

Hello,

A bit of feedback about Urban Forest Management plan.

Questions that were asked:

Commerce City is at 3.8% tree canopy cover, how does this compare with other cities?

Commerce City is located in a relatively dry climate, so our tree canopy should not be compared with most major cities in the US (Midwest, South, North East, Northwest will all have much much larger tree canopy cover). However, we should shoot for 15-20% as an ambitious yet attainable goal.

How do we get there?

We will approach this in a cycle of at least 3-5 years since trees have very different lifespans from humans and not much changes year to year. Urban trees have their lives cut very short, but can still live for hundreds of years. For sake of this, we should assume urban trees will live 30-60 years, about 5-10% of their actual lifespans. Also, we assume their growth rates are altered from natural cycles. We need to measure as much as we can in order to manage it, and will need to make assumptions in order to paint a full picture.

Currently, we don't know a few things:

1. What the % will be in 5 years if all the trees we have grow at a normal rate, adjusted for a standard mortality rate?
2. How many trees will be planted in the next 5 years from development?
3. How many trees are slated to be removed for safety or other reasons in the next 5 years?

What we can put into place:

Policy that restricts the removal of trees without a permit. To effectively manage our tree canopy cover, we need to know how many trees are removed each year. Commerce City needs to make it illegal to remove trees without a permit (HOA's, City Property, Right of Ways, Commercial Properties, etc). We should push for residential, if pushback, we remove it as a concession to get the law passed with everything except residential. There can be exceptions to any removal, but legitimate reasons must be put forth and it will be case by case decided by a city representative.

At a high level, this stabilizes the number of trees we have, and removes the uncertainty of how many total trees we have because of no un-reconciled losses.

Long Term:

Commerce City needs to make a plan to staff an FTE that focuses solely on Urban Forest Management in Commerce City.