



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**MEETING MINUTES  
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE  
SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY BOARD**

Tower 101, Suite 1100  
101 NE 3rd Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301  
September 30, 2025 – 6:00 PM

<b>Cumulative Attendance</b>					
<b>1/2025 through 12/2025</b>					
	<b>Members</b>	<b>Appt by</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
1	Robert Daoust, Vice Chair (arr. 6:05)	II	P	5	2
2	Kelly Charles	IV	P	7	0
3	David Blattner, Chair	I	P	7	0
4	Suzee Bailey	C	P	6	1
5	Spencer Lasday	IV	P	5	1
6	Vacant	III	-	-	-
7	Nicole Barnett	M	P	6	1
8	Sarah Rahmankhah	IV	P	4	0
9	Vacant	M	-	-	-
10	Vacant	III	-	-	-
11	Vacant	II	-	-	-
12	Parker Jacobson-Bertanzetti, Non-Voting Youth Chair	C	A	4	3

\*attending via Zoom

**Staff Present**

Glen Hadwen, Sustainability Manager  
 Dr. Nancy Gassman, Deputy Director of Public Works/Chief Resilience Officer – Sustainability (via Zoom)  
 Luz Ramirez, Sustainability Coordinator (via Zoom)  
 Talula Thibault, Sustainability Analyst; SAB Liaison  
 Melissa Doyle, Division Manager / Solid Waste and Recycling (via Zoom)  
 Laura Tooley, Urban Forester  
 K. Cruitt, Recording Clerk, Prototype, Inc.

**Also Present**

Mark Clark, RES (via Zoom)  
 Justin Freedman, RES  
 Larsen McBride, RES (via Zoom)  
 Kyra Paris, RES  
 Megan Rising, RES  
 Jesse Adams  
 Rose Cummings  
 Anne Wiley

**I. Call to Order/Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present.

Chair Blattner noted that the Board would need to vote to change the regular meeting date of the fourth Monday of the month to today's date.

**Motion** made by Mr. Lasday, seconded by Ms. Barnett, to change the meeting date to today. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Vice Chair Daoust arrived at 6:05 p.m.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

**I. August 25, 2025**

**Motion** made by Mr. Lasday, seconded by Vice Chair Daoust, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

**III. Liaison Report**

• **Parking passes**

Ms. Thibault noted that parking passes were available to the Board members at the check-in table.

• **Net Zero Resolution**

Chair Blattner recalled that the City's proposed Net Zero Resolution was recommended by the Sustainability Advisory Board (SAB) and will be on the City Commission Agenda at their November 4, 2025 meeting.

• **Sustainability Summit**

Ms. Thibault advised that the Sustainability Advisory Board of the Village of Key Biscayne will host a Sustainability Summit for SABs throughout South Florida. She plans to attend the Summit, which is scheduled for Wednesday, November 19, 2025 from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. One additional Board member may attend if they wish.

• **2025 CDP Disclosure Submission**

Mr. Hadwen stated that the City has submitted its 2025 Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) submission to an international platform which documents work on the reporting

of greenhouse gases and increasing resilience. The City received its highest-ever rating in 2024 and anticipates the same rating in 2025.

#### **IV. City of Fort Lauderdale Draft Urban Forestry Master Plan, Presented by Justin Freedman, RES**

Mr. Hadwen introduced team members from consultant RES, who assisted the City in preparing its Draft Urban Forestry Master Plan.

Justin Freeman, RES project manager, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the draft Plan, explaining that in 2024, the City prepared a tree canopy assessment which determined the City's tree canopy to be at 26.6%. The goal for this canopy is 33% by the year 2040. To reach this goal, the City will need to add 0.4% of the City's overall area in tree canopy each year. He characterized this goal as aggressive but achievable. The goal of 33% coverage comes from Fort Lauderdale's Comprehensive Plan for 2040 and is consistent with other City sustainability efforts.

The Draft Urban Forestry Master Plan includes 62 recommendations across 14 areas to improve urban forestry practices. The City will need to undertake a significant effort including tree planting, revising practices, tree maintenance, protective measures, and more to reach its goal of 33% coverage.

Mr. Freeman noted that 2021 was the last year in which the City met its annual goal to increase its tree canopy. As the City continues to grow in population, this increases the need to plant more trees alongside the pressures associated with ongoing development, including both housing and infrastructure.

The current canopy coverage of 26.6% is not evenly distributed across the City. This helps the project team to prioritize the areas in which trees will be planted. The City also plans to use a tree equity assessment tool to determine priority. Neighborhoods facing socioeconomic challenges typically receive lower scores for canopy cover.

The Draft Urban Forestry Master Plan involved input from different types of community stakeholders. This included internal stakeholders from City Departments who interact with the urban forest, as well as private property owners throughout the City. This feedback was gathered through both public and one-on-one meetings, and a survey available to residents received nearly 800 responses. Many of the public stakeholder responses indicated that tree removal related to development is seen as excessive. There is broad community support for planting more trees.

Once all the information was compiled, the project team developed 62 recommendations for the Draft Urban Forestry Master Plan. The recommendations are grouped into 14 categories which included the following:

- Strengthening tree preservation measures
- Updating permit fees
- Incentivizing tree preservation for developers

- Assisting homeowners with tree preservation
- Expanding staffing
- Minimizing impacts from pests and invasive species
- Restoring mangrove habitat
- Prioritizing tree planting
- Standardizing design practices
- Centralizing tree databases
- Engaging communities

The City currently has 8.75 square miles of tree canopy, as well as another 5.6 square miles for potential tree planting. Not all of these plantings can be done within the City's rights-of-way, which means it will also be encouraged elsewhere. To reach the goal of 33% coverage, the canopy will need to grow by 58.7 million square feet, which averages out to 3.9 million square feet of canopy per year.

To achieve its goal, the City will need to plant an average of 10,000 trees per year. Trees of appropriate size include live oaks, mahoganies, and other large trees, which will need sufficient space to grow. Additional scenarios involve the planting of smaller trees as well.

Cost estimates associated with the recommendations are based on present-day estimates, with cost ranges based on potential internal costs as well. Potential planting costs are not included in the Plan's estimates. Mr. Freeman emphasized the importance of supporting the Plan in order to achieve its goals.

In the past, the City has received grants to plant trees, including plantings in disadvantaged neighborhoods. RES has identified 13 programs with a value of just under \$22 million which can help support the actions within the Plan. There are also internal funding sources which can be applied to the recommendations, including increased permit and mitigation fees, additional penalties for tree violations, implementation of impact fees, penalties for damages to specimen trees, and more.

Mr. Freeman concluded by encouraging the Board members to review the Draft Urban Forestry Master Plan, which is currently available on the City's website, and provide feedback to the project team.

Ms. Charles asked if it may be possible to enter into a partnership with tree growers in order to help offset the costs of the Plan. Mr. Freeman confirmed that this may be an option.

Chair Blattner asked if the estimated numbers of trees to be planted each year include consideration of the number of trees lost annually to disease, storms, and more. Mr. Hadwen commented that the City's tree canopy has remained relatively level for the last five years.

Chair Blattner also requested information regarding recommendations for the tree palette. Larsen McBride, also representing RES, advised that the proposed tree palette significantly expands the one currently listed in the City's design and construction manual. All species in the palette are either native or naturalized non-invasive species. They are classified according to their characteristics, which include wind, drought, and flood tolerance, size of the root plate, and more. He emphasized the value of including as many species as possible in the palette in order to fit a variety of planting spaces.

Chair Blattner asked if attractiveness to invasive fauna, such as iguanas, was also a consideration when preparing the palette. Kyra Paris, also representing RES, advised that this was not a major consideration, as the composition of the palette focused on flood, drought, and wind tolerance. Other considerations included appropriateness as street trees, the possibility of falling debris, and longevity. Mr. Freeman also noted that the trees are intended to attract native wildlife.

Ms. Barnett addressed the Plan's milestones and time frame, asking if tree canopy assessments will be conducted annually in order to track the Plan's progress toward its goals. It was clarified that the City performs a canopy assessment each year. Mr. Hadwen added that the Plan will be evaluated every three years. Mr. McBride further clarified that some ongoing actions are included in the Plan's milestone tables, as the team is confident the City can implement these recommendations over the next few years. It will ultimately be up to the City to determine how to sustain the recommendations they implement.

Rose Cummings, member of the public, requested more information on how the canopy calculation is affected when trees are lost by hurricanes or other circumstances. Anne Wiley, member of the public, also asked how this loss is measured and can be made up. Mr. Freeman explained that the canopy is measured each year and plans adjusted accordingly.

Ms. Cummings also asked what percentage of the recommended tree palette consists of native plants. Ms. Paris estimated that the palette includes roughly 60% native species, pointing out that some species, such as palms, are not native but are also not considered invasive. No invasive species are included in the palette.

Ms. Cummings continued that she was particularly in favor of the Plan's suggestion that fines and mitigation be based on canopy rather than diameter. Mr. McBride emphasized that the project team felt this was optimal for Fort Lauderdale, and other local municipalities have already adopted this practice. The Plan's goals include strengthening the City's systems to preserve its trees.

Ms. Rahmankhah requested clarification of what a database of trees would include. Mr. McBride stated that the City does not currently maintain a tree inventory, which is recommended by the Plan. There are different ways this database can be established, including remote sensing or partial inventory techniques. In addition to the inventory, the Plan also proposes changes to Code and the design process which will help preserve more trees. As the Plan's recommendations are implemented, it is also

recommended that the City seek to quantify the number of trees that may be preserved by certain policies.

Mr. McBride continued that as the City manages its own trees, it also maintains some influence over trees on private property, particularly during development. Community outreach and involvement are major components of the Plan. He also emphasized communication between City Staff and communities to determine how residents can help implement the Plan's initiatives.

Vice Chair Daoust noted that one determining factor for costs is the average square footage per tree, and requested more information on how this is calculated. Mr. Freeman replied that these costs are based on determining the number of trees needed to plant to reach the overall goal.

Jesse Adams, member of the public, requested more information on residential enforcement, including how violations could be documented, how enforcement could be ensured, and how the public can track the results of enforcement actions. He explained that it can be challenging to contact Code Compliance during off hours, and noted that the public does not have a clear way to track the progress of enforcement action.

Laura Tooley, Urban Forester, recommended that residents call Code Compliance directly for follow-up information. Service requests can also be made through the 828-8000 number for information including Code case numbers. She noted that one of the Plan's recommendations includes providing additional training to Code Compliance on tree-related issues.

Mr. Adams felt improved visibility of the City's Code processes could help residents understand what can be done. Ms. Tooley noted that civil penalties for unpermitted tree removal have increased since the past year, again pointing out that not all Code Officers are familiar with how Code may relate to trees.

Ms. Cummings asked if City advisory bodies are being informed of the Plan. Mr. McBride advised that one recommendation is to update Code language to provide permit or plan reviewing bodies with recourse to recommend setback modifications specifically to preserve existing trees.

Mr. Freeman concluded that comments on the Draft Urban Forestry Master Plan may be submitted online before Friday, October 17, 2025.

Mr. Hadwen requested that the Board consider providing a recommendation in support of the Draft Urban Forestry Master Plan to the City Commission. He also suggested that the members review the Plan further and bring their three most important recommendations from the document back to that meeting for additional exploration. He also proposed that the Board consider a communication to the City Commission at the October meeting to be considered at the same time the Plan is presented on November 4, 2025.

## **V. New Business**

Ms. Thibault briefly reviewed the following upcoming events:

- The public comment period for the Draft Urban Forestry Master Plan will be open through Friday, October 17, 2025
- The first annual South Florida Sustainability Summit is scheduled for Wednesday, November 19, 2025 in Key Biscayne
- The fifth annual Climate Week is scheduled for October 6-12, 2025, in person or online; registration is free
- A Broward County tree giveaway is planned for October 18, 2025 at Highland Park in Miramar from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. while supplies last
- An Ocean Exchange Event is planned in Fort Lauderdale from October 26-28, 2025; this event advances innovation in technologies aimed at the blue economy
- The 30<sup>th</sup> annual Florida Remediation Conference is scheduled for November 3-5, 2025, and addresses regulatory and technical trends regarding soil and groundwater cleanup
- The North American Association for Environmental Education Conference will hold a research symposium on October 30, 2025 as well as a conference from November 3-6, 2025; all events will be held online
- The 17<sup>th</sup> annual Southeast Florida Climate Leadership Summit is scheduled for December 16-17, 2025 in West Palm Beach, Florida

## **VI. Old Business**

None.

## **VII. Proposed Communication**

None.

## **VIII. Comments**

None.

## **IX. Items for Next Meeting**

- **October 27, 2025**

These items were previously discussed.

## **X. Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

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Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]