

The mission of the City of Gainesville Tree Advisory Board is to provide arboricultural expertise to the City Commission and recommendations for the efficient, practical, and timely expenditure of monies from the Tree Mitigation Fund in such a manner that benefits our citizens and sustains our urban forest.

The three most important things our Board accomplished during Fiscal Year 2022-23 are:

- Code revisions to expand use of the Tree Mitigation Fund (TMF)

It was brought to the attention of the Board that the TMF was growing faster than it was being spent. With recommendations from City management and input from members of the public, we revised Code of Ordinances, Chapter 30, Article VIII, Division 2, Section 30-8.7, C.2b, to expand uses of the TMF. We believe that the revised code will expedite expenditures from the Fund, as well as help fund new jobs within the Urban Forestry Division, enhance the quality and scope of infrastructure projects, and improve the green infrastructure of our city. New code also allows funds to be used for needed life cycle maintenance of new plantings, ensuring stewardship of the City's investment.

- Support for conservation land acquisitions with Tree Mitigation Funds

Purchasing land within the city limits for preservation and enhancement of Gainesville's urban forest is a high priority use of the TMF. It allows the city to protect wooded parcels from future development in order to conserve them for future generations, increase overall tree canopy cover and offer additional community benefits such as expanding recreation, improving water quality, and preserving habitat. This ensures that Gainesville will continue to be a place where neighbors have close-to-home access to green spaces and be able to experience the natural world.

- Assistance with resolution to protect the Live Oaks on the 100 block of SE 1st Ave

For over 33 years, the Tree Advisory Board has provided recommendations to the Commission for how to manage our urban trees. Recently, an impassioned response to the proposed removal of heritage Live Oaks on the 100 block of SE 1st Avenue brought attention to the importance of balancing safety with tree preservation. Our Board served as a welcoming venue for members of the public to voice concerns, ask questions, and make suggestions for alternatives to tree removal. The public's input and resulting collaboration between our Board and City management will allow TMF monies to assist with a public infrastructure project that will improve pedestrian safety and preserve these heritage street trees.

The three most important things our Board is working on now are:

- Revisions to Ch23

It has come to the attention of City management that the section of our Code which guides the maintenance of transportation corridors - Ch. 23: Streets, Sidewalks, and Other Public Places – lacks the same level of tree protection and management provisions as in other City code sections, despite the fact that street trees make up a large portion of city-owned trees. We are currently collaborating with Public Works management to draft and submit provisions which will ensure

public safety and guide future management of Gainesville's street trees. We believe this will bring a much-needed update to this chapter of our Code.

- Tree list

Chapter 30, Article VIII, Division 2, Section 30-8.10 outlines Gainesville's tree list that regulates which tree species can be planted within City of Gainesville development projects as well as where they should be planted, and what criteria they meet (i.e., providing shade, appropriate for utility rights-of-way, retention pond banks, street sides, etc.). We are currently updating this list to better guide future users.

- Curation of potential land parcels to be purchased for conservation and tree preservation with Tree Mitigation Funds

As previously mentioned, purchasing conservation lands is an optimal way to spend monies from the TMF. We are currently creating a list of parcels with input from city staff and interested stakeholders that would be ideal purchases for the city, both for potential conservation and high quality heritage tree preservation value. We believe this list will help guide the acquisition process and ensure that lands are purchased at a fair market value.

The Commission helps our Board better serve our neighbors by continuing to support the Urban Forestry Program within Public Works. We see every day how Urban Forestry Division (UFD) personnel are doing their best to serve citizens and protect the city's forest. We appreciate Dave Conser, COG Arborist, facilitating our meetings, keeping us informed and responding to our requests for information. We also are very grateful to Joe Wolf, GRU's Utility Forester, for faithfully attending our meetings for decades, taking meeting notes and providing valuable institutional perspective.

We recognize that our city's urban forest is an asset worth \$1.4 billion in real and compensatory services. As Board members, we are here for the Commission and our citizens to advise regarding sustainable management this important asset. As City residents, we are proud that Gainesville has been designated as a 'Tree City USA' by the Arbor Day Foundation for the last 42 years and hope that honor continues for the next 42! We look forward to continuing to serve as a resource to the Commission as well as your liaison to GRU, the Urban Forestry Division staff, and our neighbors. Please let us know how we can better assist in the upcoming year and thank you for your continued support of our Board and Gainesville's urban forest.

Sincerely,

Gainesville Tree Advisory Board
Erick Smith, Chair
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