

Citizen involvement in maintaining and planting trees in communities is vital to the health of our urban forests.

Volunteers in many Iowa and Illinois communities have started or supplemented community forestry programs and have been very successful. Developing a strong committee is often a multi-year process with small steps taken every year. This guide offers suggestions for developing your community forestry or beautification program.

Getting Started – Phase I

Establish a Steering Committee

As you begin your efforts to create a community volunteer program, you will first want to build a strong foundation with a steering committee that is designed to function for many years. Seek broad citizen representation from throughout the community. See our *Organizing a Successful Tree Committee* resource guide for more information.

Create a Formal Tree Board

You can either ask the city council to approve the steering committee as the sanctioned tree board or ask the existing tree board to include representatives from the steering committee.

Become a Tree City USA

Begin work to meet requirements of Tree City USA. You can find information on how to become a Tree City at www.arboday.org/programs/treeCityUSA.

Create a Plan

Write a three-year to five-year focus plan that lays out the goals you want to accomplish.

Build Strong Connections With the City

Report annually to the city council. Review this video on how to work with your city council: vimeo.com/11115985.

Engage Schools and Youth

Begin a program with the schools, both to provide education about trees and healthy urban forests and



to engage youth in your community forestry efforts. See our *Engaging Youth in Your Community Programs* resource guide for more information.

Provide Training

Make sure your volunteers are equipped with the knowledge to plant and care for trees and to be effective advocates for trees. Contact Trees Forever to discuss support available to your community. Seek out workshops, online training, educational publications, and courses such as Iowa State University's *Shade Tree Short Course* and share these opportunities with city staff and tree board members.

Tree Survey/Inventory

Complete a street and park tree assessment that covers all of your community's public trees. Strive to obtain a full inventory, including street trees and park trees. If this is not possible, try to get a partial inventory of 5-10 percent of your trees. Contact your state's DNR urban forestry coordinator to ask how your community can obtain a tree inventory. Otherwise, seek a tree care company that provides this service. Another possibility is to recruit volunteers to complete the survey. Contact a forestry or biology department at a local college for possible assistance.

Building the Committee – Phase II

Create or Update Tree Ordinances

Write a tree ordinance or revise the existing ordinance (include a clause for reviewing it every three years). For information about tree ordinances, see:

www.isa-arbor.com/education/onlineResources/treeOrdinanceGuidelines.aspx

store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/Tree-Ordinances-for-Iowa-Communities-Community-Trees

store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/Sample-Tree-Ordinances-for-Iowa-Communities-Community-Trees

Reinvigorate the Tree Board

Consider changing roles or officers to keep contributions and perspectives fresh. If a member has left the tree board, brainstorm a new person to invite to fill the position.

Tree City USA Requirements

Continue to implement requirements to become a Tree City USA.

Report

Submit a report annually to the city council.

Public Education

Develop a program (using media, presentations, etc.) and visit civic groups regularly to enlist their members' support and participation.

Volunteer Training

Provide formal training for volunteers. (Attend Shade Tree Short Course, state chapter arborist meetings, Extension meetings, Trees Forever annual meetings, conferences and field days).

Long-term Plan

Develop a long-term master plan that includes planting and maintenance (use the three- to five-year focus plan from Phase I).

Ongoing Activities: Phase III

Complete a detailed inventory of street and public tree resources.

Have a Management Plan in place for long-term planting and maintenance with provisions for annual review.

Review the city tree ordinance every three years.

Continue education efforts with the public and schools.

Report annually to the city council.

Strengthen Committee Make-up as your group becomes more experienced. Consider bringing new and different perspectives to your membership. If you sense volunteer burnout, think about changing roles and seeking new or different volunteers to serve as officers. Take time to celebrate both short-term and long-term accomplishments (100th tree planted, 10th planting project, etc.) and share those accomplishments with the public.

Engage the Community for support and ongoing funding activities. Thank longtime partners (school teachers, city staff, scout leaders, newspaper reporters, etc.) who have consistently contributed to your group's success. Thank long-term sponsors and share with them some of your accomplishments.

Forester/Arborist: Encourage the city to hire a full- or part-time urban forester or arborist.

Helpful Resources

Illinois Department of Natural Resources Urban Forestry
dnr.state.il.us/orc/urbanforestry

Iowa Department of Natural Resources Urban Forestry
www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/Forestry/UrbanForestry.aspx

University of Southern Illinois Community Forestry
mypage.siu.edu/urban.forestry

University of Illinois article, How Trees Build a Neighborhood – lhl.illinois.edu/communities.htm

Greg McPherson's article on urban forests built to last – earthsky.org/earth/greg-mcpherson-on-urban-forests-built-to-last

Hiring a Tree Care Professional

www.extension.iastate.edu/forestry/care_maintenance/arborists.html

Join Trees Forever on its mission to plant and care for trees and the environment by empowering people, building community and promoting stewardship.

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