



Public Policy: *How Laws and Policies Are Influenced*

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Public Policy: How Laws and Policies Are Influenced

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This material was compiled in cooperation with William F. Elmendorf of Pennsylvania State University, School of Forest Resources, Urban and Community Forestry.

www.sfr.cas.psu.edu/GeneralPublic.html

HOW LAWS
AND POLICY ARE
INFLUENCED

Introduction

WHAT IS PUBLIC POLICY?

In communities large and small, public policy is the mechanism by which issues impacting the “public good” are debated, analyzed, researched, argued over, and ultimately decided. This process of, “...some action taken by government to resolve issues of public concern” is commonly referred to as **public policy**.

Often major public policy change is caused by outrage, a response to something that has happened (e.g., the removal of street trees or private property trees for a new development), or concern over something that should have happened.

Land use and land protection is largely shaped by public policies, impacting how trees, forests, watersheds, parks, and wilderness areas are managed and conserved. Public policies can support solutions to complex natural resource issues or, in some cases, inflict damage to those resources. Public policies can address a variety of issues and foster a variety of desired outcomes, such as:

- Beneficial uses
- Health and safety
- Preservation of natural or cultural resources
- Economic growth
- Transportation
- Financial and economic interests

Understanding public policy and how it works is critical to knowing if the natural resources you want to protect and maintain have the necessary

legal protection. Are there opposing interests seeking to influence a different policy? Have your stakeholders considered the impact of proposed policy changes on residents, commercial interests, or the city government? Are there hidden, unintended consequences? How can you effectively lobby or influence the appropriate official, agency, or government entity?

Policy for a local government should reflect the values, standards, desires, and abilities of a municipality and should not be merely borrowed from others.

Local governments create and interpret public policies based on a body of knowledge compiled from several sources, including:

- General, comprehensive, or development plan (a planning document that guides growth and development)
- Elements of the general or comprehensive plan such as transportation and land use
- Ordinances such as zoning, subdivision and land development, and street tree
- Resolutions passed by a governing body
- Conditions or rules regarding land development
- Staff reports
- Memos from leaders
- Council decisions and prevailing philosophy

Any group, whether a grassroots or a national organization, can effectively leverage public policy “tools” to oppose regulations, pass legislation, or enforce a law.



HOW LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKS

Local government provides citizens with basic community services such as police and fire protection, roads, and utilities, and funds these services through taxes and fees. Informed participation in the decision-making process is critical to a better planned and managed community. Most local governments provide for citizen and volunteer input through:

- Commissions
- Boards
- Public hearings
- Public elections

Through a wide array of prescribed legislation, decision-making, and municipal processes, good local government:

- Provides the services and other resources essential to a prosperous, orderly, and well-maintained community
- Provides long-term stewardship of public assets and natural resources
- Encourages strong economic and planned growth

PUBLIC FINANCING OF CONSERVATION

There is a variety of voluntary incentives and forms of compensation that state and local governments use to encourage land conservation. These can be used alone or in conjunction with regulatory approaches:

- **Less-Than-Fee-Simple Acquisition** enables protection of the natural environment by easement, where the easement buyers pay only for land rights that need to be protected (e.g., development rights). This concept allows owners to cash in on development values, while land is

conserved and managed as open space. It also lessens the annual tax burden for private property that may be held for conservation purposes, as the sale of development rights lowers the assessed value of the land. This method is increasingly used to preserve working farms and forestlands, enabling owners to donate development rights to the state or a land trust in exchange for a tax deduction equivalent to the value of the donated rights.

- **Full-Fee Acquisition** can be used to purchase land outright, including all property rights (e.g., through bond issue). The creation of new parks within already developed urban or suburban areas typically requires such purchase.
- **Tax Incentives** in the form of reduced property tax rates can be granted for individuals who hold their land in open space for a period of time under contract with state or local government.
- **Developer Incentives** can motivate builders to develop in a particular area or configuration. In exchange for not developing part of a parcel, the locality may allow the developer increased density, decreased development and impact fees, decreased standards (e.g., parking and street width), and/or provide preferential or expedited permit processing.

HOW TO GET INTO THE BUDGET

Local government budgets are divided into two parts: the operating budget and the capital budget. The **operating budget** includes regular operating expenditures such as city staff, trash pickup, policing, and maintenance; these are financed through annual tax revenues from sales tax, property tax, and other sources. The **capital budget** funds road and transportation improvements, new building

construction, and other large scale projects; these are usually financed over time through issuance of municipal bonds. Both budgets are potential sources of support for urban forestry.

Some functions (policing, for example) may be supported by a mix of municipal, county, state, and federal dollars. In general, urban forestry, parks, and green spaces are funded from local tax dollars. In addition, some state and federal transportation grants or community development block grant funds can supplement local funds to support landscape improvements when they are part of a larger project, such as road upgrades.

There are **four ways to influence the budget process**.

All involve persuasion and preparation on your part. The more points of influence you engage, the more successful you will be.

1. Contact **city budget and management** staff and ask for inclusion in the preliminary budget released by the mayor/county executive. Start with the budget office and ask for the staff member who monitors the agency or issue you are concerned with.
2. Contact a supportive **councilperson** and ask him or her to introduce your item in the budget.
3. Meet with the relevant **agency heads** and ask for funding in the department budget (transportation and parks and recreation are likely targets.) Generally, agency heads will be reluctant to propose new programs if the mayor has not promoted such expansion.
4. Build **public support** for your cause. Elected officials respond to organized groups of voters.

Advocates should begin meeting with council members, executive budget staff, and agency heads six months before the next fiscal year. Get to know the budget staff in your mayor or city manager's office and find out which council staff participate

in budget decisions—they are powerful people behind the scenes.

There are also challenges associated with **influencing local government** and its impact on urban and community forestry. Bill Elmendorf and A.E. Luloff, in the article, "Using Ecosystem-Based and Traditional Land-Use Planning to Conserve Greenspace," describe **three key challenges to creating better urban forest policies**:

- Lack of cooperation and partnership between multiple jurisdictions and agencies
- Lack of awareness and involvement by community foresters and arborists in the policymaking and land use planning process
- Lack of tree inventories, green infrastructure maps, geographic information systems (GIS), economic analyses, or other data about urban forests that would support informed decision-making by officials

Nonprofits have a unique leadership role in impacting the public agenda. Nonprofits, citizens associations, and volunteer organizations are vehicles for organizing and communicating citizen concerns. As advocates and subject matter experts, citizens groups serve a vital function. **Nonprofits can:**

- Provide nonpartisan expertise to help leaders become more informed
- Educate voters about complex problems
- Provide a forum for exchange of viewpoints
- Track and engage the policymaking process by participating in hearings, public comment sessions, and other means of input
- Create sustained momentum and form coalitions to support important public policies

WORKING WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOR SUCCESSFUL URBAN FORESTS

Developing good relationships with community officials is essential in putting “green issues” on the agendas of local governments. Citizen advocacy groups, including those concerned with trees and other environmental issues, often react quickly in response to a crisis, and sometimes they disband after the immediate problem is resolved. It is best to develop working relationships with community leaders before a crisis occurs.

By finding out the different roles and powers of elected officials and department heads, you can concentrate on gaining the cooperation of those who can best support your program. The mayor, county executive, or town administrator’s office is a good starting point to reach the appropriate officials. Think about the perspectives of those you are meeting with and try to understand each person’s function and priorities. Will they be supportive of green issues and do they have the power to do anything to address your concern?

Approach meetings with officials as you would other business meetings. State your concerns and ideas concisely and explain why they are important. In your discussion, use specific examples of issues and opportunities and be ready to present sound, logical arguments to support your position. Understand the costs and financial impacts of your requests and propose various options. Provide examples of other cities or towns that have implemented similar measures and explain how they fund them (taxes, permit fees, etc.).

If there is opposition to your program, consider alternatives that will enable officials to address the concerns of opposing groups. Prepare a program summary in writing with specific examples and financial information. Distribute the summary before your meeting begins and refer to it during the discussion.

Ways to Work With Community Officials

These guidelines will help you to develop successful relationships with community officials and their staff.

- Make your concerns known to community officials as early as possible in the development of a program. One of the first objectives of any community program should be to gain the support of local officials.
- Be respectful and friendly. Your objective is to gain friends and allies, not to make enemies. Give officials and staff members the opportunity to convey their thoughts and listen carefully to what they say.

- Be truthful and informative. Be clear about how many people you represent. Make sure your facts are sound. If you don't know the answer to a question, say "I don't know," and, if possible, follow up later with the answer. Credibility is valuable currency.
- Try to meet with city officials personally rather than in a public hearing to convince and solicit support for a project. A private conversation can be more comfortable for you and the official. If you are successful, you probably will be invited to speak about your program in a public forum.
- If you have been asked to discuss your program at a public hearing, take the time to prepare a professional presentation. Find out the position and attitudes of the whole council or commission and anticipate questions and concerns that you may be required to address during the hearing. Listening to questions and comments from officials can help you understand their attitudes. Take notes and be prepared to answer questions in a thoughtful manner.
- Ask local candidates to appear jointly in a nonpartisan forum during elections.
- Use letters to follow up on unresolved concerns or requests. The letter should clearly identify the problem(s), urge a resolution, and indicate that a reply is expected.
- Send helpful officials and staff letters of thanks with copies to the mayor or county executive, department heads, or other key leaders.
- To keep community leaders informed about your program, place their names on your mailing list and regularly send them copies of newsletters and other correspondence.
- Invite officials to participate in your projects. Ask them to speak at a volunteer project, lunch meeting, or other occasion, and invite them to take part in photo opportunities and news conferences.
- To further your public policy goals, host a field tour for elected officials and their staff. Showcase the positive impacts of urban forestry programs and the negative consequences of inattention to the issue. Provide a fact sheet that includes your policy suggestions, the cost of the proposed solution, the department staff resources needed, and how your proposal could be funded (general operating, development fees etc.).

When working with officials, remember that you have the right to express your views and opinions and that officials and legislators want to listen and help. You have the opportunity to bring unique information and perspectives to community leaders. Building partnerships and cooperation will greatly improve the chance of having a successful program or project.

Much of the article on this page and the preceding page was excerpted from "Fact Sheet Number 3—Urban and Community Forestry in Pennsylvania: Working with Local Governments for Successful Urban Forests" by Pennsylvania State University, College of Agricultural Sciences.

LEVERAGING PUBLIC POLICY TOOLS

There is a wide variety of regulatory tools, legal measures, and voluntary incentives that can be legislated to promote land conservation, retention of trees and other natural features, and context-sensitive design.

These tools include:

- Comprehensive plans
- Land-use plans
- Tree ordinances
- Variances
- Subdivision regulations
- Land-development permits
- Performance standards or controls
- Urban growth boundaries
- Transfer of development rights
- Acquisition of open space
- Conservation easements
- Conversions
- Landowner tax incentives

REGULATORY TOOLS

Zoning is not planning, but is an implementation tool of the comprehensive plan. One phrase found in many state enabling statutes is that zoning ordinances shall be “prepared in accordance with a comprehensive plan.”

Zoning ordinances can be effective tools for encouraging economy and ingenuity in development. Options for **zoning** to preserve natural resources include:

1. **Existing use zoning**—the legal future use of a parcel is based on the current use (e.g., rural resource)
2. **Overlay or preservation zoning**—addresses areas with unique geographical features (e.g., standards for riparian area conservation along rivers and stream corridors)
3. **Conservation zoning**—sets the groundwork for conservation subdivision by providing for smaller lot sizes, clustered development, and conservation of a certain percent of open space
4. **Sensitive area ordinance**—used to regulate and oversee the removal of vegetation, destruction of wooded areas, and to limit grading on steep slopes
5. **Tree preservation ordinance**—protects worthy individual trees or groups of trees from removal and damage during development
6. **Timber harvest ordinance**—provides standards and regulations for timber harvest operations (e.g., harvesting technique, road and landing construction, hours of operation)



Subdivision Ordinance

A subdivision ordinance is a general ordinance that regulates lot layout and design and development safety and quality. Subdivision ordinances can be designed to work with zoning ordinances to conserve open space. For instance, zoning can provide for greater density, smaller lot sizes, and greater conservation of open space while the subdivision ordinance can provide for stronger design requirements and standards that support conservation.

Noted urban planner Randall Arendt advocates for an approach that inventories the natural features of a site **before** lot lines are created. He argues that a conservation subdivision requires five steps **before** lot lines are ever drawn:

1. Development of a context map that identifies the subject property in relationship with surrounding landscape
2. Completion and submittal of a natural resource inventory
3. Identification of conservation areas and creation of a detailed grading map that notes areas such as woodlots and riparian areas
4. Clustering of building sites in a manner that preserves conservation areas but achieves full density as defined by zoning
5. Alignment of streets in an optimum and safe manner to access homes

There are also other conservation tools that include:

- Transferable development rights
- Growth boundaries
- Planned residential or unit development (PDR/PUD)
- Official maps

However, the most common tool related to urban forest protection is the tree ordinance.

MOST COMMON PUBLIC POLICY TOOL FOR URBAN FOREST PROTECTION—THE TREE ORDINANCE

Community forestry ordinances are variable for each community because of different legal, environmental, social, political, and economic needs, wants, and abilities. They are important tools to help ensure that the natural environment is considered in community life and in growth and development. A planning process is used to ensure that ordinances meet the needs, desires, and values of individuals and communities. **The Model for Rational Decision Making** is a helpful tool that can support the planning process.

A policy or ordinance should:

- Provide equity for all (treat alike)
- Be of an efficient manner (most benefit for the cost)
- Improve public security (safety, well-being, quality/enjoyment of life)
- Impede personal liberty as little as possible

Types of Community Forestry Ordinances:

- **Street Tree Ordinances.** Preserve, protect, and enhance publicly owned trees and vegetation on streets and in parks, provide permit processes for tree planting and tree removal, provide tree maintenance standards, manage hazardous/nuisance trees, and manage disease and insect concerns.
- **Municipal Tree Commission Ordinances.** Enact formation and define composition of municipal tree commissions.
- **Tree Preservation Ordinances.** Preserve, protect, and enhance native and landmark trees or preserve percentages of forests in development.
- **Timber Harvest Ordinances.** Set standards for the completion of timber harvesting plans, use of public roads, protection of riparian areas, and reforestation

- **Subdivision, Zoning, and Grading Ordinances.** Preserve and protect open space, steep slopes, riparian areas, agricultural lands, and forest lands from development.
- **Landscape Ordinances.** Set guidelines and standards for landscape architecture such as the landscaping of parking lots and developments.

What Successful Community Forestry Ordinances Need:

- Use the planning process in development
- Enable public participation and education during development
- Provide authority (enforcement and restitution)
- Provide technically correct standards and guidelines
- Be enforceable in court

General Guidelines for Evaluating Ordinances:

Ordinances should meet the wants, needs, and enforcement abilities of individual municipalities. When evaluating existing or proposed ordinances, the following considerations are important:

- **Technical Feasibility.** Is it possible to fulfill the terms of the ordinance? Will the ordinance meet its intended technical effect? Are the arboricultural guidelines correct?
- **Economic and Financial Possibility.** Do the public benefits of the ordinance outweigh administrative costs, private sector compliance costs, and potential costs of conflict such as litigation?
- **Political Viability.** What is the impact on power groups including business leaders, developers, and citizen groups? Is the ordinance acceptable or threatening? Providing for public input, education, and participation early on in ordinance development can increase political viability.
- **Administrative Operability.** How well can the ordinance be administered by staff? Are the provisions for permit review, plan review, inspections, and enforcement adequate?
- **Is the Ordinance Legal?** Does the ordinance meet guidelines of state enabling legislation? Will it withstand the rigors of court if there is a challenge on the grounds of “taking”? Taking is a problem of over-regulation, which goes so far as to result in confiscation of private property without fair payment or process.



Small Group Exercise

The Model For Rational Decision Making is a public policy planning process to help you understand what will meet the needs, desires, and abilities of an individual community.

Model for Rational Decision Making

Decision-making strategy policy or agency in your community.	Describe how you can apply to a public
Analyze components/situation and make assumptions for change/future	
Identify goals for problem or plan	
Identify objectives for problem or plan	
Identify alternative courses of action (strategies) to meet objectives	
Evaluate/predict consequences of alternative strategies (using criteria and measures)	
Prioritize alternatives, and select alternatives that maximize the desirable and minimize the undesirable	
Develop criteria for evaluating success of strategies and objectives	
Formulate mechanisms for implementation (should be considered from the very beginning)	
Formulate mechanisms for feedback and analysis (measures to be used to evaluate criteria)	

ADVOCATING FOR POSITIVE CHANGE: WHY INVOLVE THE PUBLIC

By empowering the public to become involved (including developers and anyone impacted by an ordinance) you increase the public's understanding of the ordinance, increase your understanding of citizens' concerns, and increase buy-in and support. You can also decrease opposition and the future costs of conflict. Public involvement is time-consuming and can be frustrating for elected officials, professional staff, and the public. However, the time spent up-front on community inclusion can save even more time later as the ordinance is accepted and implemented without legal challenge.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSERVATION ADVOCATES

Elected officials respond to the needs and issues that voters tell them are most important. Here are four things conservation advocates can do to encourage preservation of open space:

1. Educate the Public

Conservation of open space difficult because residents and elected leaders are unaware of the benefits that green spaces provide. Furthermore, it is hard to arouse public interest and support for open space conservation until the loss of benefits is more than evident. By the time this occurs, there are few or no open space tracts left that are of suitable size, location, character, or price.

2. Strengthen Comprehensive Planning

The success of incorporating viable natural resources into community development depends on the ability of municipalities to understand and use the fundamental tools of land use planning and regulation. If local planning agencies are provided support by state enabling legislation, grants, mentoring

programs, and education, the agencies will be able to effectively use the fundamental planning tools—subsidies and incentives, taxation, regulation, public acquisition, and education. In that way, conservation of the natural environment will be more attainable. It is also important that natural resource professionals work with planners as early in the planning process as possible.

3. Advocate for a Watershed or Multi-Municipal Approach

The continuing emphasis on the role and initiative of local municipal government in providing for open space requirements—such as adequate ecological criteria and funding for acquisition and management—is unrealistic. Many municipalities are not able to raise enough public funding within their taxing authority to acquire or manage meaningful open space in a competitive land purchase arena. Creation of regional authorities (whether public, private, or a public-private partnership) that concentrate on open space conservation and facilitate cooperation and coordination between jurisdictions is a major step toward being able to conserve meaningful open space.

4. Strengthen Public Interest Groups

Clawson (1962) described the weakest link in open space conservation as the lack of an organized, articulate, effective, public interest group. He believed that open space conservation was not seen as an important political or social issue, that public apathy was extreme, and citizen advocacy and support for land use planning and the importance of open space were inefficient and insufficient. Public support and involvement continues to be an important ingredient in successful open space conservation.

Exercise: Influencing the public agenda

You are meeting with a city official to discuss issues related to protecting trees in a booming subdivision.

1. Describe the steps you would take to educate your city council person.

2. What is your ideal outcome?

3. How would you communicate a “win/win” opportunity?

Public Policy Worksheet

Goals	Organizational Considerations	Constituents, Allies, & Opponents	Decision Makers	Tactics
Long-term		Constituents	Primary Decision makers	
Intermediate		Allies	Secondary Influencers	
Short-term		Opponents		

Program Model: Public Policy

FRIENDS OF THE URBAN FOREST Advocacy Campaign to Restore Funding for San Francisco Tree Plantings

OVERVIEW

Friends of the Urban Forest (FUF) successfully advocated in 2005 to restore city funding for community-based tree plantings and maintenance. This advocacy effort involved educational meetings with politicians, government officials, and the media as well as grassroots e-mails, letters, and phone calls to local officials. Although the campaign was able to secure funding for the coming year, it was not able to achieve long-term funding for tree plantings. FUF plans to launch an effort in the spring of 2006 to support long-term funding.

BACKGROUND

Founded in 1981, Friends of the Urban Forest provides financial, technical, and practical assistance to individuals and neighborhood groups in San Francisco who want to plant and care for trees.

Programs include:

- A tree-planting program through which community volunteers plant over 1,500 trees each year
- A tree-care program where FUF's certified arborists, assisted by volunteers and trainees, prune and re-stake existing street trees
- A community involvement and youth education component that provides tree tours, quarterly pruning workshops, leadership training, and a youth tree-care program that trains economically disadvantaged youth in planting and tree care

Funding for the organization comes from several sources, including individuals, foundations, corporations, events, and different public funds such as

general revenue and a special sales tax, Proposition K.

In 2005, money from the Proposition K sales tax intended for privately maintained, nonprofit street tree planting was eliminated, significantly threatening the ability of FUF to continue all of its efforts.

FUF launched an intensive educational, media, and grassroots outreach effort to restore funds. The campaign was successful in recovering \$162,000 for the programs from San Francisco's general fund for a one-year solution, but was not able to affect the changes in the Proposition K sales tax that would have ensured tree-planting and maintenance funds for the next 30 years, the lifetime for Proposition K sales tax funding.

In the spring, FUF plans to initiate a campaign to advocate for long-term funding of tree planting and maintenance. FUF will invite its constituents to help develop strategies for this effort.

COMPONENTS

One-on-One Educational Efforts

There were several components to the advocacy effort to restore funds for tree planting and maintenance. First, the FUF executive director realized when talking to people in the mayor's office and the Board of Supervisors who oversee these funds, that there was a misconception about FUF's historical and current reliance on public funds. As a result, he spent considerable time informing elected officials and their staffs about FUF's accomplishments and funding history. This involved

preparing clear, concise memos on the subject and sending them by e-mail, fax, and snail mail. He then followed up with phone calls and, when possible, face-to-face meetings.

In addition, FUF asked its board of directors and other supporters to use their contacts to get across this information. For example, one of FUF's board members has a relationship with a supervisor and was able to arrange for a meeting.

Media Effort

FUF also worked to educate reporters about FUF and the funding dilemma. In addition to working with individual reporters, FUF met with the editorial board of the local newspaper. When the paper was not able to run an editorial on the subject, FUF asked if it would consider an op-ed piece. The chairman of the board of a local Latino organization wrote an op-ed piece for praising FUF's programs. Coming from him, the piece increased credibility and illustrated a diversity of support for the organization.

Grass Roots Campaign

FUF has an e-mail list of approximately 4,000 residents to which it sends monthly updates about its activities and other issues. This list has been compiled over the years and includes FUF members as well as volunteers who have participated in its planting or other programs.

FUF e-mailed information to these people urging them to contact the Mayor and their Supervisors in support of the funding. The e-mails included a brief description of the issue and included phone, fax, and e-mail information for the mayor and the supervisors.

RESULTS

The City restored \$162,000 to the 2005–2006 budget for community tree plantings and maintenance. This, along with support from other sources, will allow FUF to continue its planting programs for the coming year.

LESSONS LEARNED/ADVICE

1. Establish and nurture relationships with government and political officials and their staff. Help them to understand the history of your organization and how your work furthers their goals. There may be misconceptions or past problems that you need to work through and clarify.
2. Prepare clear and concise informational handouts for persons you need to reach such as government officials, politicians, and staff of interested organizations, neighborhood organizations, and residents. Tailor these handouts to the audience you are trying to reach.
3. Get information to your audiences in a variety of ways—fax, e-mail, snail mail, phone calls, and meetings. Do not rely on just one method of transmission.
4. Capitalize on the relationships of your board of directors and other supporters. These relationships may enable you to reach people who otherwise would not take the time to learn about your organization.
5. Cultivate a relationship with the media. Educate reporters and editors about your organization and the challenges you face. Work with individual reporters and with the editorial board. Request a meeting with the editorial board to explain your concerns. Ask if they will write an

editorial supporting your cause. If they are not able to run an editorial, ask if they will print an op-ed piece on the issue. If possible, have the op-ed piece authored by a respected member of the community who is not directly affiliated with your organization.

6. Pay attention to and nourish your relationships with community organizations including neighborhood papers, neighborhood associations, and merchant groups.
7. Realize that in many cases the messenger is as important as the message. Be savvy about who you send to speak to a particular target or audience.
8. When working with your supporters, realize that you cannot rely solely on their passion for your cause. You need to make it easy for them to be advocates. Be careful and thoughtful in what you ask them to do. For example, provide them with phone numbers of politicians and government officials who need to hear your message. Prepare sample letters that they can send describing the issue at hand.
9. Give supporters timely feedback on their advocacy efforts. Let them know the latest developments in a clear, concise way.
10. When communicating with your supporters, convey a sense of urgency, not panic.
11. Be discriminating in your use of large-scale grassroots response to issues. This should not always be your first plan of action. If you overuse this strategy, you can burn out your supporters and alienate the decision-makers you need to influence.
12. Reactive advocacy and proactive advocacy differ. In the first, you are responding to a crisis,

and in the second you are trying to create an environment where a crisis will not arise. Both types are valuable and need to be practiced by many organizations at some point in their history. Keep in mind that the strategy used in each type will differ. Proactive advocacy can allow you the time to involve your constituents in strategy development and implementation in a way that reactive advocacy often does not permit.

Contact Information:

Kelly Quirke, Executive Director
Friends of the Urban Forest
Presidio of San Francisco Building 1007
PO Box 29456
San Francisco, CA 94129-0456
Tel: (415) 561-6890 ext 107
Fax: (415) 561-6899
E-mail: kelly@fuf.net
Website: www.fuf.net

Program Model: Public Policy

SACRAMENTO TREE FOUNDATION Greenprint Program Advocacy Campaign

OVERVIEW

Sacramento Tree Foundation (STF) is working with the elected officials of 28 local governments in a six-county region to double the Sacramento region's tree canopy over the next 40 years.

This summer—after five years of discussion, research, and an extensive stakeholder and community involvement campaign—a call to action and a work plan for each of the 28 local governments has been completed. This document, the Greenprint, includes guiding principles for cities and counties to maximize the benefits of shade trees to save energy, improve air quality, retain storm water runoff, and enhance community life. It also offers a step-by-step approach to increase levels of commitment in three key areas: management of public trees, policies and ordinances, and community partnerships. Official adoption of the Greenprint by city councils and county boards of supervisors will take place this fall.

BACKGROUND

Since its inception in 1982, STF has educated people about the importance of trees and mobilized them to plant and care for trees. Over time, its focus has shifted from the care and maintenance of individual trees to the importance of improving the urban forest—the complex ecosystem of trees and other vegetation that serves and supports the urban area.

Programs include:

- *Community Shade*, which plants and cares for more than 2,000 trees a year in schools, parks, and streets
- *Mistletoe*, which helps residents remove this tree parasite
- *Nature*, which replants native trees that have been lost to development or road widening
- *NeighborWoods*, which assists neighborhoods to organize community tree planting and maintenance
- *Shade Tree Program*, a partnership with a local utility to provide trees and education
- *Save the Elms Program (STEP)*, which monitors for Dutch Elm disease and plants new disease-resistant elms
- *Seed-to-Seedling*, a curriculum for elementary school teachers on native oaks
- *Greenprint*, an advocacy campaign that builds support for doubling of region's tree canopy over next 40 years

At a board retreat in January 1999, the Board of Directors of STF determined to take a broader, more coordinated approach to its efforts to improve the urban forest. As a result, it decided to launch a project to research and identify the needs of Sacramento trees and to set the agenda for community action to meet those needs.

This project resulted in two main findings:

- There was a need for a community-wide renaissance on the importance and benefits of the urban forest.
- The urban forest does not follow political boundaries. Any successful approach to managing the urban forest must be regional.

What followed was a five-year effort to learn more about the local benefits of the urban forest and how local governments could work together to grow the forest and maximize its benefits.

The campaign required two main paradigm shifts in community thinking. First, the community needed to look at the totality of the urban forest—the canopy of the trees and the ecology of the neighborhoods in which they were located—instead of at individual trees. Second, local governments needed to see their role as part of a regional effort rather than as isolated entities.

COMPONENTS

Beginning the Process

STF kicked off this campaign in 2000 by publishing the State of the Trees Report, which detailed the current situation in the region and put forth a vision for maximizing the benefits of the urban forest. The report was presented at a summit meeting of elected officials in 2001. As a result, elected officials representing 20 municipalities signed an Urban Forest Compact that proposed a shared vision and identified goals to optimize the region's urban forest.

Over the next three years, STF launched an educational effort that resulted in a video and a brochure entitled “What’s the Value of a Tree.” STF worked with the U.S. Forest Service’s Western Center for Urban Forestry Research to gather local data on the value of trees and their financial value to the region.

During this same period, STF worked to develop a regional plan based on its previous work. Originally called the Sacramento Regional Urban Forest Framework, in 2004, the plan was renamed Greenprint to dovetail with the Sacramento Council of Government’s Blueprint plan for guiding land-use and transportation choices in the six-county area. Beginning in 2005, residents and stakeholders

throughout the 28 municipalities were invited to contribute their thoughts and ideas in reviewing the first draft of the Greenprint. Over 35 presentations were made to elected officials, civic groups, professional organizations, service clubs, and general community meetings. Approximately 5,000 people participated.

A second summit of elected officials was held in June 2005 to receive additional input. The Greenprint is now finalized and awaiting adoption. Over the next few months STF will visit each city council and county board of supervisors in the region to persuade them to formally adopt the Greenprint. STF is encouraging community residents to send in endorsement forms and support letters to their local officials. Samples of both can be found on their Website (www.sactree.com).

The next step is to establish a Greenprint Clearinghouse, managed by STF, which will offer technical, scientific, and policy-making information and resources to assist cities and counties in implementing the plan. The Clearinghouse would:

- Serve as an information resource center
- Convene regional working groups
- Sponsor community events and assist in the creation of new nonprofit urban forest organizations
- Highlight successes and regional achievements
- Provide information and opportunities to fund new tree programs.

RESULTS

The Sacramento Regional Greenprint includes guiding principles for cities and counties for maximizing the benefits of shade trees to save energy, improve air quality, retain storm water runoff, and enhance community life. It is not a master plan but

rather a guide to help municipalities develop their own individual plans and work collaboratively with other entities.

The Greenprint offers a step-by-step approach to increase levels of commitment in three key areas: management of public trees, policies and ordinances, and community partnerships. Flexibility is included so that each city and county can develop its own way to achieve progress in each of these areas.

This campaign has greatly increased the interest and knowledge in the region of the value and importance of trees. It has resulted in the development of data on the value and benefit of trees that is relevant to the local region and is delivered in understandable formats.

In addition, it has served as a catalyst for regional cooperation and has assisted in the development of a tree network of interested parties.

LESSONS LEARNED/ADVICE

1. Be mission-based. Be clear where you want to go. Chase your dream, not dollars.
2. Remember the importance of stewardship. Trees need people and people need to be recognized. It is important to follow your passion, but do not forget the importance of follow-up and maintenance work—with both trees and people.
3. It is crucial to do research on the benefits of trees that includes local data. There are a lot of numbers floating around, but they are not useful unless they relate to the local environment and are verifiable. The U.S. Forest Service's Western Center for Urban Forestry Research was key in helping STF collect this data.

4. Make sure that reports and recommendations are relevant to the audience you are addressing. Do not write recommendations that the audience has no control over. The initial Greenprint is geared to local governments. The next step will be to write companion pieces for businesses, nonprofits, and the community-at-large.
5. Make everyone a winner in your presentation. Be sure that there is some piece that they can identify with and say they are doing. No government wants to be identified as the entity that is doing nothing. The Greenprint is organized such that all the local governments addressed can see how they are currently working toward the solution.
6. Funding for advocacy projects such as these is difficult to obtain, yet these projects require an enormous amount of staff time and energy. STF was fortunate to obtain a \$100,000 matching grant from the U.S. Forest Service in 2004 that allowed them to hire a full-time coordinator to work on Greenprint. This made a huge difference and allowed STF to present the report to elected officials and the rest of the community.
7. This is just the beginning! Implementation and the motivation of the broader community are essential to the project's success.

Contact Information:

Ray Tretheway, Executive Director
201 Lathrop Way, Suite F
Sacramento, CA 95815
Tel: (916) 924-8733
Fax: (916) 924-3803
E-mail: ray@sactree.com
Website: www.sactree.com

Public Policy Resources

Books

Arboriculture and the Law

By Victor Merullo

International Society of Arboriculture

Conservation Design for Subdivisions

By Randall Arendt

Island Press

Growing Greener

By Randall Arendt

Island Press

Tree Conservation Ordinances

by Christopher J. Duerksen

Planners Press

U.S. Landscape Ordinances: An Annotated Reference Handbook

By Buck Abbey

John Wiley & Sons

How to Build Advocacy

Building Citizen Involvement: Strategies for Local Government Training Workbook

by International City/County Management Association

ICMA Press

Building Diverse Community-Based Coalitions

by M.N. Themba and R.G. Robinson

The Praxis Project Press

Budgeting: A Guide for Local Governments

by International City/County Management Association

ICMA Press

E-Advocacy for Nonprofits

by Elizabeth Kingsley, Gail Harmom, John Pomeranz, and Kay Guinane

Alliance for Justice Press

How to Deal With a State Budget Crisis

by State Policy Action Resource Center

State Policy Action Resource Center Press

Lobbying and Advocacy Handbook for Nonprofit Organizations: Shaping Public Policy at the State and Local Level

by Marcia Avner

Fieldstone Alliance Press

Securing Federal Assistance for Local Programs

by International City/County Management Association

ICMA Press

Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy

by Rinku Sen, Kim Klein

Wiley Press

The Wilder Nonprofit Field Guide to Conducting Community Forums: Engaging Citizens, Mobilizing Communities

by Carol Lukas

Amherst H. Wilder Foundation Press

Policy Resources on Conservation and Trees

Building Greener Communities: Planning for Woodland Conservation

by Donna Drewes

Building Greener Neighborhoods: Trees as Part of the Plan

by Jack Petit, Debra Bassert, and Cheryl Kollin

National Association of Homebuilders Press

Community Green Scenes: Designing Projects with an Ecosystem Perspective

Trees Forever

Community Open Space: New Techniques for Acquisition and Financing

by International City/County Management Association

ICMA Press

Creating a Regulatory Blueprint for Healthy Community Design

by International City/County Management Association

ICMA Press

Cultural, Heritage, and Environmental Tourism

by International City/County Management Association

ICMA Press

Financing Land Conservation

by International City/County Management Association

ICMA Press

Getting to Smart Growth: 100 Policies for Implementation

by International City/County Management Association

ICMA Press



Guidelines for Developing and Evaluating Tree Ordinances

by E. Bernhardt and T. Swiecki
CA Dept. of Forestry Press

Handbook for Tree Board Members

National Arbor Day Foundation

Local Tools for Smart Growth: Practical Strategies and Techniques to Improve Our Communities

by National Association of Counties
National Association of Counties Press

Trails and Greenways

by International City/County Management Association
ICMA Press

Trees in the Community: Managing the Urban Forest

by International City/County Management Association
ICMA Press

Trees: The Green Infrastructure

by International City/County Management Association
ICMA Press

Tree Conservation Ordinances: Land-Use Regulations Go Green

by Christopher J. Duerksen
American Planning Association

Tree Ordinances- A Resource List

by Ingrid Sather
USDA Forest Service Press

U.S. Landscape Ordinances: An Annotated Reference Handbook

by Buck Abbey
John Wiley & Sons Press

Web Resources

www.actrees.org

The NeighborWoods Guide and Workbook is available in PDF or in hard copy by order.

www.arborday.org/programs/treecitybulletin-browse.cfm This link will help you find issue(s) of The National Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City Bulletins that are related to this topic.

<http://cufr.ucdavis.edu/>

The Center for Urban Forest Research.

www.greenlaws.lsu.edu

Louisiana State University Greenlaws

www.itreetools.org

i-Tree is a suite of tools to manage and quantify the benefits of urban forests.

www.lcv.org

The League of Conservation Voters. You can find your state chapter for the League of Conservation Voters on this website. Your state chapter is a good source of information to keep you current on conservation issues being considered in your state legislature.

www.lwv.org

The League of Women Voters provides training workshops on engaging citizens in public policy.

<http://neighborhood.uoregon.edu/>

Green Neighborhoods: Planning and Design Guidelines
Green Neighborhoods, a primer on ecological planning, develops strategies for maintaining high air, water, and urban forest quality in new residential developments. The information and advice is drawn both from the rapidly expanding body of research and literature on ecological planning and from the neighborhoodsLAB's own research.

www.parksandpeople.org/publications/special_reports/GTGN.pdf A Guide to Greening Neighborhoods: Creating and Caring for Community Open Space

<http://phytosphere.com/treeord/>

ISA Guidelines for Developing and Evaluating Tree Ordinances.

www.afj.org

Alliance for Justice

AFJ is a reliable authority on laws and constraints regarding advocacy by nonprofits

www.brookings.org

Brookings Institution

Brookings' Metropolitan Policy Program has great research reports on major trends impacting urban centers

<http://clpi.org/>

Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest

CLPI has tools to help nonprofits become more effective at their advocacy mission

www.isa-arbor.com

International Society of Arboriculture

ISA is the professional association of arborist with local chapters in every state; best resources for tree care technical standards and consumer fact sheets.

www.nlc.org

National League of Cities

<http://rnrext.cas.psu.edu/>

Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension

Forest conservation and municipal fact sheets by Bill Elmendorf are available from this website.