

Urban and Community Forestry Management

In a Nutshell

Urban and Community Forestry is the planning and management of a community's forest resources to enhance the citizens' quality of life. The process integrates the economic, environmental, political, and social values of the community to develop a comprehensive management plan for the urban or community forest. Urban and community forests could be developed in almost any community.

The “How To”

Community forest management is complex and unique to the individual community. Many communities contain a mix of rural forest lands and urban-type environments that require knowledge of traditional forest management as well as arboriculture. Any community forest on public land should be managed by a professional forester and/or an arborist certified by the International Society of Arboriculture. The [Missouri Department of Conservation](#) has urban and community forestry staff that can assist every community in Missouri with the development of a management plan. Illinois communities can contact the [Illinois Department of Natural Resources](#).

Planning & Zoning

Community forests in municipalities or managed by other government agencies should have an ordinance(s) that establish the responsibilities of management of the community forest, including trees in the public rights-of-way and parks. Even small communities with limited staff should establish someone who can oversee contractors or take care of issues as resources allow. Ordinances can be extremely simple, or complex: dealing with issues of hazard trees on private property, large scale insect and disease infestations such as Emerald Ash Borer or Gypsy Moth, protection and preservation of trees during development, and prohibiting improper and damaging tree trimming (topping). See the case studies tab for examples of communities with more detailed ordinances.

Dollars & Cents

Benefits of trees are numerous but frequently described in terms of aesthetics. While there is obvious value in beauty these values are subjective and difficult to quantify. Trees in well-managed community forests provide tangible benefits to residents and tourists by reducing stormwater, cleaning water and air, increasing property values and tourism, reducing crime, and more. The U.S. Forest Service and industry leaders are continuing to provide research to quantify these benefits. Publicly owned trees in parks, along public streets, and on other public properties are part of a community's infrastructure and are the only part of that infrastructure that gains value as it ages.

The [iTree Suite of Software](#) is a tool that can quantify the value of trees. Various i-Tree programs can reveal air quality improvements, carbon dioxide reduction, stormwater control, property value increases, energy conservation, and more. For example, i-Tree Hydro can analyze urban hydrology and model vegetation effects. i-Tree Eco can determine the value of vegetation's effects on air pollution for a community. i-Tree Streets can

place a dollar amount on an inventory of street trees.

Measuring Success

Measuring the success of a community forestry program is somewhat nebulous and often completely subjective, depending on the point of view. The most basic way to measure success for a municipality is qualifying for Tree City USA status through the [National Arbor Day Foundation](#). The National Arbor Day Foundation provides the [minimum standards for Tree City USA](#). Communities interested in attaining Tree City USA status should contact their local Urban and Community Forester with the Missouri Department of Conservation or the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Discover More

A wealth of information is available for proper management of community forests, but one should be cautious as to the source and credibility of the information. Universities, professional organizations such as the International Society of Arboriculture, and government agencies like the Missouri Department of Conservation, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and United States Forest Service all have great resources for information.

- [Missouri Department of Conservation](#) (Community Forestry)
- [Illinois Department of Natural Resources](#) (Community Forestry)

This [Green Infrastructure Roadmap](#), prepared by Heartlands Conservancy, is meant to act as starting point on the road to realizing a green infrastructure vision for Southwestern Illinois and the region. (Green infrastructure refers to infrastructure that mimics natural processes, including woodlands, wetlands, parks, prairies, and open space.)

Case Studies

City of Lake Saint Louis Community Forest Ordinance

Contact

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Description

Model tree ordinance that includes language to prevent companies from topping trees on private property. This reduces storm damage and minimizes the development of hazard trees within the municipality.

Also, Lake Saint Louis protects their large trees on private property by restricting their removal without permit. Permits to remove trees over certain sizes (depending on type) must be obtained from the city. Arborists that operate within the city must obtain a permit and must have an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)

Certified Arborist on staff. Visit the [International Society of Arboriculture](#) for more details on professional certification.

Cost

Arborist permit fees: \$25

Lessons Learned

Concerns over private property rights were an issue at the time the ordinance was under development. Foresters and arborists from St. Peters and other agencies were able to convince policy-makers that restricting private companies to accepted standards of care (see [ANSI A300 standards](#)) is similar to basic building codes and a matter of public safety.

Professional arborists with ISA Certified Arborists on staff are promoted by the city and appreciate the support of professional tree care. Arborists are encouraged to attain their professional certification and are required to attend continuing education to retain their certification. Quality tree care on public and private property reduces costly storm damage cleanup and enhances public safety.

City of St. Peters Community Forest Ordinance

Contact

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City of St. Peters Parks Right of Way Foreman
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Description

Model tree ordinance that includes language to prevent companies from topping trees on private property. This reduces storm damage and minimizes the development of hazard trees within the municipality.

Lessons Learned

Concerns over private property rights were an issue at the time the ordinance was under development. Foresters and arborists from St. Peters and other agencies were able to convince policy-makers that restricting private companies to accepted standards of care (see [ANSI A300 standards](#)) is similar to basic building codes and a matter of public safety.