

A man in a green hoodie and sunglasses is kneeling in a field, working with a tree sapling. He is holding a rope and appears to be securing the base of the tree. In the background, other people are visible, some working with trees. The scene is outdoors with a clear blue sky and bare trees, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting.

Planning for Raleigh's Canopy

Greg Levine, Trees Atlanta Executive Director

March 11, 2025



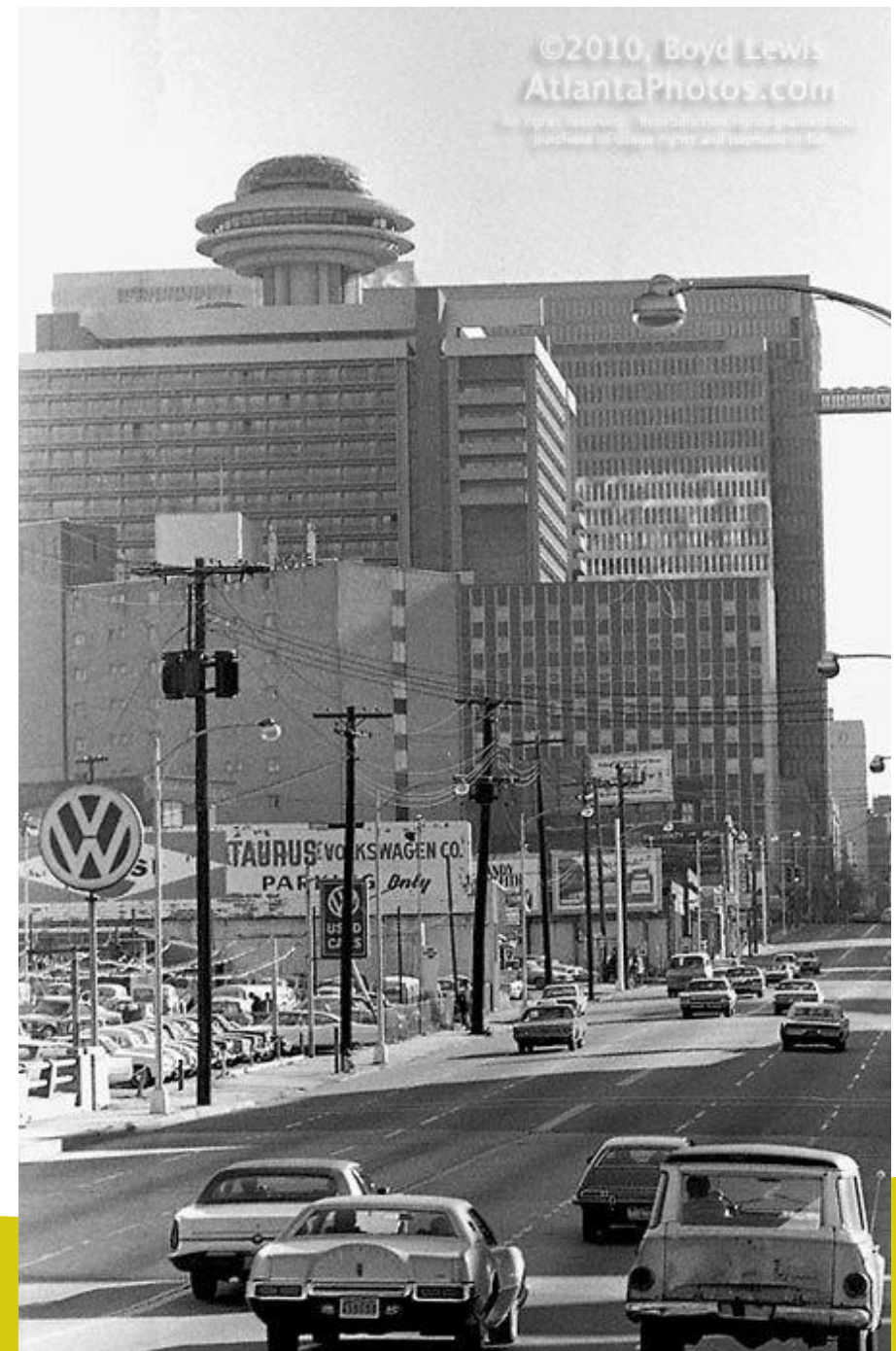
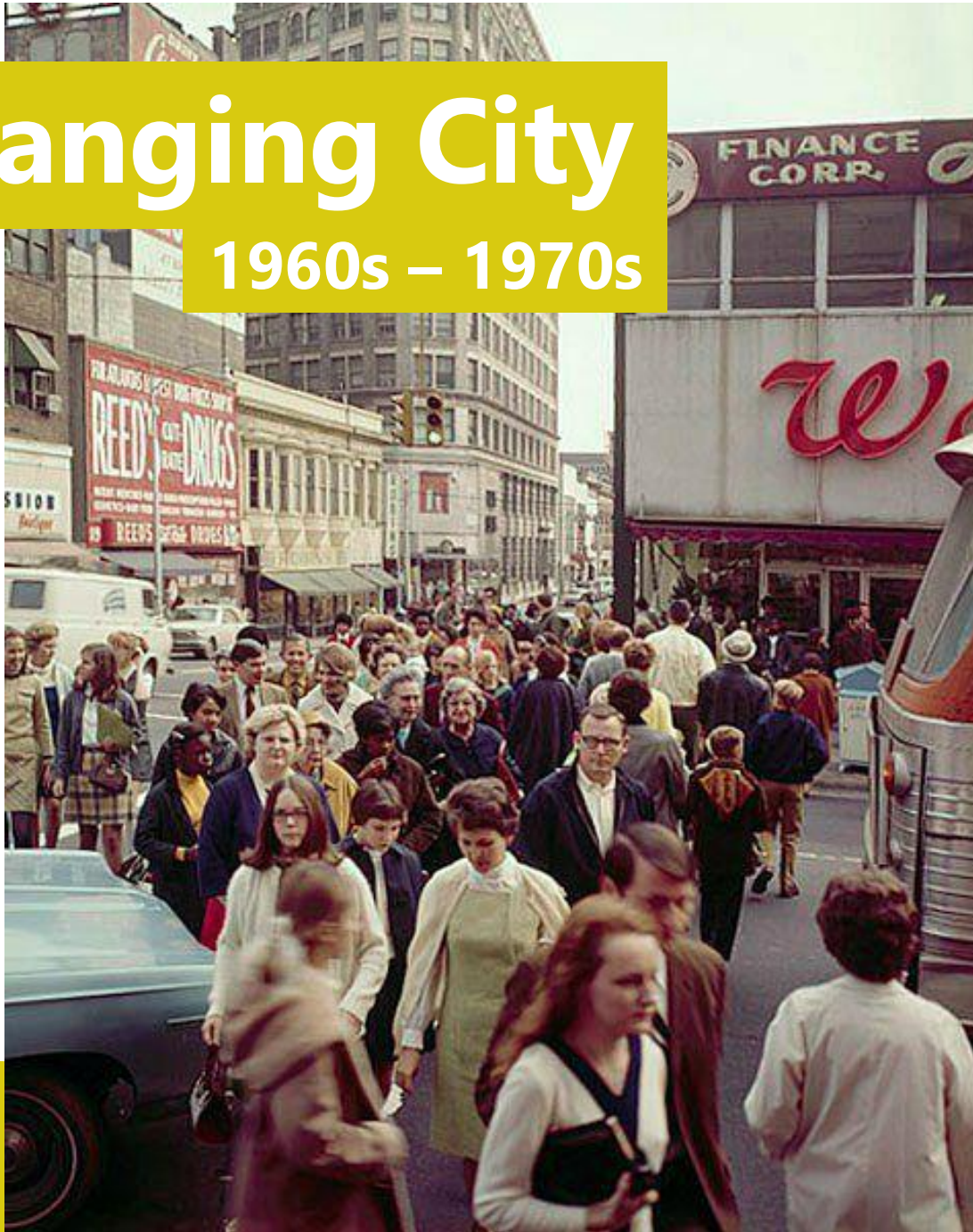


Trees Atlanta
protects and
improves
Atlanta's
urban forest
by planting,
conserving,
and educating



A Changing City

1960s – 1970s



©2010, Boyd Lewis
AtlantaPhotos.com

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without prior written permission from the publisher.



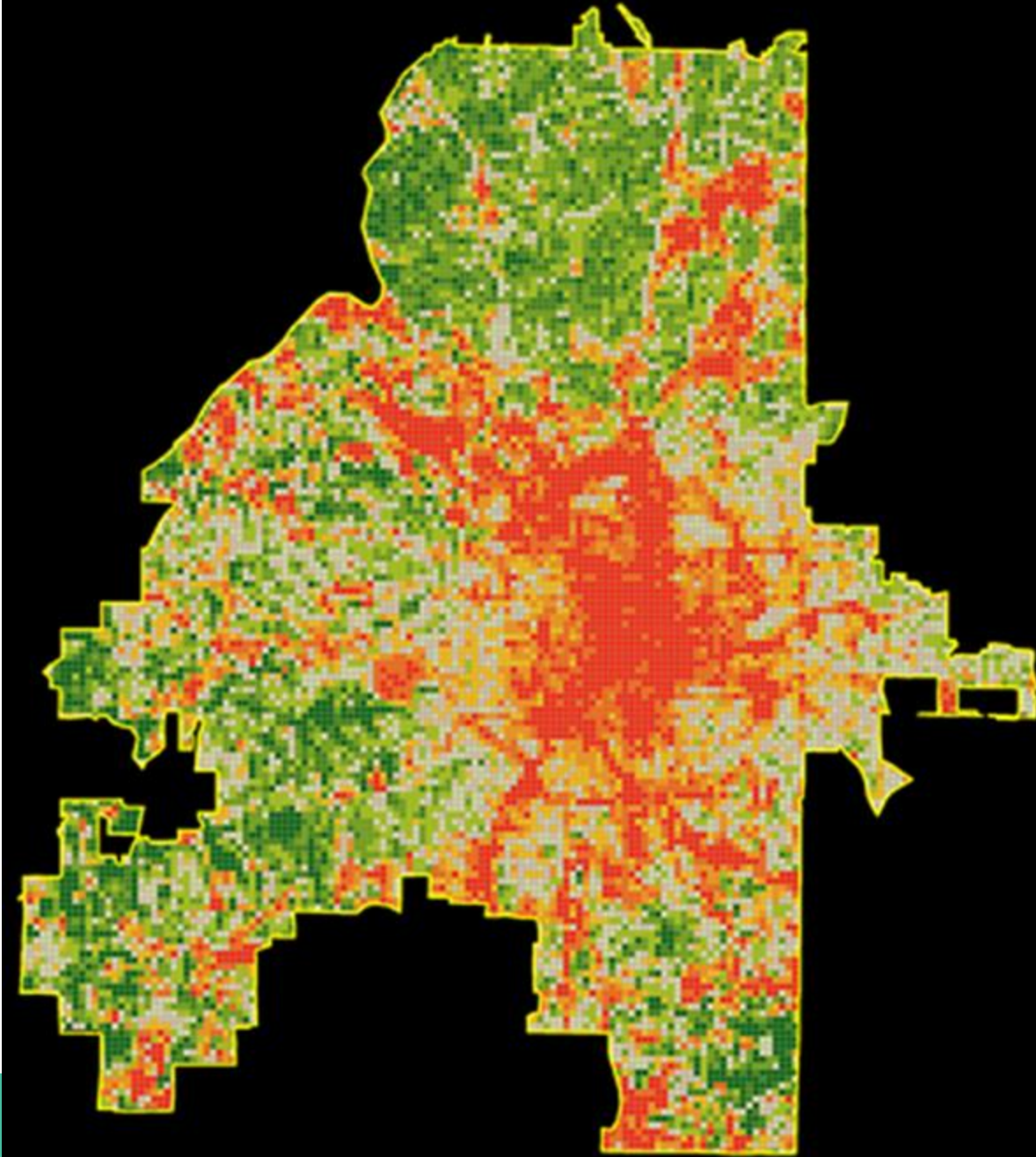
1985



Atlanta's Growing Challenge

46% canopy

1985	2008	2014	2018
50%	47.9%	47.1%	46.5%



Atlanta's Growing Challenge

Canopy Coverage

- City Council Tree Canopy Goal: 50%
- Current Canopy 46% (2018)

Alarming Trends

- Hottest global temps in recorded history: 2016 #1, 2020 #2, 2019 #3, 2018 #5 ¹
- 2024 warmest ocean temperatures ever measured
- Record heat - June 2024
 - 2nd highest average temp in history
 - 1/3 the average rainfall
 - 18 days at or above 90 - nearly double the 'normal' days
 - 9 days that hit at least 95
 - Hottest day: 100 degrees on June 26
 - Tied record high from over a century ago

Tree Loss



¹ 2020 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Atlanta's Growing Challenge

Tree Loss

BEFORE

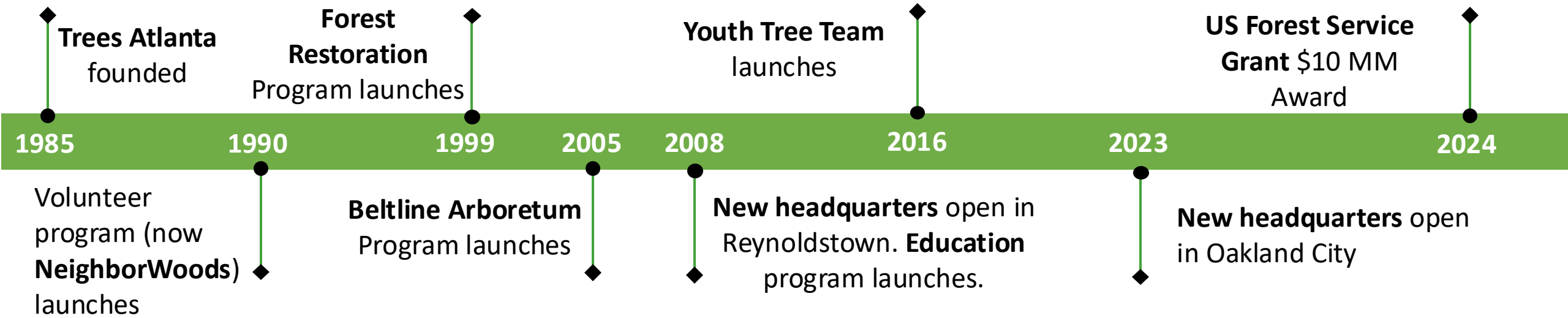


Atlanta's Growing Challenge

Tree Loss

AFTER





Trees Atlanta Programs

- Tree planting
 - Urban Trees - 1985
 - NeighborWoods - 1991
- Forest Restoration - 1999
- Education - 2001
- Atlanta Beltline Arboretum - 2006
- Youth Tree Team – 2014

BEFORE



Eastside Beltline

AFTER

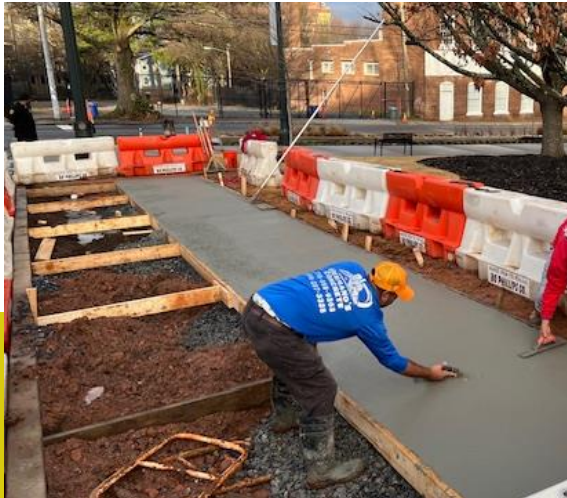


Tree Planting

Urban Trees

Trees Planted	2020	2024	2025 Projection
NeighborWoods	4,000	4,886	4,365
Front Yard Trees	813	871	950
Forest Restoration	1,250	1,070	1,000
Urban Trees	376	1,166	1,979
Total Trees	6,439	7,993	7,734
Cities	6	12	14

- Large trees for municipal contracts
- **Atlanta Beltline Arboretum**
 - 11+ miles complete
- **8K trees Downtown**
 - Master plan development in 2020
 - \$6M IRA Federal funding



Tree Planting

NeighborWoods – Community Forestry

- **Volunteer-based tree planting**
 - ~60% of total trees planted
- **Planting & Tree Care**
- **Plantlanta**
 - 600 trees in 2 days
- **Front Yard Tree Program**
 - 8 Partners Cities/Counties
- **Engagement**
 - Low tree coverage



Growing for a Growing Need

Accomplishments:

2020

- Completed Downtown Master Plan
- Front Yard Tree program launched

2021

- Contract expansion to 12 cities annually

2022

- Initiated contract growing

2024

- Received \$6M grant and created Urban Trees program for downtown
- Separated Tree Health Care program
- Measured concrete removal



Forest Restoration and Conservation

- Changed recompense funds to allow purchase of forested land
- Our work
 - Manage healthy urban forest
 - Remove invasive species
 - Re-introduces native trees and plants
 - Over 40 forests



Kudzu before - 2008



Invasive removal - 2010



Native planting - 2013

Youth Education 2012

- Tree Camp
 - 4 age groups
- In-School Classroom
 - 50 schools



Youth Tree Team

An Urban Forestry Workforce Training Program



Adult Education

- 5 certification programs
 - Pruning
 - Tree Keepers
 - Docent
 - Forest Stewards
 - City Forest Certification
- Speaker Series
- Workshops



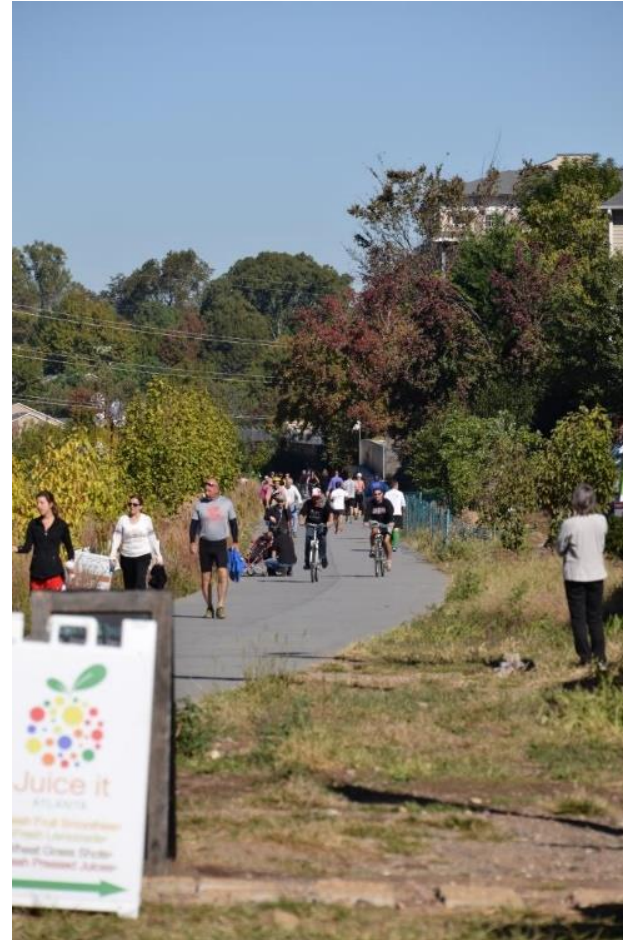
Atlanta Beltline



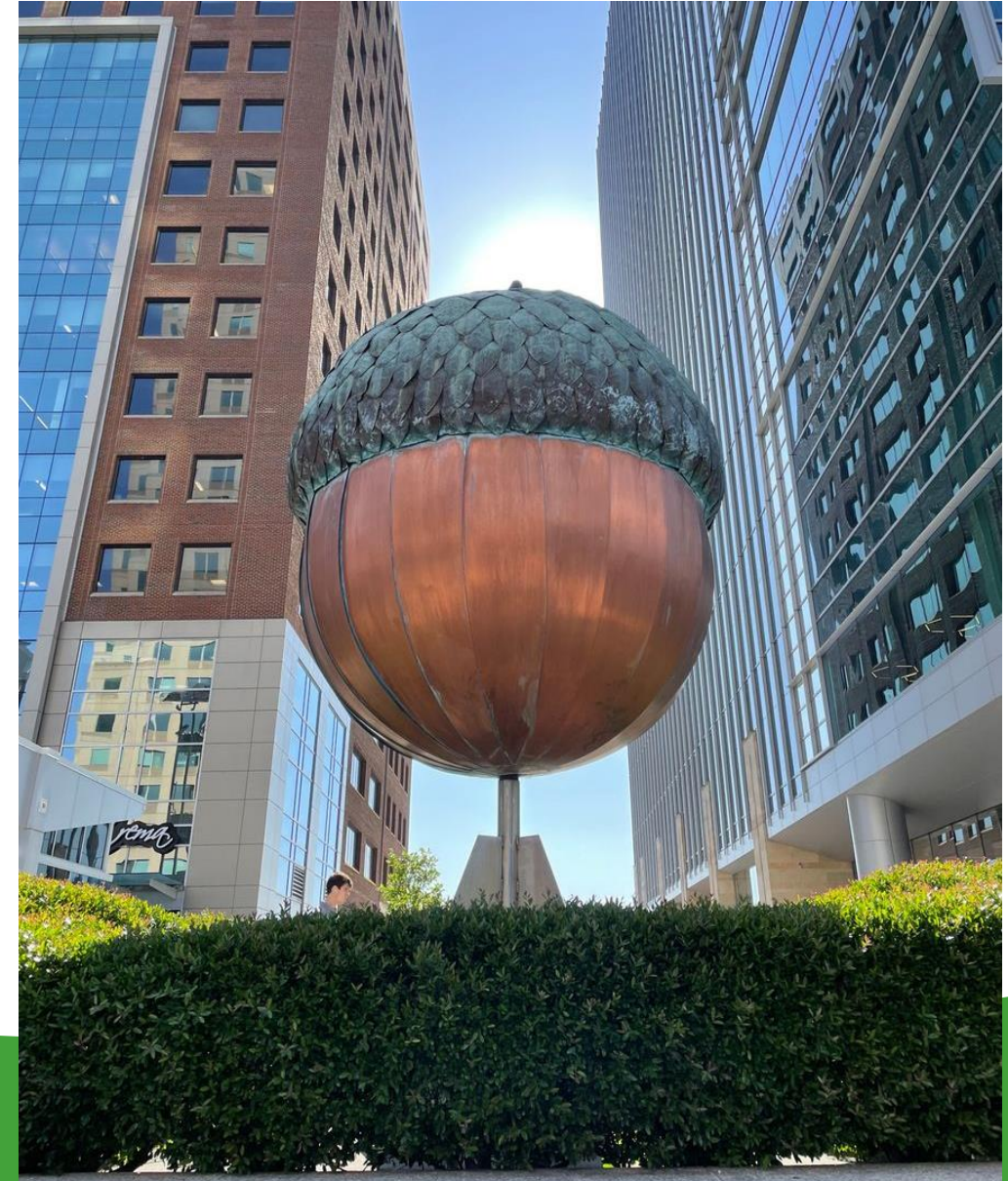
Atlanta Beltline Arboretum

22 Mile Corridor

- Trails
- Future Transit
- Re-development
- Parks
- Reconnecting the City
- 2 million users annually
- **Arboretum - A Gateless Garden**



Raleigh Acorn

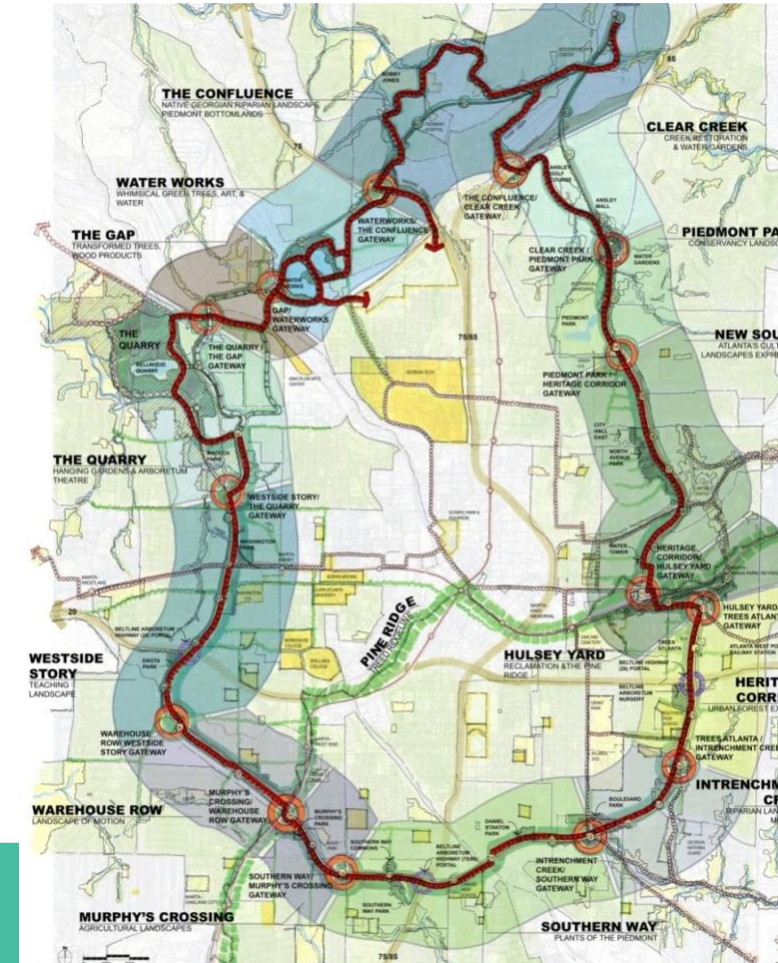
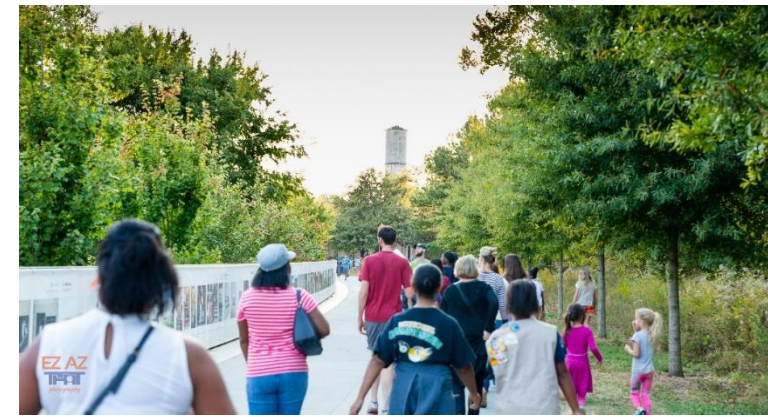


Raleigh Parks

- Museum Park
- Dorothea Dix Park
- Greenway Trail

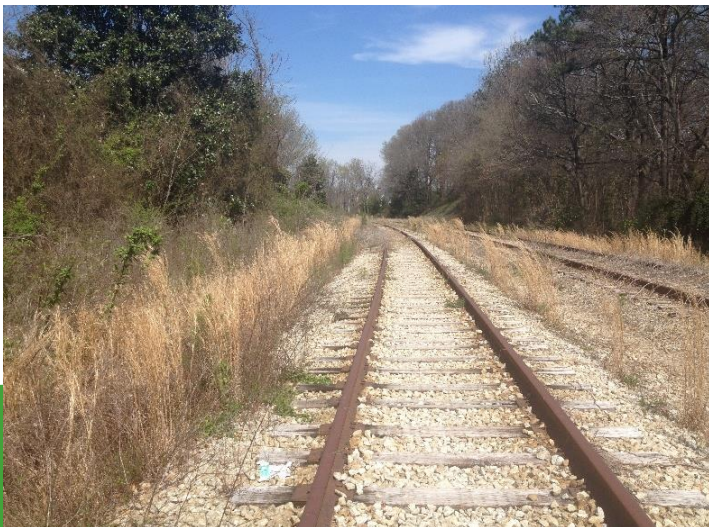


Atlanta Beltline Arboretum

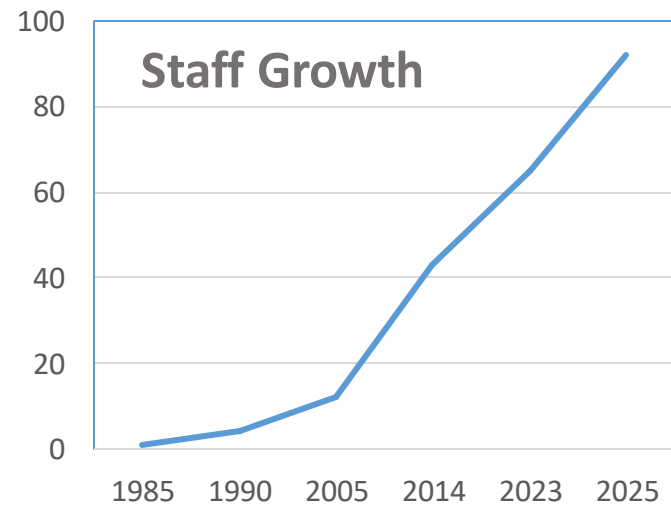
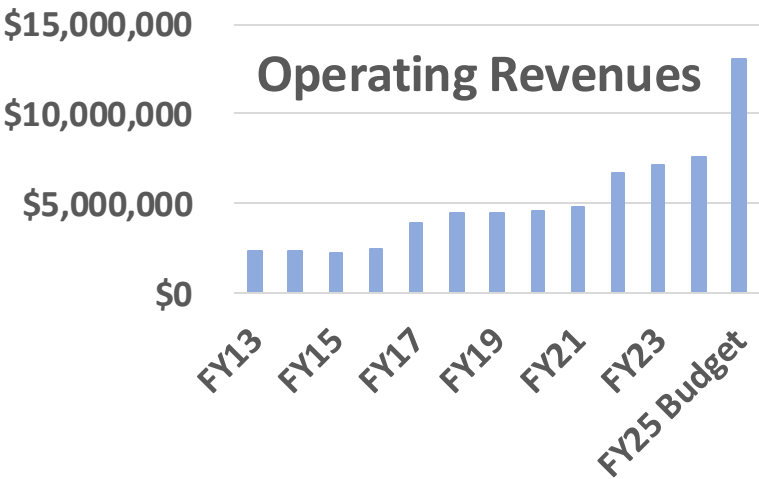


Atlanta Beltline Arboretum

Advocacy, Restoration, and Planting



Growing to Meet the Need



Partnerships

City of Atlanta – 40-year partner

- One of our Founders
- Annual Contract from Tree Trust Fund (Recompense)
 - 1M+ for planting, restoration, & education
- Mayor's Greenspace Advisory Committee
 - 13 nonprofits



Partnerships

City of Atlanta – 40-year partner

- Tree Ordinance rewrite phased approach
 - 2017 - Purchase of forest with recompense funds
 - 2023 - Phase 1
 - Chain link fencing protection
 - Soil volume and area requirements
 - Native Species
 - Parking lot requirements beyond the life of the tree
- Public trees vs. private trees
 - 3,000-inches tree initiative = 1,000 trees
- Phase 2024
 - 77% of Atlanta's tree canopy is located in single-family residential
 - Increasing recompense to \$260 per inch
 - Saving trees on single family
 - No Recompense cap
 - Greenfield preservation 30%



Partnerships

12 cities and counties

- Front yard trees biggest program
- 75% fund their programs

Non-Profits and Community Groups

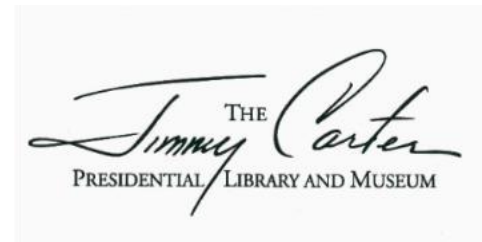
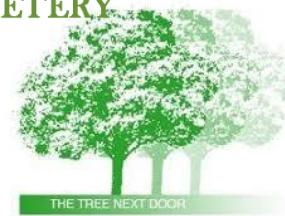
- 30+
- 50 schools
- 70 neighborhoods

Federal Funding - \$10.45 M

- Downtown planting
- Green Workforce Program (UFOR)
- Engagement - low canopy neighborhoods



Partners



Volunteer Program Accomplishments

2020

- Volunteer projects continued through COVID

2021

- Launched Certified Volunteer Umbrella Program

2023

- 5th Certified Volunteer Program,
- City Forest Buds - verification for City Forest Certification
- Expanded opportunities: office, campus care, downtown, and Junior Interns

2024

- 43K Volunteer hours



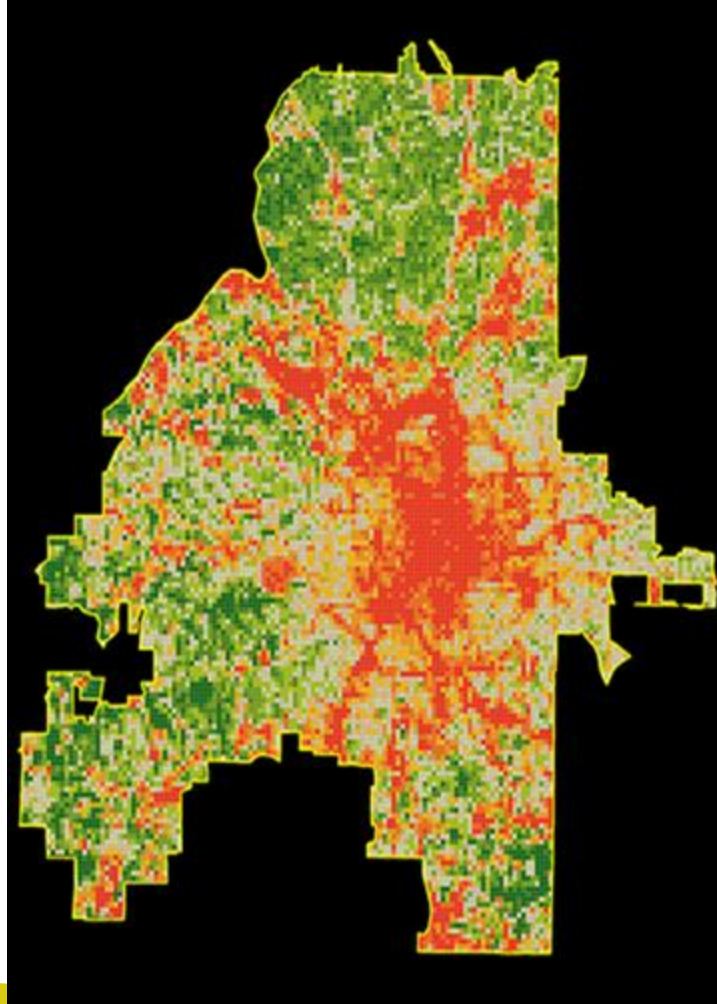
Looking Back to 1985

Population Increase

- Atlanta
1985: 410K → 2025: 511K
- Metro Atlanta
1985: 1.8M → 2025: 6.3M

What would we do differently?

- Focus on density, Historic Districts, local/regional trees, purchasing forests, & Zoning Ordinance
- Measure tree canopy every 3 years



Future Priorities

- 40th Anniversary
- **Strategic Plan**
- Tree Nursery
- Capital Campaign
- Focus on Property Owners and Hot Neighborhoods
- Zoning Ordinance



Looking forward - Trees Raleigh?

1. Create group or support existing tree groups: Leaf & Limb, Project Pando, & Trees for the Triangle,
2. Grow volunteer programs
3. Look for large projects to align with and make richer with an added tree focus
4. Grow partnerships with your city and mayor
5. Balance growth - create dense developments while saving greenspace
6. Continue to expand Greenway program!





TREES ATLANTA

Greg Levine
greg@treesatlanta.org

References

- [https://s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/wakegov.com.if-us-west-1/s3fs-public/documents/](https://s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/wakegov.com.if-us-west-1/s3fs-public/documents/2023-09/Raleigh%20R)
- 2023-09/Raleigh%20R
- <https://raleighnc.gov/climate-action-and-sustainability/services/mapping-urban-heat-islands>
- <https://raleighnc.gov/climate-action-and-sustainability/services/mapping-urban-heat-islandsgreenways>
- <https://raleighnc.gov/greenways>

