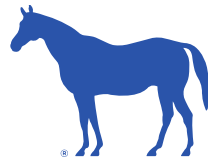# LEX GROW TREES UPDATE

Heather Wilson, Urban Forestry Section Manager
Jennifer Carey, Director
Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee
March 12, 2024

LEXINGTON

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Topics

- **Background**

  - **What is an Urban Forest? What is Urban Forestry?**

  - **How Trees Benefit Lexington – Our *Why?***

  - **Urban Tree Canopy Assessment – A Quick Recap**

- **$1.5 Million for Tree Canopy Growth & Support**

- **Lex Grow Trees Grant Program**

- **Next Steps**

- **Questions**

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Background

What is an Urban Forest? What is Urban Forestry?

- An Urban Forest is composed of all the trees within our urban lands and includes
  - Individual trees
  - Tree stands / small groupings of trees
  - Trees found along streets, in gardens and parks, along greenways and in planned green / naturalized spaces, in nature preserves, and along corridors
  - Trees on both public and private property
  - The various ecosystem components that exist with these trees (e.g., – soils, understory flora, wildlife)

- Urban Forestry is the careful and purposeful management of our Urban Forest

Background

How trees benefit Lexington – Our Why?

- Environmental
  - Provide stormwater mitigation
  - Reduce heat island effect
  - Remove airborne pollutants
  - Sequester carbon
- Human Health
  - Reduce hospital stays
  - Reduce rates of cardiac disease
  - Improve mental health & reduce stress
  - Improve our immune systems

- Social
  - Reduce rates of crime
  - Encourage community engagement & connectivity
  - Decrease aggression & violence
- Economic
  - Reduce costs of city services
  - Increase property values
  - Reduce energy bills
  - Support tourism

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Background

Urban Tree Canopy Assessment – a quick recap

- **Tree Canopy Assessment – 2012 (21% canopy coverage)**

- **Tree Canopy Change Analysis – 2020 (23% canopy coverage)**

URBAN SERVICE AREA
The Lexington **urban service area** is the one (1) main area of interest over which all metrics are summarized.
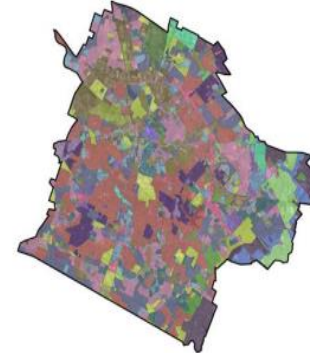
CITY COUNCIL DISTRICTS
Twelve (12) **city council districts** were assessed to inform the council members and citizens residing in each individual voting district.
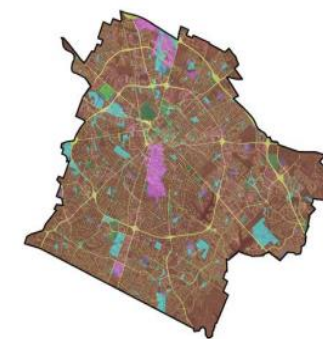
HUC-12 WATERSHEDS
Since trees play an important role in stormwater management, six (6) USGS HUC-12 watersheds were assessed.

ZONING
Thirty-six (36) **zoning types** were assessed to further dissect urban tree canopy on different types of land use.

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP
Property ownership summarizes parcels by ownership type, including public schools, local government-owned parcels, University of Kentucky, Lexington-Fayette Urban County Housing Authority, and privately owned lands.

CENSUS TRACTS
Eighty-one (81) **census tracts** were assessed to show the relationship between tree canopy and socio-demographics and highlight potential environmental justice issues.

Background

Urban Tree Canopy Assessment – a quick recap

Table 2. Urban tree canopy assessment results by acres and percent (percentages based on land acres).

Lexington Urban Service Area	Acres	%
Total Area	54,648	100%
Land Area	54,055	99%
Urban Tree Canopy	12,649	23%
Total Possible Planting Area	17,668	33%
Total Unsuitable Area	23,738	44%

CITYWIDE URBAN TREE CANOPY CHANGE

Over the eight-year study period, there was an increase in Lexington's urban tree canopy. Tree canopy increased by 1,736 acres citywide, yielding a 3% raw increase since 2012 (16% relative to 2012 acreage). This increase in canopy can be attributed to crown growth of maturing trees and growth of newly planted trees since 2012. Current levels of urban tree canopy in Lexington can continue to be improved with careful planning and planting efforts. See Table 4 for more details.
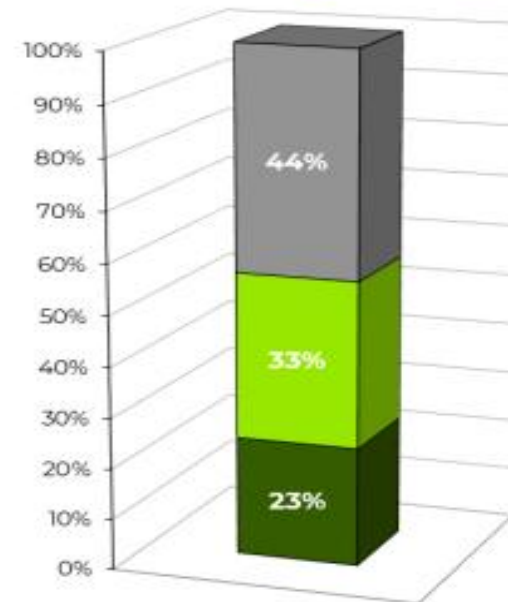

Figure 9. Urban tree canopy, possible planting area, and area unsuitable for UTC in the Lexington Urban Service Area.

Property Ownership (UTC%)

- Fayette County Public Schools (11%)
- Federal (17%)
- LFUC Government (32%)
- LFUC Housing Authority (25%)
- Other Tax Exempt Properties (20%)
- Private (25%)
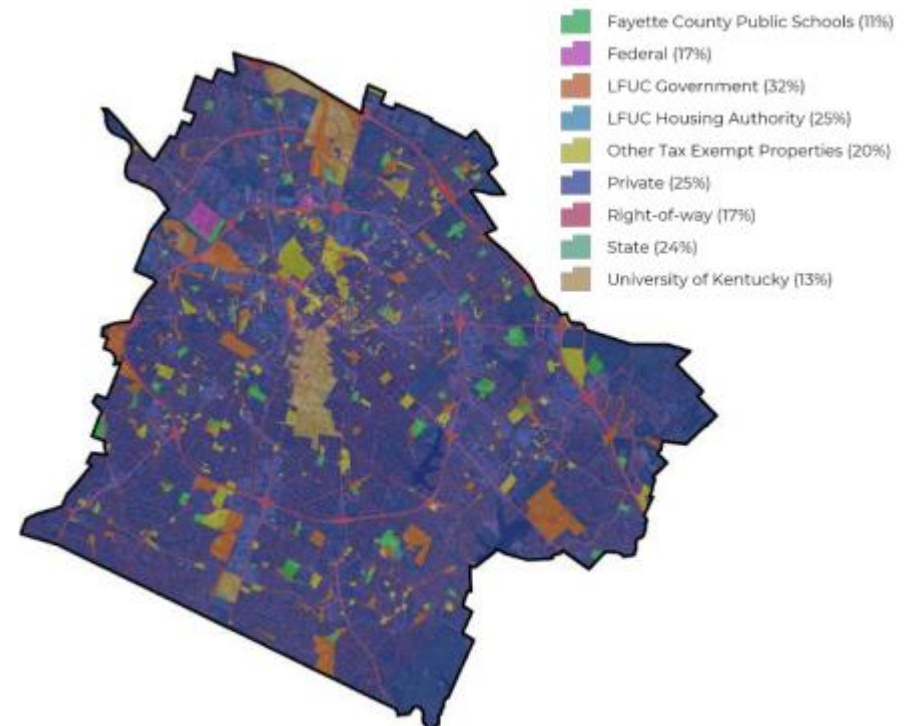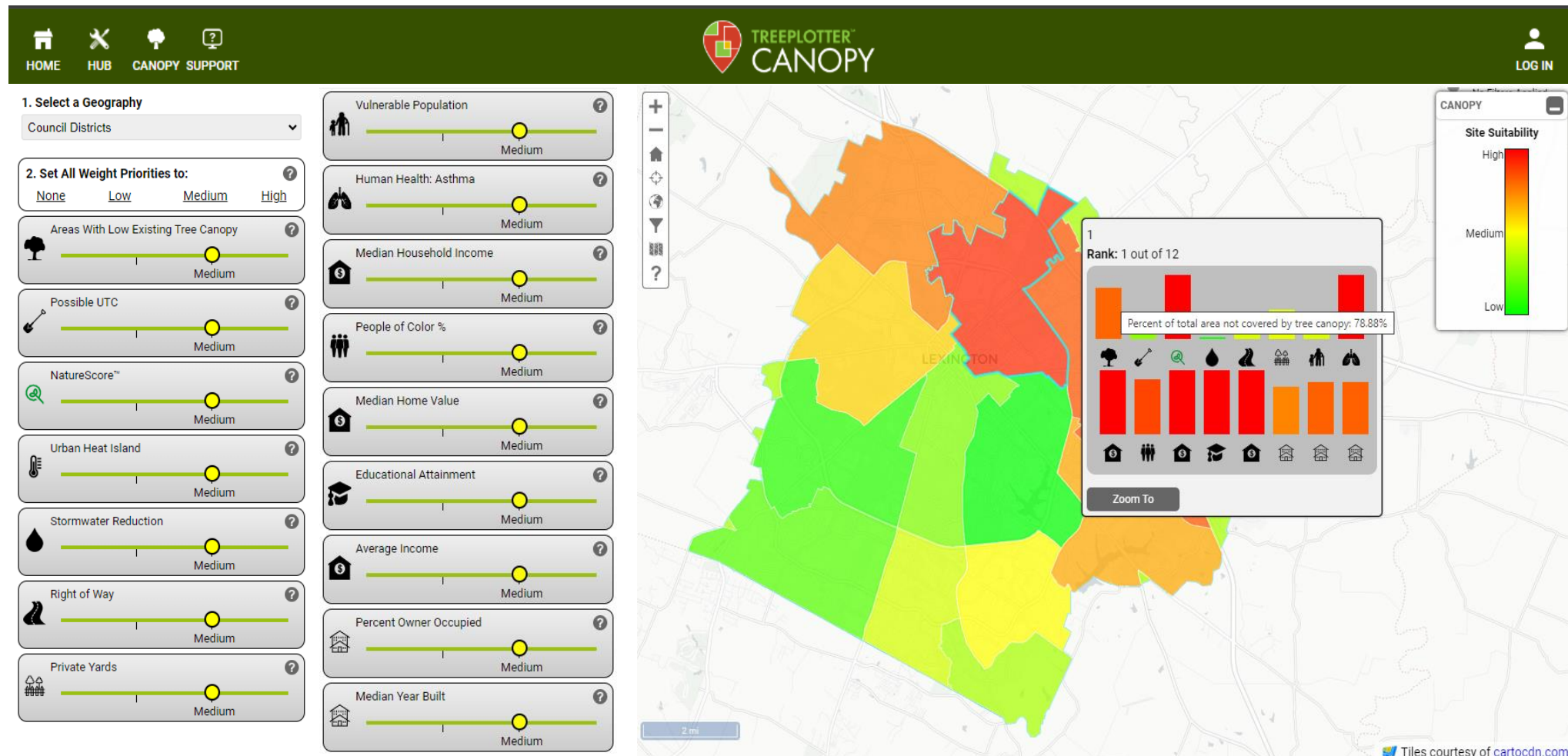- Right-of-way (17%)
- State (24%)
- University of Kentucky (13%)

Figure 10. Property ownership and urban tree canopy percentages in Lexington.

Background

Urban Tree Canopy Assessment – a quick recap

LEXINGTON

$1.5 Million for Tree Canopy Growth & Support

Beginnings

- Council allocated through Budget Stabilization Funds (2022)
- Funds placed in Environmental Services' budget
- Formed Tree Canopy Ad Hoc Committee
  - Comprised of Councilmembers, Council Staff, Community Members, LFUCG Staff
- Tree equity is our driving factor
  - Timing with Tree Canopy Assessment
  - Timing with recognition of tree equity needs across United States

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$1.5 Million for Tree Canopy Growth & Support

Framing Our Values

- Strategic Planning Session (August 9, 2022)

- Creation of our guiding principles

- Target areas

  - Communication

  - Education & Awareness

  - Community Engagement

  - Tree Planting

  - Tree Maintenance & Support

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$1.5 Million for Tree Canopy Growth & Support

Initial Priorities

Infusion of funds to Hazard Street Tree (Cost-Share) Program (FY23)

- $150K – Clear the backlog
- $ 50K – Targeted

Branding and Marketing Campaign

- Telling our story
  - Branding our message
  - Reaching into the community
  - Targeting our impact
  - Project tracking and management
  - Tracking our spending
  - Showcasing long-term impacts

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$1.5 Million for Tree Canopy Growth & Support

Funds Spent To Date

- 3 Pilot Projects

- A total of $62,600
  - Geomancer Permaculture, LLC
  - Seedleaf, LLC
  - Trees Lexington!

- Targeted Goals Addressed
  - Education & Community Engagement
  - Tree Care Education
  - Tree Care Maintenance
  - Tree Planting
  - Work Force Training

Seedleaf nourishing communities

TREES LEXINGTON!

$1.5 Million for Tree Canopy Growth & Support

Pilot Projects – Geomancer Permaculture, LLC

- Approved amount – $15,000

- Project – Food Forest Development Project

  - 2-year project

  - Provide workforce training

  - Demonstrate alternative management options for public lands

- 200 edible trees and shrubs to be purchased and planted

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$1.5 Million for Tree Canopy Growth & Support

Pilot Projects – Seedleaf, LLC

- Approved amount – $7,600.16

- Project – Food Forest Design Training Program
  - 6-module course
  - Target audience – individuals aged 17 years and older
  - Provide career path training

- 88 trees to be purchased and planted

- Irrigation for long-term survivability

Seedleaf
nourishing communities

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$1.5 Million for Tree Canopy Growth & Support

Pilot Projects – Trees Lexington!

- Approved amount – $40,000

- Project – Community-Based Tree Planting Pilot Program

  - Time frame – 1 year

  - Community engagement & education

  - Target area – Districts 1, 2, 7

- 100 trees purchased and planted

Bainbridge Place (District 7)
- Existing plans by HOA
- 10 B&B + 17 3-gallon trees
- 40 volunteers

WWB Elementary School and Community Center (District 1)
- Building on the work with FCPS and Shropshire Circle
- 23 B&B + 19 3-gallon trees
- 75 volunteers

TREES LEXINGTON!

Lex Grow Trees Grant Program

- Two rounds of grants (spring, fall)
  - ~$500,000 available each round
  - up to $100,000 per applicant per round

- 1st grant application window
  - March 15 – April 26

- Applications scored via rubric
  - Project impact
  - Project engagement
  - Tree mobilization
  - Project success
  - Cost efficiency

- Who can apply?
  - Organizations of all sizes
    - Non-profits
    - For profit companies
    - Neighborhood associations
    - HOAs

- Collaborations and partnerships are strongly encouraged

LEX GROW TREES
Planting Roots for Tomorrow

LEXINGTON

Lex Grow Trees Grant Program

- Grant Program Guidelines (see packet) were informed by:
  - Implementing / managing the three pilot projects
  - Stormwater Quality Projects Incentive Grant Program
  - Corridors Neighborhood Enhancement Match Grant Program

- Selecting Grant Recipients and Awarding Funds:
  - Scoring Committee will score applications using rubric
  - Scored applications will be presented to the Tree Canopy Ad Hoc Committee for recommendation to Council
  - Recommended applicants will be presented with a Grant Agreement
  - Accepted Grant Agreements will come to Council for approval and Mayor's signature
  - Once Grant Agreement if fully executed, grant recipients may initiate their project and begin receiving grant funds

Lex Grow Trees Grant Program

- DES requests that the EQPW Committee:
  - Review and comment on the proposed draft resolution (see packet) that
    1. establishes the Lex Grow Trees Grant Program
    2. approves the grant program guidelines
    3. authorizes the Tree Canopy Ad Hoc Committee over the grant program
  - Consider approving the drafted resolution
  - Support the resolution once it is brought to the full Council

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Next Steps

- Press release – March 18, 2024
- How you can help
  - Newsletters
  - Word of mouth
  - Volunteer
  - Community meetings / Neighborhood meetings
  - Assist your community in accessing our information and funds
- Informational Q & A Sessions
  - Wednesday, March 27, 2024 – Northside Library Large Meeting Room, 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.
  - Thursday, March 28, 2024 – via Zoom*, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.

  *will be recorded and made available

LEX GROW TREES

https://lexgrowtrees.com/

Questions?