

Update Your Community Forestry Work Plan!

Urban forestry, by the very nature of tree longevity, is a program of the future. The goal of any successful tree committee is to develop a program that allows for establishing and maintaining a sustainable community forest. The community forest should be comprised of a variety of species and age classes which insulate the population from devastating insect and disease outbreaks. All trees on public rights-of-way and in parks need to be maintained according to currently accepted professional standards on an established schedule. The urban forest should be an economic asset and source of community pride. Therefore, decisions and recommendations of a tree committee need to be made with the following goals in mind:

- Provide the City with a hazard free, healthy and aesthetically pleasing urban forest.
- Provide the City with the most cost effective urban forestry program available within budget guidelines.
- Maximize the contribution that trees will make to the economic development potential of the community who owns them.

Toward these goals, your tree committee should identify the following annual and long term actions:

Define **Management Areas**. Management Areas can include any of the following:

- Municipal right of ways along water ways and parks.
- Areas long streams and water ways.
- Areas that interface in infrastructure.
- City parks, golf courses, and cemeteries.
- Downtown and business district planting spaces.
- Street trees and planting spaces located in green strips between curb and sidewalk.
- City tree nurseries.
- Utility easements.

Complete and assess **Tree Inventories**. Critical to caring for and enhancement of the forest is the completion and continuation of an assessment of the species, number, health condition, location, and maintenance needs of all publicly owned trees located in management areas listed above. A current inventory will allow urban forest managers to assess species distribution, identify hazardous trees, and formulate work plans to assure the continued health of the urban forest resource.

Produce an accurate **Data Summary**. Information from the inventory is useful to assess the survival and health of tree species, identify disease and insect problems, demonstrate to community officials and citizens the value of the forest, and obtain and distribute realistic data about the goals, and future management and funding needs of the Urban Forestry Department.

Define **Benchmarks** that allow you to measure the success of your Community Forestry Program. Examples could be items such as all new commercial and residential developments comply with required specifications such as tree spacing, varieties and minimum shade coverage, reduction of hazardous trees in public spaces, the establishment of a regular cyclic pruning program, establishment of a city tree nursery, or a volunteer program to assist city managers with appropriate tree care.

Develop an **Action Strategy**. Action Strategies will help you get where you want to go. They can include city employee education, funding procurement, either through grants, donations, municipal funds. Community leaders should recognize the importance of the contribution that a healthy urban forest offers to the community, both financially and aesthetically. Identify all planting sites on public property and develop strategy to fill them. Implement a revolving maintenance plan that will assure maintenance pruning and other activities on a five year basis.

And most importantly, encourage **Citizen Involvement!** Public officials are influenced by public opinion. If they see members of the community assisting with a planting project or volunteering to assist in public spaces, they will generally be more willing to support the Community Forestry Program with the dollars necessary to maintain a health forest. They will recognize the importance of the benefits that trees offer to a community, beyond shade and beauty.

If you are ready to update your Community Forestry Work Plan, give Deb, Garth or Gerry a call. They have the information to help you get your program on track and make it an asset to your community.