

When I joined the Tree Advisory Board, I thought the job was mainly going to be getting a lot of street trees planted as quickly as possible. I soon learned this was the opposite of good practice and how many hours of education, investigation, strategic thinking, and plain old hands-on hard work go into creating and maintaining a street tree program worthy of a place like Mariemont and its beautiful urban forest. Tonight, on behalf of our board, I'd like to update you on our many successes in 2022.

I'd like to start by grounding you in the TAB's objectives, since all our work supports them:

- Preserve and enhance Mariemont's robust tree canopy for future generations
- Create and implement a comprehensive, Master Tree Plan that employs science-based decision making to foster street tree health and limit disease spread
- Act as good stewards of Village resources
  - not planting more than we can take care of – trees pay off in maturity
  - not creating scenarios that will become resource drains or liabilities for future generations

We've gotten a LOT done in 2022. We've dedicated over 730 volunteer hours through October, which translates to almost \$20,000 in services donated to the village. These efforts resulted in:

- Applied for, and were awarded Mariemont's FIRST EVER grant from the ODNR Division of Forestry
- Completed a new Village-wide master planting plan
- Instituted a young tree training program for street trees
- Raised \$5,153 in 2022 for the street tree planting fund (through MPF), including a generous, anonymous \$2,500 matching grant
- Planted 19 new trees in 2022
- Continued educating our Mariemont neighbors with monthly Town Crier articles, annual young tree training workshops, and Arbor Day events
- Continued our own education with 6 of our members and one member of our Service Department learning about urban forestry through the Tree Commission Academy, presented by the ODNR Division of Forestry.

- Continued growth of our volunteer base, and through these efforts, identification and installation of new, motivated TAB members.
- For the sake of brevity, I'll update you on the first three items.

## **1: Tree Grant**

- We are thrilled to bring monies from the Division of Forestry into Mariemont for the first time ever, as the award represents the culmination of two years of classroom learning as well as countless hours of strategic work we prioritized.
- Grant request was for \$12,000. Still waiting on official packet from ODNR, for confirmation of grant amount. Grant funds will be matched by the \$8,000 authorized by council in September, plus in-kind (i.e. labor for watering by Service Department, TAB volunteer hours).
- Grant's purpose is to drive urban canopy restoration by increasing planting of large-at-maturity trees.
- Additionally, we built our proposal around the mitigation of stormwater effects in the northeast portion of the Village – base of steep Miami Rd. hillside.
- Plan includes approximately 46 trees planted on 6 streets: Rowan Hill, Grace, Lytle Woods, Haines, Bramble Hill, and the segment of Murray between Lytle Woods and Rowan Hill.
- The specific trees selected for the project will intercept an estimated 3.75 MILLION gallons of rainwater over the next 60 years and prevent over 600,000 gallons of stormwater runoff in the same timeframe(!).
- Work must be started and completed in 2023 and will require best-in-class practices in tree selection, planting and care.
- While this grant is the biggest feather in our cap to date, our master planning work – which I'll talk about next - is the foundation of our success with the grant proposal and will serve as a blueprint for Mariemont's street tree program into the next century.

## **#2: Master Plan – Completed a draft of Village-wide master plan, which we plan to submit to the Village in early 2023.**

- A Master planting plan is a Village-wide guide in which specific tree varieties are assigned to each street based on the unique conditions of that street.
- Master planning is important because:
  - it ensures the Village is using its right-of-way resources most efficiently. “Right tree in the right place”
  - it protects the Village’s entire urban forest from threats due to pests and disease by requiring diversity and placing trees in a way that they do not become potentially destructive “super-highways” through the Village.
  - It provides a guide to our service department of what gets planted where and enables the village to create a multi-year planting plan and work with vendors to ensure healthy trees are available when needed.
  - It provides the framework for an orderly planting structure and is a useful tool install new trees throughout the Village equitably.
  - Master tree plans are a part of Mariemont’s heritage, beginning with the 1923 Nolan Plan.
- So how do we make a Master Plan? Science? Artistry? A bit of both.
  - It all begins with Urban Site Indexing, a street-by-street evaluation of environmental factors such as tree lawn width, soil quality and structure, street traffic, and presence of utilities, from which we derive a “score” for that street.
  - We use those scores to identify which tree varieties are best suited for the conditions of that specific street.
  - Check the historic Nolan plan to see if a tree was assigned to that street and, if so, whether the recommendation is still viable and/or available. – adhere to plan where possible or make nods (i.e. Chinquapin oaks on Chestnut – “chestnut” oaks vs. Nolan plan Chestnut trees)
  - All done with guidance from ODNR Division of Forestry and Service Department
  - Next steps: internal vetting, determine planting priorities/resident-focused plan, present to council, deploy to Village (timing, first half 2023)

**#3: Young tree pruning** – As I've mentioned, one of our goals is to ensure we make the best use of the Village's resources, and this is one example we are most proud of.

- Young tree pruning is an important part of the establishment of our street trees.
- Purpose – create a growth habit that is less prone to structural failures and breakage
- Trees that are young tree pruned are proven to live many years longer on average and are less likely to be damaged in storms than those that are not trained.
- Important financially to the village
  - Less tree turnover – taking down/replanting
  - Less storm damage cleanup (most expensive time for tree companies)
  - More years each mature tree is generating financial benefits to the community
- It takes time: ideally 5 times over the first 15 years of being planted
- Unfortunately, the Service Department just doesn't have capacity for this job, as most their work is time-sensitive
- TAB is taking on this work, closely aligned with the Service Department and with ongoing training of TAB members and volunteers by ODNR urban foresters
- Partnered with ODNR Division of Forestry to offer a Young Tree Structure Training workshop here in the Village 2021 and 2022, open to anyone who wants to learn, taught by ODNR urban forester. We anticipate this will be an ongoing program.
- Not only a great/necessary training tool but also has been effective bringing in new volunteers and allowing us to vet them as potential board members.

We hope this update has been helpful to shed light into our role. Ongoing, We are committed to prioritizing the RIGHT work to ensure we are strengthening and protecting Mariemont's tree canopy for generations to come.