Planning Commission Meeting Agenda
November 24, 2026
100 5th Street Northeast
City Space Conference Room
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Carl Schwarz, Chair
Danny Yoder, Vice Chair
Ross Harness
Hosea Mitchell
Betsy Roettger
Lyle Solla-Yates
Josh Carp
Michael Joy

I. Commission Work Session
Beginning: 5:00 p.m. Location: (CitySpace, 100 5th Street NE, Charlottesville, VA 22902)

1. Draft Urban Forest Management Plan

II. Future Meeting Schedule/Adjournment
Tuesday December 8 - 5:30 PM - Regular Meeting

Individuals with disabilities who require assistance or special arrangements to participate in the public meeting may call the ADA Coordinator at (434) 970-3185 or submit a request via email to ada@charlottesville.gov. The City of Charlottesville requests that you provide a 48 hour notice so that proper arrangements may be made.

Planning Commission pre-meeting and regular meetings are held in person and by Zoom webinar. The webinar is broadcast on Comcast Channel 10 and on all the City's streaming platforms including: Facebook, Twitter, and www.charlottesville.gov/streaming. Public hearings and other matters from the public will be heard via the Zoom webinar which requires advanced registration here: www.charlottesville.gov/zoom . You may also participate via telephone and a number is provided with the Zoom registration or by contacting staff at 434-970-3182 to ask for the dial in number for each meeting. Written comments may be submitted via email to planningcommission@charlottesville.gov.

City of Charlottesville
Parks and Recreation and Office of Sustainability

PLANNING COMMISSION

Subject: Draft Urban Forest Management Plan

Staff Contacts: Steve Gaines, Parks and Recreation, Urban Forester
Rob Mathes, Parks and Recreation, Landscape Manger
Kristel Riddervold, Director, Office of Sustainability

Date: November 24, 2026

Background

The core goal of this project is to update the current Urban Forest Management Plan ('UFMP') to integrate climate action goals and equitable implementation, specifically targeting increased and equitable urban canopy coverage and greater stewardship capacity. This approach includes both public and private properties. Implementation of the UFMP will be primarily led by the City and will also require partnerships with community-based organizations who are already active in urban forest and tree management in the City.

The City's initial UFMP was completed in 2009 and is part of the Comprehensive Plan in the Plan Appendix. In 2024, the City was awarded grant funding through the Inflation Reduction Act via the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service to conduct a set of data collection activities and update the UFMP. In November of 2024, the project kicked off with consulting support from the firm Eocene Environmental Group. Although the federal grant was terminated in April 2025, the City identified internal funds to work with Eocene to modify the project scope and continue the UFMP update. Both the Urban Forest Assessment (the data component of the project) which was completed in 2025 and community engagement that occurred during spring/summer 2026, including a dedicated project page on Connect Charlottesville, informed the draft UFMP. Key findings from the Urban Forest Assessment and community engagement are included in the attached presentation.

The draft 2026 UFMP is a comprehensive update of the City's 2009 UFMP and reflects current approaches toward environmental stewardship, expanded climate and sustainability goals, and commitments to equity and inclusion. It also aims to integrate a range of current plans relevant to urban forest management, such as the Climate Action Plan, Comprehensive Plan and forthcoming Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan. The updated UFMP is intended to be adopted as an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan, replacing the original 2009 version. Charlottesville's draft plan is complete and is currently being shared with the community for public review and comment via the Urban Forest Management Plan page on Connect Charlottesville. The comment period will close on November 30.

The purpose of this presentation is to present the draft Urban Forest Management Plan to the Planning Commission.

Staff Analysis

The attached presentation provides an overview of the development of the UFMP, including history and background of the project, key takeaways from the 2025 Urban Forest Assessment and 2026 community engagement efforts, the plan vision, goals and objectives, and next steps.

The draft UFMP establishes a short term citywide urban forest canopy goal of 47% in 10 years, with an emphasis on forest quality (healthy native species) and equitable canopy distribution. The Plan also has neighborhood-specific canopy goals, which used existing canopy cover, heat vulnerability, socioeconomic factors, and available planting space to prioritize Plan implementation. The Plan features five goals, each with supporting objectives and actions, to be initiated over the next ten years. These Plan recommendations address prioritization of resources to reach lower canopy and high heat neighborhoods first, increasing street tree stocking, management of public land and the public urban forest, collaborating with community members and partner organizations to support stewardship of private trees, expanding outreach and education, and building and growing overall program effectiveness.

The strategies and actions in the UFMP are largely intended to be led by the City. However, since most of the city's urban forest and tree canopy are located on private property, collaborating and coordinating with community members and partner organizations will be essential for successful plan implementation.

The development of the UFMP was informed by multiple rounds of stakeholder meetings and engagement to collect input from community members, partner organizations, City staff, and subject matter experts. The Plan recommendations, including policy and regulatory opportunities, were developed based on relevant elements of the 2009 UFMP,

local context, the most recent Tree Commission 2025 State of the Forest report (including the Commission's set of recommendations), the Urban Forest Assessment, lessons learned from peer communities, and community member input.

This presentation is intended to share the draft plan with the Planning Commission and seek initial endorsement or suggested changes. A work session was held with City Council in November. Specifically, we are looking for feedback guided by the following questions:

- Are there any topics or objectives missing that belong in this plan?
- Does the approach of establishing both citywide goals and neighborhood level goals meet the intent of Comp Plan Environment Strategy 6.1, which provides guidance for how to update the UFMP?
- Do the approaches of expanding the scope of the plan to include both public and private property as well as leveraging the efforts of local organizations meet the intent of Comp Plan Environment Strategy 6.3, which provided guidance for increasing tree canopy on private land?

After the public comment period closes at the end of November, project staff will work to integrate feedback and will bring a final draft of the plan to the Planning Commission for a public hearing in January 2027. Staff will seek the Commission's recommendation to Council for plan approval and amendment to the Comprehensive Plan at that meeting.

Staff Recommendation

Staff is asking for the Planning Commission's feedback and initial endorsement of the draft Urban Forest Management Plan.

Attachments

A. Draft Urban Forest Management Plan
B. Presentation for November 24, 2026

City of Charlottesville
Office of Sustainability / Department of Parks & Recreation

PLANNING COMMISSION

NOVEMBER 24, 2026

Attachment A – Draft Urban Forest Management Plan

https://www.charlottesville.gov/DocumentCenter/View/17127/Urban-Forest-Management-Plan_Draft-



Charlottesville Urban Forest Management Plan 2026



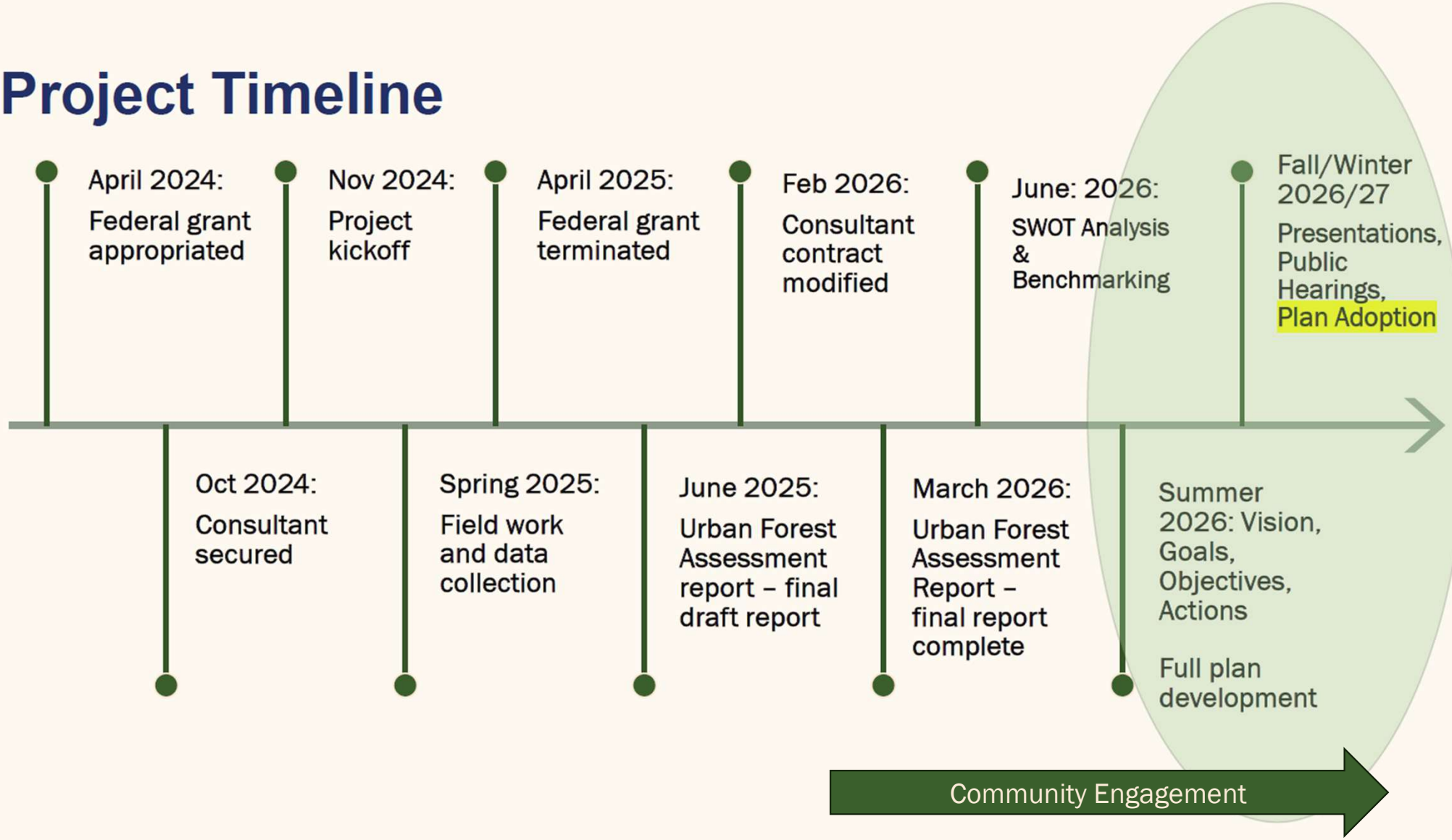
Agenda

1. Project Summary
2. Elements of the Plan
3. What do we have?
4. What do we want?
5. How do we get there?
6. What are we doing now?
7. Next Steps

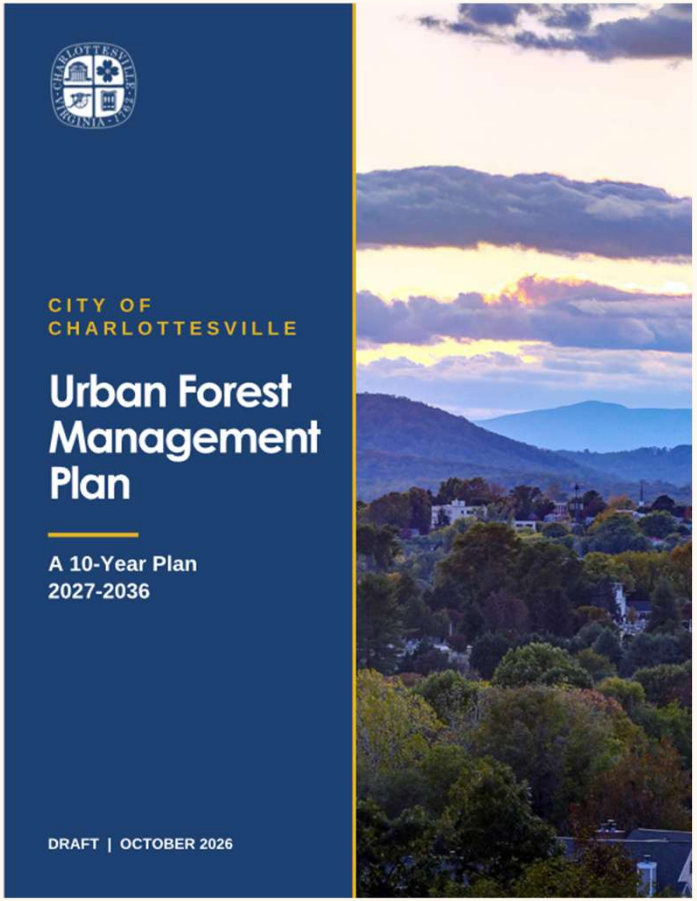
Project Scope & Goals

- In 2024, the City was **awarded grant funding** through the Inflation Reduction Act via the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service to support this project.
- Scope: A comprehensive review and update of the City's 2009 Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP), including robust urban forest assessment.
  - **Reflect current approaches** toward environmental stewardship, expanded sustainability goals, and commitments to equity and inclusion.
  - **Integrate a range of current materials relevant to urban forest management** (e.g., Climate Action Plan, Comprehensive Plan).
- Goals: **Update the current urban forest management plan to integrate climate action goals**, specifically targeting increased and equitable urban canopy coverage and greater stewardship capacity. This approach includes both **public and private properties**.
  - Project recognizes the need and opportunity to tackle a more **relevant, adaptive, and inclusive** approach to the management of our urban forest.

Project Timeline



Elements of the Urban Forest Management Plan



- Introduction
- Urban Forest Assessment
- Program and Policy
- Vision, Goals, Objectives
- Action Framework
- Monitoring and Adaptive Management
- Appendices

What do we have?



Urban Forest Assessment



Components

Tree Canopy Analysis

- Spatial analysis and aerial photography to capture insight about Charlottesville's canopy.

Street Tree Study

- Inventory involving 200 randomly selected 200 street segments.
- Trees were observed for species identification, relative age, relative health, and structural defects.

Vegetation Assessment

- Stratified random sampling of public and private properties
- Collected data on overstory and understory species composition, presence of invasive vegetation, and relative age and health of the urban forest across the City.

Urban Forest Assessment



Key Takeaways

Tree Canopy Analysis

- 2025 canopy coverage is 46%; ~10% decline from 2006
- Neighborhood canopy cover varies widely; plantable space also varies widely across neighborhoods
- Urban heat is directly linked to canopy cover
- Does not reflect health, diversity, or invasives

Street Tree Study

- Low number of street trees per centerline mile
- High rate of planting where possible
- Strong diversity
- Limited available space to plant large trees

Vegetation Assessment

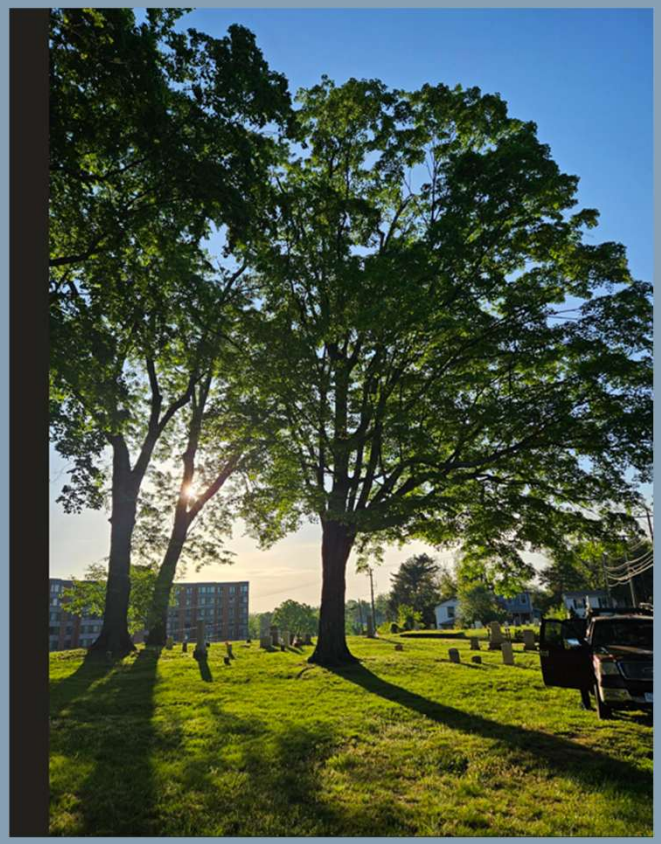
- Invasive trees make up 6% of the urban forest
- Invasive plants detected in 82% of plots
- Private property trees contribute 83% of the canopy and have more available space to plant medium and large trees

Program & Policy Context

- Status review of 2009 UFMP objectives
- Review of related City plans; identified opportunities for alignment
- Regulatory framework for tree conservation
- Program Benchmarking
- Staff and Community Partners Input (SWOT Analysis)
- Community Survey

What do we want?





Vision Statement – Charlottesville's Urban Forest

Every Charlottesville neighborhood has a healthy, resilient tree canopy that provides environmental, health, and economic benefits to its neighbors and visitors. The City, its partners, and the community work together across public and private land to protect, grow, and sustain the urban forest in the face of a changing climate.

Urban Forest Canopy Goals

- **10-year goal: 47% with an emphasis on avoiding loss and on forest quality**
- **2050 goal: 50%**
- **Neighborhood specific goals based on planting availability**

Neighborhood	Current Canopy (%)	Canopy Goal (%)
10th & Page	21	38
Barracks / Rugby	67	67
Barracks Road	32	38
Belmont	34	45
Fifeville	46	49
Fry's Spring	60	60
Greenbrier	59	59
Jefferson Park Avenue	33	43
Johnson Village	59	59
Lewis Mountain	47	52
Locust Grove	46	49
Martha Jefferson	41	46
North Downtown	34	42
Ridge Street	39	51
Rose Hill	31	44
Starr Hill	25	34
The Meadows	32	42
UVA	39	50
Venable	47	50
Woolen Mills	46	48

Note: Current canopy and canopy goals are rounded to the nearest whole percent.



Management Plan Goals

Goal 1:

Grow & Diversify Charlottesville's Trees and Forests

- **Objective 1.1:** Direct a majority of tree planting investments to neighborhoods identified as highest priority through the UFMP planting prioritization model, which accounts for existing canopy cover, heat vulnerability, stormwater value, socioeconomic factors, and available planting space.
- **Objective 1.2:** Increase street tree stocking citywide from the current 66% toward the recommended 75-80% minimum, concentrating new plantings in the largest open sites within priority neighborhoods.
- **Objective 1.3:** Diversify species composition in new plantings so that no single species, genus, or family dominates the canopy, prioritizing climate-ready native species chosen for heat, pest, and drought resilience.



Goal 2:

Conserve & Manage the Public Urban Forest

- **Objective 2.1:** Lead by example on City-managed land, meeting the same standards the City asks of private development and actively restoring canopy and native forest.
- **Objective 2.2:** Pursue acquisition of forested or environmentally significant private parcels to prevent canopy loss on properties that could otherwise be subject to future development, sale, or conversion.
- **Objective 2.3:** Manage City trees on a planned and proactive basis, guided by consistent standards for inspection, maintenance, removal, and planting.
- **Objective 2.4:** Control invasive species on City-owned lands and rights-of-way, prioritizing areas where removal delivers the greatest canopy and environmental benefits.
- **Objective 2.5:** Treat trees removed from City land as a resource rather than waste.



Goal 3:

Support Stewardship of Private Trees & Forests

- **Objective 3.1:** Increase participation in existing programs and expand technical and financial assistance for private property tree planting, preservation, and care.
- **Objective 3.2**: Increase tree canopy on private property through collaboration with nonprofit partners and private property owners.



Goal 4:

Expand Communication, Outreach, & Engagement

- **Objective 4.1:** Build understanding of urban forestry's role among City decision-makers.
- **Objective 4.2:** Increase public awareness of urban forestry programs and how to engage with them.
- **Objective 4.3:** Deliver place-based education and engagement across Charlottesville's neighborhoods.
- **Objective 4.4:** Work together with City staff, nonprofit partners, and community groups like CCS to make outreach more effective and avoid repeating efforts.
- **Objective 4.5:** Coordinate with the green industry in Charlottesville to enhance cooperation among nurseries, contractors, arborists, utility providers, and neighboring jurisdictions, such as Albemarle County.



Goal 5:

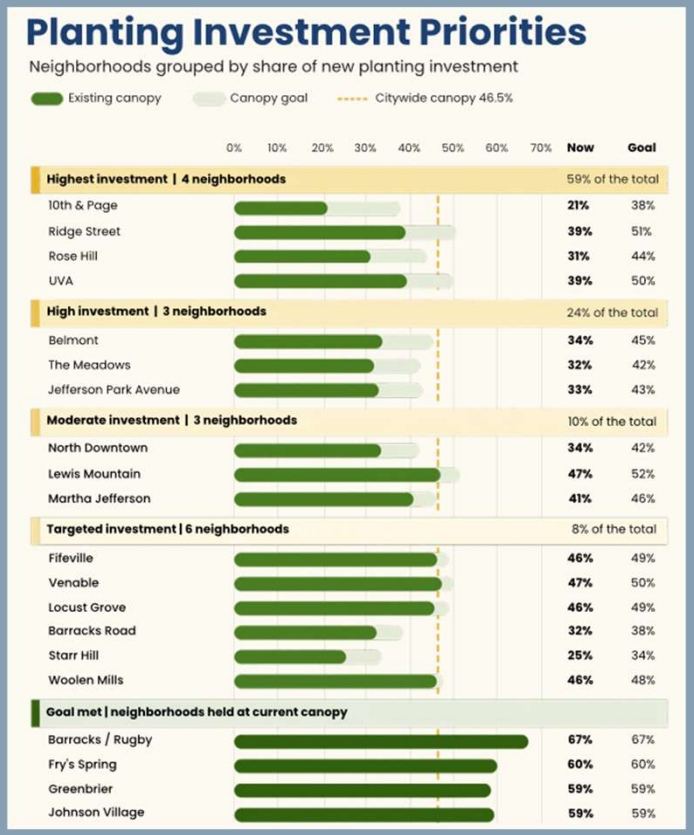
Build & Grow Program Effectiveness

- **Objective 5.1:** Align the staffing, data, and funding resources required to implement and sustain the UFMP.
- **Objective 5.2:** Manage tree risk on City property and rights-of-way through a documented approach to risk assessment, response, and storm coordination.
- **Objective 5.3:** Establish a standing interdepartmental coordination structure that brings Urban Forestry, Public Works, Utilities, and Neighborhood Development Services into regular dialogue on tree-related decisions to help prevent avoidable tree loss.
- **Objective 5.4:** Build the training, knowledge, and skill base of those who care for Charlottesville's trees, from current City staff to people entering the field, including students, veterans, and non-traditional candidates.
- **Objective 5.5:** Identify and engage in state and local policy opportunities
- **Objective 5.6:** Develop individual management plans for neighborhoods, parks, and schools

How do we get there?



Action Framework



- **Planting Investment Priorities**
- **Implementation Phasing**
- **Policy and Regulatory Recommendations**

Are we getting what we want?



Monitoring & Adaptive Management

- Is the canopy growing where it is needed most?
- Are our streets more tree-lined?
- Is our tree population getting more varied and resilient?
- Is the City managing trees and risk on a schedule instead of reacting to problems
- Are we growing and caring for canopy on City land?
- Is more forest being protected?
- Are neighbors planting and caring for trees on their own property?
- Are partners and the community taking part?
- Does the program have the people it needs?
- Is the City ready to use what the State allows?

What are we doing now?

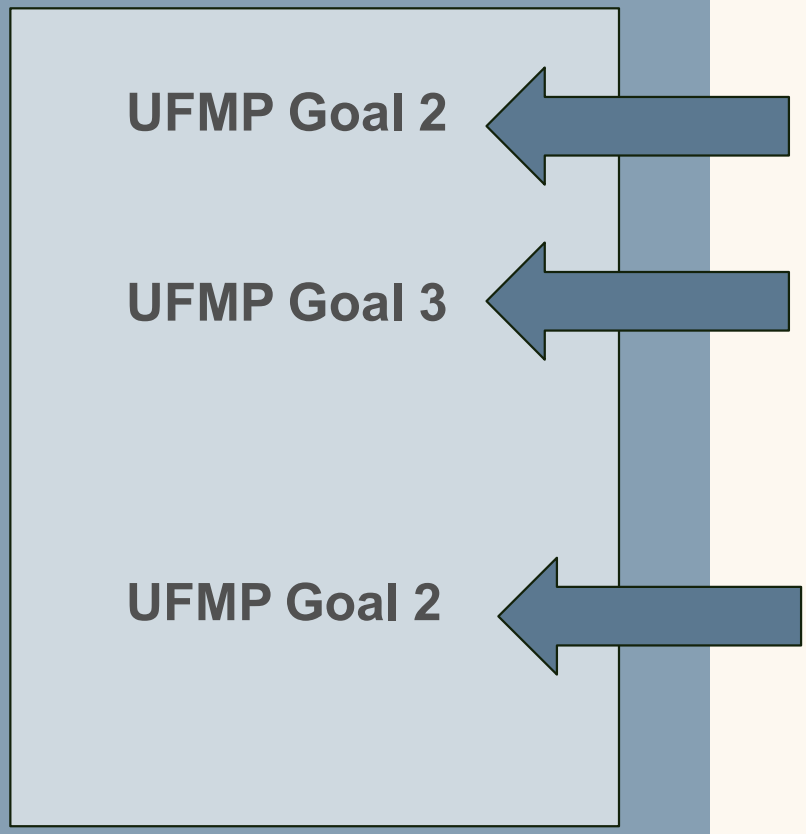


Actions Underway

Best Management Practices for Tree Preservation, Transplanting, Removal and Replacement

- **Updating and upgrading Comprehensive Tree List – should improve likelihood of getting the right tree in the right place.**
- **Updating Tree Preservation Guide (BMPs)**
- **Creating a user-friendly "pocket guide" for tree preservation and development**
- **Opportunity to review and update, as needed, the Tree and Landscaping Guide**
- **Increased monitoring and enforcement of tree related zoning codes (regarding preservation and tree installations) aiming for increased tree survival.**

2025 State of the Forest



Tree Commission Recommendations

Preserving Downtown Mall Trees – Downtown Mall Tree Management Plan

- Support both grant funding and annual city budgeting in order to finance all phases of the Downtown Mall Tree Management Plan

The Charlottesville Invasive Plant Partnership: Invasive Control on Private Properties

- Explore the provision of incentives and/or penalties to check the rampant growth of tree-killing invasive vines on private property
- Consider an ordinance to address the overgrowth of invasive vines analogous to the existing ordinance that prohibits the overgrowth of tall weeds on private properties (Code of Ordinance, section 5-149)

Canopy Collective: Advocating Opportunistic and Innovative Tree Planting on Public Land

- Consider proposals for alternative tree planting installations on publicly-owned parcels in low-canopy neighborhoods and downtown areas to pilot best practices and enhance the social and ecological value of publicly-owned land

2025 State of the Forest

UFMP Goals 3 & 5

UFMP Goal 3

Tree Commission Recommendations

Engagement with the City to Support Tree Preservation

Update City site plan guidance to facilitate preservation of mature trees.

- Engage a broad range of public and private stakeholders in steps to preserve mature trees on public and private lands.
- Document successful efforts to preserve trees in concert with site development.

Vulnerable Parcels

Emphasize and potentially expand key restrictions on site plan development to ensure protection of critical slopes, urban forest, and hydrological systems.

- Consider a zoning change to add a design overlay district for these ecologically sensitive parcels.
- Evaluate parcels with critical slopes, urban forest connections, and/or floodplains for potential City acquisition as both parkland/public space and green infrastructure investments, in support of Comprehensive Plan Goal 13.

Next Steps

Council/Commissions	Dates
City Council Work Session	11/16/2026
Meet the Plan: Drop-In Session (City Space 12-2:00)	11/17/2026
Meet the Plan: Drop-In Session (virtual 4-6:00)	11/18/2026
Climate Café (Botanical 9:30-11:00)	11/20/2026
Planning Commission - Presentation	11/24/2026
Planning Commission – Public Hearing & Action	1/12/2027
City Council – Public Hearing (first reading)	2/16/2027
City Council – Action (second reading - consent agenda item)	3/1/2027

Note: Goal is for plan adoption as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan

Planning Commission: Specific Questions

- **Are there any topics or objectives missing that belong in this plan?**
- **Does the approach of establishing both citywide goals and neighborhood level goals meet the intent of Comp Plan Environment Strategy 6.1, which provides guidance for how to update the UFMP?**
- **Does the approaches of expanding the scope of the plan to include both public and private property as well as leveraging the efforts of local organizations, meet the intent of Comp Plan Environment Strategy 6.3, which provided guidance for increasing tree canopy on private land?**


Thank You