UFMP Goals and Strategies (DRAFT)

As of July 27, 2026 - Still in Progress

The Discovery Phase of the Asheville Urban Forest Master Plan is complete and the final phase of Plan Development is now underway.

The first steps in plan development include creation of **Guiding Principles** that will apply to all efforts, four **Plan Goals**, and **Strategies & Action Steps** to reach those goals.

These three pieces are described in brief below, and were created based on input received from both the community and the Urban Forestry Commission.

UFMP Guiding Principles (6)

Six UFMP guiding principles are proposed, based on the priorities heard from the Asheville community. These principles serve to convey a clear and consistent direction throughout plan implementation, and can be used as a backbone to community, nonprofit and city implementation decisions. All work in this plan is centered on the following six principles:

- **Community Involvement is Key.** Community-led work and input are critical.
- **Investment is Prioritized Where Needed Most.** When resources become available, the areas of the city with the highest need are prioritized for investments and improvements.
- **Trees are Critical City Infrastructure.** Trees are vital community assets akin to utilities, roads and sidewalks.
- **Focus on Nature-Based Solutions.** Trees are a pillar of green infrastructure, supporting the vibrancy of the city's ecosystems, and critical for advancing riparian health.
- **Work is Grounded in Data & Science.** Decision making includes consideration of data and emerging science-backed solutions.
- **Conservation is our Baseline Strategy.** Conserving and protecting existing tree canopy is the primary approach at the outset of any challenge, before considering alternatives like removal and replanting.

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UFMP Goals (4)

The strategies and action steps that will be detailed in the UFMP are all focused on reaching four goals. Asheville will steward the urban forest in order to:

- *Reduce Impacts From Heat Island Effect*
- *Adapt to Climate Challenges*
- *Ensure All Residents Have Access to Ecosystem Benefits*
- *Preserve Asheville's Identity as a Green City*

Strategies (12) & Action Steps

The following provides a brief description of the 12 strategies in development for the UFMP currently. Each strategy will have a number of measurable Action Steps, currently in development. Responsibility for these action steps is shared; initiatives will be driven by community partners, while others fall under City leadership.

It is important to note that this is a plan for the entire urban forest. The majority (almost 80%) of Asheville's urban forest is on private property and thus must be implemented by the entire community .

Strategy 1: Improve Partnerships & Collaboration

The City is one of many partners that will need to work together to implement this plan. Action steps will address fragmentation of efforts across the community and within the City.

Strategy 2: Prioritize Preservation of Mature Trees

As mature trees provide exponentially higher benefits than young trees, efforts to preserve them (assuming good condition and non-invasive) must be prioritized. Action steps will address code, knowledge and education.

Strategy 3: Expand and Improve Canopy on Private Lands

Almost 80% of tree canopy in Asheville is located on privately-held land. Action steps will address knowledge, practices and resource challenges for tree canopy located on private lands.

Strategy 4: Expand and Improve Tree Planting

Urban forests require a continuous lifecycle rotation to remain healthy and resilient. Rather than a one-time project, tree planting must be an unending, cyclic process guided by key

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strategic principles. Action steps will address what to plant, making space, ensuring a system is in place for young tree establishment, and access to technical expertise.

Strategy 5: Improve Canopy Quality

Beyond the amount of tree canopy that exists, a canopy of high quality is also critical. Action steps will address invasives, tree species choices in planting, proactive care, soil conditions and more.

Strategy 6: Build & Maintain Spaces That Will Support Trees Long-Term

Trees and tree canopy that isn't in a naturalized wooded area need care and attention to the location and space. Action steps will address making quality spaces along streets, in parking lots, or in privately owned landscaped areas like yards and commercial grounds.

Strategy 7: Improvements to City Regulations

There are a number of improvements to City regulations and policies that will be included in the plan. Action steps will provide an opportunity for immediate changes in the upcoming UDO, but also in capital improvement projects and ongoing activities as well.

Strategy 8: Improve Communication & Community Education

We need to strengthen public dialogue and training across diverse areas. . Action steps will address gaps in knowledge and understanding around not just **how** to care for trees, but **why** trees are important as well as addressing FEAR following severe storms like Helene.

Strategy 9: Refresh Operational Strategies

While park land constitutes a small fraction of the municipality (2%), its canopy distribution heavily intersects with the public right-of-way. Shading along roads and sidewalks offers vital urban heat reduction and enhances pedestrian walkability. Associated action steps will target operational improvements in municipal infrastructure and canopy management.

Strategy 10: Explore Funding Sources

Funding the implementation of this plan as well as ongoing programs is always a challenge, Action steps will identify some options for funding source exploration.

Strategy 11: Pursue Data and Provide Access to All

There were a number of gaps in knowledge that emerged during Discovery. Action steps will address filling those gaps and providing increased data access.

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Strategy 12: Incorporate into Broader Initiatives (walkability, health, stormwater, etc.)

Trees are often siloed into green initiatives or parks projects. However, trees play a significant role in many broader initiatives within Asheville and should be included as such. Action steps will suggest pathways to incorporate trees in the upcoming comprehensive plan, public health initiatives, recovery and riparian repair projects, walkability efforts and more.

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