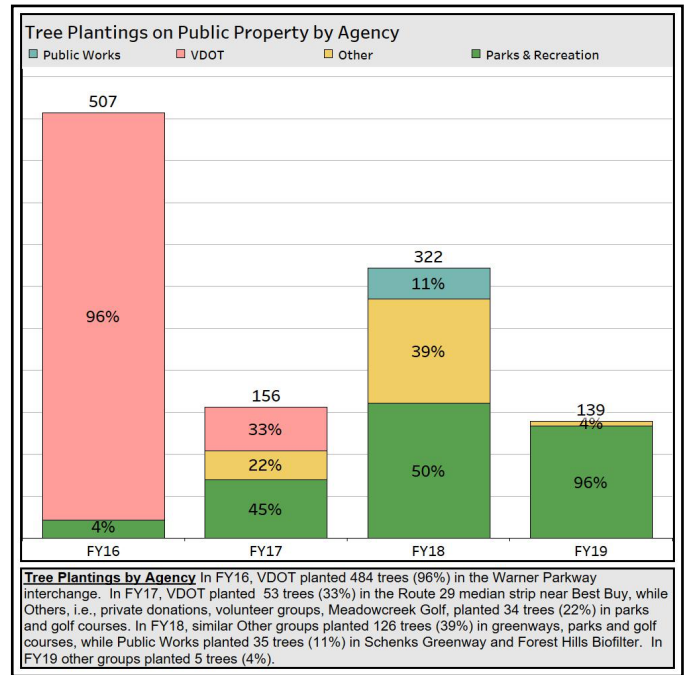
Although more trees planted in the parks help the overall tree canopy, they do not provide needed shade for pedestrians and urban neighborhoods to help reduce energy costs and promote health.



Agencies Planting Trees on Public Property.

Another way to increase the city's tree canopy is to collaborate with other partners to plant more large canopy trees. The biggest partner agency is VDOT, which as you can see on the chart on the right has planted the greatest number of trees in the past four years. In FY16, VDOT planted 487 trees for the John Warner Parkway and Interchange.

Other private partners, such as the Tree Stewards offer volunteer time and resources to plant trees on public land in Charlottesville. Almost 40% of the trees planted in FY18 were from private sources. What is not reflected in the FY19 data is a new collaborative effort between the Tree Commission and the Tree Stewards to plant trees in low canopy neighborhoods. In FY19, 21 trees were planted in Belmont front yards, which in addition to the environmental benefits, will provide shade to City sidewalks and streets



Charlottesville Resources Dedicated to

Trees. The chart to the right shows City revenues that have been allocated to trees through the CIP process. In fiscal years 2017-2018, Council approved \$50,000 for tree preservation and planting. In FY19, Council approved \$50,000 for tree planting only, with \$50,000 being approved in the Pks & Rec operations budget for tree preservation, thus increasing the total funding for trees by 100%.

However, even with level funds of \$50,000/year for tree planting, the Commission cannot meet its minimum annual goal to plant 200 trees per year. Due to the increasing cost of trees each year from \$250/tree several years ago to \$350/tree, only about 140 trees can be planted each year. Not only is our goal financially unattainable, we are unable to outpace the number of trees that are taken down each year.

