

Focus Group #1 Notes

Public Meeting 4/8/2019

All participants were asked to provide feedback to question #1. Once all participants responded, the facilitator moved on to question the next question. This process was repeated for all four questions. Some participants provided multiple responses to a single question, as indicated by the dashed lines in the matrix below.

**Please note that these are NOT direct quotes, but rather paraphrased responses:*

Participant ID #	Question 1: Tell us about a significant experience you have had in your life that involved trees. It does not need to have occurred in Gainesville, it just needs to include trees.	Question 2: What do you think the term “urban forest” means? How would you define it? <i>Note: Participants’ were presented with an ecologist’s definition of “urban forest,” prior to the focus group, which likely biased responses to this question.</i>	Question 3: What are your perspectives on the current state of Gainesville’s urban forest? What makes you say that?	Question 4: How can we improve the management of Gainesville’s urban forest? What ideas do you have, and why?
1	<p>In Cuba we had Eucalyptus trees lining our property. They were very tall trees. I realize now that they were not native, but they were a part of the identity of my home. When I was a child and we’d get sick, my mother would take the large Eucalyptus leaves from that tree and boil them in water. She’d drape a cloth over our head and have us inhale the steam from the boiling water with the leaves. It would help us feel better. The trees were healing. I love them. I also remember that when I was a child someone told me that I</p>	<p>Urban forest means that we have a city in the forest. There should be as many trees as possible. I think we live in a place where people seem to be enlightened about ecology, but I would like us to do more. I don’t want to see Gainesville become like Miami where development has removed so many trees. I want the canopy to continue to grow. To me, the forest needs to be a very significant part of the city, especially in poorer neighborhoods because studies have proven that trees bring all sorts of benefits to poorer areas. The trees can be a vehicle for resurrection of a neighborhood.</p>	<p>We have a situation here where development is being valued over trees by political elite.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I have been told that it is very expensive to remove a tree, but I have no idea. Is it really that expensive?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>There are more creative ways to deal with these issues. How can green roofs fit in here? I think we need to be creative because not everyone sees trees as a neighborhood asset for beautification and health. We need to spread the gospel to</p>	<p>As population in Florida increases, we should have more pocket park areas that are protected so we are sure to keep areas with trees. We need to change how people are thinking about trees, and help them to see their full value. In Japan people ‘Bathe in the forest.’ They go out and immerse themselves in the forest as a healing practice. We need to incorporate the idea of saving the forest as a way of improving people health and quality of life.</p> <p>-----</p>

	<p>would never be lonely in my life because I can keep company with the trees. That was powerful to me. I will always remember she said that. I will never be lonely because I have the trees.</p>	<p>-----</p> <p>When my neighborhood was being developed, not a lot of attention was paid to incorporating trees into the neighborhood. I agree that the black asphalt is an eye sore and I would personally volunteer to go out with an axe to remove the asphalt from my neighborhood to make it more ecologically friendly.</p>	<p>more people about the value that trees provide to the community. I also think that we need better architects here in Gainesville who care about our landscape and have innovative ways of protecting our trees.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>What role does UF play in all of this? What is UF's vision for the urban forest? That is a huge factor that needs to be considered because whatever UF decides to do is going to have a huge impact on the rest of the community.</p>	<p>There are a few areas that I would like to see protected. The large open field at the Ignite Life Center could be another park. Also, the City owns the headwaters of Sweetwater Branch – it is the area west of Popeyes (near the Publix on N. Main St.) and north of the Spirit Plaza. That area could be cleaned up and preserved as a valuable ecological site where people could come and meditate.</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Growing up in Virginia, there were a lot of large trees there. My dad's favorite tree was a maple species. There was this beautiful fir species that I loved. I remember growing up hearing birds in canopy.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>–</p> <p>When I visited La Salle, Utah I went into an Aspen forest and hugged an Aspen tree. It was an amazing experience.</p>	<p>The problem with the definition of 'urban forest' is that there is a difference in what people are considering 'urban.' There should be a distinction between the areas that heavily covered in asphalt and have very few trees, versus areas that are urban residential areas that do have trees. What really bothers me is asphalted areas. I want an initiative to "green" our parking lots, like what they are promoting on depave.org. It is an organization that advocates for removing parking lots. I think we should be saving our old trees, not cutting them down for parking lots.</p>	<p>I don't think that Tree Mitigation Fund should be part of the ordinance. We shouldn't be cutting them down. As trees get bigger, they store more CO2. I think we need standards for developing around trees instead. We also need deeper setbacks between buildings and streets to allow for more trees.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>It seems that the tree mitigation funds are not being spent on re-planting, so I really think we need to change the ordinance. We should take a close look at it and make so strategic changes. Rather than having people pay a fee to remove trees, I think we need to require that they provide</p>	<p>Tree giveaways and events need to be better publicized throughout the community. We need to get more word out to people on the Eastside.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>There are examples in other places that have used a Citizen Forestry Program model to train the residents to be tree stewards. Maybe that is something we can bring here.</p>

			<p>a strong reason about why it is necessary to remove certain trees for a development project. Is there really nowhere else the development could take place?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>We need more people in the City Arborist's department. Matt Mears is working with a skeleton crew. We need to hire and train staff according to ISA (International Society of Arboriculture) practices. If we want to increase tree canopy we need the people to do it, so spending money on staff is a worthwhile investment. With more staff able to increase the tree canopy, the City can save money by reducing the energy needed for heating and cooling buildings.</p>	
<p>3</p>	<p>In May of 1978 a tornado came through and knocked down six trees on our property. We removed them and planted six new ones. Now they are huge! It's been amazing to see them grow.</p>	<p>50% canopy cover is pitiful.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I'd like to see more tree coverage, especially in the Eastside.</p>	<p>The tree ordinance that was created 2 years ago was a great initiative, but it wasn't able to stop the clear cutting. The way the ordinance is written and the inclusion of the Tree Mitigation Fund makes it possible for large trees still to be removed, if the developer is willing to pay for it. This is very concerning to many people. There is a lot of concern about the large trees along Newberry Road being taken down.</p> <p>-----</p>	<p>We need to look at our budget and have discussions where trees are considered a priority.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Wild Spaces, Pubic Places has funds to put towards this idea of pocket parks and promoting mindfulness in nature.</p>

			<p>We need to ensure that values of our local communities and the integrity of our “tree city” identity are being upheld and protected.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>We need to shift the priorities of the City’s leaders and make conservation and expansion of the urban forest more of a priority.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>My father was an environmental consultant and ‘bird person’. I learned about ecology from my Dad.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>—</p> <p>Also, as kids the trees on my parents’ 12 acre property were our playground. We would go out and try to find the best ones to play in. The large Live Oak trees were great for climbing with my brother.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>—</p> <p>Trees really can remind us of home. When I go to Brooklyn, NY to visit my brother, I get the same feeling when I am in a place with a lot of trees. It helps make it feel homey.</p>	<p>I am a landscape architect, so my definition of the ‘urban forest’ really aligns with the definition that was given in the presentation earlier. However, I have not ever thought much about how the public and private areas are both part of the urban forest, so that is a new way of thinking about it for me.</p>	<p>The tree ordinance is being upheld. It’s not a matter of people being uncompliant or breaking the law, but rather a question of how successful the language of the ordinance is at actually protecting the trees.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>For certain tree species that are a certain size, in order to remove the tree you need to pay a significant amount in fees just to be allowed to remove it. Then on top of that is the cost of actually removing it.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>We are talking about the issue of communication. Well right now there is a push by the City and UF to establish a stronger partnership, and that is what it is going to take... partnership. We need to be working together, not apart. We need stronger</p>	<p>We need a shared vision where we are working together, not yelling at each other.</p>

			<p>partnerships between all the major players, including UF, GRU, the City and County Departments. We need to invite developers into these conversations. We also need to make sure we are focusing on maintenance and longevity of trees, not just planting. We should be dedicating resources to maintaining trees so they stay healthy, otherwise we will continue to plant trees that do not survive.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">5</p>	<p>My dad owned a tree farm and passed along the knowledge. I used to go out and help me take care of the trees. I'd do weeding and stuff like that. I didn't really like doing it, but it made me realize that taking care of trees is more complex than it looks.</p>	<p>The term does sound contradictory. It would seem that 'urban' and 'forest' don't go together.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>The maps we were shown at the beginning of the meeting that were part of the ecological survey do a better job of defining 'urban forests' than words. You can see the area of coverage on the maps.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>In terms of what I would like to see in Gainesville, I think we should be putting solar panels on top of every municipal building downtown. I was going to put solar panels at my house, but there is actually too much tree coverage in my yard for the solar panels to be a viable. But the trees are staying... there is no</p>	<p>I really like the City's nature parks and think it is cool that they are a part of Gainesville's urban forest. It's nice that we have diversity in the type of forest we have. It seems to be a draw for many people to come into the area.</p>	

		way I would take down a tree at this point.		
6	<p>The shade that trees provides is what stands out most to me. I live in Starke and we had trees lining the basketball court when I was a kid. It provided shade when we were playing. Now those trees have been cut down and I think about the poor kids who don't have shade to play in. Shade is really important in Florida.</p> <p>----- -</p> <p>Also, I grew up with trees all around, so I associate trees with home.</p>	<p>The Eastside of Gainesville has less canopy cover. That is common for urban areas that are less wealthy, as we see in impoverished areas of inner cities. If we increase the forest cover on the Eastside, maybe that can increase progress overall in that area.</p>		<p>These are good ideas, so we need to make they stay on the right track to get implemented.</p>
7	<p>Participant arrived late. Was not present to answer this question.</p>	<p>Participant arrived late. Was not present to answer this question.</p>	<p>What we are talking about here is a quality of life issue. There are many studies that show that trees improve people's quality of life. Right now it is too easy for developers to take the trees down.</p> <p>This is a communication issue. We need to communicate to others in the community about the many values that trees provide to our community. But for so long the developers have had the ear of the City Hall. That is what needs to change.</p>	<p>We need to look at how the General Transfer Fund from GRU is being spent.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Developing more pocket parks can help with heat island effect, which is a major issue.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>We could use the welcome packets that people receive in the mail when they are new to the area as place to put information about the urban forest management plan. This could help inform people of the importance that trees play in Gainesville and help newcomers</p>

				learn about how our community values trees.
--	--	--	--	---

Focus #2 Group Notes

Public Meeting 4/8/2019

**Where individuals made multiple comments throughout one question's session, these separate comments are bulleted.*

Participant ID #	Question 1: Tell us about a significant experience you have had in your life that involved trees. It does not need to have occurred in Gainesville, it just needs to include trees.	Question 2: What do you think the term "urban forest" means? How would you define it?	Question 3: What are your perspectives on the current state of Gainesville's urban forest? What makes you say that?	Question 4: How can we improve the management of Gainesville's urban forest? What ideas do you have, and why?
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had a huge Live Oak in his front yard. A third of the tree split and fell one evening. He thought he had to cut the tree down because he assumed it would not survive. Knowing what he knows now, he probably would not have taken the tree down. Just because a tree is damaged doesn't mean it needs to be removed. • When they were developing Campus Lodge, it used to be full of hardwoods. He kept a chunk of the 150-year old Swamp Chestnut Oak. When they finally cut into it some time later, it smelled so strongly like Jack Daniels. He realized that it's not just a flavor, it is absorbed from the wood! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The place where the other animals in the city live. • By having a discussion about the term "urban forest," your conceptualization of the urban forest can change very quickly. More complexity is created. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a time of transition in Gainesville for the urban forest. There are trees that were here before Gainesville was Gainesville. These really long-lived trees may never be replaced due to urban stress. "Relic trees" are dropping and there is no adequate replacement. Decision for replacement have changed. We are transitioning from trees that pre-dated the built environment to trees that are constrained by the urban environment. • Nature parks are focused on nature, not just recreation like the active parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education is the biggest thing that can improve the urban forest, if nothing else—residents need to hear a lot of what was shown in the presentation. Everyone lives somewhere, people should reflect on how they relate to the trees around them. Having people become familiar of what is around them. • Cutting down a tree anywhere affects everybody because my yard is part of the urban forest. What one person does affects us all.
2	Neighbor's tree was cut down within past year that provided his yard with a lot of shade and windbreak. How was it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would look at it as the percentage of canopy and greenery in the metropolitan area. Vegetation in general. 	Though he can only go off of observation, it seems to him that the severe storms in the last decade have almost made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have to design transportation in a way that maximizes movement for

	<p>permitted? It wasn't close to the house and was a large tree.</p>	<p>Also, wildlife habitats should fit into the definition of an urban forest. Includes an attempt to avoid barriers that make it impossible for wildlife to travel from one place to the other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also includes open, grassy areas and natural areas, whether trees are present or not 	<p>it "open season" on certain kinds of species like laurel oaks and pines because they're not as long-lived or break in the wind. Has seen some large trees not close to homes, heritage, trees, that are removed. How are they permitted? Could they be pruned instead? Has a problem with that.</p>	<p>wildlife within the urban area, although it is difficult.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we could educate people on how the urban forest affects water quality, the lack of an urban forest impacts water quality. A lot of people think the rains have restored the wetlands (like Payne's Prairie), but it also receives a lot of storm water runoff, and 441 is just about flooded off. • Reach out with volunteer activities, provide an outlet for forest management in the form of an activity of some sort. • Had removed a tree and was asked to replace trees in an already heavily forested yard. • Seems trees are permitted for removal without a good reason but then they don't get replaced.
<p>3</p>	<p>Had a friend break a leg falling out of a tree. Growing up there was also a tree that got hit by lightning once that they had to remove. He had lemon trees in the past which was nice. At his old school there was a Gumbo Limbo tree on the property that was relatively rare, and the school actually worked around the tree to install a fence—he was glad that they kept it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenery in the city, literally any greenery, including bushes, trees, all of it—not just trees. • Upon second thought, could imagine a definition where his perception could have been trees on city-owned property. • An Urban Forest is different from a forest in that an Urban Forest is literally in the city, maybe less diverse, disrupted, or having not been there as long. Natural differences including what 	<p>Agrees that trees make Gainesville, Gainesville. Has been in Gainesville for a short period of time, but sees that Gainesville tries to conserve more than other places he has seen. The canopy cover seems to indicate this emphasis on protecting trees, compared to Boca Raton. It seems like Gainesville is trying to get ahead of the problem, not just solve the problem.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agrees with education. Reaching portions of the population that do not actively come to meetings like this. These meetings only reach people that care. • Have kids talking to kids. Empower groups to educate their peers. • (Should the city revisit an analysis of our forest periodically?) Yes.

		has affected the trees, like pollution.		
4	From Miami, her grandfather liked to have his own produce available, but as he got old it became difficult to care for his fruit trees and he had to let them go, but having fruit available is a nice memory.	Prior to the meeting, she would have associated it with a <u>lack</u> of trees. An “urban” forest would be similar to a “concrete jungle”—buildings.	Also from South Florida, without having come to this meeting she would not have known that there was a problem. She’s seen more trees here than in her life. It is refreshing to know that there is a push to conserve the forest before it’s too late.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Santa Fe and UF both have clubs for everything, reach out to these clubs and get them involved. • Vertical development could reduce the impact of spreading development, by condensing it and building up it could relieve some of the stress of tree removal.
5	Climbed a lot of trees as a kid until one fell out of the tree onto a sidewalk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees around where people live, work, and play—parks, neighborhoods, etc. • In some cases, the Urban Forest is very intentional—selected, pruned, etc. to be a certain way. • Pine plantations represent a third category, not urban forest, not natural forest, but a third “forest” requiring a different kind of management. 	Really likes the city’s nature parks. Thinks it is cool that we have that part of the urban forest that has that diversity. It seems to be a draw for many people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agrees that education and community involvement is very important, including neighborhood tree plantings, educating on right trees, how to handle trees before and after storms. But a lot of people are strapped for time or money and these individuals may not be able to think of the urban environment beyond their basic needs being met. There needs to be a lot more pressure on developers. There’s a lot of money involved in developing. All are still impacted by the benefits and the disappearing benefits, whether or not they are a part of it. Push developers to incorporate trees more. Developers are developing for one segment of the population, but they still impact others not a part of this target negatively. • (Should the city revisit an analysis of our forest

				periodically?) Costs a lot of money, could that money be used for something different? In helping conduct the 2016 analysis she heard an array of values from residents, not all of them being positive regarding conducting an analysis like that.
6	Trees were a part of his childhood in an urbanizing area. His dad told him the trees would be replaced with houses one day. That would boggle his mind, because we think of trees as always being there, as permanent, but not necessarily.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The term “urban forest” is thought to be an oxymoron sometimes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is this place going down the path that Orange Park went down? Are we developing without thought? We are right at the edge where the tipping point could be. It scares him that it could happen to Gainesville and that Gainesville could be at that point. What makes him love this city in part is the fact that we have the trees. Preservation should happen on a collective scale rather than focusing on individual trees. Also agrees with #5 about nature parks and appreciates that kids can experience them in our town, that they are accessible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The city has to go out and make contact about those trees. Talk about benefits of trees and their drawbacks. The city has to go into neighborhoods and be seen as engaged, as a human element to the management of trees. There’s opportunities for improvement: a) put powerlines underground, b) retrofit neighborhoods. This would allow trees to be healthy and get to their full size. Limiting city plantings to ROW limits types and numbers of trees that can be planted. Allowing replacement trees to be transferred to another private property with better planting area would mean someone might not plant 10 trees and let them all die.