



I was disappointed to learn Friday afternoon that Metro has approved the removal of 21 mature cherry trees along 1st Avenue to accommodate a stage for the NFL Draft in late April.

It seems incredibly short-sighted to cut down trees that took 15+ years to grow for the convenience of a **one-time, 48-hour event**.

I understand that the NFL is willing to make a relatively small financial contribution towards replacement trees, but the environmental and health impacts of a mature tree far exceeds that of a newly planted one. It will take decades to truly replace the benefits of the trees scheduled for removal.

Our city has hosted numerous outdoor celebrations of comparable size and scale in this same area that have not required tree removal (e.g. New Year's Eve, 4th of July, CMA Music Festival, Stanley Cup Finals, to name a few). Tree removal for this event feels like an extreme concession.

According to the Metropolitan Nashville Urban Forestry and Landscape Master Plan (dated July 2016), the downtown subarea has less than 5% urban tree cover vs. a target of 10% urban tree cover. This represents the lowest urban tree cover in the city. Of all areas in our community, the urban core is where we can least afford to lose trees.

Over the last 33 years, Nashville Tree Foundation has planted over 10,000 trees across Davidson County, many of which have been planted on Metro-owned land, including Riverfront Park. It's discouraging to see how casually the city has discarded the hard work and financial resources that our organization and our peer organizations have dedicated to improving our city. Furthermore, this action is in total conflict with Executive Order 40, which recognizes the value of trees as a public utility, and the recent launch of the Root Nashville canopy campaign. Less than a year after these exciting developments, we are showing the world that we can "talk the talk" but are not willing to "walk the walk".

I'm sure many will say that 21 cherry trees are not material in "the grand scheme of things", and we can and should have that discussion. But, this feels like an inflection point for our city. Are we genuinely committed to a sustainable, livable Nashville? If so, what does that look like in practice?

I implore you, as city leaders, to delay the removal, scheduled for Monday, April 1, so that alternative solutions can be considered.

Respectfully,
Noni Nielsen
Nashville Tree Foundation
615-292-5175

Carolyn Sorenson, Executive Director
<https://www.nashvilletreefoundation.org/>