Dear Mayor, Councilmembers, Director of Community Development and Tree Canopy Preservation Program Manager,

The Brookhaven Tree Conservancy is happy to see that the City is continuing to refine the 2021 Tree Ordinance.  One important measure of progress is understanding if this ordinance is making an impact.  We would ask that this proposed set of changes adds a provision to measure the City of Brookhaven Tree canopy every 2 years.  This was last done in Sep 2019 (reported in May 2020).  It is imperative to understand if these policy changes are making an impact on the ground.

There are two proposed changes that we would like to understand further.  What is the driving principle behind:

1) Section 14-47  paragraph 3, ...trees removed as part of any (deleted future) city capital improvement project will be replaced....  What impact will this change have on canopy preservation / growth?  
Will this look back to earlier capital improvements that eliminated many trees?

2) Section 14-51 E.4,...why was the percentage of approved overstory trees reduced from 85% to 60%?

 Are there expectations on how this set of changes will accelerate the preservation of our tree canopy?  And will this be measured? The canopy vendor's report of Sep 2019 reflected inaccurate calculations of canopy loss; therefore we'd like the City to request the vendor correct their math in the May 2020 report and calculate accurately in any future work.

 Regarding the math in the study, we sent the observations below to Deputy City Manager Patrice Ruffin and others in the City, and the vendor recommended no change and Patrice agreed.  The fact is that the math in the report is misleading and does not accurately answer the question of how much as been lost.  The vendor is incorrectly calculating the % of the change.  I explain below, taken from the email I sent to the City at the time:

1. UTC shrank 6.3% since 2009 from 47% to 44%, but even more dramatically in the last 2 years: from 50% to 44%, a 12% loss in 2 years.  (page 11)

2. Single Family lots are where the loss is greatest. (page 13)

-- From 2009-2019: the "5% loss" quoted in the narrative at the top of the page is inaccurate.  It's a *5 point drop* but represents an 8.7% loss in 10 years.

-- From 2017-2019, 2 years: the pace of the loss is increasing.  In 2 years we see a 13.3% loss, an 8 point drop.

 Losing 13% of SFR canopy every 2 years areas will decrease our total canopy coverage as follows:

in 2019: UTC = 44%

in 2021: UTC = 41.4%

in 2023: UTC = 37.3%

Thank you and Best Regards,

Brookhaven Tree Conservancy

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