

# BUILDING STAKEHOLDER CAPACITY

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Photos courtesy The Greening of Detroit



**The Greening of Detroit provides tree-planting assistance to community groups.**

**W**hen neighborhood associations, church groups, schools or other organizations in the Detroit, Michigan area need help in accomplishing tree projects, The Greening of Detroit is there to help. Capacity building is their business. When a community group has an idea for a tree planting project, a leader of the group discusses the idea with The Greening of Detroit and completes a project application. The group is asked to designate two members to act as organizers and liaison. It is their job to recruit help and relay information. The Greening of Detroit provides

technical advice such as site evaluation, species recommendations, and how many people will be needed for the actual planting. The group is responsible for funding, but not without helpful advice from experienced fund raisers, if needed. The Greening of Detroit orders materials, taking advantage of their nursery license and contacts with growers to get the best prices, and arranges for delivery of the trees to the planting site. Trained volunteers from The Greening of Detroit are on hand during the planting to provide assistance and instructions on follow-up care.

## What Is Stakeholder Capacity?

In the simplest terms, “capacity” is having the ability to do the job. If volunteer groups are formed, cultural minorities are successfully recruited, and the needs of sustainable urban forestry are identified, it will all come to naught if the citizens do not have the skills and information to carry out projects and accomplish goals. For example, if it is decided that trees are needed on a barren street or housing development, stakeholder capacity must be sufficient to know how trees can be obtained through public resources or private funds, what permission is needed, what technical help is available and – if the work is to be done on a volunteer basis – the right trees to plant, how to order, how to plant and how to care for the trees, and many other things that go beyond simply wanting more trees. Success depends on a group’s collective ability to overcome the unknowns they face and compete successfully for acceptance and support of their ideas.

## Opportunities for Self Education

For the highly motivated, there are many opportunities to learn about the technical aspects of sustainable urban forestry and the social and communication skills that make implementation possible. Reading this book and similar publications is a good first step. Another might be to order a complete set of Tree City USA Bulletins available from The National Arbor Day Foundation and to contact your state urban and community forestry coordinator to receive your state’s newsletter. ‘Must’ reading would also include:

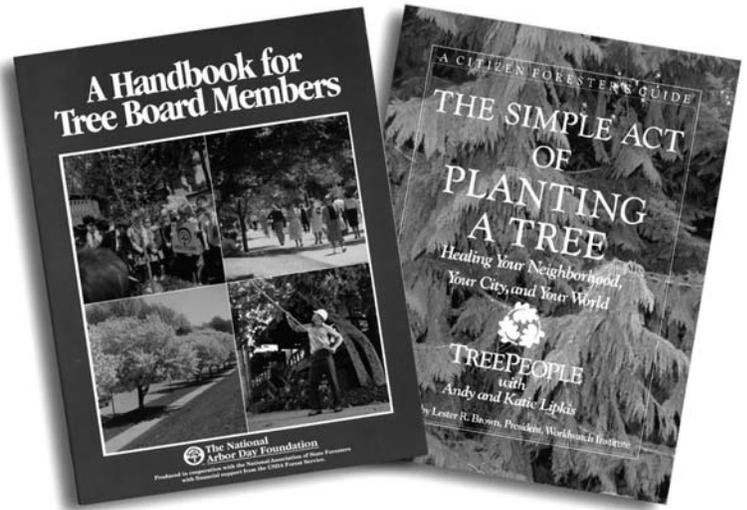
*The Simple Act of Planting A Tree* by Andy and Katie Lipkis (TreePeople, 12601 Mulholland Dr., Beverly Hills, CA 90210)

*A Handbook for Tree Board Members* by Gene W. Grey (The National Arbor Day Foundation, 100 Arbor Ave., Nebraska City, NE 68410)

There are many textbooks available that, although intended for professionals, are easy for most lay citizens to understand. Two that are especially helpful are:

*Urban Forestry: Planning and Managing Urban Greenspaces* by Robert W. Miller (Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ)

*Public Relations and Communications for Natural Resource Managers* by James R. Fazio and Douglas L. Gilbert (Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., Dubuque, IA)



*Reading books is a great first step in learning about the technical aspects of sustainable community forestry.*

For self-learners with easy access to the Internet, a whole world of learning and networking is available. For starters, the following sites are recommended, with links to an almost endless array of other organizations, individuals and sources of help:

[www.treelink.org](http://www.treelink.org)  
[www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org)  
[www.americanforests.org](http://www.americanforests.org)  
[www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com)

Another Internet resource is an entire Web course on urban forestry available through Utah State University. For more information phone 435/797-5570 or go to: <http://online.usu.edu/classes/fr5650>.

## Workshops and Conferences

Education is one of the best investments an organization can make in building stakeholder capacity. Experts are available to provide periodic workshops at your location. For example, Cooperative Extension agents or Master Gardeners can give workshops on pruning or pest detection and control.

- Muscatine, Iowa, put an interesting twist on a Tree Care Workshop holding it in January with the local meteorologist presenting “Tree Survival in Iowa’s Weather.” The workshop then moved outside for a pruning demonstration by the county extension horticulturist.

## More Than a Workshop



The City of Anderson and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Forestry Division sponsor the Madison County Community Tree Stewards Course to enable citizens to learn about tree growth, tree identification, right tree/right place tree selection, care and maintenance of trees, the benefits of trees, and to have state and local opportunities for contributing to the urban forest.

In exchange for six weeks of one-evening-a-week training culminating in a certificate of recognition and a Tree Steward t-shirt and lapel pin, participants are asked to donate forty hours of volunteer service over two years.

- Hot Springs, Arkansas' free tree workshop focused on correcting storm damage, safety procedures and how to evaluate hazard trees.
- The Athens-Clarke County Tree Council organized a one-hour informational workshop for planners, developers, and builders to inform them of new landscape requirements in the county's revised development regulations. Presentations from the planning department, landscape management division and tree council summarized the new landscape and tree canopy cover requirements.

Conferences offer an excellent way not only to learn in formal sessions but to network with peers and experts to find solutions to problems or obtain guidance based on their experiences. Your state urban and community forestry newsletter is usually a good source of upcoming events, but here are three opportunities that can be especially helpful:

**National Urban Forest Conference** This event is sponsored every other year at various locations throughout the country. Contact American Forests (P.O. Box 2000, Washington, DC 20013, [www.amfor.org](http://www.amfor.org)).

**International Society of Arboriculture** An annual conference held at different locations throughout the country. Contact ISA (P.O. Box 3129, Champaign, IL 61826, [www.isa~arbor.com](http://www.isa~arbor.com)).

**The National Arbor Day Foundation** The National Arbor Day Foundation conducts workshops and conferences throughout the year both at Lied

Lodge & Conference Center in Nebraska City, Nebraska, and at various venues throughout the nation. For a list of upcoming events, visit the Web site: [www.arboday.org/programs/Conferences.html](http://www.arboday.org/programs/Conferences.html) or phone 402/474-5655.

### Keeping Up on Research Results

At the heart of sustainable urban forestry are people and trees. Research results on the human dimension are published in a wide range of scholarly publications that are not easy for most



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citizens to either access or read. To search for social science results, four sources that provide good starting points are:

**USDA Forest Service Research Experiment Stations** Begin by going to the Web site: [www.fs.fed.us/library/pubs.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/library/pubs.html). From there, click on each research station or the one in your area, and browse their list of publications. Most are available free and are written in language understandable by lay people.

**National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council** For more than a decade, NUCFAC has sponsored research projects. These may be found at the Web site: <http://www.treelink.org/nucfac/index.htm>.

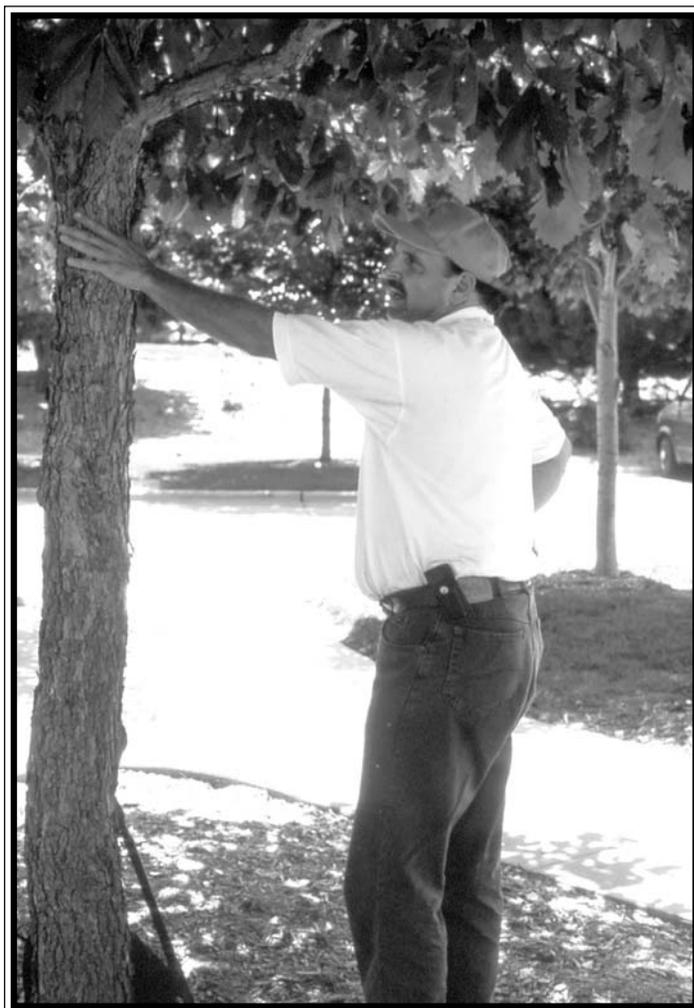
**Human-Environment Research Laboratory**  
[www.herl.uiuc.edu](http://www.herl.uiuc.edu)

**Human Dimensions of Urban and Community Forestry** [www.cfr.washington.edu/research.enumind](http://www.cfr.washington.edu/research.enumind)

The above sites can also lead you to such biological and management research results as the latest findings on how to control pests or whether or not it pays to fertilize trees. The research often debunks old practices such as tightly staking trees, or it reveals new cultivars and uses of waste wood. Staying current is an important part of building stakeholder capacity. Again, there are many publications where these results are made public, but the best single source is the *Journal of Arboriculture*. This monthly publication is available through the International Society of Arboriculture at the address listed earlier in this chapter.

## Using Experts

No organization can 'go it alone' and be successful. Networking with people in similar organizations or neighboring communities can help build capacity. So can tapping into the vast pool of experts who are available. Sometimes a consultant is needed, and his or her services come with a price. For specific jobs such as drafting a plan or evaluating 'save trees' in a proposed development, this may be the best route if funds are available. Consultants are usually listed in the Yellow Pages and in trade journals. Consulting arborists who are affiliated with the American Society of Consulting Arborists can be located for any area of the country



*Tapping into the network of experts can help build capacity.*

through a search feature at: [www.asca-consultants.org](http://www.asca-consultants.org). Other experts who are usually willing to provide guidance or answers to technical questions include:

- local arborists and tree care company employees
- Master Gardeners and Cooperative Extension agents
- urban foresters and park personnel
- state urban & community forestry coordinators
- college professors

Environmental groups and social activists are particularly good sources of advice for helping with political action, media assistance and organizational matters.

In short, the help is out there. Building stakeholder capacity first begins with the awareness to do so, the will and persistence to grow and improve, and knowing where to go for help.