

Year	Main Goals	Community Involvement
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a tree board or department - Adopt a community tree ordinance - Spend at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry - Celebrate Arbor Day 	Education & Outreach, Assessment of Trees Currently in ROW
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a city map which indicates available rights-of-way without affecting property access or drainage systems 	Public ROW Tree & Vegetation Plantings
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with the Tree Board to identify decorative trees that can be planted in utility easements 	Residential Tree Giveaway, Education on How to Properly Plant and Water a Tree
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a relationship with citizen volunteer committees for the use of native plants and vegetation 	Westview Landscaping Committee, Hilshire Beautification Fund, active HOAs
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess properties which lack trees near the Spring Branch Creek and other drainage waterways 	Residential Tree Giveaway, Coordination with Harris County Flood Control and City Arborist

Year 1:

STANDARD 1 - A Tree Board or Department

Someone must be legally responsible for the care of all trees on city- or town-owned property. By delegating tree care decisions to a professional forester, arborist, city department, citizen-led tree board or some combination, city leaders determine who will perform necessary tree work. The public will also know who is accountable for decisions that impact community trees. Often, both professional staff and an advisory tree board are established, which is a good goal for most communities.

The formation of a tree board often stems from a group of citizens. In some cases a mayor or city officials have started the process. Either way, the benefits are immense. Involving residents and business owners creates wide awareness of what trees do for the community and provides broad support for better tree care.

STANDARD 2 - A Public Tree Care Ordinance

Cities and towns in the U.S. have both public and private property within their jurisdictional boundaries. Trees on public property are a public good, and caring for these trees is a vital element of the Tree City USA program. A public tree care ordinance or law forms the foundation of a city’s tree care program; it provides an opportunity to set good policy and back it with the force of law when necessary.

A key section of a qualifying ordinance is one that assigns authority over public trees. This could be through the establishment of a tree board or forestry department—or both—and gives one of them the responsibility for public tree care (as reflected in Standard 1).

Qualifying ordinances will also provide clear guidance for planting, maintaining, and/or removing trees from streets, parks, and other public spaces.

Importantly, a public tree care ordinance must be in effect 24/7/365. In other words, the policies for tree planting, care, and removal of trees codified in the ordinance must be continuous, not triggered by an event like landscaping requirements or the land development process.

Beyond that, the ordinance should be flexible enough to fit the needs and circumstances of the particular community. There are many ways to strengthen a tree ordinance, including the task of crafting and implementing a plan of work, a clause protecting public trees from damage, or the requirements for tree care businesses.

For tips and a checklist of important items to consider in writing or improving a tree ordinance, see Tree City USA Bulletin #9.

STANDARD 3 - A Community Forestry Program With an Annual Budget of at Least \$2 Per Capita

City trees provide many benefits—clean air, clean water, shade and beauty to name a few—but they also require an investment to remain healthy and sustainable. By providing support at or above the \$2 per capita minimum, a community demonstrates its commitment to grow and tend these valuable public assets. Budgets and expenditures require planning and accountability, which are fundamental to the long-term health of the tree canopy and the Tree City USA program.

To meet this standard each year, the community must document at least \$2 per capita toward the planting, care and removal of city trees—and the planning efforts to make those things happen. At first this may seem like an impossible barrier to some communities. However, a little investigation usually reveals that more than this amount is already being spent on tree care. If not, this may signal serious neglect that will cost far more in the long run. In such a case, working toward Tree City USA recognition can be used to reexamine the community's budget priorities and redirect funds to properly care for its tree resources before it is too late.

STANDARD 4 - An Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation

An effective program for community trees would not be complete without an annual Arbor Day ceremony. Citizens join together to celebrate the benefits of community trees and the work accomplished to plant and maintain them. By passing and reciting an official Arbor Day proclamation, public officials demonstrate their support for the community tree program and complete the requirements for becoming a Tree City USA!

This is the least challenging—and probably most enjoyable—standard to meet. An Arbor Day celebration can be simple and brief or an all-day or all-week observation. It can include a tree planting event, tree care activities or an award ceremony that honors leading tree planters. For children, Arbor Day may be their only exposure to the green world or a springboard to discussions about the complex issue of environmental quality.

The benefits of Arbor Day go far beyond the shade and beauty of new trees for the next generation. Arbor Day is a golden opportunity for publicity and to educate homeowners about proper tree care. Utility companies can join in to promote planting small trees beneath power lines or being careful when digging. Fire prevention messaging can also be worked into the event, as can conservation education about soil erosion or the need to protect wildlife habitat.