

Urban Forestry Master Planning for Small Communities: Street tree inventory project

Most of the urban forests in NY State occur in small communities that often can not budget for the services of a dedicated city forester. The Community Forestry outreach program would like to assist small communities in developing management plans for their street tree populations. Sponsored by Cornell University, the Community Forestry outreach program is made up of Cornell faculty, extension educators and professionals in the field of urban forestry.

What are we offering?

- To work with your community to set up the management planning process
- To organize the completion of an inventory of all the street trees within your municipal boundaries
- To gather data on tree species distribution, health and maintenance needs.
- To determine where there are existing plantable spaces.
- To provide you with a list of appropriate species for new planting
- To help you formulate a management plan for your community.
- To provide an electronic copy of the entire inventory so that you can keep it up to date.



What's in it for you?

- To inexpensively build a plan that will protect and enhance your urban tree resources.
- To decrease the risk and the cost associated with tree branch failures.
- To provide greater energy savings and pollution reduction through maintaining a healthier urban forest.
- To increase storm water re-charge and reduce the need for building more storm drainage infrastructure.
- To be eligible for a \$30/per tree cost recovery from your local utility company if you have a plan for responsible tree planting under electric wires.
- To help beautify the environment and create a community identity.

Through a complete inventory, you will have data that will quantify many of these benefits to your community.

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities. NYS College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, NYS College of Human Ecology, and NYS College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University, Cooperative Extension associations, county governing bodies, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating

What do we need from you?

- Someone will need to be designated as our contact person during this process.
- Signoff from a public official supporting the project.
- There needs to be a staff person assigned to keep and update the electronic database that will be provided.
- The computer software necessary would be Access or Excel.
- We will need good street maps with addresses to work from.

How much will this cost?

In a pilot project conducted in the fall of 2002, college students from the agriculture and forestry schools in New York (Cornell-Agriculture, Morrisville, and Syracuse-Environmental Science and Forestry) were used under our supervision. In a “SWAT” team approach using approximately 12 students, we completed the data collection stage during one weekend in September. The students collected data using small hand held computers.

- Costs for the student wages (\$10/hr), room and board, if necessary, will need to be covered. We estimate this at less than \$3000. We can point out grant funds that can help to cover the cost of this program.

An alternative method is to recruit volunteers from your community (Master Gardeners, Master Forest Owners, BOCES and high school environmental education students) to conduct the data collection. Some knowledge of plant identification is helpful. Volunteers will be trained to use our handheld computers. Members of the Community Forestry Outreach program will be available to provide support and guidance along the way.

- Costs for volunteers may include meal and travel expenses.
- An equipment use fee of \$10/week/device will be charged to maintain and update the required hardware and software.
- Your community may wish to purchase their own equipment (or at least one to maintain the database). The cost of a handheld computer (Palm Pilot M105- \$99), and Software (Pendragon Forms - \$149) may add additional expenses

After the data is collected and summarized, we will hold a one-day workshop for all participating communities to walk through the process of creating a planning document. This would include the transfer of the electronic data to you, training on how to use it, and the development of tree maintenance and planting schedule that would work within your budget constraints.

Where do you go from here?

- Visit our web site www.hort.cornell.edu/commfor for more information and an application

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