

Assessment of Urban Forestry in Syracuse - THE MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Indicators of a Sustainable Urban Forest	Overall Objective or Industry Standard	Performance Levels			Syracuse Today
		Low	Moderate	Good	
Tree Inventory	Comprehensive, GIS-based, current inventory of all intensively-managed public trees to guide management, with mechanisms in place to keep data current and available for use. Data allows for analysis of age distribution, condition, risk, diversity, suitability.	No inventory or out-of-date inventory of publicly-owned trees.	Partial or sample-based inventory of publicly-owned trees, inconsistently updated.	Complete, GIS-based inventory of publicly-owned trees, updated on a regular, systematic basis.	Complete GIS-based inventory in place. Street trees updated in 2013, park trees in 2014. Plan in place to reinventory 1/7th of all trees every year.
Canopy Assessment	Accurate, high-resolution, and recent assessment of existing and potential city-wide tree canopy cover that is regularly updated and available for use across various departments, agencies, and/or disciplines.	No tree canopy assessment.	Sample-based canopy cover assessment, or dated (over 10 years old) high resolution canopy assessment.	High-resolution tree canopy assessment using aerial photographs or satellite imagery.	Full canopy assessment performed in 2009, no more recent data available. Update recommended every 10 years.
Management Plan	Existence and buy-in of a comprehensive urban forest management plan to achieve city-wide goals. Re-evaluation is conducted every 5 to 10 years.	No urban forest management plan exists.	A plan for the publicly-owned forest resource exists but is limited in scope, acceptance, and implementation.	A comprehensive plan for the publicly owned forest resource exists and is accepted and implemented.	Management plan created in 2003, never adopted by city council. Current management work is 60-70% reactive in nature, largely due to limited resources.
Risk Management Program	All publicly-owned trees are managed for maximum public safety by way of maintaining a city-wide inventory, conducting proactive annual inspections, and eliminating hazards within a set timeframe based on risk level. Risk management program is outlined in the management plan.	Request-based, reactive system. The condition of publicly-owned trees is unknown.	There is some degree of risk abatement thanks to knowledge of condition of publicly-owned trees, though generally still managed as a request-based reactive system.	There is a complete tree inventory with risk assessment data and a risk abatement program in effect. Hazards are eliminated within a set time period depending on the level of risk.	Because of updated inventory, risk ratings are known on all trees. Only highest priorities have been addressed each year. Other risk abatement work occurs via citizen requests or chance field encounters. No official risk management policy in place related to urban forestry.
Maintenance of Publicly-Owned Trees (trees managed intensively)	All intensively-managed, publicly-owned trees are well maintained for optimal health and condition in order to extend longevity and maximize benefits. A reasonable cyclical pruning program is in place, generally targeting 5 to 7 year cycles. The maintenance program is outlined in the management plan.	Request-based, reactive system. No systematic pruning program is in place for publicly-owned trees.	All publicly-owned trees are systematically maintained, but pruning cycle is inadequate.	All publicly-owned trees are proactively and systematically maintained and adequately pruned on a cyclical basis.	Ongoing maintenance is largely (60-70%) request based, though small amounts of proactive pruning occurs when budget allows. Onondaga Earth Corps is also now involved in young tree care/pruning, funded in part by the city.
Maintenance of Public Natural Areas (trees managed extensively)	The ecological structure and function of all publicly-owned natural areas are protected and enhanced while accommodating public use where appropriate.	No natural areas management plans are in effect.	Only reactive management efforts to facilitate public use (risk abatement).	Management plans are in place for each publicly-owned natural area focused on managing ecological structure and function and facilitating public use.	
Planting Program	Comprehensive and effective tree planting and establishment program is driven by canopy cover goals, equity considerations, and other priorities according to the plan. Tree planting and establishment is outlined in the management plan.	Tree establishment is ad hoc.	Tree establishment is consistently funded and occurs on an annual basis.	Tree establishment is directed by needs derived from a tree inventory and other community plans and is sufficient in meeting canopy cover objectives.	For the last 8 years, have been planting 1500 trees per year due to Save the Rain program funds. City removes approximately 700 trees/year. OEC is planting 65-70% of trees for city, remaining is planted by a contractor. After STR funding is depleted, city can fund 350 trees per year if no additional funding is obtained. No management plan or canopy goal currently in place.
Tree Protection Policy	Comprehensive and regularly updated tree protection ordinance with enforcement ability is based on community goals. The benefits derived from trees on public and private property are ensured by the enforcement of existing policies.	No tree protection policy.	Policies are in place to protect trees, but the policies are not well-enforced or ineffective.	Protections policies ensure the safety of trees on public and private land. The policies are enforced and supported by significant deterrents and shared ownership of city goals.	Development regulations & tree ordinances are in place, though enforcement is challenging due to staffing resources. Sidewalk policy has a significant impact on trees. Master plan process reviewing these policies. iTeam is reviewing sidewalk policy solutions.
City Staffing and Equipment	Adequate staff and access to the equipment and vehicles to implement the management plan. A high level urban forester or planning professional, strong operations staff, and solid certified arborist technicians.	Insufficient staffing levels, insufficiently-trained staff, and/or inadequate equipment and vehicle availability.	Certified arborists and professional urban foresters on staff have some professional development, but are lacking adequate staff levels or adequate equipment.	Multi-disciplinary team within the urban forestry unit, including an urban forestry professional, operations manager, and arborist technicians. Vehicles and equipment are sufficient to complete required work.	Current staffing levels are insufficient for proactive tree care and solid enforcement of policy. Existing staff is trained annually. Equipment is sufficient for existing staff, but not for implementing additional proactive work.
Funding	Appropriate funding in place to fully implement both proactive and reactive needs based on a comprehensive urban forest management plan.	Funding comes from the public sector only, and covers only reactive work.	Funding levels (public and private) generally cover mostly reactive work. Low levels of risk management and planting in place.	Dynamic, active funding from engaged private partners and adequate public funding are used to proactively manage and expand the urban forest.	Current funding supports only reactive tree care. No management plan in place to determine exact funding levels needed for quality proactive care.
Disaster Preparedness & Response	A disaster management plan is in place related to the city's urban forest. The plan includes staff roles, contracts, response priorities, debris management and a crisis communication plan. Staff are regularly trained and/or updated.	No disaster response plan is in place.	A disaster plan is in place, but pieces are missing and/or staff are not regularly trained or updated.	A robust disaster management plan is in place, regularly updated and staff is fully trained on roles and processes.	No official disaster management plan is in place. Procedures exist, but are currently inefficient (no central command, debris management) at larger scale events.
Communication	Effective avenues of two-way communication exist between the city departments and between city and its citizens. Messaging is consistent and coordinated, when feasible.	No avenues are in place. City departments and public determine on an ad-hoc basis the best messages and avenues to communicate.	Avenues are in place, but used sporadically and without coordination or only on a one-way basis.	Avenues are in place for two way communication, are well-used with targeted, coordinated messages.	Communication avenues are in place within city departments via Pre-Development meetings, Road Recon meetings, and other team organization internally. No solid communications in place between city and citizens related to urban forestry.



