



How and Why TreesCharlotte Was Founded

TreesCharlotte is a public/private collaborative dedicated to increasing civic awareness, education and engagement in the environment by preserving Charlotte's signature natural resource: its outstanding tree canopy. In pursuit of its mission to grow the tree canopy to 50% coverage by 2050, TreesCharlotte's goal is to plant 15,000 trees annually, primarily with volunteers.

The inspiration for TreesCharlotte emanated from a Canopy Committee convened by The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation in June 2010. Armed with the results of an aerial analysis of the canopy indicating a loss of 3% of the canopy between 2002 and 2008, the Canopy Committee confirmed the need for and value of a large-scale and organized approach to remedying the situation. One year later, in June 2011, the City Council adopted the goal of 50% tree canopy by 2050. The City and the Knight Foundation then commissioned a study to surface a practical and effective model for implementation. This study took the form of a six-month exploration with key community and corporate leaders, arborists, government agency leaders and concerned citizens about ways to elevate the importance of Charlotte's tree canopy and strategies for enhancing and protecting trees. The resulting organizational framework and business model were endorsed by the Knight Foundation Canopy Committee and later by key stakeholders at the first Tree Canopy Action Summit in May 2012. Following the Summit, the plan was supported by Foundation For The Carolinas and Charlotte City Council. The process-rich development of TreesCharlotte has resulted in broad-based community support and positions the organization well to succeed in its ambitious endeavors.

TreesCharlotte was launched with generous leadership and support from The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Foundation For The Carolinas, and the Blumenthal Foundation. More recent supporters include Carolinas HealthCare System, Crescent Resources, Duke Energy Foundation, the Harris Family Foundation, Howard and Julie Levine, and Rotary District 7680. TreesCharlotte is currently incubated at Foundation For The Carolinas, governed by the TreesCharlotte Foundation Board, and led by Dave Cable as Executive Director.

TreesCharlotte adds value in three main areas: community vitality, education and the environment.

Community vitality. While Charlotte's tree canopy is one of the finest quality urban forests in America, not all neighborhoods benefit equally from trees. Many of Charlotte's neighborhoods, particularly under-served community areas, have little to no trees. TreesCharlotte benefits the vitality of these communities in two profound ways. First, TreesCharlotte provides the leadership and infrastructure for communities to organize and rally for community-wide tree planting events. Tree planting is a uniquely powerful tool to build social capital in our community and people love to plant trees, especially with neighbors and family members. Second, the planted trees increase the attractiveness of areas across

Charlotte and help to enhance property values. Planting a tree connects people to the earth and provides a sense of place.

Education. Trees are powerful tools for teaching children and adults about stewardship of the earth. Each planting event brings tree experts and arborists in front of residents and volunteers for an orientation on the value of trees and how to plant and care for trees. Some tree planting events take place on CMS campuses where the teachers integrate trees into the curriculum and students and neighbors have the opportunity to participate in the planting events.

Environment. There are few activities more meaningful than planting a tree to help our environment. This is particularly true today as our area becomes more urban and 3 to 4 million new residents move to the Piedmont Crescent. Charlotte's treed neighborhoods benefit greatly from the tree canopy. Trees are essential to our health, both physically and mentally. Trees cool our streets, parking lots and buildings, reduce storm water runoff, sequester carbon and help clean our air. Trees are one-stop environmental sustainability boosters.