

City of Edmonds
Community Forestry Strategic Plan
Proposed Key Objectives
July 2014

Vegetative Resource

1. Relative Canopy Cover

Achieve a climate-appropriate degree of tree cover, community-wide

This criterion refers to the amount of tree canopy cover compared to the amount of **available** planting space. Planting spaces are areas where a tree can be planted, as in, open ground available to plant. This can be in passive areas of parks, planting strips along streets, even landscape islands in parking lots. Technically, this can be anywhere where there is no impervious surface (roads, rooftops, etc.), but certain land uses, such as ball fields and golf courses would not be reasonable areas to include in the potential. It can also include available space on private property. The different benchmarks along the spectrum offer levels of cover as a percentage of the potential planting space in the community. While it may seem logical to plant for tree cover in all possible planting spaces, the key objective is to achieve a climate-appropriate degree of tree cover. In hot, sunny climates, where shade of buildings and other impervious surfaces is extremely important, as well as stormwater abatement, the amount of appropriate cover may be very high. In the Pacific Northwest, tree canopy is one of several strategies used to mitigate stormwater. This ecological function must be balanced with the need for reasonable solar access and other community values (e.g. views, vegetable gardening).

2. Healthy and Diverse Tree Population

Establish a diverse tree population suitable for the urban environment and adapted to the region.

Diversity of species and the appropriateness of those species in the area are important factors to consider for a healthy community forest.

The good news about our region is that a huge variety of tree species can grow in our climate, but not all grow well. It's important that tree selection is based on how well the species grows in the area and has minimal maintenance issues, like drought tolerance and resistance to pests and disease.

Urban foresters are trying to anticipate the effects of climate change locally, and many of these health issues may be connected to this shift. Above all, the community strengthens the sustainability of its urban forest by using suitable species that flourish with a low degree of maintenance.

Diversity of the species in the population is equally critical. Too often, a small palette of trees is used in most landscape designs and in street improvements. The lack of diversity can create a situation in which a pest or disease can wipe out a significant portion of the population. The constant threat of pests and diseases heading our

way cannot be ignored but rather can be alleviated through a diverse array of tree species in the community.

Species diversity is best achieved by focusing on the opportunities in replacement and new planting efforts. This would be in regards to not only the street tree population but for public landscapes (parks, city properties) and required landscapes with commercial and multi-family residential development.

3. Tree Inventory

Acquire a comprehensive understanding of the tree resource to direct its management.

Understanding the needs and composition of the community forest requires comprehensive information about the tree resource to direct its management. Performing a tree inventory is the most common tool with which to collect important data such as species, size, condition, risk level, and location. Usually this is done along the rights-of-way and in landscaped park and other public areas. For forested open space, sample plots are taken to get a snapshot of the condition and composition of that sector of the community forest. Capturing all these data in the City's GIS mapping is particularly useful to visualize the resource in relation to other aspects of the community.

- Detailed understanding of the condition and risk potential of publicly-managed trees.

Understanding the condition of trees helps in prioritizing the management of the community forest. Part of a tree inventory is rating the condition of a tree from excellent to very poor (or dead). Whether it is a sample plot inventory, such as in a park, or a complete tree inventory in the rights-of-way, assessing the condition of the trees will impact the decisions made about the City's maintenance work plan.

Along with condition, a necessary assessment of a tree is its risk of failure and likelihood to cause harm or damage. There is an industry rating system for such tree risk assessments that is commonly used as part of a tree inventory.

- Detailed understanding of the ecological structure and function of all natural areas.

Edmonds has extensive mature forest stands in natural areas throughout the community, and they provide the highest ecosystem benefits. In order to maintain the structure and function of these forests, analysis of the condition (pest and disease issues), diversity, and potential for forest renewal is paramount.

Resource Management

4. City-wide Management Plan

Develop and implement a comprehensive community forest management plan for the community.

A comprehensive community forest management plan provides a specific road map for annual work and budget that is aligned with the mission and goals of an urban forestry program. The following drivers for the plan include:

- All public trees are managed with safety as a high priority.
- Urban forest renewal is ensured through a comprehensive tree establishment program driven by canopy cover and diversity objectives.
- The benefits derived from large-stature/mature trees are ensured by the implementation and enforcement of municipal-wide policies and regulations.

5. City-wide Funding

Develop and maintain adequate funding to implement a community forest management plan.

Without funding, a management program cannot be successful. These days, cities must be creative in developing and maintaining adequate funding to execute needed work identified in the management plan. In the Pacific Northwest, urban forestry can be linked effectively to stormwater management for a city (Vancouver, WA), and therefore, funding could be garnered from other departments that have similar goals.

6. City Staffing

Secure qualified staff and resources to implement a community forestry program.

Along with funding, staffing resource is just as critical for the success of an community forestry program. The key objective is to employ and train adequate staff to implement the program and plan.

Community Framework

7. Community Cooperation

Ensure all city departments, other public agencies, businesses, green industry, and large private landholders cooperate with common community forestry goals and objectives.

The goal of community-wide cooperation is shared vision including the use of professional standards.

8. General Awareness of Trees as a Community Resource

The general public understanding the role of the community forest as vital to Edmonds' environmental, social, and economic well-being.

The most effective way to get the general public understanding the role of the community forest is through education and participation. A successful outcome is public support of a City forestry program and City Council approval for adequate funding of a program.