

Urban Tree Management and Maintenance

2024

Overview

In many ways, what comes after a tree is planted is just as important as selecting its location and species. Many challenges associated with urban forestry initiatives stem from the burden of tree management being placed on residents who often lack the time, technical knowledge, and connection to the initiatives to successfully maintain them. There is a variety of evidence, as well as testimony from our workshop participants, that indicates this issue is critical in the planning of a successful urban forestry initiative.

Key Considerations from Workshops

Our workshop participants highlighted the following as key considerations about tree maintenance and management when developing urban forestry initiatives:

- **Lack of Knowledge:** Insufficient education about composting, planting, and available resources, leading to distrust in city systems.
- **Lack of Time:** Without support, many in neighborhoods do not have time to plan, execute, and maintain urban forestry initiatives.
- **Financial Considerations:** The potential negative financial costs to planting trees, including property damage, cost of materials, and cost of maintenance can provide challenges.
- **Buy-In and Ownership:** Most folks do not want trees to be planted “for” them, or without their consultation. Community engagement to co-design projects is key.

Resources and Best Practices

- [American Public Works Association - Urban Forestry Best Management Practices](#): This document from the national professional association for public works professionals provides a menu of policies that can help local governments engage in the proactive management of urban forests.
- [Virginia Department of Forestry – Homeowner Assistance for Urban and Community Forestry](#): The Virginia Department of Forestry provides a variety of helpful guides related to the planting of different species of trees, tree care, and stormwater management. These tools can be used outside of Virginia and offer good guidance on how to clearly communicate best practices for tree management and care.
- [International Society of Arboriculture – Tree Owner Guide](#) – As a part of their *Trees are Good* campaign, this website provides extensive information and guidance that informs about tree choice, managing hazards, tree health, pruning, and other best practices.

Selected Resources

- **[Not By Trees Alone](#)** – This August 2022 paper published in *Landscape and Urban Planning* highlights the critical intersection of the need for increased urban forestry initiatives with the legacy of environmental racism in the United States. It offers the pursuit of “just cities,” which can exchange diversity, equity, and inclusion as inseparable from sustainability and resilience. These principles are key in ensuring that the effects and management of urban forestry initiatives and projects coordinated with residents and neighborhoods, rather than assigned to them.
- **[What do neighbors think of Urban Forestry?](#)**: A statistical analysis of surveys disseminated in Mississauga, Ontario, indicated that respondents generally had more positive support levels for broad statements about urban forestry than specific policy ideas. The main apprehensions were related primarily to concerns about tree management and some of the potential negative effects of new tree canopies (fallen branches, storms, etc.). The analysis indicated that to increase support for these initiatives, different types of trees should be offered to residents, and they should be included in the planning process.
- **[Urban Forestry after disaster](#)**: Six months after a 2013 ice storm, Toronto residents were surveyed to determine types of dissatisfaction with tree management in the city. The responses indicated that due to small and large branches falling on their property, many had decided to remove healthy trees from their properties to mitigate future risk. The study captures the way in which the negative consequences of poorly planned tree planting and lack of coordination with neighborhoods can severely diminish urban forestry initiatives.

References

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