



City of Tampa Urban and Community Forestry Grant: Toward the Development of a Strategy for Urban Forest Sustainability

FINAL REPORT: 3/31/2009

Introduction

The primary goal of this project was to develop initial Strategies for Urban Forest Sustainability and prepare many of the elements necessary to eventually create a comprehensive Urban Forestry Master Plan. We accomplished this goal through a stakeholder driven, publicly supported process that built upon the results of existing scientific efforts. This brief final report summarizes the process, products and results of the efforts supported by the Urban and Community Forestry Grant (U&CF).

Process and Products

Work efforts supported by the U&CF grant are outlined below in chronological order. Based on revised ideas to better achieve project goals, and with agreement with City staff, the specific order of tasks and exact specification of work efforts differs slightly from the original project plan. The following is an outline and brief description of specific efforts.

Baseline urban forest data (funded by City as a match for U&CF grant)

The impetus for this project was the City of Tampa Urban Ecological Analysis 2006-2007. This project was funded directly by the City and serves as a match for the U&CF grant. Final products of this analysis included high-resolution tree and vegetation cover maps, analysis of tree canopy change from 1976 to 2006, results of UFORE analysis such as composition, structure, health, invasive and exotic species occurrence, environmental and economic benefits, and other relevant analysis.

Products resulting from this task:

1. City of Tampa Urban Ecological Analysis 2006-2007 ([TampaUEA2006-7 FinalReport.pdf](#))
2. Presentation of results to Tampa City Council on 4/24/2008 ([TampaUEA CityCouncil.pdf](#))

Public Workshop.

Results of the Urban Ecological Analysis and educational programming related to the benefits of trees and urban forestry were presented at a half-day public workshop called the *Mayor's*

Symposium on Community Trees and the Urban Forest. Over 128 people attended the symposium, representing concerned citizens, planners, neighborhood associations, developers, business leaders and government agencies. In addition, the Sun Coast Section of the American Planning Association Florida Chapter provided 1.5 AICP Certification Maintenance credits for planners who attended the event. Facilitated working groups were included to gather public concerns and issues associated with Sustaining Tampa's Urban Forest.

Products resulting from this task:

1. Flyer advertising the symposium and agenda ([TampaMayorSymposium.pdf](#))
2. Fact sheets distributed to symposium participants ([TampaUrbanForest_AllFactSheets.pdf](#))
3. PowerPoint presentation used during symposium ([TampaUEA2006_Symposium.pdf](#))
4. Symposium results: Open Forum Responses ([Symposium_OpenForumResults.pdf](#))

Mayor's Steering Committee on Urban Forest Sustainability

The efforts of the steering committee represented a major part of the U&CF project. The committee was formed with representatives of a diversity of stakeholder groups, including: the Mayor's Beautification Program; Tampa Bay Builders Association; Arborists; Tampa Reforestation and Environmental Efforts; Tampa Electric Company; Urban Foresters; and the neighborhood and community associations within the City of Tampa. Meetings were organized and directed by a team from the University of Florida, University of South Florida and Hillsborough County Extension. Through a process of open discussion and facilitated decision making the steering committee identified a vision statement, goals and implementable strategies to guide urban forestry policy and management efforts within the City of Tampa. The work effort included four meetings:

- September 16, 2008: Development of a Vision for Tampa's Urban Forest
- October 21, 2008: Goals Development
- November 18, 2008: Strategy Development
- January 20, 2009: Completion of work efforts and presentation of next steps

Products resulting from this task:

1. Letter to conformed committee members ([SteeringCommittee_ParticipantLetter.pdf](#))
2. Presentation at first meeting ([TampaUEA2006_Committee_9-16-08.pdf](#))
3. Steering Committee Meeting Agendas ([SteeringCommittee_Agendas.pdf](#))
4. Minutes from Meeting 1 ([CommitteeMeeting1_minutes.pdf](#))
5. Minutes from Meeting 2 ([CommitteeMeeting2_minutes.pdf](#))
6. Minutes from Meeting 3 ([CommitteeMeeting3_minutes.pdf](#))
7. Presentation at final meeting ([TampaUEA2006_Committee_1-20-09.pdf](#))
8. Committee's Final Vision, Goals and Strategies ([TampaUF_Vision-Goals-Strategies.pdf](#))

Forest Opportunity Spectrum Analysis

The Forest Opportunity Spectrum (FOS) was a method to identify existing and possible urban tree canopy locations. The project was modeled after the Forest Opportunity Spectrum analysis

developed by the USDA Forest Service's Northern Research Station and the Spatial Analysis Laboratory (SAL) of the University of Vermont and used with cities such as Baltimore, Maryland and New York City. The goal of the project was to leverage the high resolution geospatial datasets developed during the Urban Ecological Analysis to compute UTC metrics at the parcel level and summarize this information both by land use and by spatial distribution. Detailed information on Tampa's existing and possible UTC should be used to inform strategic planning for urban forest planting, management and educational goal setting efforts in the City. In addition to the FOS analysis, project partners have arranged for a related training session for Florida Urban Foresters and Planners. The training session will be an online presentation by Dr. Morgan Grove from the USDA Forest Service's Northern Research Station to educate attendees about the Forest Opportunity Spectrum approach and the lessons learned from major northeastern cities where the methods have been employed.

Product resulting from this task:

1. A Report on the City of Tampa's Existing and Possible Urban Tree Canopy ([Tampa FOS Document.pdf](#))
2. Training/Educational presentation by Dr. Morgan Grove from the USDA (scheduled)

Community Preferences Survey (funded outside U&CF grant)

The University of Florida, Hillsborough County Extension, and University of South Florida are currently surveying City of Tampa neighborhood association members and residents to identify the perceptions of community members regarding urban forests. Although not supported by the U&CF grant, the survey results will be analyzed within the context of the Urban Ecological Analysis, Symposium, Steering Committee, and Forest Opportunity Spectrum to inform the future development of an Urban Forest Management Plan.

Results and Next Steps

The specific products mentioned above will be used by stakeholders the City of Tampa as part of general and specific urban forest related planning efforts. In addition to the broader implications of the U&CF supported work efforts, there are several specific outcomes worthy of note. The following represent direct and indirect results of the increased focus on urban forestry brought to Tampa in association with the U&CF grant project.

- City of Tampa Strategic Plan. Each year the City of Tampa develops a strategic plan for the operations of government. This year, the City incorporated specific points within the strategic plan based on the knowledge gained as part of the urban forest efforts. For example, in choosing where to plant trees the plan indicates City staff will "Evaluate site locations for appropriateness according to Best Management Practices and the Urban Forest Steering Committee Goals and Strategies." See [StrategicPlanElements.pdf](#).
- Comprehensive Plan Elements. In 2008, the City of Tampa updated its Comprehensive Plan (currently undergoing review by State of Florida Department of Community Affairs).

Specific elements were included in the updated comprehensive plan focused on Urban Forestry. Specifically, a new Urban Forestry section was added to the plan to include policies specific to the goals of urban forestry. For example, “Objective 38.27. The City of Tampa will maximize the retention and enhancement of the City’s mature native shade tree canopy for the environmental value and for the contribution to this City’s quality of life.” The inclusion of an urban forestry section means that future development plans within the City, such as the new form-based zoning approach, will include urban trees as an important consideration. See [TampaCompPlan_UrbanForest.pdf](#)

- Restructuring of City of Tampa Parks and Recreation Department. The increased focus on urban forestry contributed to the successful restructuring of the City’s Urban Forest Management staff. The City hired a new Urban Forester to focus on operations management, and restructured an existing position to focus on planning and regulatory efforts related to urban forestry. Hiring an Urban Forestry was one of the strategies which emerged from the Committee on Urban Forest Sustainability. The U&CF project helped the City maintain support for these positions even given the serious economic climate recently facing Florida communities.

The U&CF grant helped the City achieve great progress, but there remains much work to do to ensure the sustainability of Tampa’s urban forest. The following represents the possible next steps related to urban forestry in Tampa which are currently under consideration and/or planning.

- Form-based Zoning. The updated Tampa Comprehensive Plan outlines form-based zoning as future approach to community development. As part of the guidelines for these efforts, landscaping, trees and the urban forest are identified as important components of a form-based design process. Products from the above listed tasks should be utilized during the development of form-based zoning for specific communities.
- Tree Ordinance. Chapter 13 of the City Land Development Code will eventually be revised. Tampa’s tree ordinance has at times been the subject of very divisive debate among the same stakeholders represented on the *Mayor’s Steering Committee on Urban Forest Sustainability*. The success of the effort to craft a vision, goals and strategies for urban forest sustainability demonstrates that these stakeholders actually share much in common related to urban forest management. This project provided a constructive format for discourse that can be used as a template for future discussions related to the tree ordinance. Perhaps more importantly, the project has built a level of trust between stakeholders which should help promote a collegial environment for future debates.
- Parks and Recreation Department Operations. Like all City Departments, Parks and Recreation has been faced with the challenge to provide services with a reduced budget. The outcomes of the various grant-related initiatives described above provide a certain

degree of guidance for the City to focus efforts where they are needed and desired. City staff will use these products to inform both planning efforts (e.g. form-based zoning) and operational management of specific programs. For example, Parks and Recreation staff can now begin to answer questions about where to focus tree planting and management efforts, which land uses offer the greatest potential for tree enhancement efforts, and what goals should be considered when targeting specific programs.

- Urban Forest Management Plan.** The development of an approved Urban Forest 10-year Management Plan and annual operational plans is the next step being considered by the partners involved in the U&CF grant related efforts. The Management Plan would incorporate the results of the U&CF grant efforts together with the related Community Preferences Survey to developed land use specific urban forest management approaches (see conceptual process diagram shown below).

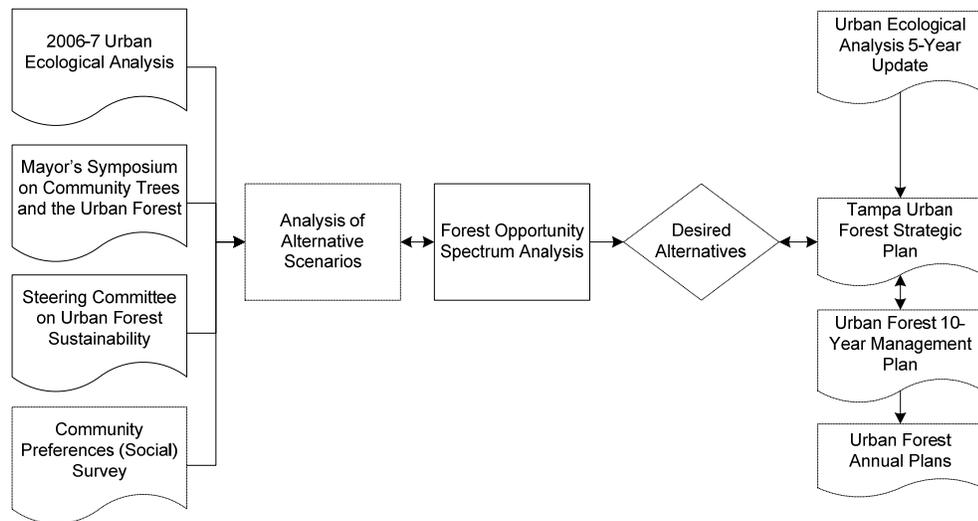


Figure 1. Conceptual process to create Urban Forest Management Plan.

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