



Advocating for Trees in Your Community

One of the most important functions of your community tree committee is to be an effective voice for trees. As advocates you will work with community and government leaders to protect and promote a healthy urban forest. Educating your fellow citizens and gaining their support is also critical to your success.

Know Tree Benefits

To be an effective tree advocate, you must know the facts! It is essential that you have credible data to illustrate why trees are important. With the facts behind you, you can successfully demonstrate the economic, environmental, and social benefits that trees provide in your community. Contact Trees Forever staff for a list of benefits and related resources.

Advocate with Policy Makers

It is at the local level where you likely will have the greatest impact on your community's urban forest. Here are a few ideas about what can be done locally:

- Work with your government officials to establish a tree board.
- Ask your city council to allocate funds for tree planting and maintenance of the trees as they grow.
- Work with city staff and the city council to develop or amend ordinances that promote street trees and proper species selection. Find examples of tree-friendly ordinances at www.isa-arbor.com/education/resources/educ_TreeOrdinanceGuidelines.pdf.

Keep your city council updated on your committee's activities. Meet with them on a regular basis – at least annually. And always remind them of the benefits that trees provide and the importance of maintaining trees – the green infrastructure of your community.



Don't forget that you can have an impact at the state and national levels, too. Talk to your legislators about providing adequate funding for forest health efforts in your state, including urban forestry.

Illinois State Legislators

www.ilga.gov/senate
www.ilga.gov/house

To find out who your legislators are:
www.elections.il.gov/DistrictLocator/DistrictOfficialSearchByAddress.aspx

Iowa State Legislators

www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/senate

To find out who your legislators are:
www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find

Congressional and other contacts:
www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml

**“I speak for the trees,
for the trees have
no tongues.”**

– Dr. Seuss, *The Lorax*

How to Communicate with Policy Makers

Always take the opportunity to talk with your policy makers – whether at a meeting you organize with them or at other public meetings. Remember to always be polite and respectful, and don't take up too much of their time. And be sure to thank them if they have taken actions that you support!

Personal Contact

- Set up appointments with your mayor, council members and/or aldermen. Have an agenda and stick to the points you want to make.
- Take advantage of meet-and-greet events in your community. You will also be reaching other community members at these events.
- Invite your mayor and city council members to your tree-planting events and give them an opportunity to speak. Include them in pictures and stories to the media.

Letters/Emails

Letters and emails are effective means of communicating. Remember the “3 Bs” of letter writing: Be direct. Be concise. Be gone. Clearly state your concern or issue, ask for their support, and keep your letter or email brief.

Recruit Other Advocates

Ask other people to talk to their council members and legislators also. **It doesn't take many contacts to make an impact on policy makers.**

Advocate with Your Friends and Neighbors

It is just as important to talk to your friends and neighbors to build support among citizens for community trees. Make the issue visible and keep doing it.

Educational Opportunities

Look for educational opportunities at events and with community groups. Be creative!

- Set up booths at garden shows, community fairs, and events.
- Visit schools and other youth organizations to talk about trees.
- Talk to church groups and civic organizations.
- Talk about the issues in your daily conversations.

Being An Effective Spokesperson

Use media to help get the word out. Feature stories, letters-to-the-editor, talk radio, Facebook pages, and community websites are all effective means to inform and persuade. See our *Using Media Effectively* resource guide for more information.

Useful Education Websites

Alliance for Community Trees

www.actrees.org

Iowa DNR's Trees for Kids

www.iowadnr.gov/Education/ForTeachers/EducationTrainingPrograms/TreesforKidsTeens.aspx

IOWATER

www.iowater.net/LearningCorner/LinksTeachers.htm

Environmental Educators Association of Illinois

www.eeai.net

Arbor Day

www.arborday.org/arborday/?gclid=CPX9gLC4xKYCFclKKgodIEuRGw

University of Illinois Extension Just For Kids

urbanext.illinois.edu/kids

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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