

An Urgent Call to Action:

Protect New Orleans' Diminishing Tree Canopy!

Save Trees with Ordinance Protection Coalition (STOP Coalition)

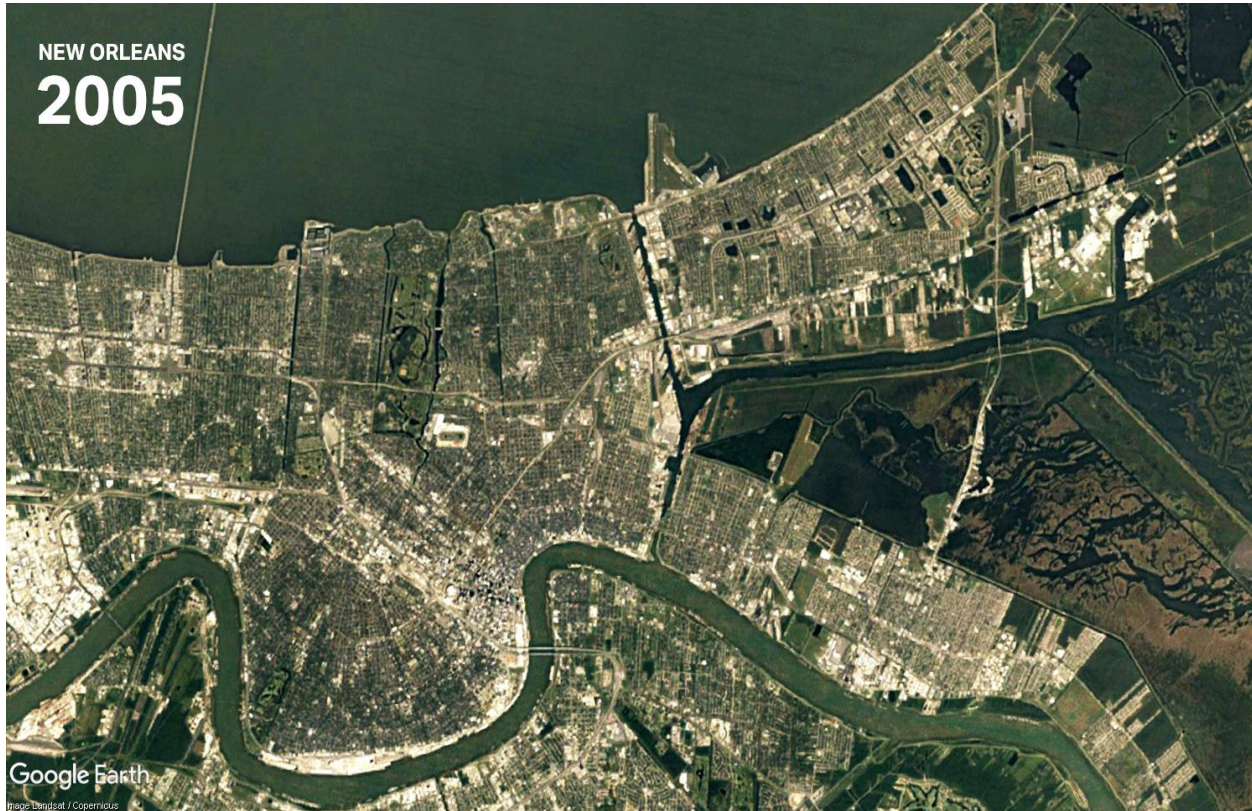
August 6, 2024

STOP Coalition Members Are United in Support of Urgent Action to Defend Our Trees

- Carrollton Area Network
- Garden District Association
- Groundwork New Orleans
- Louisiana Landmarks Society
- Maple Area Residents, Inc.
- Mid-City Neighborhood Org.
- Parks for All
- St. Charles Avenue Assn.
- Sustaining Our Urban Landscape
- Tree Canopy NOLA
- University Neighborhood Assn.
- Urban Conservancy

NOLA's Diminishing Tree Canopy

New Orleans -- 2005



Percentage of Tree Coverage

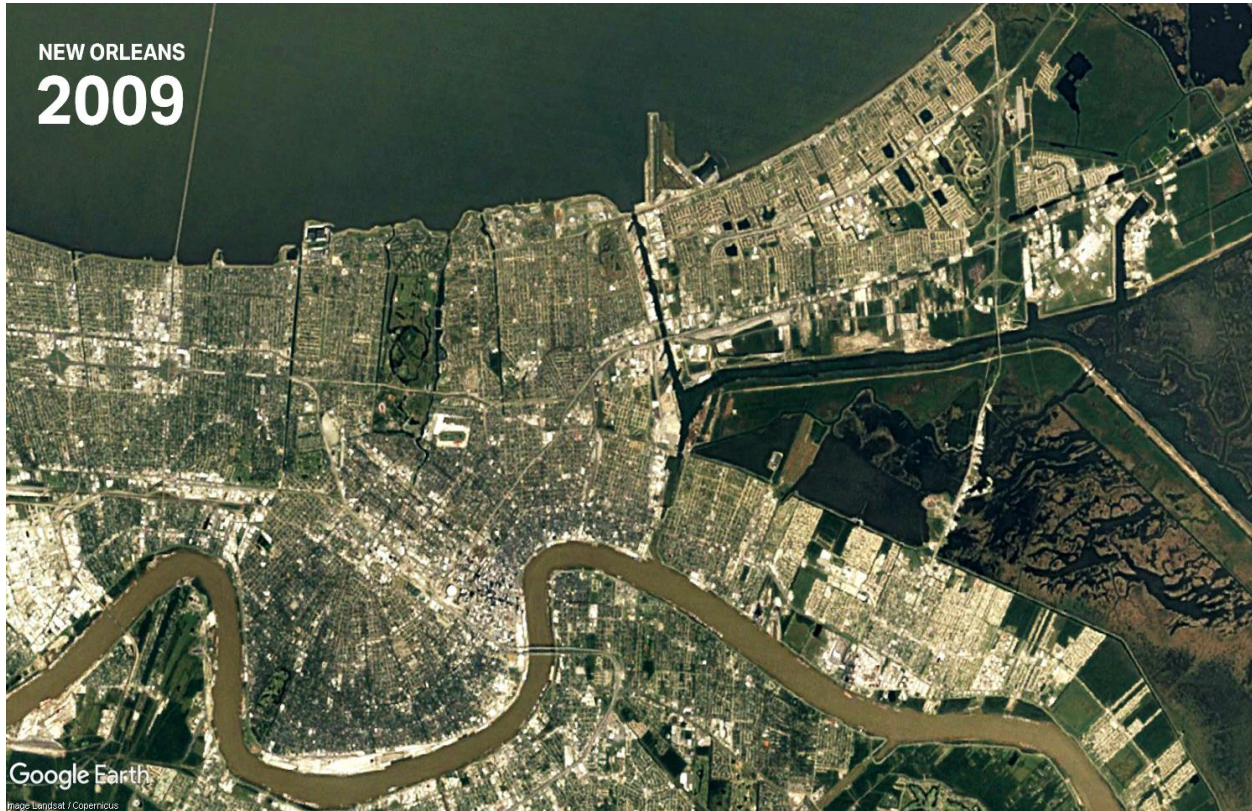
32.9 %

*estimated Pre-Katrina Tree Canopy Coverage

SOURCE: Nowak, David J., and Eric J. Greenfield. "Tree and Impervious Cover Change in U.S. Cities." *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*. Urban & Fischer, January 17, 2012. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1618866711000999>.

NOLA's Diminishing Tree Canopy

New Orleans -- 2009



Percentage of Tree Coverage

23.3%

*Reduction of 9.6% in tree canopy coverage (2005-2009), approximately a 30% loss

SOURCE: Nowak, David J., and Eric J. Greenfield. "Tree and Impervious Cover Change in U.S. Cities." *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*. Urban & Fischer, January 17, 2012.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1618866711000999>.

NOLA's Diminishing Tree Canopy

New Orleans -- 2024



Percentage of Tree Coverage

18.5 %

New Orleans has lost more than 40% of its tree canopy in just the last 20 years!

SOURCE: New Orleans Reforestation Plan

NOLA's Diminishing Tree Canopy

Over 200,000 trees were lost due to Hurricane Katrina.

But alarmingly, our tree canopy has **continued to decline since Katrina!**

New Orleans does not compare favorably with other cities in our region.

Today, only 18.5% of our city is covered by tree canopy, compared to:

Atlanta (47%)

Austin (38%)

Memphis (37%)

New Orleans is roughly on par with Houston (18%).

How has the lack of adequate Tree Ordinance Protection hurt New Orleans?

Big-Project Damage on St. Roch Avenue

- Tree Plan: “No excavators!” → Video
- Tree Plan: “Erect tree protection barriers!” → Photos
- “Stop Work!” Orders
- Email Exchanges and Meetings with PPW

2500 Block of Banks

Entergy Instructed Parks and Parkways

“This tree must go!”



2600 Block of Banks

Entergy Instructed Parks & Parkways

“This tree must go!”



3830 Banks Street

Entergy Instructed Parks and Parkways

“This tree must go!”



4609 Banks Street

The adjacent property owner asked that this public tree be taken down.

Parks & Parkways complied!



4624 Banks Street

The adjacent property owner asked that this public tree be taken down.

Parks & Parkways complied!



Disappearing Oaks One-by-One on Banks Street

- Spring 2022 (4700 Block) X X
- July 13, 2022 (2500 Block) X
- July 14, 2022 (2600 Block) X
- October 22, 2023 (4624) X
- October 29, 2023 (4609) X
- November 2023 (3816) X
- November 2023 (3830) X
- The Mid-City Neighborhood Organization received no notice before these trees were removed, despite its repeated contacts with Parks & Parkways.
- **What can we do now—in 2024—to improve ordinance protection for trees?**

TCNOLA Timetable for City Code Update in 2024

January: TCNOLA Email to Council Urged Update of City Code's Tree Provisions

February: TCNOLA Met with Lesli Harris' and Oliver Thomas' Council Offices

- **Agreed:** TCNOLA to Deliver Discussion Draft Ordinance Updating City Code by March 31

March 22: Emailed City Code Update Ordinance to Council and Parks & Parkways

- **Next Step: Set up a meeting with Parks & Parkways. That proved complicated!**

April 11: Lesli Harris Office's **First Attempt** at PPW Meeting

- Harris' Director of Operations provided available times on April 11 and 19 for a meeting with TCNOLA and the Department of Parks and Parkways.
- TCNOLA confirmed availability for both dates, and on April 11 we sent an email asking, "Are we meeting today?"
- Parks & Parkways replied, "Apologies all, we have interviews this afternoon . . . so this date cannot work" but asked about "availability the week of April 22" and promised that "we will meet then."

Thus died the **first attempt** at a meeting with Parks & Parkways.

TCNOLA Timetable for City Code Update in 2024

April 15: Harris Office's **Second Attempt** at Parks & Parkways Meeting

- Director of Operations: "Based on everyone's availability, I can schedule the Tree Canopy Ordinance meeting for **Thursday, April 25th @ 1:30 PM.**"

April 23: TCNOLA's email (two days before the April 25 meeting) to Harris' Office and to Parks & Parkways said, "I'll see you on Thursday afternoon."

April 24: Mike Karam's reply said, "The meeting for tomorrow has been cancelled at my request," apologized for late notice, and promised a draft that "the department will submit to Councilmember Harris in the coming weeks."

Thus died the **second attempt** at a meeting with Parks & Parkways.

TCNOLA Timetable for City Code Update in 2024

April 24: Harris' Office asked "Will the ordinance be ready for discussion and potential vote at the May 6th Quality of Life Committee Meeting?"

April 24: Parks & Parkways answer must have been, "No." TCNOLA was informed that "our office has rescheduled the May 6th Quality of Life Committee Meeting to May 29th."

April 24: TCNOLA renewed its call for a meeting with Parks & Parkways before the May 29 Committee Meeting. **"We should be pursuing a shared agenda, but it's hard to get to a meeting of the minds if you don't have a meeting."** [Emphasis added.]

April 26: Lesli Harris' Office agreed with TCNOLA that, "a follow up meeting afterward with everyone ahead of that May 29 target date is a good idea"

But, less than a month later . . .

TCNOLA Timetable for City Code Update in 2024

- **May 22**: TCNOLA asked, “Is the topic still on next week’s agenda for a Quality of Life Committee Meeting? **Has PPW produced a draft or made any response to our March 22 submission?**” [Emphasis added.]
 - **Reply**: “Parks and Parkways will not be ready for public discussion and voting by the 5/29 Quality of Life Committee Meeting. They will be in contact in the coming weeks”
- Thus died the **third attempt** at a meeting with Parks & Parkways.
- A **fourth meeting** opportunity in late June also never happened, nor in July, nor in August . . .

Continued Deferral, Delay, and Disappointment

June 27: The Urban Conservancy requested “a commitment to take up the city code update project without further delay, treating this issue with the urgency it merits.”

- Reply: “Our office is committed to having this ordinance discussed and voted on at a future Quality of Life Committee Meeting, **hopefully before the Fall of 2024.**” [Emphasis added.]
- Response: “Understood, . . . but time really is of the essence and we are deeply concerned that if this doesn't happen in July or August, it will be further delayed as the budgeting process gets rolling. Meanwhile we'll continue to inflict irreparable harm to our mature trees and canopy.”
- Reply: “Our office's preference would be for the ordinance to be **heard and voted on during either July or August**, and **we have requested that** with the Department of Parks and Parkways.” [Emphasis added.] But despite that request from Lesli Harris’ Office to Parks & Parkways . . .

July 15: “Our office is planning to have the ordinance introduced during the October 7th Quality of Life Committee Meeting.”

No meetings in April, May, June . . . July or August . . . or before the Fall of 2024.

New Orleans Reforestation Plan

- City Planning's Tree Preservation Study was published in October 2020.
- The Master Plan for the 21st Century called for 50% tree canopy coverage without any baseline data.
- City Planning asked SOUL to marshal data to establish a baseline.
- SOUL's two sets of data revealed that New Orleans is only covered by 18.5% tree canopy.
- SOUL coordinated creation of the New Orleans Reforestation Plan.
- The Reforestation Plan was thoroughly reviewed in multiple public meetings and endorsed by City Council Resolution.

New Orleans Reforestation Plan

The Plan (completed in December 2022) was recognized by a City Council Resolution on January 19, 2023. When released at a press conference on January 20, the New Orleans Reforestation Plan was endorsed by Parks and Parkways, City Planning, the Mayor's Office of Resilience & Sustainability, the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans, and the Greater New Orleans Foundation.



It's time for the City to begin implementing the Reforestation Plan that it endorsed!

Recommended: Tree Protection Ordinances

- A **Unified Tree Policy** for New Orleans Requires Multiple Municipal Law Reforms and an Update of the City Code Provisions Governing Trees:
- **2.4** Incorporate Trees into Stormwater Ordinance
- **2.5** Create Better Tree Protection Regulations During Roadway Construction
- **2.7** Enforce Tree Policy
- Require interagency cooperation among municipal entities.

New Orleans' Tree Canopy Deserves Maximum Possible Protection. We must **Incorporate National Standards and Best Practices into the City Code.**

New Orleans Reforestation Plan

- In seven public meetings plus four roundtables—11 meetings in all—SOUL engaged landscape professionals, nonprofits, utilities, and government agencies in a public dialogue about the Plan.
- Parks and Parkways attended every meeting.

Three Key Goals for the City

GOAL ONE

**No Net Tree Loss
within Three Years**

GOAL TWO

**Create a Unified
Tree Policy**

GOAL THREE

**Plant an Equitable
Urban Forest**

Where Do We Go From Here?

- Council: Introduce Tree Canopy NOLA's Draft Ordinance in August and Consider All Proposed Revisions and City Code Updates.
- Council: Approve City Code Updates Without Delay Where Consensus Exists.
- Council: Appoint a Council Advisory Commission with All Stakeholders Represented and Tasked with Producing a Comprehensive Revision of the City Code Provisions Governing Trees by March 2025.
- Council: Establish in Municipal Law a Procedure for PPW and Neighborhood Associations to Address Urgent Threats to the Tree Canopy.
- STOP Coalition: Post Resources Online and Supplement the Online Depository with a Public Records Act Request for Documents.