

Turning Government Leaders Into Tree Supporters

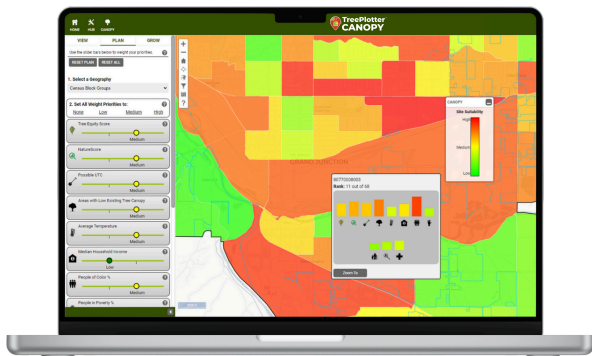


PlanIT Geo™
developers of TreePlotter

Having a tree advocate among government decision-makers can be a game changer for a public urban forestry program.

Urban forestry programs often [operate on tight budgets](#) and urban forest managers must continually advocate for funding from [internal and external sources](#). Having a supportive mayor, city council member, division supervisor, or any other role with sway over budgets and priorities, can be the difference-maker in getting the resources you need to maintain and expand a healthy urban tree canopy.

So, how do you turn those in charge into tree supporters? Reinforce your tree advocacy with data that brings a measurable context to the conversation. Urban tree canopy data and tree inventory statistics help make the value and risks of urban forestry real and relatable.



“In most cases, one is not dealing with biologists and natural resource specialists [on city council]. Charts and maps showing risk are a straightforward tool to show the urgency of the public safety problem. It also helps leadership understand the scale of funding required to mitigate the risk.”

-Shannon Atencio, New Mexico State Forestry, Las Vegas District

TELL A STORY WITH CANOPY DATA

Nothing backs up urban forestry talking points quite like a map of tree canopy data. Showing a council member an [interactive map of red canopy losses](#) in their district is both compelling and easy to understand.

When Lexington, Kentucky completed an [urban tree canopy assessment in 2022](#), they had a strategy to help the results resonate with city council. They asked [PlanIT Geo™ to develop report cards for all 12 council districts](#). The report cards scored 5 different canopy criteria and provided an overall letter grade. Urban forestry staff found that sharing a report with a giant D for a council member's district was very effective for getting them interested and motivated in urban forestry efforts.

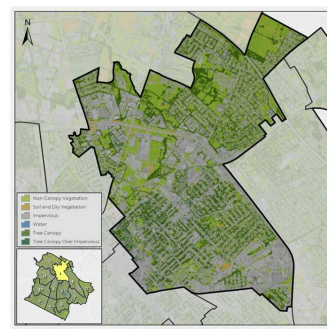
ANSWER KEY QUESTIONS WITH TREE INVENTORY SOFTWARE

A tree inventory provides an abundance of statistics that urban foresters can use to contextualize their needs to municipal leaders. [Tree inventory software](#) offers charts, graphs, and data points that allow urban foresters to ask and answer key questions with just a few clicks.

For Shannon Atencio, Las Vegas District Forester, a tree inventory was pivotal in [communicating the tenuous state of Las Vegas's urban forest](#) back in 2020. Many street trees were nearing the critical point of being a hazard to public safety. This decline was documented in [TreePlotter™ INVENTORY software](#) to create reports and maps to educate city council on the condition of public trees.

Las Vegas has also used volunteer field inventory days to engage community members in understanding why this resource is important. Once people go through this type of exercise, they look at trees, tree care, and tree benefits differently. These new urban forest advocates then become allies in showing city officials that their constituents want greater investment in trees.

CANOPY IN LEXINGTON'S COUNCIL DISTRICT 1



OVERALL GRADE:
D

City Council District 1 was the only district that lost canopy between 2012 and 2020. This district also has the highest amount of impervious land cover. District 1 should plant in parking lots or in the right-of-way to help mitigate stormwater runoff and minimize the urban heat island effect.

CRITERIA	GRADES
CURRENT CANOPY District 1 had the second lowest percent of UTC with 19%. District 1 has not yet achieved its UTC goal of 30%.	D
POTENTIAL CANOPY District 1 contained 29% PPA, which could bring its total canopy cover to 48% if all plantable space is utilized.	D+
STORMWATER CONTROL Trees in this district absorb 12 million gallons of water per year, providing over \$109K in annual stormwater benefits.	F

THERE'S STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Since 2012, [PlanIT Geo](#) and the [TreePlotter Software Suite](#) have helped organizations advocate for their urban forest with innovative data, tools, and planning. If you'd like to have a discussion specific to the needs and goals of your community, [please reach out today](#).