

Tree Conservation Commission
Business Meeting Minutes
City of Atlanta, City Hall
Arborist Division, Suite 3800
February 19, 5-6pm

Commissioners present: Susanne Blam, Jack Cebe, Dina Franch, Nabil Hammam, Marvin Lampkin, Katherine Moore, Lawrence Richardson, Chet Tisdale, Elizabeth Ward, and Sarah Boles (joined in progress at end of Business Meeting and attended hearing)

Staff present: Jonathan Futrell, Reggie McLendon, Donna Wilson, and Mike Ward, Law Department (joined in progress); Thor Leen, City Arborist; Kathy Evans, TCC staff.

Visitors: Ryan Gravel, AICP, primary author of City Design; Stephanie Coffin, Tree Next Door.

1. **Minutes.** Distributed January 15 business meeting minutes. (Approved via email because meeting time was limited).

2. **Guest Speaker.** Ryan Gravel, AICP, primary author of City Design, and original visionary for City of Atlanta Beltline. Presented and discussed City Design project and goals.
 - Atlanta City Design, a larger vision for how Atlanta will grow.
 - Estimates suggest Atlanta area will add 5.5 to 8 million in the next 20 years (like adding equivalent of Charlotte to Atlanta). City may grow from approx. 465 million to 1.2 million.
 - Growth will occur whether we plan or not; City Design is a plan for that growth.
 - Tree canopy – and land it represents – is a significant part of the planning.
 - City Design, core principles: *Equity, Progress, Ambition, Access, Nature*
 - Ryan Gravel recommends obtaining hard copy of the project report (which is in hardback book format). Also available on web <https://www.atlcitydesign.com/>
 - *Nature* – protection, expansion of ecological value of watersheds, trees, and habitats against the force of urbanization.
 - Old Atlanta grew up around streetcar. New Atlanta grew around the automobile with corridors leading to leafy green neighborhoods.
 - Need to design streets and corridors for mobility. Conservation areas for watersheds, canopy, character, and scale.
 - Design for: transit corridors, alignment with public life.
 - As population grows, will need more [public] greenspace, places to get away from people. Need city-wide trails.
 - Lungs of the City – big forested areas. Such as the neighborhoods of Buckhead, Druid Hills, Cascade, South River Gardens, etc.
 - Need to protect creeks and water ways and connect people with these areas.
 - Develop clusters of developments in areas such as former Bowen Homes – 285 and Hollowell; Lakewood and Metropolitan; Greenbriar. Connect various parts of the city via transit.
 - Aspirational for all city plans and activities, in hopes that we will ask, “Does it help us achieve our core principles? *Equity, Progress, Ambition, Access, Nature*”
 - Most robust ongoing proposal is for South River Park. Approximate 3500-acre “park” including community as well as natural areas. 1/3 is in the City of Atlanta. 2/3 in DeKalb. Residential, 5 landfills, truck yards, public land (Constitution Lake, DeKalb County greenspace; Southside Park, Atlanta; and Prison Farm, Atlanta-owned in DeKalb).
 - Completed City Design in 2017.

- Questions:
 - Have planners examined how the city’s canopy would look if we did not act and tree ordinance and other codes remained unchanged? Will the tree ordinance changes support the “Nature” goals (watersheds, canopy, habitat, etc.) of City Design?
RG: not that I’m aware of. Not following tree ordinance work as closely. Anticipating a massive investment in greenspace protection.
 - How can we incorporate these principles into regulations? We have the standards, for green building and LEED – related but not the same. For example, less parking, more tree protection, more watershed protection.
RG: yes, it is complex. Best example for comprehensive urban plan may be the 1909 Chicago Plan (first comprehensive plan for an American city). It was a social plan as well. Wacker’s Manual of the Plan of Chicago – was developed to inspire school children and teach the history and benefits of the Chicago Plan.
 - Do you see areas where City Design principles have been considered or applied?
RG: Considered in development of transportation plan. Housing is starting to look at it. Urban Ecology, somewhat.
 - How does the larger plan fit into the site-by-site basis?
RG: Yes, and we may not get it all right now, but we will get there over time.

3. **Tree Ordinance.**

- S. Blam received follow up from Elizabeth Johnson, Project Mgr, City Planning, requesting to schedule a time for the tree ordinance team to hold a focus group with the Tree Commission.
- Scheduling options, March 4 a possible option. Prefer to give detailed feedback before a draft is released to public. Would like to look at how draft proposals would apply to cases.
- Tree Commission would like to receive a copy of the draft ordinance (or proposals) in advance of meeting with Tree Ordinance Team and consultants – to better direct comments.
- City Council (CDHS Committee) public Work Session on Draft 1 of Tree Ordinance is scheduled for March 20, 11am. Tree Commission would like its feedback incorporated into Draft 1. [Note: postponed related to COVID-19 reponse].

4. **Tree appeals.** Distributed paper copies of appeals. Distributed outline for hearing procedure – includes reminders about holding questions until presentations of each party to appeal are complete (except clarifying questions), that parties may not speak outside designated times, etc.

5. **Old Business.**

- Arbor Day is Feb 21, 2020.
- City of Atlanta Proclamation for Arbor Day 2020, 34th year as Tree City USA – presented by CM Matt Westmoreland at City Council meeting, Monday, February 17.
- Arbor Day Lunch and Learn (Story of the Forest and Why Atlanta’s Urban Canopy and Watersheds are So Special), sponsored by Tree Conservation Commission, noon, Old City Council Chambers, Friday, February 21. Open to employees and public. Please join if you can. Thanks to Jace Cebe for his coordination work.
- Trees Atlanta Annual Canopy Conference (focused this year on urban trees and climate change), Thursday, Feb 20, K. Evans and Arborist Division staff members will attend.

6. **New Business.**

- Only one hearing this month, February 19. Will need two appeal hearings next month -- March 18 and March 25. [Note: postponed related to COVID-19 response.]
- Jonathan Futrell provided update on jurisdiction on federal properties.
- Financial Disclosure requests will be mailed and emailed by COA, Ethics Department. Please complete disclosure online as soon as possible – and before April 1. Penalties apply for late filers.
- ParkPride annual Parks and Greenspace Conference, Monday, March 23. Tree Commission partnered as “Friend” and provided Atlanta’s Native Forest Calendars. Marvin Lampkin and Kathy Evans plan to attend. [Note: postponed related to COVID-19 response.]