



Preserving and Restoring Arlington's Valuable Urban Tree Canopy

Presented by the
Environmental Affairs Committee
Arlington County Civic Federation

December 14, 2021

Agenda

- ▶ Background – Value of Arlington Trees
- ▶ Preserving Arlington's Tree Canopy Public Collaborative Findings
- ▶ Next steps

Tree Benefits: Growing Arlington's Urban Forest

Presentation to Arlington County Civic Federation
March 16, 2021

Karen Firehock – Executive Director

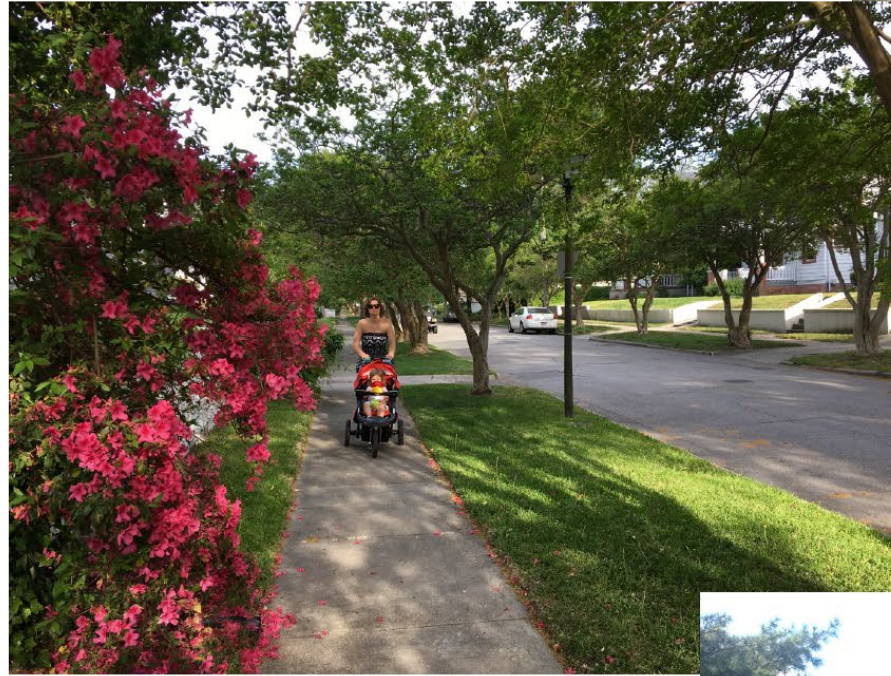


Research to inform this presentation was funded by the U.S. Forest Service.



Trees: Create Healthy Communities

- ❑ Access to fitness opportunities. (addresses obesity, nature deficit disorders)
- ❑ Clean air – trees absorb pollutants, VOCs, filter runoff, cool the city. (combat asthma)
- ❑ Well being and mental health - -people heal faster when they can see or access green. (hospitals need this for patients, reduces absenteeism of workers)
- ❑ Less crime occurs near trees. (issue especially for downtowns and public housing areas)
- ❑ Employees will exercise if they can access green where they work and on the way to work. (addresses employee health)



2016 - “Invaluable” Ecobenefits

- ▶ Beyond providing recreation, well-being, beauty, shade and homes for wildlife, **Arlington County finds**:
- ▶ 755,400 trees, 122 species worth more than \$1.4 billion
- ▶ ↓ Rainfall runoff 10,730,168 cubic feet/year preventing flooding
- ▶ ↓ 1,235 tons of air pollution/year preventing disease and hospital visits
- ▶ Store 30,900 cars' worth of carbon emissions in 2016 plus 1,500 more cars/year (7,500 more now)
- ▶ ↓ energy costs of more than \$1 million annually

Collaborative Process

- ▶ Phase I Scoping - understand the nature of the issues (e.g., economic, legal, policy and environmental) considering all points of view to build actionable public consensuses.
 - ▶ Diverse stakeholders and subject matter experts
- ▶ Phase II Develop recommendations
 - ▶ May – November – plenary & subject area “team” meetings
 - ▶ Created and researched independently by each team
 - ▶ Assigned priorities based on importance and readiness

Phase II – Immediate Action Opportunities

- ▶ ***Improving County management*** of urban forest through education, department coordination, better data, tree planting and maintenance, and volunteer programs
- ▶ ***Refining regulation in zoning***, lot coverage, and the Tree Preservation and Stormwater Ordinances to make tree preservation more feasible.
- ▶ ***Upgrading enforcement*** of tree protections using more well-qualified staff, tighter control of land disturbance and vegetation replanting rules, education on the value of trees and lobbying for more County authority to regulate trees.

Phase II – Immediate Action Opportunities

- ▶ ***Correcting inequities*** in tree canopy in some neighborhoods by expanded tree planting in minority neighborhoods and upgrading the quality and access to natural resources data in the County's GIS system
- ▶ ***Increasing financial resources*** for tree programs by providing tax abatement for forested land and revising the proffer policy for development to include trees.
- ▶ ***Providing incentives to developers*** to preserve trees including funding trees for stormwater mitigation.



Preserving Arlington's Tree Canopy:

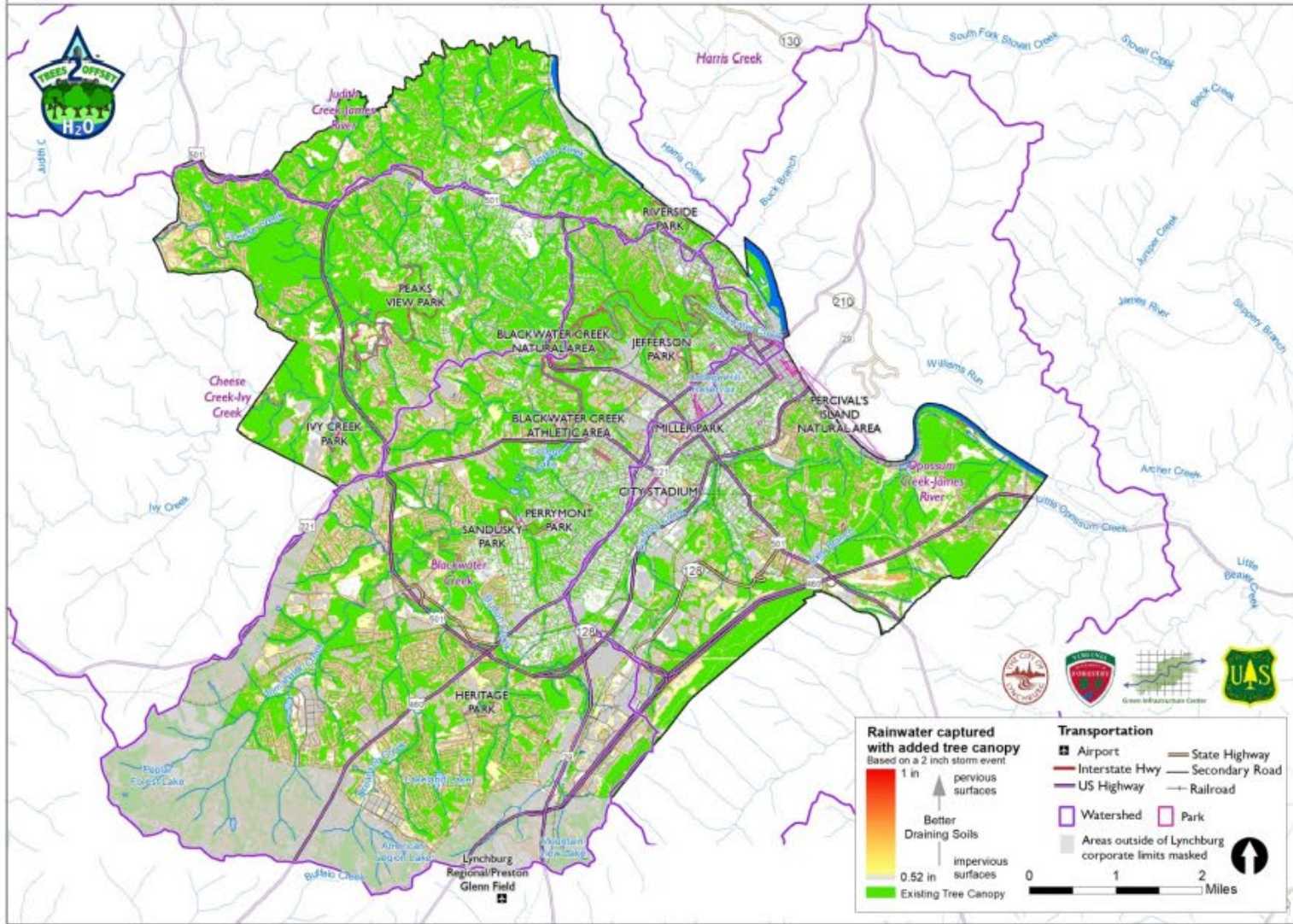
Next Steps

Need for immediate action on tree canopy/land cover studies

- ▶ Big changes since 2016 - free 2020 USFS data has better definition
- ▶ Basic foundation for urban forest management – existing conditions, benchmark for future performance
- ▶ Recognized first step in planning and prioritizing efforts, answering questions for FNRP
- ▶ Important to integrate land cover into current County GIS system
- ▶ Use to address multiple County priorities – tree canopy, stormwater, infrastructure (green and grey), open space and recreation, land acquisition
- ▶ Be responsive to the County on ACCF “Resolution on Immediate Update to the Arlington Tree Canopy Studies” 3/16/21



Lynchburg Optimal Tree Planting Locations for Stormwater Infiltration



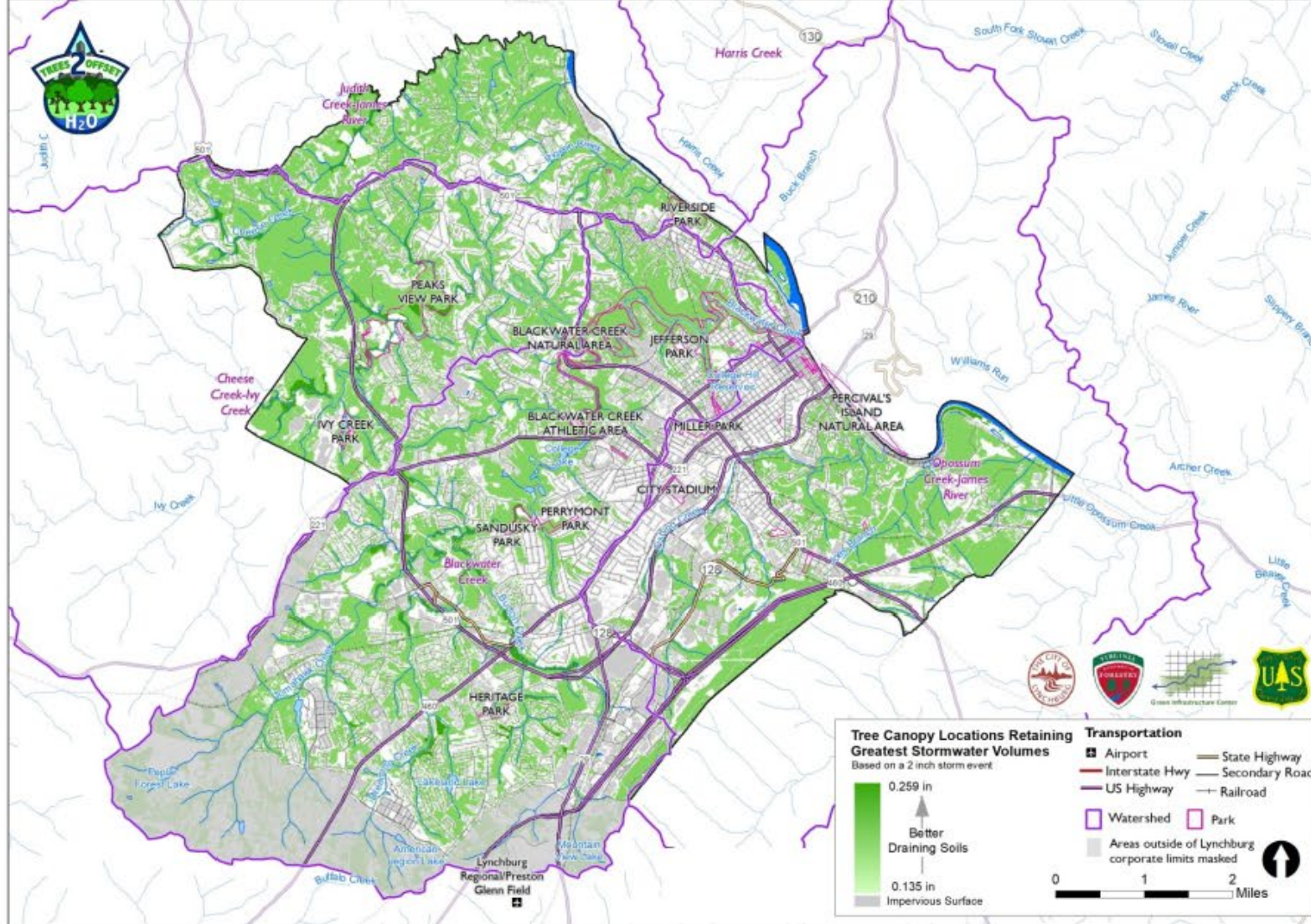
Data can be translated into maps~

All planting areas are not created equal.

Optimal Tree Planting Location



Lynchburg Best Canopy Retention Locations for Stormwater Infiltration



Optimal places to retain canopy

Key Strategy: Plant trees on private lands

In a study GIC did looking at 31,000 parcels in a city, if everyone planted a single tree, they would intercept **62 million gallons** of rainwater every year (1.5 million bathtubs!) 80% of planting areas are on private property!

- The Arlington County Tree Canopy Assessment found that approximately 2,890 acres were identified as preferred planting areas, with most of that acreage coming from residential zoning (2,088 acres).
- So organize plantings in your community and encourage them in HOA lands, yards, streets ...everywhere!



Each tree icon represents a possible tree planting location that avoids buildings, underground utilities, and other infrastructure. Tree spacing is 30 feet.

ACCF Next Steps

- ▶ Environmental Affairs Committee –
 - ▶ Continue work to develop formal resolutions for ACCF membership
 - ▶ Work with individual CA's, County, interested organizations
 - ▶ Early 2022 - conduct a public plenary session on implementation
- ▶ ACCF
 - ▶ Wide public distribution of Collaborative report as noteworthy information
 - ▶ Require a County response to ACCF 3/16/21 “Resolution on Immediate Update to the Arlington Tree Canopy Studies” *
 - ▶ Meetings with County Leaders
 - ▶ Online and Paper Petitions
 - ▶ CA/organization advocacy

* <https://www.civfed.org/newContent/2021-03/2021-03%20EnvAff%20Resolution%20Collaboratives%20Preserving%20Tree%20Canopy%20APPROVED.pdf>