

Key Issue #10: Improving Urban and Community Forestry Management and Maintenance

Many thought leaders noted that current urban forestry funding and programs focus on tree *planting*, but not maintenance. Many noted the need for a shift in focus to maintenance and management of urban *forests*, rather than just trees, along with supportive funding. Regionally appropriate design and maintenance strategies for these forests need to be developed to reflect regional soil and environmental conditions. Further, these design and maintenance strategies also need to take into account and safeguard specific eco-services provided by urban forests, such as wildlife corridors, urban orchards (“food forests”), air quality, water quality, and stormwater management. Thought leaders noted that urban forest design, maintenance, and management strategies need to be developed before planting initiatives are started. For example, soil pits need to be designed for trees that require soils specific to Rocky Mountain West-adapted trees, and watering strategies need to take into account the needs of regionally-adapted trees (i.e. trees native to Denver have different water needs than trees native to Boston). Finally, the benefits of regional-scale urban forests to humans and the environment need to be taken into account when planning their planting, maintenance and management.

IDEAS FOR ACTION - Gaps, Needs, Opportunities

- Increase funding for UCF maintenance and management; programs need to be developed with maintenance and management planned for at least three years to ensure survivability of urban trees and forests. *(Related to Key Issue 8.)*
- Focus on the quality and not necessarily on the quantity of trees being planted – it is much better to have incremental and strategic growth of tree canopy to obtain the greatest impact.
- Focus on appropriate urban forestry placement in a community for maximum benefit, overall tree species composition, and connection to habitat and people (such as providing wildlife corridors, recreation areas, or shading for neighborhoods).
- Include trees in the municipal accounting systems. Trees “appreciate” instead of depreciate.
- Offer cities USFS technical expertise on how to utilize the data from the UTC and implement it to be able to measure results over time. *(Related to Key Issue 1.)*
- Encourage development of urban forest programs as part of the municipal public works office, which may be the best place to manage the UCF. Increase the awareness of the importance of trees so they are viewed as a part of the city’s core infrastructure.
- Create a model policy for municipalities to adopt that provides incentives to protect trees so they cannot be cut down if they are greater than 15 inches in diameter.
- Manage UCF at a regional scale rather than by municipality. For example, it is much more cost and time effective to control pests regionally *(related to Key Issue 4)*.

- Focus on ways to increase awareness and training for how to properly establish and maintain both existing and newly planting trees, how to utilize technology and data for best UCF placement, and to implement UCF Best Management Practices for optimal urban tree health so there is no net loss of canopy in communities.
- Focus on soil health to increase urban tree and urban forest health. Soil replacement is frequently needed when planting new trees in previously hard-capped soil because it is so highly damaged.
- Develop programs to decrease the amount of impervious services in municipalities. Models for achieving this include the Urban Conservation Easement program that Casey Trees has developed, through water quality enhancement policies, or incentives for planting and protecting urban forests. There is a continuing increase of impervious surfaces in most urban areas; in New York City, impervious surfaces have reached somewhere around 60-70%.
- Develop a national UCF management and maintenance plan for sustained UCF planning, health and maintenance in collaboration with NGOs, and state and federal governments. This program should not be directed from the federal level only as federal priorities change and program implementation could be threatened over time. Work on the ground with the communities to implement such a program, asking for help from nonprofits to work as bridges between the federal and state governments and the local communities.
- Expand the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) to include urban forests to gather information on the structure, function and value of urban forests; there is a significant amount of private land in urban areas, so this offers an opportunity to identify private lands where tree canopy could be increased.
- Increase utilization of UCF for biomass and wood products instead of wasting urban forest wood.
- Utilize the technological advances in remote sensing to improve the UTC Assessment.