

ANNOUNCER: You've tuned in to another
edition of The Break Room, a

weekly conversation about how
the City of St Augustine

works from those who do the
work everyday. Hosted by the

City of St Augustine's
Communications Director, Melissa

Wissel. The Break Room offers a
closer look at the different

City departments and provides
updates on current and upcoming

projects and events. And now
your host, Melissa Wissel.

MELISSA: Welcome to The
Break Room. Thanks for tuning

in. I'm Melissa Wissel,
Communications Director for the

City of St. Augustine. This
week, I'm sharing The Break

Room with Glabra Skipp. She's our
Environmental Program

Supervisor. Glabra, we're glad
to have you back again. GLABRA: Thanks

for having me again. MELISSA: We're
going to talk this week on the
City's Tree Canopy
Enhancement Programs.

Applications opened on June 1st
and tell us about the program,

about the application process.
Having a problem today. GLABRA: Yes,

we're really excited. This is
our third year of the program.

So, we've been doing this since
2021. We started this program

because of the tree canopy that
we had lost from Hurricanes

Matthew and Irma. We really
wanted a way to put trees back

into the community. These
are large trees. These are not

the saplings that you get from
Arbor Day. These are 30-gallon

trees with one to two inch tree
chunk calipers. So

they're, they're significant
trees. MELISSA: Really trees. GLABRA: They're

trees. You're not going to mow
over it by accident.

So, to date, we've planted 116
trees, and this year we're

going to grow that number some
more. MELISSA: And do you have a limit

on how many you can offer up, or
you can accept applications? GLABRA: We

do. So, the first year, we did
not, and we had a lot of

applications. We did that on

purpose. We wanted to grow the

canopy as much as we could that
first year. But in the last two

years, we've had to limit it to
40 applications, a more

manageable number for now. So
that's where we're at right

now. MELISSA: You you accept more than
40, and then you weed through 'em,

no pun intended. I mean. GLABRA: Well,
we we limit it to 40

applications. And most of
them, so as we talk through the

application process, there is a
map. You have to be within City

limits, so that is the first
thing you need to do is check

to make sure you're in City
limits. And most of them will go

through if they're in City
limits, as long as there's

nothing huge, as far as
limitations. MELISSA: And that would be?
Let go ahead and talk

about. You mentioned the first
thing is where do you live? Are

you within the city limits? GLABRA:
Exactly. So are you within City

limits? It has to be a
residential property. Single

family homeowner, like no
condos, no apartment complexes.

You also have to be the
property owner to apply, you

can't be a renter. So, even if
the house is a rental, that's

okay. It's just the property
owner has to apply. Have to

have their permission to plant

the tree. I mentioned that

you have to be in City limits.

And we also are looking, the

tree can be planted anywhere on

the City right of way adjacent

to your property or on your

private property. So, a

lot of tree programs in other

Cities will limit it to it

needs to be in the front yard

or it needs to be in the right

of way, but we don't limit it.

It can be anywhere on your

property, as long as the space

is right. MELISSA: And if I'm, get the

tree planted as a property

owner or if it's a tenant

living there, I'm responsible

for maintenance, keeping it

alive. Right? GLABRA: Correct. Yes.

MELISSA: That would scare me out. I

think I wouldn't apply for that
reason. GLABRA: Once the tree's

planted, it's your
responsibility to keep it

watered and alive. MELISSA: And we get
in, do you get instruction? You

tell me how to do that? GLABRA: We do
have some instructions. Yes, we

will email them to you and we
also have them on our website.

MELISSA: And does this program fill up
quickly? I know the first year,

you, we kind of joke that it was
like a rock concert. GLABRA: It

does and it can depend. This
year, we've already seen it

starting to fill up rather
quickly. Last year, it took

maybe like a month and a half
or so to fill up. So, it really

depends on getting the word out
there and who's interested.

MELISSA: So, don't be discouraged. The
program opened on June 1st.

We're a little bit past that
now, but don't be afraid to

apply. If you don't get in, you
can apply next year. GLABRA: Exactly.

MELISSA: And there's no, you don't get to
hold on to the applications.

It's a brand-new process next
year. GLABRA: Correct. So, I want to

talk a little bit about the
application process. So, it's

an online application. It's
very simple. You, we have eight

tree species that you can choose

from. And on the website, there

are little details about every
one of these trees, so how high

they get. We try to pick two
large, two medium, two small for

the options. So you get to pick
your first preference and your

second preference. And then
you'll tell us where you want

to have it, is at the front yard,
side yard, right of way. And then

we also ask if you have an
irrigation system present, which

believe it or not, isn't for the
reason you might think. It's

actually to know if there's
pipes in the ground. So you're

going to sprinkler pipes that
we kind of have to worry about

when the tree is getting
planted. MELISSA: So, it doesn't have to

do with - you don't have an
irrigation system, so we're not

going to give you a tree. It's
you have an irrigation system,

so we need to be careful not to
burst your pipe when we... GLABRA: Right.

Because these trees are
going to need more water than

your irrigation system is
going to put out, especially to

start with. So, we're not
really looking at whether or

not you have one as a criteria
for whether you can get a tree.

We also ask for access
information, like is your

property gated? Are you in a
subdivision? Do you have a dog

that's going to come out and, you
know, be present during the

inspection? So, you put all
that information in. We do an

administrative review. We look
to make sure you're in City

limits. We make sure that you
meet all of those criteria. MELISSA: And

then, do we, you come out and
plant them? Not you, but.

Do you plant them? GLABRA: No, I don't
physically plant them, but the

next step is actually we have
city staff that comes out and

do an assessment of your
property to make sure that

we're in, the right tree is
being planted in the right

place. So, if you picked one

species of a tree but it's

really not going to grow there
because there's too much shade

or maybe there's a power line
and that tree is going to get

too tall, they might recommend
a different tree species from the

list. MELISSA: And we have staff that
come out and do that. GLABRA: Correct.

So generally that happens
around August. We're not

going to actually be planting
the trees until probably the

beginning of next year. MELISSA: Okay,
yeah. The planting, if I recall,

is like February-ish. GLABRA: Right it's
early, early. It was probably

winter still, but. MELISSA: It takes
time. So you're going to, even

if you apply now and you get
accepted. It's still going to

take time. So you're, it's
kind of like that FEMA

mitigation program. It doesn't
happen quickly. GLABRA: Right. So after

the site assessment and they
come out then our staff makes

maps up. Shows where the tree's
going to be planted on your

property and list the tree
species out. And then, you'll

actually have to sign a legal
agreement saying that the City

or the representative has
permission to be on your

private property to plant the
tree. And releases us

from any, you know, liability
from being on the property. So

that's the, it's pretty
easy process. And once that's

done and we have your legal
agreement in place, then we're

kind of waiting to get the
trees. We have to we purchase

them in bulk and we have an
installer that will come and

install them. And like you
said, that's usually around

February. So it is a process.

MELISSA: Do I, if I get a tree one year, am

I allowed to apply again? Do
you not, is there any rule

about applying year after year?

GLABRA: We currently don't have any

rules. We may have to
down the road. But for now, we

don't have any rules about if

you have enough space, you can

apply again. MELISSA: Okay and I can get
a tree for free. GLABRA: Yes and

install it for free and
planted. MELISSA: I just have to keep it

watered. GLABRA: Yes, you have to keep
it watered. Is, I mean,

kidding aside, what happens if I
don't keep it alive or it dies.

I mean it, has that... GLABRA: It has. The
City is... we're not going to come

remove the tree for you.
So if the tree dies, you're

going to have to remove it
yourself. You're going to have

to refill your hole.
On a case by case basis, we will

evaluate if, you know, we will
plant... We will not plant another

one and just come out. You do
have to apply again, you'd have

to be part of the process
again. If you've killed 2

trees. MELISSA: Yeah. Probably not
going to. GLABRA: Probably not the right

fit. Maybe there's just not
enough water. MELISSA: It might be

considered at risk. G;ABRA: Yes. MELISSA: If
you're just now tuning in, you

are listening to The Break
Room. I'm Melissa Wissel,

Communications Director. And I
have Glabra Skipp in studio this

week. She's our Environmental
Program Supervisor. Just

wrapping up talking about the
tree canopy enhancement

program. Check it out on the
website, CityStAug.com/TreeCanopy. But

you've got more things going on

than just tree canopies.

What else is going on in your

division? GLABRA: Well, we just wrapped
up last April our

sustainability workshop. So
that was a great success that I

kind of wanted to mention to
maybe drum up some excitement

for next year. We had three
different programs. We had them

at the Galimore Center, and this
was Earth Week. And we

talked about this tree program.
We explained to residents this

process that we're talking
about now. We talked about our

Mayor's Monarch Pledge. We
talked about the composting bin

pilot program that we had done
last year. And we gave some

tips and tricks for what you
can do to keep our waterways

clean. And then Olivia Smith,
and you've had her several

times. She talked about
recycling efforts in the City.

And then we had St Johns
River Water Management District

talked about water conservation
and what you can do. And we had

the St Johns County Master
Gardeners come present about

composting basics. MELISSA: So, are we
still doing and help me. Are

we still doing the composting
bins? What's the status of

that? GLABRA: So, we're waiting for now,
where as budget permits, we

will have another program cycle
for that and staff time, as well,

to get those established. It's a big endeavor.

I know it seems
simple that you're, you know. But

you had to assemble the bins,
purchase the bins. There's a

lot that goes into it, and we
need to make sure that we have

the budget to do it as well.

MELISSA: Tell me if you can recall,

numbers of the bins that we
gave out. Was it fifty? GLABRA: Yes. It

was fifty bins. MELISSA: And people were very
interested. GLABRA: Those went faster

than the trees went.

Those, that was extremely

successful program. MELISSA: Well and
you know. I want to give you

guys a huge shout out, because
we're, it's a double-edged

sword. You guys really try hard
to get the community involved,

and as the City, that we're
proactive in these programs. And

like you just said, what people
don't realize is there's

financing, there's budgetary
implications for us to do this.

People are so excited. I
want to recycle bin. I want to

get my composting. I want the
tree. They need to do more. We

need to have more. And the
enthusiasm is great, but it's a

lot more work I think than
people realize. GLABRA: Yeah and we

want to do more as well. We

just need to find the balance

between getting these
initiatives, because we find

great pleasure in them well. We
want to see the trees planted.

We want to see the compost bins
out there. So it's finding

that balance. MELISSA: And do we have,
we've been doing some

things within the City.
Paper conservation, recycling

within the City. So, even as an
organization, we try to do our

best practice. We've got
the electric cars and some

of our vehicles. So even as an
organization, we're involved.

GLABRA: Right and we're trying to be
more and more sustainable every

day. We have an internal sustainability program, and it's

getting more and more of those initiatives implemented as we

can. MELISSA: And you're also, does your team do the inspections for the

grease traps? GLABRA: Yes. Yes. Grease trap inspection MELISSA: How's that going? GLABRA: It's never

ending. There have been so many more restaurants added to the

City. So, it's a fun challenge to inspect all of

those, and it's a big endeavor. MELISSA: So, before we wrap

up, you mentioned, excuse me, you mentioned the Mayor's

Monarch Pledge. I know we had talked about it a while ago. We

kicked it off. I know we're still doing it. But remind me

and and our listeners, what is
that? GLABRA: Right. So, it's an annual

pledge that you take, and we
have been signing up for the

last few years, and there is
information on the website

about that, as well. And you pick
different initiatives and one

of the initiatives we pick is
to plant native milkweed around

the City. And we are getting
ready to do that again. Mark

Hartley, our Streets and
Grounds Manager oversees the

planting of the milkweed. So,
he's going to be working on

that. And we also, like at our
sustainability workshops, we

had a table set up with

information about the monarchs

and we had flyers, handouts for
butterflies, and native

plants. So, we're finding ways
to plug that in and to keep

that initiative going. MELISSA: And as a
resident, what would I do? I

would go find... GLABRA: Native milkweed.

MELISSA: Milkweed. But not just

milkweed. Native was like the
critical thing, right? There's like a fine line. GLABRA: Yes, there's a lot of
research about wanting to plant

native milkweed instead of the
tropical milkweed, which has

some challenges associated with
it. So, when you look at the

nurseries, ask for native
milkweed. It can be tricky to

find, but it is available, so...

MELISSA: And they know what that is if

you say. I want native. Not just regular

milkweed. GLABRA: Correct and there's a lot of research online. The

Florida Wildflower Foundation has a lot of information on

what species are native, but the nurseries will know what's

native and what's not. MELISSA: So, if you see a or butterflies around

town. It's because we're planting native milkweed. GLABRA: Right,

and you also need some other pollinator plants to go around

with it. So, don't forget your other pollinator plants.

Anything with flowers and blooms to go along with your

milkweed to encourage butterflies. MELISSA: Alright. Well, I

think that about sums up
what you've got going on. I

know you're always busy. And if
you haven't applied for the

tree canopy program, take a
look, see online at CityStAug.com/TreeCanopy.
If you don't get in this year,

keep an eye out for next year.
And thanks for coming down,

talking to us on The Break
Room. GLABRA: Thanks for having me. MELISSA: You

can now find us on your
favorite podcasting app. Look

for us on Spotify, Apple
Podcast, Spreaker, and more. We

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time. Thanks for tuning in.

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listening to The Break Room, a

weekly program addressing
projects and programs offered

by the City of St Augustine.
Join us each week as the City's Communications

Director Melissa Wissel has
in-depth conversations with the

people who make our town work
to meet the needs of our

community. The Break Room is
produced by Communication

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at this time next week for

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