

MORE ABOUT TREE BOARDS



TREE BOARDS:
*Citizens Working Together
for a Healthier Community Forest*



A Town Tree Board or Committee is a citizen-led group, that works with municipal public officials to improve health of the urban and community forest through tree plantings, advocacy, education, management and maintenance activities.

Why Have a Tree Board?

- **Advocate** – for public tree and forest management and support urban and community forestry.
- **Get Work Done** – help with a tree inventory, an education campaign, a planting program or tree ordinance.
- **Bring in Additional Resources** – help apply for grants, solicit private donations, organize fundraisers, and advocate for larger budgets.
- **Reduce Conflicts** – help reduce potential conflicts by providing a forum for reviewing complaints, addressing safety issues, and making recommendations to the town.
- **Help Raise Public Awareness** – educate residents about the importance of trees and urban forestry and raise public awareness of the needs of trees and forests.
- **Improve your Urban and Community Forest** – all these activities result in an improved urban and community forest for your city or town.

How are Tree Boards Formed?

Some Tree Boards may be part of a Landscape, Beautification or Planning Committee, but most arise as part of the Tree City USA program. In larger communities, the Tree Board may be a part of a department responsible for tree care and arboriculture. Having a specific tree board committee is beneficial as it ensures that trees are addressed specifically, and not simply as an add-on to existing committee concerns.

Most boards are advisory to the town, but some have additional authority as the town determines appropriate. A Tree Board structure, authority, duties and membership are established within an ordinance.

Examples of types of Tree Boards

- In place of a department, in small communities, a board can coordinate contracts for tree maintenance and planting; visit sites and resident complaints; and manage a tree inventory.
- As a volunteer action group, a board can plan and coordinate volunteer tree plantings, organize training workshops, educational programs, and fundraising.
- As an advisory group to town staff, a board can research and recommend ordinance provisions for new or revised ordinances, develop tree species lists for public planting, develop a tree management plan and associated policy.
- As an official committee, a board can act on behalf of the community to apply for state and national grants, start and manage a tree nursery, and help create parks in town.
- Or any combination of the above that serves the needs of their community.

Tips for Successful Tree and Forest Boards

- Try to build a board that is representative of the diversity of your community.
- Look for members with some area of expertise (arborist, communications specialist, grant writer, etc.). Make sure, in particular, to have some members with knowledge of trees, forestry and arboriculture.
- Find members who are interested in working positively with all constituents, town commissions, and other public officials.
- Start with some easily achievable and tangible projects. Some tree boards have found that difficult projects (like writing a new tree ordinance or conducting a full inventory) often result in frustration and produce little to show for the effort.
- Rotate your leadership and membership often. This helps groups guard against “burn-out” and continually brings in new ideas.
- Make sure that all members are committed to finding solutions, not just identifying problems.

Example Tree and Forest Committee Duties

- Direct a survey or inventory of existing town trees and forest lands in order to improve understanding of the town’s forest resources.
- Develop and recommend a Tree Management Plan.
- Identify areas of town in need of additional beautification and plantings.
- Develop and maintain a list of recommended species for planting on public spaces.
- Seek and apply for grants to assist the town in its efforts to achieve its vision.
- Promote public knowledge and awareness of the benefits of trees and forests.
- Act, in an advisory capacity, on tree related issues with respect to development, re-development and management of public properties.