



**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY**

GREG FISCHER
MAYOR

April 23, 2013

To: Mr. Paul Cappiello
Mr. Shane Corbin
Mr. Robert Eberenz, Jr.
Mr. Todd Eberle
Ms. Cheri Bryant Hamilton
Mr. Scott Hannah
Mr. Henry Heuser
Ms. Monica Orr
Ms. Katy Schneider
Mr. Allen Steinbock

Subject: Tree Advisory Commission Recommendations

Dear Board Members:

I am in receipt of the communication from Co-Chair Schneider regarding the Tree Advisory Commission's accomplishments and the recommendations for moving forward. I cannot thank you enough for agreeing to serve on this important commission. Your advice and counsel on the significant issues facing the community relative to our community's tree canopy is greatly appreciated.

I and my staff have had numerous conversations with the Commission Co-Chairs as well as several of you, but I want to take this opportunity to provide a response to the issues at hand. Over the past year, the Tree Advisory Commission has achieved much; I appreciate your hard work and passion, and am committed to continuing to support your efforts.

As you know, Louisville Metro has been suffering from a structural budget deficit. When I took office in January 2011, this deficit stood at \$25 million and would have continued to impact the financial viability of Metro government without a course correction. I have had to make, and will continue to have to make, many hard choices to keep us on the path to fiscal stability. The plan is to reduce the deficit significantly with a goal of completely eliminating the structural deficit by the fiscal year end on June 30, 2015. Many of your recommendations have a budgetary impact, and, as you are aware, must be considered within the larger context of all of our Metro needs and limited budget.

Despite the limitations of our Metro budget, my Administration has vigorously pursued several initiatives under our common agenda to enhance the tree canopy and protect our urban forest including:

- Creation of the Office of Sustainability and hiring Metro's first Sustainability Director;
- Publication, after significant public input, of the city's first Sustainability Plan;
- The revitalization and refocus of Brightside to do even more than it has in helping keep the community clean and green. Brightside has moved to the mayor's office and will be working with

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Metro agencies, MSD and the private sector through the collective impact model to accomplish the initial goal of planting 10, 000 new trees by 2015 as well as other goals to support a sustainable city; and

- In addition to the partnership with Brightside, we have established, and will continue to establish, public/private partnerships such as the Ecotech and UPS tree donations and supporting the Urban Design Studio “Give a Day” tree inventory initiative

When we started this journey last year, your duties were significant—to start a fledging group of knowledgeable and concerned citizens, to educate the community about the serious concerns relative to our depleting tree canopy, to make recommendations to the community and to help raise funds from private sources given the fiscal constraints of city government. I appreciate your continued efforts towards these ends as private funds will be needed to complete an inventory and assessment of Louisville’s tree canopy and fulfill the goal of planting 10,000 new trees by 2015 and the recommendation to hire an urban forester. An urban forester position was recommended for inclusion in the FY14 budget and is being considered at this time. In addition, I believe Brightside can be a “treemendous” partner in these areas particularly with respect to enhancing staff capacity to help achieve your mutually beneficial goals.

A meeting is already set up for next week between Commission leadership and my staff to explore fund raising opportunities with Brightside, who is also willing to serve as the Commission’s fiscal agent through its 501(c)(3), as well as to discuss the larger context of a “clean and green collective impact model” as a means to implementing our shared goals.

I share your interest in updating our Metro ordinances and policies to protect and enhance our tree canopy. However, I believe we also share the concern that it is premature to pursue a Tree Protection Ordinance until we have an adequate inventory of our trees. A legislative or regulatory framework may also need to be explored depending on the outcome of the tree canopy analysis.

My staff is working with the Commission on the development of the RFP or RFI to begin the tree canopy analysis, and I greatly appreciate your willingness to raise private dollars to accomplish this important goal.

As you can see, we have all been hard at work in good faith to enhance Louisville’s green factor with a special emphasis on trees. We can always improve through greater communication and coordination. Maria Koetter, our Director of Sustainability, will be your primary point of contact. Additionally, I have asked my Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief of Strategic Initiatives, Mary Ellen Wiederwohl, to spearhead our effort to align all of our “clean and green” initiatives citywide. Maria and Mary Ellen will be your regular partners as we work collectively to address these critical needs to ensure Louisville as a global green leader.

Thank you for your service. I hope you will continue to serve our city, our community, and ultimately, our future.

Sincerely,



Greg Fischer
Mayor