



# **Alabama's Five-Year Strategic Plan**

**2007-2011**

## **Urban and Community Forestry**





# Alabama's Five-Year Strategic Plan 2007-2011

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# Urban and Community Forestry

## Executive Summary



**A**uburn University, through the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, is responsible for carrying out Alabama's Urban and Community Forestry Financial Assistance Program. This federally funded program enables Extension to provide urban and community forestry technical and financial assistance to Alabama's cities and towns. A strategic plan is an important part of Extension's U&CF program and serves as a tool to stimulate U&CF program focus, direction, and cooperation at the state and local level.

Alabama's U&CF Strategic Plan addresses six strategic issues. Each issue is further refined into specific goals and objectives with detailed measures and target dates.

- **Capacity Building**  
Increase ability of individuals, groups, and organizations to participate in and contribute to Alabama's U&CF program.
- **Assessment and Research**  
Assess Alabama's urban forest resources and public attitudes as a basis for developing program standards and research initiatives.
- **Education**  
Develop educational activities that increase urban forestry professionalism and public awareness.
- **Recognition**  
Acknowledge those who make valuable contributions to Alabama's U&CF program.
- **Governance and Policies**  
Enhance prospects for Alabama local governments, professions, and businesses to implement urban and community forestry ordinances, guidelines, standards, and procedures.
- **Tree Maintenance and Renewal**  
Increase number of urban trees planted, protected, and maintained in Alabama.

## U&CF Program Mandate

In the 1990 Farm Bill, Congress expanded the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978. This legislative act improved federal support for each state's UC&F program. As a result, each state's capacity to deliver U&CF services to its cities and towns was greatly strengthened.

In 1999, the USDA Forest Service contracted with Auburn University to be the pass-through entity for U&CF financial and technical assistance in Alabama. Auburn University delivers U&CF program assistance through the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

As a condition to receiving federal assistance, the USDA Forest Service requires that Auburn University develop and periodically update an active Alabama U&CF Strategic Plan. The purpose of a strategic plan is to focus and coordinate a statewide strategy so Alabama communities can establish, improve, increase, and sustain active U&CF programs. Alabama's original plan was completed in 1994 and underwent its first revision in 2000. This document is the second revision of Alabama's U&CF Strategic Plan.



## Importance of Alabama's Urban Forest

Urban forests are a way of life in Alabama. Our state's 47.8 percent urban forest canopy is the nation's highest. Alabama's urban forest also provides valuable benefits to our communities.

- **Trees make people healthier.** Moderate physical activity such as planting and caring for a tree can reduce chronic illnesses and conditions, such as diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, and cancer.
- **Trees help people make money.** Landscaped homes generally sell faster and for more money than comparable "un-landscaped" homes. Increased property values make money for homeowners, builders, and local governments.
- **Trees help clear the air.** Healthy urban trees "scrub" the air by removing harmful elements. Trees also cool urban areas, thereby reducing pollution worsened by urban "heat islands."
- **Trees are good for the environment.** Trees help control surface water runoff during intense rain. They also reduce soil erosion and the amount of sediment that can build up in streams.
- **Trees enrich the human experience.** Accessible and well-maintained urban green spaces foster positive interaction among people. A community's urban forestry program can help lower people's level of fear, reduce aggressive behavior, stimulate volunteerism, and build good citizenship.



## VISION

Create an urban forest throughout Alabama that is universally recognized as an integral part of sustainable communities and that contributes to an improved quality of life.

## MISSION

Focus, coordinate, and expand urban forestry activities that improve both the quality of Alabama's urban forest resource and the quality of life of all citizens.

## Strategic Issues, Goals, and Objectives

### Strategic Issue #1: CAPACITY BUILDING

**Goal 1:** Increase ability of individuals, groups, and organizations to participate in and contribute to Alabama's U&CF program.

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>Objective 1:</b> | Certify 10 Extension agents by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). (2010)  |
| <b>Objective 2:</b> | Increase the number of communities with professional staff positions from 39 to 50. (2011)   |
| <b>Objective 3:</b> | Certify four Alabama Forestry Commission personnel as certified arborists (one per region). (2011)   |
| <b>Objective 4:</b> | Increase the number of ISA-certified arborists from 133 to 160. (2011)   |
| <b>Objective 5:</b> | Increase the number of graduates from the Tree Board Academy from 9 to 50. (2011)  |
| <b>Objective 6:</b> | Increase enrollment of students in the AU School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences (AU-SFWS) urban forestry program. (2011)                      |
| <b>Objective 7:</b> | Support 100 percent placement of AU School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences (AU-SFWS) urban forestry graduates in related career fields. (2011) |
| <b>Objective 8:</b> | Increase the number of nonprofessional volunteers in community and urban forestry by 10 percent. (2011)  |



**Goal 2: Increase urban and community forestry funding in Alabama.**

- Objective 1:** Support AUFA attainment of self-sufficiency through private investment and other sources of funding. (2011)
- Objective 2:** Support Coosa Valley Youth Services' development of stable funding for regional tree nursery located in Anniston. (2011)
- Objective 3:** Develop funding/resource clearinghouse for urban forestry programs. (2011)

**Goal 3: Improve urban and community forestry planning, coordination, and partnerships.**

- Objective 1:** Add an urban forestry component to each of the partners' web sites and ensure that each is linked to the other partners' sites. (2009)

**Goal 4: Provide greater access to urban and community forestry for all communities and citizens.**

- Objective 1:** Identify communities in need of an urban forestry program. (2008)
- Objective 2:** Develop a strategy to engage communities in need of an urban forestry program. (2009)

**Goal 5: Increase political support for urban and community forestry programs in Alabama.**

- Objective 1:** Provide copies of the Partnership annual report to appropriate federal, state, and local elected officials. (2007)
- Objective 2:** Notify elected officials of urban and community forestry activities in their jurisdiction and involve them when possible. (2007)

**Goal 6: Develop innovative urban and community tree programs and projects.**

- Objective 1:** Develop on-site demonstration projects to serve as models for promoting urban forestry (with urban and community forestry funding and other available funding sources). (2007)
- Objective 2:** Develop a rapid-response technical team process to assist communities with local urban forestry issues on a strategic basis; enact this process. (2009)

**Goal 7: Utilize relevant technologies for urban forestry programs.**

- Objective 1:** Increase utilization of GIS and GPS technologies for urban and community forestry. (2007)

**Goal 8: Identify and cultivate allies for urban forestry.**

- Objective 1:** Develop a list of potential organizations/individuals that might serve as allies or resources for urban forestry programs. (2007)
- Objective 2:** Develop and initiate an outreach strategy for involving new partners in urban and community forestry programs. (2008)



*Mountain Brook*



*Montevallo*



*Decatur*





*Tuscaloosa*



*Orange Beach*

## Strategic Issue #2: ASSESSMENT AND RESEARCH

### **Goal 1: Assess the condition of Alabama's urban and community forest.**

- Objective 1:** Research and develop urban forest models that identify traditional forest impacts on cities, such as urban-wildland interfaces. (2009)
- Objective 2:** Develop a plan to collect and interpret baseline data on 100 percent of Alabama's urban forests. (2011)
- Objective 3:** Increase annually the number of local community tree programs that assess and monitor their urban forests by 10 percent. (2011)

### **Goal 2: Develop standards to assess urban and community forest programs.**

- Objective 1:** Assess the number of volunteers active in urban forestry programs. (2008)

### **Goal 3: Reassess public attitudes, awareness, and educational needs.**

- Objective 1:** Complete a second statewide assessment of public attitudes, awareness, and educational needs. (2009)

### **Goal 4: Conduct urban forestry research.**

- Objective 1:** Create a prioritized list of research needs for urban and community forestry. (2007)
- Objective 2:** Develop and implement a strategy to meet identified research needs. (2008)



## Strategic Issue #3: EDUCATION

### Goal 1: **Develop targeted urban forestry education and training programs for urban forestry practitioners and clients.**

- Objective 1:** Develop a plan for youth education in urban forestry. (2009)
- Objective 2:** Institutionalize an urban forestry distance-education program for professionals at the local level. (2009)
- Objective 3:** Develop educational programs for non-traditional groups, such as builders, developers, boards and commissions, and regional planners with the ultimate goal of educating them on the importance of urban forests. (2010)

### Goal 2: **Develop educational programs that increase public awareness of urban forestry.**

- Objective 1:** Implement an urban forestry marketing strategy. (2007)

## Strategic Issue #4: RECOGNITION

### Goal 1: **Acknowledge and appreciate the achievements of individuals, organizations, and communities that contribute to the state's quality of life through urban forestry.**

- Objective 1:** Develop an annual awards program for all certified Tree City USA and Tree Line USA communities. (2007)
- Objective 2:** Develop an annual report by the Partnership that highlights accomplishments during the year. (2007)
- Objective 3:** Develop and implement activities to attain 120 Tree City USA certifications, 15 Tree City Growth Awards, and 5 Tree Line USA certifications. (2011)







*Homewood*



*Redstone Arsenal*



*Fairhope*

## Strategic Issue #5: GOVERNANCE AND POLICIES

### **Goal 1: Work to make community and urban forestry a required component of regional and local planning ordinances and guidelines.**

- Objective 1:** Initiate discussions with two granting agencies to discuss ways that urban forestry considerations may be incorporated into grant processes. (2008)
- Objective 2:** Initiate discussions with local and regional planning agencies to discuss ways to incorporate urban forestry and greenspace considerations into planning processes. (2008)
- Objective 3:** Help 25 communities develop and adopt local tree/landscape ordinances by providing information on available resources. (2011)
- Objective 4:** Incorporate urban forestry as part of Alabama's State Implementation Plan (SIP) for obtaining alternate air quality credits. (2011)
- Objective 5:** Incorporate urban forestry management as part of the urban infrastructure in meeting water quality standards for storm water runoff. (2011)
- Objective 6:** Promote inclusion of urban forestry in state and county emergency management mitigation plans. (2011)

### **Goal 2: Encourage enforcement of stricter certification requirements for tree surgeons and trimmers.**

- Objective 1:** Encourage local governments to require state certification before issuing businesses licenses for tree surgeons and trimmers. (2011)
- Objective 2:** Encourage the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries to distribute an updated test for tree surgeons. The updated test will expand the scope of work it covers to include tree maintenance and removal. Encourage training opportunities. (2011)



## Strategic Issue #6: TREE MAINTENANCE AND RENEWAL

### Goal 1: Increase the number of trees planted (recommended species).

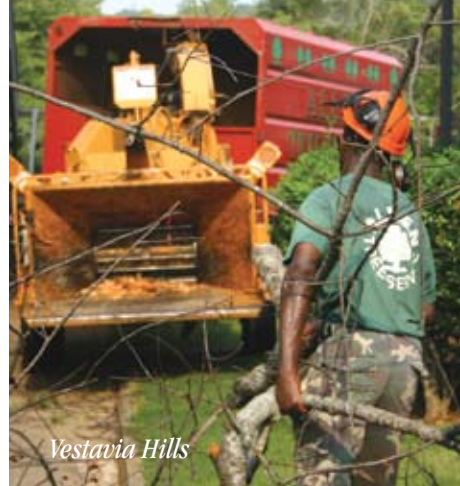
- Objective 1: Identify sources of seedlings for distribution at Arbor Day and other celebrations. (2007)
- Objective 2: Support increased funding sources for planting trees in communities. (2011)
- Objective 3: Promote tree agreements, using public funds to plant trees on private property. (2011)
- Objective 4: Promote tree planting as a way to offset energy costs. (2011)
- Objective 5: Support local tree planting advocacy groups. (2011)
- Objective 6: Increase the number of communities that actively manage their urban forests. (2011)

### Goal 2: Increase funding for tree maintenance such as pruning and disease control.

- Objective 1: Educate municipal officials of the relative costs/benefits of proactive versus reactive maintenance. (2011)

### Goal 3: Decrease the amount of property loss/damage caused by urban trees.

- Objective 1: Provide information about storm mitigation and hazards to municipalities to mitigate losses caused by urban forests. (2009)







## Making the Plan a Reality

Alabama's Five-Year Urban and Community Forestry Strategic Plan is an ambitious statement for the future. It paints a picture of what urban and community forestry can be in our state. If these goals and objectives are accomplished, all Alabama citizens will benefit. But, success will only be achieved with the help of people who believe in the plan's value and are willing to make it happen. That's why Auburn University, through Extension, will work with many of its partner organizations to carry out the plan's objectives.

Another key element to this plan's success lies in the hands of Alabama's U&CF community. That includes you. Alabama's U&CF Strategic Plan is a guide and a resource that you can use in developing your organization's program plans. It gives you and your organization an opportunity to make a difference.

Whether you are a citizen, tree board member, city official, or just someone who cares about trees in our communities, take time to look through this publication and see how you can help make Alabama better for people through urban and community forestry.





## Strategic Plan Participants

Auburn University and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System gratefully recognize the many individuals and organizations who contributed to the making of this plan. Special appreciation goes to the individuals who attended a two-day U&CF Strategic Plan retreat held in Montgomery. These individuals represented important Alabama groups, and their contributions were invaluable. In addition, Joe Sumner (Director, Community Resource Development, Auburn University) donated his time to facilitate the retreat and to structure the plan's format. His insights, advice, and recommendations were essential.

### The following participated in the strategic plan retreat:

Brenda Allen  
School of Forestry & Wildlife Sciences

Beau Brodbeck  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Kitty Chamberlain  
City of Montgomery

Michelle Cole  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

David Daughenbaugh  
City of Mobile

Michelle Floyd  
Ala-Tom RC&D Council

Cleve Formwalt  
Formwalt's Tree Service

Paul Garmon  
Alabama Power Company

John Gladness  
City of Sylacauga

Shelley Green  
Alabama Urban Forestry Association

Larry Grewelle  
Montgomery Tree Committee

James Jennings  
Alabama Urban Forestry Association

Neil Letson  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Jeff Luvall  
NASA Global Hydrology & Climate Center

Paul Mask  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Stan Roark  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Amanda Smith  
Alabama Urban Forestry Association

Harold Taft  
Alabama Forestry Commission

David West  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Yaoqi Zhang  
School of Forestry & Wildlife Sciences







Montgomery



*Your Experts for Life*

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**Neil Letson**, *State Urban Forestry Coordinator*, Auburn University

**For more information**, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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