

## Summary and Synthesis of SUFC's Leadership Meeting

SUFC Steering Committee, Washington, DC

December 3, 2012

### Meeting objectives:

1. To adequate space and time to discuss current SUFC activities and assess short-term and long-term needs such as funding.
2. To address fiscal management alternative options for SUFC growth and oversight.
3. To explore what SUFC growth might look like in a 1-3 year timeframe.
4. To achieve greater clarify on how Vibrant Communities Initiative fits within SUFC framework.

To help set the stage for the larger discussion, SUFC Steering Committee (SC) reinforced their commitment and appreciation for the Coalition and the working relationship it provides:

- *"It is always important to come together to 'break bread' and work together. But regarding more tangible achievements - I see SUFC not necessarily doing the work but supporting the message and work of its members. SUFC is a means to an end."*
- *"It is very impressive how our [SUFC] voice or message is unified but not diluted. That is great. We have built trust and strength among the membership."*
- *"SUFC has far exceeded the Forest Service expectation and hopes. Advocating (not necessarily on the Hill) with a single voice has yield many positive results. And some of the most valuable work products have come from this group such as the ASPWA best management practices series (APWA+), Planning the Urban Forests (APA+), SMI Leadership Institute etc. I hope SUFC continues its emphasis on its members and speaking with one voice."*

### SUFC Principals: Policy and Operations

Steering Committee did not have the time to go through Principals documents in depth; however, there was general consensus that the principals remain solid and current. The document will be updated to include a statement of purpose for SUFC.

Document should be reviewed alongside proposed SUFC business plan.

*NOTE: Leadership may want to include statement of support or integration of social justice issues in a revised Principals document.*

## Vibrant Cities/Communities Initiative

There was a strong interest in discussion the Vibrant Cities/Communities Initiative (VC). However, the group was able to restrict the conversation around VC to the minimum needed to advance the conversation about SUFC growth. Subsequent SC calls were set up to address specific VC questions and concerns.

Briefly summarized, the concerns and observations about SUFC's VC Initiative include:

- The VC Initiative has too heavy/over-weighted pull on SUFC leadership (convener, SC +);
- VC is a tool for SUFC to connect and intersect with diverse work;
- The move towards program implementation vs. conventional SUFC role is a concern and moving away from SUFC's mission/focus/strengths;
- The seemingly more political nature of the VC and potential to undermine SUFC progress to some degree;
- The limited administrative capacity of SUFC to sustain the Vibrant Communities Initiative (as outlined in the current proposed strategic plan);
- A wish to continue SUFC's leadership as a convening coalition for organizations, agencies and businesses involved in urban and community forestry vs. program implementation outside membership;
- A broad consensus to reduce in the scope of SUFC activity with the Vibrant Cities/Communities Initiative to the proposed deliverables for the current Forest Service VCUF Grant; and
- A desire to build consensus within the broader urban forestry community about fundraising strategies for both Vibrant Cities/Communities and SUFC – before launching specific fundraising strategies.

## Transition Planning

Jennifer will step out of the part-time convener role after the annual meeting with an early/mid March transition. This is a personal decision reflecting her wish to focus on current family demands.

Steering Committee and Jennifer recognize the role cannot be continued on the current part-time basis model/funding in place (approx. 15-20 hours/week).

A suggested transition plan will be included in the proposed SUFC business plan.

## SUFC 2.0

A consistent theme to emerge from the DC meeting was Steering Committee members' modest shared vision of SUFC growth. The SC is not looking for a vastly expanded or more ambitious vision of SUFC

moving forward. Growth was defined as continuation of the current strengths and services provided by SUFC with specific areas that need attention (policy follow-up, administration etc.). This next iteration of SUFC was referred to as SUFC 2.0.

-- See attachment --

Specific areas of focus for SUFC 2.0 include:

1. Improved Federal Agency Relationships:
  - SUFC has made solid in-roads into a relationship with EPA (Urban Waters, Stormwater+). This needs to be maintained and potentially expanded within EPA (Smart Growth, Air +)
  - Expand the number of federal agency relationships (DOE, HUD, DOT +)
  
2. Ambassadors for SUFC
  - SUFC leadership and convener have acted as informal ambassadors for SUFC and there is an official (but not active) committee – Strategic Outreach – that supports this function.
  - What do we mean by increased “Ambassador” outreach? To what end? And How?
  
3. SUFC needs improved policy education and advocacy follow-up.
  - An annual Hill Day is not sufficient. There needs to be year-round communication and relationship building with Congressional staff and elected leaders.
  - Mobilization and support for grassroots urban forestry champions.
  
4. Improve administrative functioning and work towards greater organizational self-sufficiency –  
with the ultimate goal being self-sufficiency.
  - a. Increase annual member dues (currently at \$400)
  - b. Increase the number of partnerships/private sector support
  - c. Explore more diverse federal funding opportunities

**Overlaying these requests:**

- Capacity realities
- Political realities
- Fiscal [SUFC] realities

**Questions to Steering Committee and larger SUFC membership:**

*(NOTE: These are not exhaustive but capture many sentiments and questions to the group that were expressed at the DC meeting. They should be revisited to fuel next step questions, membership input and be addressed (to some degree) in the business plan.*

- **What is the Coalition membership value to growing new (larger?) members and organizations?**

- **How can other Federal Agencies tap and support SUFC? (Urban Waters+)**
- **What is SUFC 2.0 to you? (full membership)**
- **Does SUFC 2.0 have the potential to reach beyond our “inner circles and sectors?”**
- **How does SUFC “de-silo” our work and interaction of SUFC working group members? (Steering Committee, Policy, Research+)**

## DECISIONS & Next steps:

- Alliance for Community will withdraw the NUCFAC grant submitted on behalf of several SUFC members and SUFC. *This discussion and decision was reached after the DC meeting by conference call. Notes and recorded vote are summarized in the appendix of this document.*
- SUFC Steering Committee will develop a business plan that outlines the next iteration of SUFC (SUFC 2.0).

To submit to SUFC Steering Committee for review and discussion:

- **Business plan:** Jim/Carrie/Jen+
  - Projected SUFC 2.0 outline
  - Outline each of the 5 main “services” SUFC provides (i.e., Communications: webinars, conference calls, enewsletters, brown bag lunches +) to provide a sketch of what each entails (in a sense, mapping SUFC infrastructures and services) AND administration/fundraising/strategic outreach
  - Financial projections (restricted and unrestricted and minimal operating costs)
  - Confirmed financial support and probably prospects
  - Updated Convener job description; expanded job description for potential full-time expansion (Version A and B); and search recommendations
  - Preliminary Convener leadership transition plan
- **SUFC operational proposal to the Forest Service:** Jen/ISA +
- **Establish future call/meeting dates to explore SUFC fundraising efforts:** Jen/Don
  - Vibrant Cities/Communities
  - SUFC sustainability
  - Broader urban and community forestry movement
- **SUFC Annual Meeting (last week of February) Goals:** Full Steering Committee
  - Take-away decisions and/or in-put for future SUFC agenda and growth
  - Vibrant Cities/Communities update – seeding info. to the group for one or more organizations to step up and move the initiative (or elements thereof) forward

**OTHER:**

Steering Committee Communication/Decision Making

Convener recommends SUFC Steering Committee convene for in-person meetings a minimum of twice a year. This would allow SUFC member to address strategic issues of interest to the Coalition in more depth; discuss funding opportunities and ideas; and explore future collaborative projects and concepts.

Urban Forestry Research

SUFC has a growing and sustained interest in urban ecosystem and urban forestry research. SUFC members have spent significant time on this issue in 2012 and are developing an internal platform and building stronger relationships with FS R & D leadership. The timing on this is “ripe for SUFC to have real influence – on where money is being spent.”

NUCFAC

NUCFAC is a resource that SUFC has not tapped. A question about the role of SUFC and NUCFAC and potential overlap exists to some degree. NUCFAC is preparing a 10-year plan: How does SUFC fit into that plan? How can SUFC potentially weigh in?

Continued SUFC Fiscal Management

ISA is willing to remain as the SUFC fiscal sponsor/grant manager for the Coalition. As the VC grant will wrap up in May 2013, ISA can refocus and reduce oversight to SUFC operational funds. A return to status quo.

PRINCIPALS and IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING: This spreadsheet could be used by Steering Committee to sketch out and examine elements of a business/strategic plan for SUFC.

	<b>POLICY</b>	<b>COMMUNICATIONS</b>	<b>RESEARCH</b>	<b>NETWORKING</b>	<b>PRODUCTS</b>
Objective					
Strategies					