

SECURING FINANCIAL SUPPORT

CHAPTER NINE



San Francisco and Salt Lake City are good examples of the relationship between local advocacy groups and success in funding community forestry.



Photo courtesy/ TreeUtah

When the cities of San Francisco and Salt Lake were facing budget cuts, some municipal officials wanted to drastically cut urban forestry programs. Friends of the Urban Forest in San Francisco and TreeUtah rallied their members, demonstrated public support, and convinced politicians to retain public funding for urban forestry.

Alice Ewen Walker, executive director of the national Alliance for Community Trees, used the above example in *California Trees* to make the point that an important role of local groups is to help assure that urban forestry is adequately funded. In urban forestry, securing and maintaining financial support is never easy and it requires a number of strategies.

Consistent, reliable and adequate funding is a key to sustainability. Since trees are a local resource, the ideal would be for this support to come from local sources. The ultimate source is line item funding by city government as an essential part of a community's infrastructure. This should be the goal in municipalities of all sizes.

A Goal for Sustainability – Local Support

Ultimately, community trees are a local responsibility. Federal assistance, state assistance, donations, and special grants are currently providing important help for planting trees and establishing community forestry programs. But no source of funds should be considered a substitute for including tree replacement or care in municipal budgets. Abundant, healthy trees are of value to the entire community. A forestry program is as much a municipal responsibility as streets and fire protection. Incorporating trees into the mainstream of municipal fiscal responsibility should be a goal in all strategic planning for the future of trees in America.

— John Rosenow, President
The National Arbor Day Foundation

Success in maintaining sufficient city budget support for trees can hinge on developing a convincing budget proposal and making a professional presentation.

New programs are available to help calculate quantifiable costs and benefits of community trees. Information about a community's trees is combined with variables such as air pollutant concentrations, local utility rates, and tree maintenance costs to arrive at the net value of trees in the community. This information can help justify your forestry budget request.

- The USDA Forest Service Center for Urban Forest Research reports that a study undertaken to quantify the benefits and costs of Modesto, California's urban forest was used to justify the city's annual municipal forestry budget. The

research identified the benefits of energy savings, atmospheric CO₂ reductions, air quality improvements, storm water runoff reductions, and other benefits. Total fiscal benefits in these areas were estimated at \$4.9 million less net expenses incurred in management of street and park trees of \$2.6 million. The result was a net annual benefit of \$2.3 million – a benefit cost ratio of \$1.89 returned for each \$1 expended.

- CITYgreen, a GIS application developed by American Forests for land-use planning and policy-making, calculates dollar benefits based on specific site conditions. By analyzing storm water runoff, air quality, summer energy savings, carbon storage and avoidance, and tree growth, CITYgreen uses scientific research to calculate the dollar value of trees. Urban foresters can use a variety of products produced by CITYgreen including reports that summarize key findings, maps of the resource, models for future growth, and colorful, easy-to-understand presentations.

In addition to justifying a management budget, consider justifying tree planting as part of infrastructure improvement projects. The City of Milwaukee has had success making trees part of its street and road improvement projects. Using this approach, a project tally may look something like this, with trees being an essential – but relatively inexpensive – part of the project.

PER DOLLAR PROJECT SUMMARY

Water main	\$.245
Pavement	\$.223
Storm sewer	\$.167
Sanitary sewer	\$.130
Sidewalk	\$.074
Curb/gutter	\$.059
Light	\$.043
Turf	\$.037
Trees	\$.022

TOTAL: \$ 1.00

“Think about it. Trees are the only element of the urban infrastructure that actually appreciates in value. Name one other part of your infrastructure that does that! Yet in most cities the urban forest is taken so for granted that trees are not considered part of infrastructure.”

— Pepper Provenzano
TreeLink Director

Unfortunately, with competition being what it is for limited tax dollars, sustainability may be an elusive goal for many communities. Even where such funding now exists, as the example of San Francisco and Salt Lake City point out, there is no guarantee from one year to the next that the dollars will actually be made available. Therefore, the following sections highlight a few other sources that can be used to supplement local funding or to prime the pump, so to speak, and start projects that will demonstrate the value of urban forestry and help win more permanent support.

Federal and State Assistance

Challenge Cost Share Grants

The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 and ‘Farm Bill’ legislation in 1990 and subsequent years, have provided the majority of federal funds available for urban forestry. Of particular interest to local groups are the challenge cost share grants made available under provisions of these laws. This money is made available through the offices of state urban and community forestry coordinators within the state forester’s department. The grants are offered annually and have been used in thousands of cities for such projects as:

- tree planting
- arboreta and demonstration sites
- workshops and training programs
- seed money for hiring a city forester
- tree inventories and plans
- special events
- brochures and educational materials



NUCFAC Grants

The National Urban and Community Forestry



Advisory Council was another outcome of the 1990 Farm Bill. Among the projects of this group are annual grants funded by the USDA Forest Service for projects that meet the Council’s goals for that particular year. Requests for proposals are issued each autumn and usually center on innovative communication methods, demonstration projects, research, and projects that serve the under-represented and expand diversity within the volunteer ranks of urban forestry. For information, go the Council’s Web site at: www.treelink.org/nucfac/index.htm.

The National Tree Trust



Congress created this organization in 1990 and included an endowment authorization to form partnerships with private sector interests to aid urban forestry. The trust has made thousands of free trees available for planting on public property and offers Partnership Enhancement Grants to assist nonprofit organizations with tree-related projects such as:

- community tree nurseries
- tree planting/maintenance
- education/training
- overhead/administration



The National Tree Trust helps fund community tree nurseries.

U.S. Department of Transportation

Significant funding is available annually through the Transportation Equity Act of 1998 to help “preserve and create more livable communities where roads blend with and preserve the natural, social and cultural environment.” The funds have been used to plant trees at the entrances of cities, at highway interchanges, along bike paths, at airports, in parking lots and at other locations related to public roads and transportation. How this money is made available differs in each state. In some states, it is made available through the state highway department. In others, it is passed on to the urban and community forestry coordinator to more efficiently make the funding available along with other grants for urban forestry. Contact your state highway department to find out more about this opportunity in your state.



The U.S. Department of Transportation funds projects to help “preserve and create more livable communities.”

*Resource
Conservation and
Development
Programs*



RC&D councils are found throughout the United States and are increasingly becoming interested in urban forestry programs. The organization is a unique partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and local individuals who are technically part of a nonprofit corporation. Projects are undertaken at the discretion of each council. Some funds are usually available for projects, but the real opportunity is that RC&D personnel and volunteers are masters at putting together partnerships to help secure grants, donations and cost-sharing arrangements. For more information, contact the RC&D in your county at the federal building or through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

*U.S. Environmental Protection
Agency*

The EPA annually provides financial assistance through its Environmental Justice Small Grants Program for community-based projects that address environmental justice issues. The grants are up to \$20,000 each and require no matching funds. For more information visit, www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice/grants/index.html.



Corporate Sponsors

Corporate offices are besieged by nonprofit organizations wanting support in one form or another. However, the right contacts and some perseverance can often result in assistance ranging from the printing of educational materials to outright cash grants for a particular cause. The first step is to list the companies doing business in your area, or whose products are related to your cause (a tree care company, for example). Then find out what process is used by each company for accepting proposals and prepare yours accordingly. Be sure to clearly show how the company will benefit by way of publicity or other exposure.

It is a good idea to be specific in your request, but to also be flexible in case the company has a different idea. For example, in a campaign to restore the watershed around the Chesapeake Bay, rather than make a one-time donation, Bass Pro Shops allowed donations to be collected from customers at one of its stores. This money was then matched 5 to 1 by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and several other partners. In short, partnerships can be as creative as the parties involved want them to be.

Foundations

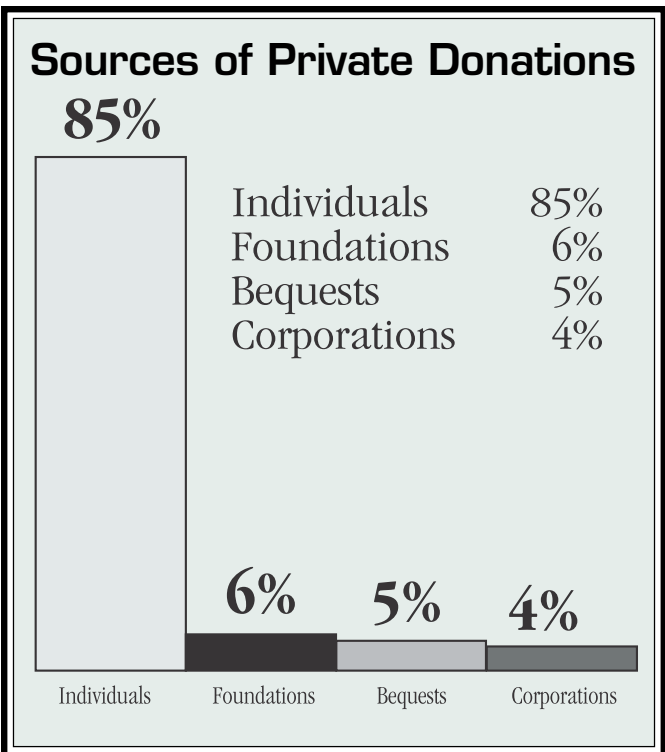
There is undoubtedly a charitable foundation somewhere that would be willing to fund your

project. The problem is to find it! The thousands of foundations in the U.S. all have their well-defined areas of interest. Fortunately, environmental improvement, including urban forestry, is one of the areas that many are willing to support.

If you are just beginning to search for a foundation to approach, the best place to start is your public library. There are various directories available that list the many foundations, sometimes sorting them by interest area. Two helpful Internet resources are The Foundation Center at <http://fdncenter.org> and The Grantsmanship Center at www.tgci.com. Also try the Internet using "Grant Making Foundation" in your favorite search engine. Two examples of the sites you will find are:

www.foundations.org/grantmakers

http://directory.google.com/Top/Society/Organizations/Grant-Making_Foundations



Marc Smiley, Organizational Development

Secrets to Securing Grant Funds

1. Follow the instructions provided by the funder.
2. Provide complete information, but keep it as simple and straightforward as possible.
3. Make the proposal easy to read. Use fonts, spacing, and layouts that are easy on the eyes.
4. Describe your organization, the project, why the project is needed, and why your organization is the one to do it.
5. Describe how your project is a fit with the funder.
6. Outline the steps you'll take to carry the project to completion.
7. List the specific goals of the project and how you will measure your success in meeting them.
8. Explain how the project will continue into the future.
9. Outline a clear budget.
10. Check your proposal to be sure punctuation, spelling and grammar are correct.
11. Be sure you've included everything requested by the funder.
12. Submit your proposal on time.
13. Obtain letters of support from the community.

Individuals Willing to Help

Notice in the following chart that most support comes not from corporations or foundations, but from individuals. This generosity is expressed largely in direct donations that may be cash, stocks, real

estate, or useable items like computers or digging equipment. These individuals may be a few local people of wealth, your members and friends, or many ordinary citizens who share an interest in your cause.

There are many ways to approach people for donations and we are all experienced at being at the receiving end of solicitations. However, Marc Smiley of Marc Smiley, Organizational Development (www.marcsmiley.com), points out that not all contacts are equal. He has provided the following summary of effectiveness that may help guide you in planning a campaign:

Using this approach... you can expect this many prospects to give:

Personal, face-to-face solicitation	50%
Personal phone call	25%
Personal letter	15%
Phone-a-thon	10%
Direct mail	less than 3%

By all means, don't overlook groups of service-oriented individuals for both financial assistance and in-kind contributions of labor, equipment and materials. Some that have provided excellent support for tree projects in the past include:

- ✓ Rotary and Kiwanis
- ✓ Master Gardeners
- ✓ Garden Clubs

- ✓ Local schools, colleges and nature centers
- ✓ Scout groups
- ✓ Churches

Helping Yourself

Sometimes the best way to raise funds or stretch dollars is simply to do it yourself. Community forestry is rife with examples of tree boards, volunteer organizations and even units of municipal government that have found ways to move their programs ahead without adequate budgets or grant support. Here are a few. A good brainstorming session will yield others. The only limit is your imagination.

- Plant trees as memorials. For a set, minimum amount, a donation will result in a street or park tree being planted. Sometimes a plaque accompanies the tree, or a central record of dedicated trees can be kept. Promote trees as memorials not only for the departed, but as gifts for graduations, birthdays, opening a new business, etc.
- ‘Feed the Oaks’ is a program similar to the above except contributions are used to fertilize and care for Covington, Louisiana’s 200 beautiful live oak trees.
- Boise, Idaho, “sells” public rest benches, complete with engraved labels, to supplement forestry department funds. The benches are made from street tree removals.
- Many cities sell firewood cut from removed trees, or other products such as compost, mulch and lumber.
- Garage sales, bake sales, food or craft booths at fairs, raffles, charity balls and tree sales can raise large sums of money. In England, 50 famous artists and personalities donated paintings, drawings, sculptures or photographs of ‘my favorite tree’ for an auction. The money was used to plant trees on the east side of London.



- Tax checkoffs in more than 60 percent of the states now allow taxpayers to donate from their refunds or to add a donation to support causes that are listed. Community forestry can be one of the causes.
- New Jersey has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars through special license plate sales.
- Where partnerships have been developed with utilities in some communities, billing statements have been used to raise money for trees. Sometimes a specific amount, such as 15 cents, is added to each utility bill. The recipient has the option of paying it or ignoring it. Another method is to ask bill payers to round the billed amount to a higher figure of their choice with the difference contributed to tree programs.
- City tree banks in many communities allow developers to contribute money as part of their mitigation package.



Plant trees as memorials and commemorative gifts.