

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY
STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN
2005-2010

GOAL

To insure a sustainable urban and community forest for the future of Mississippi. A sustainable forest can be defined as one which meets both the biological needs of the forest ecosystem and the economic and social needs of our citizenry. The urban forest can be defined as the trees and associated vegetation in and around the places where we live, work, and play. Urban forestry is the management and protection of the urban forest for the benefits provided to people and away from the problems inherent in having trees in urban spaces.

OBJECTIVES

1. Increase awareness of the importance of trees and urban forest management in the urban environment.
2. Work to insure a healthy urban environment and livable cities in Mississippi through urban forest management.
3. Provide education and training opportunities to urban forest managers, tree care providers, consultants, foresters, and volunteers on urban and community forest management and proper tree care.
4. Develop self sustaining urban and community forestry programs at the local, area and state levels.
5. Increase technical expertise in urban and community forestry.
6. Encourage partnerships in support of urban and community forestry in Mississippi.
7. Seek Funding Opportunities for implementing Urban and Community Forestry Programs in the State.

OBJECTIVE 1

Increase awareness of the importance of trees and urban forest management in the urban environment.

Actions

- I. Provide presentations for civic clubs and other organizations.
- II. Attend and participate in meetings and conferences of other organizations to promote urban and community forestry in the state.
- III. Target political and other state and local leaders with information on the benefits and needs of urban and community forests.
- IV. Influence homeowners and small business owners to properly care for trees.
- V. Conduct recognition and awards programs.
- VI. Promote youth programs in urban and community forestry.
- VII. Enhance information distribution. Provide informational brochures and publications on urban and community forestry.
- VIII. Develop a power point on urban and community forestry and combine with an attractive brochure.
- IX. Develop an outreach strategy for getting urban and community forestry information to potential partner organizations and minority groups (hispanic, asian, native American, handicapped, faith based groups) through publications, school groups, grants for handicap accessible trails, facilities, etc. Utilize the booklet, *Urban and Community Forestry Outreach Services, Strategies for all Communities*, published by the National Association of State Foresters and USDA Forest Service to promote and implement community based outreach programs.
- X. Improve communication to the field regarding urban and community forestry activities around the state. Include project lists, council activities, special events, etc.
- XI. Conduct a statewide Arbor Day ceremony annually. Encourage local Arbor Day celebrations.
- XII. Conduct an annual Arbor Day Poster contest.
- XIII. Provide articles to newsletters and magazines of organizations such as the MML, Supervisors Association, MS Business Journal, etc.
- XIV. Enhance the information available through the internet regarding urban and community forestry.

- XV. Publish the Green Communities newsletter quarterly.
- XVI. Develop a marketing and public relations campaign aimed at increasing awareness of the importance of urban forests
- XVII. Target the media with urban and community forestry information
- XVIII. Host workshops and conferences on urban and community forestry
- XIX. Make personal contacts with constituents/colleagues to promote the benefits of urban and community forestry and encourage participation in available opportunities
- XX. Develop a speakers bureau of experts available to make presentations
- XXI. Promote success stories in urban and community forestry
- XXII. Develop a program to recognize/certify urban forest areas around the state.

OBJECTIVE 2

Work to insure a healthy urban environment and livable cities in Mississippi through urban forest management.

Actions

- I. Improve urban wood utilization and recycling.
- II. Influence homeowners and small business owners to properly care for trees on private property.
- III. Encourage FIREWISE communities. Coordinate efforts of the FIREWISE and urban and community forestry programs.
- IV. Utilize urban and community forestry practices to address water quality and quantity issues and the impact of flooding. Include such practices as protection and establishment of natural areas, implementation of regulations as appropriate, and planting of the appropriate tree species. Emphasize the benefits of urban and community forestry in helping to insure safe drinking water and other health benefits, providing recreational opportunities, and enhancing economic development. Communicate the impact of trees on stormwater issues (from evapo-transpiration to importance of streamside vegetation). Continue to research the water quality and urban forest management relationship.
- V. Develop an action plan for addressing the issues associated with the wildland urban interface and forest fragmentation through urban and community forestry. The plan should include emphasis on enhancing urban areas to make them more livable, addressing the concerns of the small private landowner, fire management, invasive species awareness and control, insect and disease management, wood utilization, tree planting, maintenance, safety concerns, hazard trees, and land use planning. Actions might include such activities as internet information sharing, local meetings, training and working with developers.
- VI. Improve efforts to protect trees and the environment in urban and surrounding areas during the development process. Stress the importance of protecting tree roots.
- VII. Include urban forestry in emergency response plans including guidelines for proper pre- and post- emergency tree maintenance. Research available tools and resources for mitigating storm damage (ice, wind, flooding, fire) and develop new ones as needed.

- VIII. Use trees and forested areas for the protection of air quality in urban areas.
- IX. Manage urban forests as fish and wildlife habitat as appropriate. Promote the economic benefits of ecotourism, such as migratory birdwatching, fishing, etc.
- X. Utilize trees to add value and “eye appeal” to commercial/retail districts
- XI. Plant and manage trees along transportation corridors and rights-of-ways to improve community appearance, enhance tree canopy, improve air and water quality, provide shade, etc.
- XII. Develop standards for the management of urban forests to compliment a recognition or certification program.
- XIII. Plan for the planting of the right tree in the right place.
- XIV. Implement tree ordinances as needed to guide in the management and protection of urban and community forests.
- XV. Conduct hazard tree assessments and implement treatment schedules for maintenance and removal in order to provide for safety in the urban forest and reduce liabilities.
- XVI. Utilize urban forest inventories to develop urban and community forest management plans to help guide local program direction and funding.
- XVII. Establish tree planting goals and objectives and seek funding to implement.
- XVIII. Establish maintenance schedules for community trees.

OBJECTIVE 3

Provide education and training opportunities to urban forest managers, tree care providers, consultants, foresters, and volunteers on urban and community forest management and proper tree care.

Actions

- I. Provide training opportunities for Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) County Foresters. Be sure the MFC County Foresters are in the "loop" and trained on grants, compliance checks, Tree City USA., city planning - zoning, ordinances, smart growth, basic tree care, hazard trees. Incorporate urban and community forestry in forester, technician and ranger levels training program. Utilize the train the trainer approach to training MFC personnel. Offer MFC personnel the opportunity to participate in urban and community forestry training and continuing education programs such as the state urban and community forestry conference, National Arbor Day Foundation training courses, and other regional and national sessions.
- II. Promote the International Society of Arboriculture's Arborist Certification Program.
- III. Enhance the information available on urban and community forestry through the internet.
- IV. Make technology updates available to urban forest program managers and MFC foresters.
- V. Support the scholarship program for out-of-state training and technology opportunities.
- VI. Support the urban and community forestry curriculum option at Mississippi State. Work with Alcorn State University to continue involving their forestry students in urban and community forestry.
- VII. Support the annual urban and community forestry/arboreticulture conference.
- VIII. Monitor progress of the urban and community forestry training manual being developed by the USDA FS. Encourage the use of this information in training and education programs in the State.
- IX. Provide informational brochures and publications on urban and community forestry.
- X. Include the following topics in training: planting of the right tree in the right space, protection of trees during the development process

and stormwater management through urban forestry practices, tree ordinances, tree liability, emergency preparedness and response.

- XI. Provide urban and community forestry training for community planners.
- XII. Conduct local workshops on the care and maintenance of trees.

OBJECTIVE 4

Develop self sustaining urban and community forestry programs at the local, area and state levels.

Actions

- I. Encourage the development and enhancement of urban forest management programs in cities and towns.
- II. Actively promote Tree City USA. Target individual cities and specific areas of the State.
- III. Reap economic benefits of urban forests as related to aesthetics and other economic benefits.
- IV. Insure technical assistance is available to local communities.
- V. Support the development of Regional Chapters of the Mississippi Urban Forest Council.
- VI. Encourage local communities to hire professionals to administer their urban and community forestry program.
- VII. Continue to explore the opportunities for providing funding in support of the Mississippi Urban Forest Council.
- VIII. Support the development of Growing Out Centers or other tree nursery partnerships in order to provide trees for local communities.
- IX. Finalize the cost-benefit study being conducted in partnership with the USFS, City of Hattiesburg, and Mississippi State University and utilize results to support the development of urban and community forestry programs.
- X. Encourage mentoring between communities.
- XI. Share success stories among communities as a means of encouraging others to develop self-sustaining programs.
- XII. Include urban forest management in local emergency response plans. Plans should include pre- and post- emergency guidelines for tree maintenance.
- XIII. Implement appropriate tree ordinances providing for the management and protection of urban and community forests.
- XIV. Utilize urban forest inventories to develop urban and community forest management plans to help guide local program direction and funding.
- XV. Explore the opportunities for cooperative agreements between small communities to employ urban forest managers.

OBJECTIVE 5

Increase technical expertise in urban and community forestry

- I. Encourage the use of professionals in urban and community forestry in Mississippi.
- II. Develop/expand the list of tree appraisers, consultants, arborists, etc. - include contractors from surrounding states, i.e. Memphis, Mobile, etc.
- III. Promote jobs for students participating in the new urban and community forestry curriculum option at MSU.
- IV. Encourage consulting foresters to become more involved in urban and community forestry.
- V. MFC evaluate the potential for providing urban and community forestry services for a fee on public properties, i.e. inventories, management plans.
- VI. Target professional level service providers with technology transfer information and training.

OBJECTIVE 6

Encourage partnerships in support of urban and community forestry in Mississippi

Actions

- I. Support and promote the programs of partner organizations who share the MFC's goal of enhancing urban and community forestry in Mississippi through exhibits, speakers, sharing information, and incorporating their activities into the Green Communities newsletter. Included among these organizations are:
 - A. International Society of Arboriculture
 - B. Mississippi Chapter of ASLA
 - C. Mississippi Landscape and Nursery Assn
 - D. Mississippi Urban Forest Council, Inc.
 - E. National Arbor Day Foundation
 - F. National Tree Trust
 - G. National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council
 - H. Professional Arborist Association
 - I. Regional Urban Forest Councils
 - J. USDA Forest Service
- II. Continue to support a self-sustaining Mississippi Urban Forest Council.
- III. Promote community based outreach programs utilizing the booklet, *Urban and Community Forestry Outreach Services, Strategies for all Communities*, published by the National Association of State Foresters and USDA Forest Service.
- IV. Encourage membership in professional and non-profit organizations with urban forestry or related objectives.
- V. Promote volunteers in urban and community forestry.
- VI. Encourage corporate and private participation in urban and community forestry activities.
- VII. Promote youth involvement in urban and community forestry.
- VIII. Encourage State and local entities to establish and/or maintain an urban and community forestry emphasis within their organizations. Some of these entities include:
 - A. Cities, Towns, Counties, Sub-communities within jurisdictional boundaries
 - B. Mississippi Forestry Association

- C. Mississippi Development Authority
- D. Mississippi Emergency Management Agency and affiliated local emergency management groups.
- E. Mississippi Main Street Program
- F. Chambers of Commerce
- G. Realtor Associations
- H. Garden Clubs
- I. Mississippi Department of Education
- J. Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Districts/Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts
- K. Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
- L. Planning and Development Districts
- M. Natural Resource Conservation Service
- N. Mississippi State University Department of Forestry and Extension Department

OBJECTIVE 7

Seek Funding Opportunities for implementing Urban and Community Forestry Programs in the State.

Actions

- I. Request funding from the Mississippi Department of Transportation to continue implementation of the Transportation Enhancement Tree Planting Program.
- II. Request funding from the USDA Forest Service for administration of the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Program.
- III. Document successes to funding organizations and political leaders.
- IV. Promote the economic benefits of urban forestry such as ecotourism, increased property values, health and wellness issues, retail sales, worker satisfaction, energy savings, etc.
- V. Encourage corporate/private support of urban forestry programs. Make opportunities available for private involvement.
- VI. Encourage cities and towns to include urban and community forestry as a part of their local budget.
- VII. Utilize urban forest inventories to develop urban and community forest management plans to help guide local program direction and funding.