



How to Plan for Management

TREE CITY USA®
BULLETIN

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Guide to subjects in Bulletins 1-29



“If you fail to plan, plan to fail.” So goes the old saying, and it is as true in community forestry as it is in managing your personal checkbook. By following the few basic steps presented in this issue, leaders in communities of all sizes can develop a more effective, systematic tree program.

If there is a single action that could advance the care of trees in most communities, it is the development of a well-crafted plan. Planning is the very foundation of an effective, systematic tree program. It can be the vital nucleus around which a new program is formed or the means of re-energizing an existing program into a more productive part of municipal government.

Unfortunately, planning is often at the bottom of almost anyone’s list of exciting things to do in urban and community forestry. Planning has little of the fun associated with planting trees, nor does it provide the same sense of accomplishment as stepping back and viewing a properly pruned tree.

The lack of planning for community tree care in the United States is hampering progress toward widespread, systematic management of the increasingly important tree resource. Approximately 88 percent of the nation’s 30,000 incorporated municipalities have yet to receive Tree City USA recognition, let alone develop active management plans. Small communities are especially reluctant to take these important steps, whereas communities of *all* sizes benefit both from being eligible for a Tree City USA award and having a management plan.

Even in a community that has a forestry program, if regular planning is not part of it, the result is like a rudderless ship being pushed in whatever direction the wind is blowing. At best, little progress takes place unless by pure chance, and at worst, a disaster is the end result. In the case of community forestry, such a disaster often comes in the form of a limb falling from a hazardous street tree that should have been inspected and then pruned or replaced.

What is proposed in this bulletin is not an exercise in bureaucracy. Neither is planning equivalent to a weighty tome or cumbersome binder of maps and charts. What is important is the process leading up to a clearly written plan, whether the resulting document is two pages or 200 in length.

In the following pages are the essential steps in planning that can be used in even the smallest community to make this possible. They offer a blueprint for tree boards, volunteer groups, neighborhood associations, and anyone else who wants to ensure well-guided action on behalf of community trees.

Planning is systematic decision making. It provides the foundation for effective, continuous community forestry programs.

Five Steps in Planning

When you cut through the legalese and jargon, planning is simply systematic decision making. It removes guesswork, provides a means for balancing divergent opinions, and offers a way for measuring progress toward a goal. Planning is also a continuous process that should be as much a part of the annual calendar as Arbor Day. While there is no universally accepted way to plan, here is a simple framework that can help.

STEP 1: VISION

Where We Want to Go

Developing a vision statement for the community forest is an excellent group exercise. It is a search for the ideal — a goal for the state of community trees 10–25 years in the future. Once developed, it also stands as a written commitment toward which the forestry program will be directed.

To write a vision statement, use a round-robin or ideation technique with your group and list suggestions on flip chart pages. Have one or two members of your group then refine the ideas and put them into statement form. Bring this back to the whole group for revisions and acceptance. Thereafter, keep the vision statement visible during planning sessions and include it in planning documents, reports, and requests for financial assistance.

Example:

By the year 2020, Pleasantville's community forest will be multi-aged, fully stocked, healthy, and safe. It will contain a wide variety of appropriate species and be maintained on a low cost but regularly scheduled basis. It will contribute to the general welfare of our residents by reducing energy costs, increasing property values, providing homes for wildlife, beautifying all neighborhoods, and projecting an image of quality to visitors and prospective businesses. Care of public trees will also be used as a means to educate and inspire residents to care for trees on private property. Pleasantville will be an annual recipient of the Tree City USA Growth Award.

PLANNING:

- Ensures that all needs of the community forest are recognized.
- Reduces the risk to property and human safety.
- Makes sure that all work is prioritized.
- Provides a defensible basis for budget and grant requests.
- Leads to a continuous program from year to year, regardless of personnel changes.

STEP 2: ASSESSMENT

What We Have

An inventory of publicly owned trees provides factual information used to describe the current condition of the community forest. It is the database that can be used to decide what actions are necessary to close the gap between what is wanted and what exists. At minimum, the inventory should include:

SPECIES COMPOSITION

Why? The percentage that each species represents reveals diversity, or lack of it. As protection against epidemics or widespread loss from ice storms, no species should represent more than 5–10 percent of the total.

Use: Helps in planning which species to plant in the future. If diversity is a goal, composition data provides the guide for tracking progress toward achieving it.

SIZE OF TREES

Why? Diameter is a quick and easy measurement to make. While size doesn't correlate exactly with age, it is one clue to the age diversity that is a good goal in a managed urban forest. Sizes are usually then summarized as size classes, such as "under 4," "4–6," etc.

Use: The ideal forest will have a full range of ages/size classes. Through planting and judicious removals (based on condition), the goal should be to eventually have all ages/sizes represented throughout the urban forest, but with more young trees than older trees.

CONDITION OF TREES

Why? Classifying community trees into categories that describe their condition (Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Dead/Dying) presents a picture of the forest's health and structural stability and its relative safety for humans and property.

Use: This information guides the scheduling of pruning work and removals and the estimation of costs necessary to the forest's health and how safe it is for humans and property. This can be a first step toward risk management and risk mitigation.

PLANTING SPACES

Why? A fully stocked forest provides maximum energy savings and other practical and aesthetic benefits.

Use: When added to the spaces created by removing trees in poor condition, existing vacancies show how much planting is needed and enable a close cost estimate. This information, combined with how much money and

labor is available, helps set an annual planting schedule that will bring the forest to a fully stocked level. Using maps and house addresses during an inventory helps in organizing the work even more.

☑ MONETARY VALUE

Why? Trees are a resource and a service. The value of ecoservices can be derived through use of the i-Tree suite of programs. Appraisal formulas are available from the International Society of Arboriculture.

Use: Provides: (1) support for budget requests, (2) an estimation of the true costs of projects that would destroy trees, (3) help in gaining public attention for the tree program, and (4) a basis for seeking federal assistance following a natural disaster.

Assessment should also take into account the potential impact of population changes and areas of future development, major problems such as sidewalk lifting or conflicts with utilities, and similar information that clearly paints a picture of the community forest today.

STEP 3: LONG-RANGE PLAN

How to Close the Gap

To write the long range plan, ask the question: What must we do to change our forest as it exists today into the one described in our vision statement? Your answers provide strategic direction for an action program designed to meet the unique circumstances in your community. They also provide the first opportunity to prioritize all the work that is needed so that the most important things get done. The resulting list provides an excellent tool for estimating the total cost of creating the ideal forest. (Of course, it is important to remember the cost of *no* action — especially in terms of liability.)

Some examples of items in the long-range plan may look like this:

1. Implement a tree risk assessment and action program.
2. Implement an annual pruning program.
3. Create an annual planting schedule to replace all removals and fill other vacant sites.
4. Develop a public education program stressing the energy-saving benefits of the right tree planted in the right place.
5. In cooperation with the state wildlife department and local nurseries, conduct a campaign to create wildlife habitat in backyards and parks.
6. Develop a system for the continual updating of the community's street and park tree inventory.

STEP 4: ANNUAL WORK PLAN

Getting the Job Done

Sometime before the start of each new year, the tree board needs to develop a specific calendar of tasks to be done. This is the to-do list, complete with who is responsible and when the jobs will be done. Except for routinely scheduled events, such as board meetings, the annual work plan should be a reflection of the long-range plan. What is included will eventually lead to accomplishing the long-range plan and creating the forest described in the vision statement. But, of course, the list will be tempered by reality. It can include only what funds and labor can accomplish, although it can also be the basis for requesting the funds necessary to do the job.

Municipalities have various ways for recording the annual work plan, but it could be a simple list such as this:

Activity	Completion Date	Responsible	Cost
Select species & submit bids to plant 1/10 of vacant sites with 1.5" caliper trees	1/15	Lujan Chapman	\$3,115
Contact Rotary about volunteers for planting	1/31	Lujan	NA
Inspect street trees in SW quarter & Frontier Park for hazards	2/14	Jones Adams Picado	NA

Another helpful way to structure the annual plan is to list activities following the four categories used in the Tree City USA Growth Award application:

Category A: Education and Public Relations

Examples: Youth education projects, publication of a new brochure, special events, such as Arbor Day.

Category B: Partnerships

Examples: Applications for external funding, agreements with utilities, purchases in cooperation with another city.

Category C: Planning and Management

Examples: Updating the management plan and/or inventory, developing a wildlife area, initiating arborist licensing.

Category D: Tree Planting and Maintenance

Examples: Planting, pruning (both routine and to reduce hazards and obstructions), removals, recycling leaves.

STEP 5: EVALUATION

Making Sure It Got Done - Or Will Get Done

At the end of the year, a meeting should be devoted to an accomplishment review. A good annual work plan makes evaluation easy. It is largely a matter of reviewing the year's list of activities and accounting for what got done and what did not. The review should include statistics such as:

- ✓ Number of trees planted, by species
- ✓ Percent survival of all planted trees
- ✓ Number of trees pruned or removed, by size
- ✓ Expenditures and volunteer hours contributed
- ✓ Citizen requests received and serviced
- ✓ Educational events held

The evaluation will not only help justify expenditures and next year's requests, it is a way to update the inventory and track progress toward the vision statement. It also can serve as the basis for a Tree City USA Growth Award (Bulletin No. 18). Moreover, it makes sure that if any important component of the plan did not get done, that it will again be listed in the next planning cycle. ■

Special Plans

THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN

Community forestry programs often lack public recognition and appreciation. A public relations plan can help overcome this problem and gain the public support that is prerequisite to success. Several kinds of plans are helpful:

1. Annual Plan

Similar to the annual work plan, all activities are listed that publicize various aspects of the program, provide education about tree care, and schedule special events.

2. Training

Good public relations does not happen by accident. Anyone who meets the public or works with street or park trees needs annual training similar to the industry's customer service training. Films and speakers should be included in the training plan.

3. Special Events

Arbor Day, Arbor Week, and similar events must be thought out in detail. Guides to successful planning are available from some state foresters' offices and online at arborday.org.

PLANS FOR PARKS, NATURAL AREAS, DEVELOPMENTS

Master plans and annual work plans are also needed for areas that require special attention. This may be a park of any size, the natural woods in a community, or areas slated for development. These plans often require the services of professionals, but they may be as short and concise as this one in a small midwest city:

TIPS FOR ENSURING PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE

- Involve representatives from interested groups in the planning process whenever possible.
- Always keep municipal administrators and elected officials fully informed — in advance of public notification.
- Through media announcements, invite the public to meetings when plans are being developed or reviewed.

Cardinal Park

Cardinal Park is in conjunction with the school system and has been developed predominately for softball recreation. This is a fairly young park. Very few trees are more than 9 inches in diameter (six trees, 3.9 percent). There is very little diversity with basically only three species making a significant contribution (98.7 percent). For a young tree resource, there is a terribly high number of trees in the fair to poor categories (108 trees, 67.6 percent). Most of this is due to poor branch angles and pruning in addition to multiple lawnmower/weed whip wounds at the tree bases. This needs to be addressed immediately and stopped. As trees die or are replaced, different tree species other than silver maple or green ash should be planted. Wood mulch around new trees will reduce the risk of mower damage.

From: *Community Tree Resource Assessment for the Town of South Sioux City*. Nebraska Forest Service.

EMERGENCY PLANS

A plan should be on file to help manage emergencies such as ice or wind storms. The essential elements include:

- ✓ Phone numbers of all who should be contacted (utilities, tree care companies under contract, local media, etc.).
- ✓ Agreements with surrounding communities for mutual aid and with contractors for cleanup services.
- ✓ Homeowner tips and warnings for immediate distribution to the public, people staffing the phones, and reporters from the mass media.
- ✓ Pertinent policies about what to say and not say regarding deaths or injuries and other instructions that are easier to formulate in advance than during the pressures of an emergency. (Bulletin No. 2)

- Publish a summary of your annual work plan in the local newspaper, along with a short article about why the work is important.
- At least two weeks in advance, contact affected property owners either by mail or door hanger. Use this means to suggest making alternative parking arrangements, being prepared for noise and possible dust, and to generally prevent surprises and confrontations.
- Always clean up completely, leaving only better trees when you leave.
- Thank people for their patience, volunteer work, and contributions. Public recognition is even better.

Planning and Plans Vary Widely



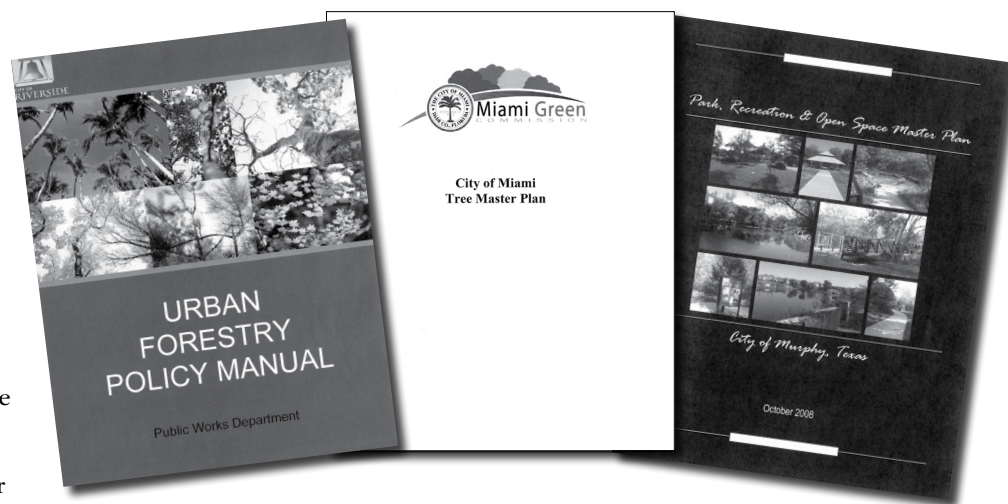
Growth Award

Both the process of planning and the resulting document (the *plan*) will vary depending on the size and resources of the community. Many small communities have no forestry plan and will benefit from following the procedure outlined in this bulletin. Others have specific state or local procedures to follow. Still others need the services of professionals to conduct studies and customize a plan to local circumstances.

The purpose of plans varies, also. A community with no forestry program should begin with a comprehensive plan to consider *all* needs of the forest. Cities with well-established programs may need to emphasize specific areas of the program, such as trees for a new park, the need for shortened pruning cycles, neglected natural areas, or some outlying area that is to be developed.

Planning and reporting is required by state foresters for financial assistance and also to qualify for a Tree City USA Growth Award. The urban and community forestry coordinator in your state can provide details.

Creating or significantly improving a management plan will help qualify your community for the Tree City USA Growth Award. For all award criteria, please visit arborday.org.



Thanks to the City of Miami; the City of Riverside, California, Public Works Dept.; the City of Murphy, Texas; and Dunkin Sims Stoeffels, Inc. for the use of their policy manuals.

Subject Index for Tree City USA Bulletins 1–29

Note: The numbers shown are Friends of Tree City USA Bulletin issue numbers. Only subjects are indexed, with bold print indicating primary emphasis of the topic in that issue. Books, individuals, tree names, places, and organizations are not included in the index. See page 8 for bulletin titles and how to order.

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iTree Tools Can Help

Since its initial release in 2006 by the U.S. Forest Service, a suite of software is free for public use and can be applied to neighborhoods or an entire city, or in some cases an individual tree. The results can serve as an inventory and with the added advantage of showing the benefits provided by the trees, quantified in dollars. i-Tree can link inventories with management needs and the environmental quality that comes from an adequate, well-maintained urban forest.

The tools and their usefulness are being expanded regularly, but three of the programs that can help in planning are:

- **i-Tree Eco.** Either complete inventory or randomly selected plots on both public and private property along with local air pollution and meteorological information provide the database. The resulting reports present a complete picture of forest structure (species, sizes, etc.), environmental effects, and value to the community.
- **i-Tree Streets.** As the name implies, this program focuses only on street trees. A complete inventory or a sampling method is done (or existing data can be used) and the results summarize the structure and value of trees in the right-of-way. Importantly, it also reveals management needs to help with planning.
- **i-Tree Species.** This one is designed to help select the most appropriate tree species to plant. It is based on a tree's function in the environment and the geographic area in which the community is located.

For additional sources of information, please go to arborday.org/bulletins.



The end result of a good plan is that the right trees get planted in the right places, then receive care on a continuous, systematic basis.

Tree City USA Bulletin ORDER FORM

Name _____
 Organization _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____

For a complete list of Tree City USA Bulletins, please visit arborday.org.

	1 Issue \$3.00 ea.
1. How to Prune Young Shade Trees	1. \$
2. When a Storm Strikes	2.
3. Resolving Tree/Sidewalk Conflicts	3.
4. The Right Tree for the Right Place	4.
5. Living With Urban Soils	5.
6. How to Hire an Arborist	6.
7. How to Save Trees During Construction	7.
8. Don't Top Trees!	8.
9. Writing a Municipal Tree Ordinance	9.
10. Plant Trees for America!	10.
11. How to Prevent Tree/Sign Conflicts	11.
12. What City Foresters Do	12.
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19. How to Select and Plant a Tree	19.
20. A Systematic Approach to Building with Trees	20.
21. How Trees Can Save Energy	21.
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