

Prepared statement to Shade Tree Commission for public comment period

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Submitted by Christine Graziano, AICP

President, Plant Five for Life

www.plantfiveforlife.org

Good morning! My name is Christine Graziano. As you may know from a previous resume submitted to Martha Isler around 2015, I have been engaged in environmental protection for nearly 30 years and bring a background and both bachelor and masters level degrees in Environmental Science, Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning as well as Natural Resource Management to my work. I am an accredited planner with the American Planning Association. I am a Board Director of Allegheny Land Trust and a trained Tree Tender living in Shadyside.

For the last year, I have been devoting a good portion of my time to founding and getting off the ground an effort called Plant Five for Life. Our mission is to connect children and families with nature from birth and more equitably. As some of you may recall, I was here in Spring 2018 to share an idea with you about how to do that which was in the early stage of development - giving trees to children at birth and matching them to sites in need of their ecological and social services in their local communities.

Shortly after my visit with the Commission, I temporarily relocated to Spain for a sabbatical year with my family through my husband's University position, returning here periodically throughout the year and then fully in August 2018. As you may know, I tried to meet with you a few times since then in follow-up, but the agenda was too full to accommodate the request. I know you are a busy Commission and that said, I want to thank you for all of your voluntary work on the Commission. It is inspiring that you are working to support the canopy and continue to do such good work. Thank you so much for your service to our community.

I am thankful to be here today so I can update you with a snapshot of our progress. I ask how we can further help you meet your priorities and goals. We also ask for your support in our work and public partnership going forward. It is our hope that shared goals and working together will be part of your priorities in 2020.

In 2018-2019 across 13 months, Plant Five for Life gave and planted 5715 trees. We engaged over 300 volunteers, 1000 families, and raised over 40,000 dollars from private and community individuals. We built a 1500 person social media following and continue to engage families and supporters. Some of our corporate and community partners and supporters have included Magee-Womens Hospital, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, Patagonia, Whole Foods, Bartlett Tree Experts, Agway, and others. We are members of the local Breathe Project and the regional Chesapeake Bay Foundation's 10 Million Trees Keystone Partnership.

We have reached this stage in our work with a small core team consisting of myself, one 9 month long fellow appointment (now concluded), 1 semester graduate school intern from Point State Park, 2 PT CMU summer interns, and a graduate course team at Chatham University as well as engaging 4 Board members and multiple partnerships. We went from fiscally sponsored by New Sun Rising to 501c3 status in 2019.

Our planting sites included at the Pittsburgh Botanic Garden coal mine restoration site (5000 trees), Southside Park (10 trees), Hilltop Urban Farm (275 fruit trees). We also gave away 350 trees in-house to educate faculty and staff at Magee Hospital which we mapped as going to 111 zip codes across the County. That day in November 2018 was also deemed 'Plant Five for Life Day in the County' by County Council proclamation.

At the end of the school year, we planted with K students from a Shadyside private school in Frick Park to celebrate their transition out of early childhood.

Our planting sites were chosen, as well as species and partners, carefully, with maintenance in mind. We protected the trees against deer browse and wind, and are working to ensure ongoing maintenance and engagement in the land and in their care. Some of our trees were purchased from Tree Pittsburgh's nursery and we will continue to buy in larger numbers from them as budget allows.

We have been invited to expand our work with the hospital and other health care facilities in the area, and to dive deeper into the neighborhood scale. In 2019-20, we are specifically working with organizations in Homewood, Shadyside, Braddock, Mt. Oliver/Hilltop area, and the Southside Slopes.

We have partnered with the Breathe Project as members and the two asthma registries with UPitt and Children's Hospital and will be doing a series of large and small tree giveaways in 2020-2021 focused on air quality and the registry in areas of disease concentration with them as well as site specific plantings focused on air quality mitigation. Our expanding campaign through Magee will message with emphasis in this regard for a prolonged period of time.

We will have a giveaway in house at Magee on Nov. 9th again. We invite you to stop by and to reach out with any additional questions. I share a brochure with all of you from the early part of our work in 2018. Our aim is to go paper free in the future so they have not been updated. Instead you have our digital summary through Mardi and Lisa.

In summary, thanks for this time. The Commission has a long tradition of protecting and growing our urban canopy and we hope that we can work together to help reverse the trend of deforestation that is plaguing both our city, county and globe and inspire a next generation to plant and protect with us.

Christine Graziano