Massachusetts Urban Forestry Program

The Citizen Forester

July 2006 No. 105

Urban Forest Management Plans: Charting the Key to Success

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"If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there."
- Lewis Carroll (1832-1898)

Ideally, every community, no matter how large, should have a current urban forest management plan. A strategic urban forestry plan can be extensive, detailed and based on a full, systematic inventory of tree resources as well as available educational, financial, partner and technical resources. Or it can be simple, direct and based on thoughtful review of existing information and knowledge. Either way, good management plans have certain characteristics in common, result in tangle benefits and are worth the investment.

Key Characteristics

An urban forest management plan should have the following:

- **Review of Current Conditions:** This is the "where are we now" section, because even if you have a good road map, it does no good if you don't know where you are starting from. This section should not only consider the current conditions of your urban forest (such as species diversity, conditions, and size structure) which may be based on some kind of inventory or survey, but should also include at least a brief review of available educational, legal, financial and partner resources in the community.

- **5-10 Year Goals:** This is the "where are we going" section. In your community, do you ***most*** want to expand your urban forest canopy? Improve the health and condition of trees? Diversify? Build your public constituency? Or improve the efficiency of operations? Here is where a community chooses the top 3-5 goals that it really wants to achieve in the near term. Ideally, these will flow from needs identified in your review of current conditions. For example, if the vast majority of your street trees are Norway maples, then an obvious goal might be to diversify and plant a variety of appropriate non-maple species. Think about short-term attainable goals and longer term goals that are reachable within 5-10 years.

- **Realistic Recommended Strategies:** In this "how do we get there" section, an urban forest management plan will outline realistic strategies that the community will pursue and implement in the next few years. These strategies should flow from current conditions and be aimed at achieving the goals. A good plan will "prioritize" strategies into those that really need to be implemented, those that should be implemented, and those that could be implemented with available resources. You should also identify a timeframe and an individual responsible for each strategy.

Benefits

The benefits of having a current plan, especially one that is used and does not just sit on the shelf somewhere, can be significant and varied:

- **Improved Efficiency:** Instead of responding only to complaints or "immediate concerns," a management plan can help you improve efficiency by taking a more strategic approach to public tree management. This can result in fewer problems down the road and greater economies of scale. A management plan can and should be used to develop an annual work plan as well. In essence, a good plan should help move your community from "crisis management" to "proactive management."

- **Increased Local Funding:** An urban forest management plan that outlines current problems and proposes strategies is the most effective tool for advocating for increased local funding. Many communities have realized significant increases with a management plan. Plans that include photographs, charts, diagrams and statistics, including risk tree data, often make a more powerful case than those that don't.

- **Raise Awareness and Build a Constituency:** Having a plan and making it available to the public can help raise awareness of the needs of the urban forest and build your community constituency.

- In many communities, local knowledge about trees is in the head of a tree warden who's been around for decades. When that tree warden retires or moves on, the community can be at a loss. A good management plan will pull that **local community** knowledge together and document the condition and needs of the urban forest resource for future generations.

Developing the Plan

Urban forest management plans can either be developed in-house with urban forestry or planning staff, or with outside consultants. The cost of a plan can range from a few days of good in-house work to several thousand dollars. Either way, the investment will be worth it.

The major cost of a completing a plan comes in the decision to do or not do a tree survey or inventory.

Is it better to have a management plan that is based on a systematic survey or inventory? Of course, but,

Is it better to have a management plan that is not based on a tree survey or inventory, than to not have a management plan at all? Absolutely!

Chose what is right at this time for ***your*** community with available resources, and start planning for a greener future!

Picks and Shovels

Sample Urban Forest Management Plan for City of Lawrence, Massachusetts: (prepared by Jane Calvin of the DCR)
http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/forestry/urban/docs/lawremgtplan.pdf be sure to scroll down a bit – it looks like you've opened a blank page

Sample Urban Forest Management Plan from Atwater, New York:
http://www.umass.edu/urbantree/samplemgtplan.pdf

Management Plan from Walla-Walla, Washington:
http://www.ci.walla-walla.wa.us/vertical/Sites/%7B5C31B82F-5E63-4200-9CF4-237E5245E279%7D/uploads/%7B399D3498-22C2-4481-BF94-F0CF5E278F0E%7D.PDF

- NOTE: One of the major areas of emphasis for the DCR Urban Forestry Challenge Grants is to fund community forest management plans. **Intents to apply** and **full proposals** are now being accepted. Please visit our grant web page for more information at http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/forestry/urban/urbanGrants.htm Please also be aware that if you reside in the communities of **Andover, Billerica, Douglas, Uxbridge, Hawley, Charlemont, Rowe, or Norwell** your community is eligible to access funds through the DCR – National Grid Partnership Challenge Grants funds.

Growing Greener

The Lexington Tree Committee deserves kudos for their lecture series, "Six Views of the Urban Forest." Thanks to good PR they've been able to attract a full audience for each night of the six-evening series. From the "broader benefits of urban forestry" to the issues of invasives to implementing a tree management program, the Tree Committee has done much to raise awareness for forestry issues in and around Lexington. The series is also being edited by tree committee members for viewing on the local cable channel.

Growing on Trees

Volunteer Opportunities to Help Boston Inventory Its Street Trees: *A note from Elizabeth Walsh of the Urban Ecology Institute:*

Hello Boston nature lovers!

Despite the unrelenting rains, this season's tree counting efforts are off to a great start, and with your help, we will be able to finish Boston's first street tree inventory this summer!

We're still recruiting volunteers for this final season of the Greater Boston Urban Forest Inventory, so if you - and any other urban tree-lovers you know - are interested in helping out, please join us for one of our three remaining Healthy Trees, Healthy Neighborhoods workshops (details below). This free workshop will provide you with the training you'll need to participate in the tree survey - and to make the case for your neighborhood trees.
Also, in case you missed it, here's a great article about GBUFI which appeared on the (FRONT PAGE!) of the June 18th Sunday Boston Globe:

http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2006/06/18/getting_back_to_roots/

Our upcoming "Healthy Trees, Healthy Neighborhoods" workshops are:

July 8, West Roxbury: 9:30am - 3:30pm, 1708 Centre Streeet, at the BPD District E-5 Community Room.

July 22, South Boston: 9:30am - 3:30pm, 340 Dorchester Street, at the Fourth Presbyterian Church.

August 5, Copley Square: 9:30 - 3:30pm, 700 Boylston Street, at the Boston Public Library, Copley Square.

To register for a workshop, just call me at 617-552-1563 (or email, walshio@bc.edu). Please let me know if you have any questions about the project, or the volunteer experience.

Thanks, as always, for all you do to make Boston a healthier home for us all, and I hope to see you soon!

Best,

Elizabeth

New Publications Available from the DCR Office of Cultural Resources:
The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Office of Cultural Resources is pleased to announce the publication of the second and third installments of the *Terra Firma* technical bulletin series.

Terra Firma #2 provides guidance on the identification, care, and replacement of trees that add significance and character to historic landscapes. Special topics related to mature trees in historic landscapes such as balancing preservation with public safety, tree removal and appropriate replacement, and caring for trees in historic burial grounds provide the public with the basic tools for caring for these often overlooked historic resources.

Terra Firma #3 ushers us through the process of identifying historic roads, documenting their characteristics, and protecting them through legal avenues available within the

Commonwealth. In this edition, recognizing threats, such as inappropriate zoning, is paired with discussions about liability and protections such as the Scenic Roads Act, while a series of success stories from Provincetown to Mount Greylock illustrates the resources, methodologies, and results of preserving historic roads.

If you would like a copy of these *Terra Firma* publications (or the initial installment, *Terra Firma #1 – An Introduction to Historic Landscape Preservation*) please contact Shaun Provencher at (617) 626-1376 or shaun.provencher@state.ma.us. You may also download an order form or copies of the bulletins in .pdf format from: www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/histland/publications.htm

Many Started on Pathways to Conservation:
Friday, July 16th in Boston's Franklin Park was a great day for future conservation leaders, and not just because the cold, wind and rain from last year were conspicuously absent. The second annual ***Future Pathways to Conservation Program*** engaged approximately 65 local public high school students in hands-on workshops led by resource management professionals from the USDA Forest Service, the DCR, the City of Boston Parks Department and several other professional and academic agencies and institutions. Students participated in a variety of activities including tree climbing techniques, tree identification, forest fire control training, soils analysis, wildlife identification and many more. The event was a resounding success with both the students and the resource professionals and the growth of interest exhibited this year heralded great expectations for future years.

On The Horizon

Views of the Urban Forest, Lecture Series: The Lexington Tree Committee is sponsoring a series of lectures on urban and community forest issues. All events are free, made possible through a grant from DCR and will be at the Lexington Carey Library at 7:30 p.m. Contact John Frey at jwfrey2@aol.com. Series includes:

- September 13, 2006: Jad Daley Campaign Director for the Northern Forest Alliance will speak on *Forests on the Edge – Linking Northeastern Wildlands and the Urban Forest* – September 13, 2006.
- October 18, 2006: David Pinsonneault Lexington's Superintendent of Public Grounds and Tree Warden will speak on *Implementing a Tree Management Program in Lexington*.

2006 ISA Annual Conference and Trade Show July 31 – August 2, 2006, Minneapolis, MN. Please visit http://www.isa-arbor.com/conference/default.aspx for details.

Empire State Green Industry Show November 14-16, 2006, Rochester Riverside Convention Center, Rochester, NY. This is a combined education conference and trade show of the New York State Arborists, ISA Chapter Inc.; New York State Turfgrass Association; New York State Nursery/Landscape Association; and New York State Flower Industries. For details, contact Jill Cyr at 518-783-1229, 800-873-8873, jill@nysta.org, or www.nysta.org.

Species Spotlight

***Betula nigra,* River Birch**

Native to the eastern United States from southern New England south to Florida and west to Kansas, river birch is normally found in the wild along stream banks and areas that flood. A medium to large sized tree, it can reach 70 feet tall and 60 feet wide and has a medium to fast growth rate.

Advantages and Limitations:
This is a relatively trouble free tree, and is better adapted to urban conditions than other birches although it can get chlorosis on high pH soils. Not the best birch for fall foliage, it does have an attractive "cream-colored" exfoliating bark which can turn to brown with ridges and furrows as the tree matures. River birch should not be planted under wires.

For more information and details on cultivars visit:
http://www.hort.uconn.edu/Plants/b/betnig/betnig1.html.

The Citizen Forester is made possible through a grant from the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Bureau of Forestry.

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If you have a topic or addition to the Citizen Forester newsletter, please let us know.

If you have questions about Urban and Community Forestry, contact:

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