

Virginia Department of Forestry 2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry Strategic Plan

PARTNERSHIPS

The partnerships established with the Department of Forestry are vital to the success of the Urban and Community Forestry Program. Since its inception in 1991, the program has sought to establish strong and diverse partnerships to help in its program delivery. The program can now list strong, effective and supportive partners in the municipal/regional/state government, educational and non-profit organization sectors. These partnerships are well distributed geographically throughout Virginia.

Representatives from the various partnership organizations were part invited to provide input into the development of the five-year plan for Virginia's Urban & Community Forests. Those invited had a history of participation with the Department's program and are recognized as key players in urban and community forestry at either the local, regional or state level.

FIVE-YEAR PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Department sought input for plan development from both internal (Department personnel) and external sources. A questionnaire/comment document was mailed to over one-hundred twenty individuals in addition to being circulated by the Virginia Urban Forest Council (now TREES VIRGINIA). From the list of those participating in the survey, forty-five individuals were invited to participate in regional planning sessions.

Using information gathered from the mail survey as a starting point, facilitated sessions were held eastern, central, and western Virginia in an attempt capture significant issues and opportunities that will impact the program in this geographically and culturally diverse state. These sessions generated the issues and opportunities that are presented in this document.

This document will provide a vision for the Urban and Community Forests for the next five years (2004-2008). This plan will assist the Department of Forestry and its partners to more effective programs at all levels that address the key issues impacting urban and community forests in Virginia.

It is a goal that urban forestry programs in all sectors (municipal/regional/state government, educational, non-profit organizations) will adopt portions of the plan as their own and commit to achieving some of the goals outlined herein.

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March 23, 2004

Virginia Department of Forestry 2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry Strategic Plan

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND MAINTENANCE

The Five-Year Plan for Virginia's Urban and Community Forests will be the focus of Virginia's U&CF Grant Assistance Program in 2004-2008. Eligible categories for grant proposals will be developed from issues and opportunities presented in this document.

The cooperative programs developed between the Department and the Virginia Urban Forest Council (TREES VIRGINIA) will be consistent with this plan. The efforts of

Department field personnel will be guided by this plan. Training opportunities and programs for field staff will also be related to the issues outlined herein.

In the development of the strategic plan, both crucial issues and key opportunities were identified. The Five-Year Plan will focus on the five most crucial issues and the five key opportunities identified from all of the input received. The Five-Year Plan is organized in an *issue-goal-response* and an *opportunity-goal-response* format. The response to each issue or opportunity is then developed in an *activity-timeframe-lead organization* format. The first organization listed as the *lead organization* will be the organization primarily responsible for the activity. The remaining organizations listed will be *partners* to the lead organization on that particular activity.

The Department of Forestry will schedule plan reviews each February 2005-2007 to document progress on the plan as well as make any changes or updates that may be necessary. Work on the next five year plan will begin in February 2008.

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Virginia Department of Forestry 2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry Strategic Plan

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY ISSUES

Issue 1 Urbanization and Sprawl

Urbanization and sprawl are negatively impacting forestland. Rapid urbanization in Tidewater, Northern and Central Virginia is resulting in a rapid conversion of rural forestland to urban uses. Poor models for land development have resulted in degraded forest ecosystems. Adequate amounts of open greenspace are not being managed or protected in communities. Urban sprawl is fragmenting forests and negatively impacting the ecological health and aesthetic quality of the Virginia's communities.

Issue 2 Program Support at the State and Local Level

There is inadequate political and financial support for urban and community forestry programs at the state and local level. At the state level, urban and community forestry is funded almost exclusively by federal dollars. State level staffing is minimal. There is essentially no state legislation or funding that deals with urban and community forestry. At the local level, many municipalities do not fund urban and community forestry programs or employ qualified professionals to manage urban forest resources. While there is support and staffing for urban forestry programs in larger metropolitan areas, few communities outside of the Tidewater and Northern Virginia areas have strong programs. This is especially true for communities with populations under 25,000 people.

Apart from the limited resources available at the state and local level, there are few sources of funding for local programs. More sources of funding need to be developed so that programs can have increased flexibility as to the timing of funds available and the type of projects that might be funded.

Issue 3 Development of the Urban Forestry Profession in Virginia

There are inadequate resources being devoted to the development of the urban forestry profession in Virginia. The urban forestry curriculum at Virginia Tech is now under development and a few community colleges are developing arboriculture and urban horticulture programs, but more needs to be done to develop a pool of technically qualified people to work in the profession.

Virginia Department of Forestry 2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry Strategic Plan

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY ISSUES

Issue 3 – con't Development of the Urban Forestry Profession in Virginia

While the ISA Certified Arborist program has increased arboriculture educational opportunities, urban forestry professionals are demanding more continuing education opportunities that deal with all aspects of urban forestry. Further, urban forestry has still not been fully acknowledged as a recognized discipline by the traditional forestry community.

Issue 4 Networking and Communication

Networking and communication among various disciplines involved in urban and community forestry has been inadequate. There is a lack of effective partnership arrangements between urban forestry organizations and other natural resource and land use planning organizations. Linkages with the programs of natural resource and land use planning agencies have been weak.

Issue 5 Proper Tree Selection, Planting and Maintenance

The general public and public officials are poorly informed on a variety of topics related to urban and community forestry. Urban forest practitioners have identified several areas where it is felt that the general public and public officials have incorrect or inadequate information. These areas include arboriculture, nursery practices, tree selection, forest ecosystem protection, tree/utility conflicts, highway tree trimming practices and riparian forest management. Acting on poor or inadequate information, poor management decisions are made with a negative impact upon urban forest resources. There needs to be more emphasis on developing and communicating good technical urban forestry information so that it can be applied at the local level.

Virginia Department of Forestry 2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry Strategic Plan

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY ISSUES

Issue 6

Public Awareness of the Value of Urban and Community Forests

Urban and community forest values as they relate to the quality of life and economic development are not recognized. The positive impact of urban forests on air quality, water quality, outdoor recreation, business district enhancement as well as aesthetics has not been fully quantified. Municipal officials do not always connect well-managed urban forests with these elements.

Issue 7

Involving Ethnically and Culturally Diverse Communities

There is minimal participation in urban and community forestry programs in ethnically and culturally diverse communities. While the Urban and Community Forestry Program has a good track record in reaching economically underserved communities, it still has made little progress in engaging ethnically and culturally diverse communities.

Virginia Department of Forestry 2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry Strategic Plan

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity 1

Advances in urban forest science and technology will help in the communication of urban forest values to public officials, the media and the general public.

Urban forest science has documented the contribution of urban forests in dealing with real world problems such as air and water pollution, stormwater runoff, and business district enhancement. The products of the science and technology can be used to influence public policy relating to urban forests and increase the public's awareness of the importance of urban forests.

Opportunity 2

Interest in Community Greenways

A strong linkage has developed between the Urban and Community Forestry Program and the greenway movement in Virginia. The Urban and Community Program is now recognized as a key player of the greenway movement in Virginia. Through its participation/sponsorship in conferences and workshops, the U & CF program has inspired numerous projects. The U & CF grant program fills a critical niche by providing planning funds for project start-ups. Greenway projects are almost always associated with important environmental corridors in communities, so there is a natural linkage between U & CF programs and greenway projects. This linkage will provide a new, diverse, and powerful constituency for urban and community forestry.

Opportunity 3

The Concept of "Green Infrastructure"

The Department of Forestry has become established as a key player in promoting the concept of "green infrastructure" through its work with the Conservation Fund. These organizations have collaborated on

Virginia Department of Forestry 2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry Strategic Plan

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity 4 Loss of Trees in Recent Storms

The tremendous *loss of* urban trees as well as the tremendous devastation *caused by* trees in recent storm events has attracted widespread media attention throughout the state. In the communities affected by these storm events, there is considerable interest in managing urban forests to avoid such disasters in the future. Urban and community foresters now have that “teachable moment” where they have the attention of the public and public officials. This opportunity can be used to educate about proper tree selection and tree maintenance as well as to make the case for more adequate urban forestry budgets at the local level.

Opportunity 5 Canopy Cover Goals in the Chesapeake Bay Agreement

The Chesapeake Bay Agreement has established urban canopy cover as one of the mechanisms available to states to achieve water quality targets. By including urban canopy cover in its *Expanded Riparian Forest Cover Goals*, the Chesapeake Executive Council has recognized the importance of urban forests in helping in the Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts. The expanded goals call for 5 communities in Virginia to adopt canopy cover goals supported by local policy and/or ordinances and make progress toward achieving those goals by 2010. The Department of Forestry and its partners can assist in this effort through technical assistance, public education and grant support

Opportunity 6 Increased Activity and Visibility of Land Trust Organizations

Land trust organizations have formed or are organizing in all parts of Virginia. Land trust organizations can be valuable partners in protecting critical elements of “green infrastructure” in the rural-urban interface. They can also be important allies in influencing public policy on development patterns and land use decisions. The Urban and Community Forestry Program has the opportunity to develop effective and sustainable partnerships with numerous land trust organizations.

**Virginia Department of Forestry
2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry
Strategic Plan**

***URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY
OPPORTUNITIES***

Opportunity 7

U & CF Partnership with the Community Design Assistance Center

The U & CF Program has established a strong partnership with Virginia Tech's Community Design Assistance Center (CDAC). Through its relationship with (CDAC) and Main Street Virginia, the U & CF program can make tree planting and open space protection components of community revitalization efforts. The U & CF program has been working with these organizations since the mid 1990s and this partnership has produced several successful projects

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2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry

Strategic Plan

Issue 1	<i>Urbanization and Sprawl</i>
Statement of Problem	Urbanization and sprawl are negatively impacting forestland
Goal	Increase the awareness among planners and public officials of the value of conserving critical land and open space in urbanizing counties
Response	Promote better models for development in Virginia that conserve critical forest land and open space in the rural/urban interface areas.

ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBLE ORGANIZATIONS <i>(lead organization in bold type)</i>
Use the green infrastructure approach to conserving and managing natural areas, working landscapes, open space, and other critical resources at the rural/urban interface	2005 and ongoing	The Conservation Fund, Department of Forestry (DOF), The Nature Conservancy
Promote “Better Models for Development” materials to planners and public officials	2005	The Conservation Fund, Department of Forestry, various land trust organizations
Organize local public forums on development issues relating to forest land	2005	Land trust organizations, local PDCs.
Support local public forums on development issues relating to forest land through U & CF grants	2004 and ongoing	Department of Forestry, various PDCs, various land trust organizations, The Conservation Fund
Provide forest resource information to local governments Using DOF’s <i>Forest RIM</i>	2004 and ongoing	Department of Forestry

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2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry

Strategic Plan

Issue 2	<i>Program Support at State and Local Level</i>
Statement of Problem	There is inadequate political and financial support for urban and community forestry programs at the state and local level.
Goal	The establishment of state and local funding sources/programs for urban and community forestry activities.
Response	Increase awareness of urban and community forestry program and their successes through various U&CF organizations. Use U&CF partner organizations to advocate/lobby for funding with General Assembly and local government.

ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME	LEAD ORGANIZATIONS (lead organizations in bold type)
Have legislation introduced in General Assembly to provide funding specifically for U & CF activities	2005 and ongoing	Scenic Virginia, Trees Virginia (VUFC)
Send information on grant awards, successful projects, etc to General Assembly members and local officials	2005 and ongoing	Department of Forestry, Trees Virginia (VUFC), other U&CF partner organizations)
Develop marketing campaign for U & CF	2006	Trees Virginia (VUFC)
Report on U & CF successes in State Forester's weekly report to Secretary of Commerce and Trade	Ongoing	U & CF Coordinator
Target U & CF grant awards for staffing in municipalities currently without an arborist position	2004 and ongoing	Department of Forestry, Trees Virginia (VUFC)

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2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry

Strategic Plan

Issue 3	<i>Development of the Urban Forestry Profession in Virginia</i>
Statement of Problem	There are inadequate resources being devoted to the development of the urban forestry profession in Virginia.
Goal	The availability of in-state programs for individuals wanting to pursue urban forestry, arboriculture, and/or urban horticulture as a profession as well as more opportunities for professional development of those already in these professions.
Response	The development of accredited programs at Virginia Tech and selected community colleges as well as continued growth of the ISA Certified Arborist Program.

ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME	LEAD ORGANIZATIONS (lead organizations in bold type)
Support new urban forestry curriculum at Virginia Tech	2004 and ongoing	Tress Virginia (VUFC), Department of Forestry (DOF)
Continue to promote ISA Certified Arborist Program	Ongoing	Mid-Atlantic Chapter of ISA DOF Trees Virginia
Development of new courses and revision of existing courses leading to Arborist Certificate Program	2004-2006	Virginia Community College System (VCCS)- Blue Ridge Community College
Development of courses in arboriculture and urban forestry in forest technician degree program	2004-2006	Virginia Community College System (VCCS)-Dabney S. Lancaster Community College
Strengthen urban horticulture program and add courses in arboriculture and urban forestry	2004-2006	Virginia Community College System (VCCS)-Virginia Western Community College
Facilitate the development of effective articulation agreements between community colleges and Virginia Tech	2006	DOF
Provide 2-year degree program in urban forestry at a community college	2008	Virginia Community College System (VCCS)- Blue Ridge Community College
Provide focus funding to community colleges as needed through U & CF Grant Program	2004-2008	DOF

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2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry

Strategic Plan

Issue 4

Networking and Communication

Statement of Problem Networking and communication among various disciplines involved in urban and community forestry have been inadequate.

Goal Increase networking, communication, cross-training and understanding among urban foresters, arborists, nurserymen, landscape architects, engineers and planners.

Response Provide opportunities for more collaboration and training.

ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME	LEAD ORGANIZATIONS (<i>lead organizations in bold</i>)
Reinstate the Trees Virginia (VUFC) annual conference	2006	Trees Virginia
Continue emphasis on grants for planning in U & CF Grant Program	Ongoing	Department of Forestry
Plan and implement <i>Urban Forestry/Arboriculture</i> portion of the Mid-Atlantic Short Course	2006	Trees Virginia
Provide scholarships to various state and national urban forestry conferences to planners, landscape architects and engineers	Ongoing	Trees Virginia Department of Forestry
Provide scholarships to urban foresters and DOF personnel to professional planning conferences at the state and national level	2006	Department of Forestry (with assistance from USFS)

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2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry Strategic Plan

Issue 5

Proper Tree Selection, Planting and Maintenance

Statement of Problem	The general public and public officials are poorly informed on a variety of topics related to tree selection, planting and maintenance.
Goal	Provide the public with more information through a variety of sources and media.
Response	Continue with and improve upon existing efforts listed in the table

ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME	LEAD ORGANIZATIONS (lead organizations in bold)
Continue to support and disseminate results of research done at the Hampton Roads Agricultural research & Extension Center (HRAR & EC)	Ongoing	Department of Forestry (U & CF grants)
Utilize workshops to provide latest information to professionals and the public	Ongoing	Trees Virginia, MAC-ISA, Mid-Atlantic Short Course, community colleges, Tree Steward organizations
Demonstrate proper selection and maintenance of trees near utility lines through demonstration projects	Ongoing	Virginia MTRP
Establish "Utility Wise" web site with information on trees for power line situations	Ongoing	VA MTRP*
Continue "Don't Top Trees" campaign	Ongoing	Trees Virginia
Support establishment of new "Tree Steward" organizations	Ongoing	Trees Virginia
Provide volunteer service and expertise to local communities	Ongoing	Tree Steward Organizations
Promote good arboriculture Through ISA Certified Arborist Program and www.Goodtreecare.com web site	Ongoing	MAC-ISA**

**VAMTRP – Virginia Municipal Tree Restoration Program

**MAC-ISA – Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture

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2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry

Strategic Plan

Issue 6

Public Awareness of the Value of Urban & Community Forests

Statement of Problem	The contributions made by urban and community forests to the community quality of life, environmental quality, economic vitality are not fully recognized and valued.
Goal	Increased awareness by public officials of the importance of urban forests in making cities and towns more liveable and appealing.
Response	Develop materials on the value of urban forests for public officials. Conduct more research that quantifies these urban forest values. Publicize urban forest values that have been identified by research.

ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME	LEAD ORGANIZATIONS (lead organizations in bold)
Develop a marketing strategy to promote the benefits of urban and community forests	2006	Trees Virginia Department of Forestry
Conduct Research Project - "The Competitive Community: Evaluating the Urban Forest and Retail Sectors"	2005	Community Design Assistance Center, Center for Urban Horticulture , Department of Forestry, Trees Virginia, Scenic Virginia
Conduct City Green Analysis in Chesapeake Bay Region and publicize results	2005	American Forests The Chesapeake Bay Program
Complete work on "Landscape Design for Small Communities" materials and distribute to Main Street Virginia	2004	Department of Forestry Scenic Virginia, Main Street Virginia
Continue to promote Tree City USA in Virginia	Ongoing	Department of Forestry Trees Virginia
Develop "Green Design Alternative Model" for Albemarle County developments publish results	2005	Trees Virginia

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2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry

Strategic Plan

Issue 7	<i>Involving Ethnically and Culturally Diverse Communities</i>
Statement of Problem	There is minimal participation in urban and community forestry programs in ethnically and culturally diverse communities (underserved communities)
Goal	Involve ethnically and culturally diverse communities in urban and community forestry programs at both the local and state level.
Response	Target ethnically and culturally diverse communities for U&CF grants, workshops, scholarships to events, and membership in U&CF organizations.

ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME	LEAD ORGANIZATIONS (lead organization in bold type)
Ensure that some U & CF grant funds reach or benefit underserved populations (specifically ethnically and culturally diverse communities)	Ongoing	Department of Forestry
Provide scholarships for U & CF events to members of underserved populations	Ongoing	Trees Virginia (VUFC)
Recruit members of underserved communities for membership and board seats on state urban forest Council	2005 and beyond	Trees Virginia (VUFC)
Target services of partner organizations to underserved communities	Ongoing	Community Design Assistance Center (CDAC)
Recruit minority students to urban forestry related programs	Ongoing	Virginia Tech – College of Natural Resources, CDAC, Community Colleges

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2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry

Strategic Plan

Opportunity 1 *Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute (VNRLI)*

Current Situation The Virginia Department of Forestry has established a strong partnership with the *Institute of Environmental Negotiation* and has assisted in the development and implementation of VNRLI. This effort has established a strong network of professionals in numerous organizations that are skilled in environmental conflict resolution. This network will prove to be valuable as the Department of Forestry deals increasingly with issues in the “wildland/urban interface.”

Goal Increase the network of individuals trained in environmental conflict resolution by VNRLI.

Response Expand outreach capability of VNRLI.

ACTIVITIES	TIMEFRAME	<i>LEAD ORGANIZATIONS</i> <i>(lead organizations in bold type)</i>
Continue to support VNRLI through U & CF grant support focus funding)	Ongoing	Virginia Department of Forestry
Develop more case studies dealing with urban forestry and wildland/urban interface issues	2005	Institute for Environmental Negotiation (IEN)
Continue to recruit urban forestry practitioners and members of U & CF organizations as participants in VNRLI	Ongoing	Virginia Department of Forestry

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2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry

Strategic Plan

Opportunity 2

Interest in Community Greenways

Current Situation

A strong linkage has developed between the Urban and Community Forestry Program and the greenway movement in Virginia.

Goal

Increase the number of urban and community greenway projects across Virginia.

Response

Continue strong partnership with the National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program and the Department of Conservation and Recreation to work on greenway related issues.

ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME	LEAD ORGANIZATIONS (<i>lead organizations in bold type</i>)
Produce final report on economic impact study of selected greenway projects	2004	The National Park Service, Department of Conservation and Recreation, The Department of Forestry
Provide funding for greenway planning through U & CF grants	Ongoing	The Department of Forestry
Organize local or regional greenway workshops/seminars/conferences	Ongoing	The National Park Service, Department of Conservation and Recreation, The Department of Forestry, RC&Ds, PDCs

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2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry

Strategic Plan

Opportunity 3

The Concept of Green Infrastructure

Current Situation

Through a regional U&CF project, a green infrastructure scoping study was completed for Virginia with participation from several state agencies and environmental organizations. This partnership has positioned the Department of Forestry to be the lead agency in promoting the concept of “green infrastructure.”

Goal

Establish the concept of “green infrastructure” in the minds of planners and public officials

Response

Provide training sessions on the “green infrastructure concept and develop model “green infrastructure projects”

ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME	LEAD ORGANIZATIONS (<i>lead organizations in bold type</i>)
Distribute <i>Green Infrastructure Scoping Study</i> to study participants	April 2004	The Conservation Fund(TCF) , Virginia Department of Forestry(DOF)
Provide in-depth training on green infrastructure to selected DOF employees	Winter 2005	TCF
Provide in-depth green infrastructure training to external audiences in each of DOF’s 6 regions	2006-2008	TCF
Support green infrastructure related projects through U & CF grants	2005-2008	DOF

Virginia Department of Forestry

2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry

Strategic Plan

Opportunity 4

Aftermath of Hurricane Isabel

Current Situation

Recent storm events (Hurricane Isabel and ice storms) have made the public aware of the need for the management of urban trees.

Goal

Better management of urban tree populations to minimize damage to and by tree in storm events.

Response

Develop media materials and train DOF employees in urban storm management issues.

ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME	LEAD ORGANIZATIONS (lead organizations in bold type)
Develop storm response “strike team” of DOF field personnel	2005	Virginia Department of Forestry
Develop storm response media materials	2005	Virginia Department of Forestry
Disseminate information on proper tree selection in communities impacted by Hurricane Isabel	Ongoing	Virginia MTRP Cooperative Extension

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2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry

Strategic Plan

Opportunity 5	<i>Canopy Cover Goals in the Chesapeake Bay Agreement</i>
Current Situation	The Chesapeake Bay Agreement has established urban canopy cover as one of the mechanisms available to states to achieve water quality targets.
Goal	By 2008, five local jurisdictions will complete a canopy cover assessment and adopt local policy or ordinances to increase canopy cover in order to enhance forest buffer function.
Response	Facilitate work on canopy cover assessments by identifying communities and networking them with the appropriate partners that have the necessary technical resources.

ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME	LEAD ORGANIZATIONS
Include canopy cover assessment as a U & CF grant category	2004-2008	Department of Forestry
Identify 5 communities for canopy cover assessment work	2004	Chesapeake Bay Program , Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Board, Department of Forestry, American Forests
Complete at least 2 assessments using City Green or other suitable technology	2006	American Forests

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2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry

Strategic Plan

Opportunity 6

Working with Land Trust Organizations

Current Situation

Land trust organizations have formed or are organizing in all parts of Virginia. These organizations are dealing with land use issues in wildland/urban interface areas and are looking to the U&CF Program for support.

Goal

An increase in documented open space protection in wildlife/urban interface areas as well a public policy, comprehensive plans, etc. addressing protection of open space.

Response

Increase networking and collaboration between urban forestry partners and land trust organizations.

ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME	LEAD ORGANIZATIONS
Provide for support of land trust organizations through U & CF grants	2004 and ongoing	Department of Forestry (DOF)
Identify joint projects of mutual interest in urbanizing areas	2005	Selected land trusts, DOF, RC & D organizations, Virginia Outdoor Fund, Vault, The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, National Park Service, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Planning District Commissions

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2004-2008 Urban & Community Forestry Strategic Plan

Opportunity 7	<i>Partnership with the Virginia Tech Community Design Assistance Center (CDAC)</i>
Current Situation	CDAD has engaged numerous communities in landscape planning through support from the U&CF grant program. This relationship has greatly assisted in expanding the outreach of the Department of Forestry's U&CF Program.
Goal	Integration of urban forestry concepts into community landscape architecture planning
Response	Continue to build on partnership with CDAD and support CDAD activities with "focus funding."

ACTIVITIES	TIME FRAME	LEAD ORGANIZATIONS
Collaborate on plan of work involving CDAC with communities seeking urban forestry assistance	2004 and ongoing	Department of Forestry (DOF), CDAC, Trees Virginia
Direct "focus funding" to CDAC	2004 and ongoing	DOF, CDAC, Trees Virginia
Implement seminar series for landscape architecture students that incorporates urban forestry principles	2005	ASLA, CDAC
Complete "Streetscape" publications	2005	CDAC, Main Street Virginia
Complete "Landscape Design for Small Communities" publication	2005	CDAC, Main Street Virginia
Involve CDAC in greenway planning projects and workshops	2004 and ongoing	Department of Conservation and Recreation, National Park Service (Rivers and Trails), DOF
Establish Memorandum of Agreement between DOF-CDAC	2005	DOF-CDAC

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