

Tree City USA Requirement Checklist



Urban & Community Forestry

Applications due: December 1st

Apply online at: <https://applications.arboday.org/community/city/>

Why your city should be a Tree City USA community

The Tree City USA program provides direction, assistance and national recognition to your community. It is the framework for a healthy, sustainable urban forestry program. Becoming a Tree City USA will benefit your community in many ways:

- Reduce costs for energy, stormwater management and erosion control.
- Reduce energy consumption by up to 25%.
- Boost property values from 7-20 percent.
- Build stronger ties to your neighborhood and community.
- Honor your community and demonstrate commitment to a healthier environment.
- Creates a framework for action as a way to begin caring for trees.
- Educate people about the value of trees.
- Increase community pride.
- Gain publicity with recognition materials.

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Tree City USA Standards

Meeting the 4 standards of the Tree City USA program provides a stepping-stone for communities on the pathway to sustainable urban forestry management.

Standard 1: A Tree Board or Department

Standard 2: A Public Tree Care Ordinance

Standard 3: A Community Forestry Program & Annual Budget

Standard 4: An Arbor Day Observance & Proclamation

This checklist is designed to assist new and recertifying communities in North Carolina with completing the application for the Tree City USA award and ensuring proper evidence is attached.



TREE CITY USA[®]
An Arbor Day Foundation Program

All reported activities must have been completed between January 1 and December 31.

ncforestservation.gov

N.C. Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services
Steve Troxler, Commissioner



Standard 1: A Tree Board or Department

Someone must be legally responsible for the care and maintenance of all trees on publicly-owned property. Through the creation of a public tree care ordinance, city leaders delegate tree care decisions to a city department, professional forester or arborist, citizen-led tree board, or some combination, determining who will perform the necessary tree work. Citizens will also know who is accountable for tree care within their community. In many cases, both a department with professional staff and an advisory tree board are established, with the department responsible for tree care work and the tree board serving in an advisory, advocacy and public education role.

Required Evidence

- Community has a Tree Board Only
 - Name and contact information of the Tree Board Chairperson
 - Number of tree board members
 - Roster of tree board members
 - Tree board meeting frequency
- Community has a Department Chair or City Manager
 - Name and contact information of the Department Chair or City Manager
- Community has both a Tree Board and a Department Chair/City Manager
 - Information as described above for both Tree Board Only and Department Only

Standard 2: A Community Tree Ordinance

A public tree care ordinance is the foundation of a community's tree care program. The ordinance sets good policy for the care of publicly-owned trees, setting an example for others to follow, and backed with the force of law when necessary. Key elements of a qualifying ordinance include delegation of authority for tree care to a city department, tree board, or both; and providing clear guidance for planting, maintaining and/or removing trees from streets, parks and other public spaces. Additional elements can be added to fit the circumstances of the community. Development or zoning ordinances do not count toward this standard.

A good foundational tree ordinance should include the following sections:

	Purpose & Intent – goals and objectives of the ordinance		Policies & Standards – tree removal, pruning, planting, maintenance, permits, specifications
	Define important, frequently used terms		Interference
	Authority – party responsible for implementing ordinance (department, staff position, tree board)		Penalties for Violation, Vandalism, Fines
	Jurisdiction – trees on public property, trees on private property		Appeals

Required Evidence

- Date current tree ordinance was established.
- Attach tree ordinance (first time applicants, or if ordinance has been revised)

Standard 3: A Community Forestry Program and Annual Budget

A Tree City USA community has an active community forestry program, evidenced by an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita. The program addresses dead and hazardous tree removal, pruning, planting, watering and fertilizing, and insect and disease control. This may seem like an impossible barrier to small communities, but a little investigation usually shows that more than this amount is already being spent by the community on its trees. The table below lists eligible expenditures. The most recently completed fiscal year-end data may be used to complete Standard 3 requirements.

Eligible Expenditures

Tree Planting & Initial Care	Tree Maintenance	Tree Removals	Management	Utility Line Clearance	Other Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting supplies • Tree purchases • Labor & Equipment • Watering • Mulch • Weed Control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pruning (contracted or in-house) • Insect & Disease control • Fertilization • Watering • Mulch • Labor & Equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor & Equipment (contracted or in-house) • Stump removal or grinding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program administration • Staff salaries • Public education • Professional Training • Memberships • Ordinance development • Tree Risk Assessment • Invasive species management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line clearance pruning (contracted or in-house) • Utility removals (contracted or in-house) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arbor Day program • Equipment maintenance • Equipment purchase • Storm damage cleanup

Annual Work Plan

Budgets and expenditures require planning and accountability, which are fundamental to the long-term health of the tree canopy and the Tree City USA Program. To meet this standard, a community must document budgets and expenditures toward the planting, care and removal of city trees – and the planning efforts to make those things happen. Developing a work plan at the beginning of each year will help ensure that necessary tasks are budgeted for and completed. Documentation of completed work plan activities is a required component of Standard 3.

Required Evidence

- [NCFS Tree City USA Annual Work Plan](#)
- [NCFS Tree City USA Financial Worksheet](#)
- Community tree management statistics
 - # Trees Planted
 - # Trees Pruned
 - # Trees Removed



Standard 4: An Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation

A Tree City USA proclaims and observes Arbor Day annually. The benefits of Arbor Day go far beyond the shade and beauty of new trees for future generations to enjoy. Arbor Day is an opportunity to earn publicity for your community and to educate citizens about proper tree care and the value of community trees. This is the least challenging and probably the most enjoyable standard to accomplish. The community issues a mayoral (or equivalent) Arbor Day proclamation and sponsors or participates in an Arbor Day observance. The types of celebrations can range from a simple tree planting event to an all-week observance.

Required Evidence

- Date Arbor Day observance was held
- Current year Arbor Day proclamation, signed by the mayor (or equivalent)
- Evidence of an Arbor Day observance (at least one of the following)
 - Program of events or agenda
 - News release or news article
 - Photographs of the event
 - Copy of website and/or social media post
 - Tree board meeting minutes
 - City meeting announcements
 - Type-written page describing the day's events

***Hint:** Make a file of news articles and pictures, photocopies, city meeting announcements, school and church activity programs, tree board meeting minutes, etc., that have anything to do with the Arbor Day observance and celebration. **Select the best items that show how Arbor Day was planned and celebrated in your community.**

Application Contact Information

- Mayor or Equivalent Information: name, title, address, email address, phone number
- City Forestry Contact: name, title, address, email address, phone number

DO NOT list your NCFS County Ranger as the City Forestry Contact. The City Forestry contact is the person within the community that has direct knowledge of the community's urban forestry program, often also the community representative or liaison with the Tree Board. This is the person who can answer questions about the community's Tree City USA application.

Signature Form

The Signature Form will be accessible to print when all required fields and attachments have been completed.

- Attach Signature Form with mayor or equivalent signature.

For assistance in meeting the Tree City USA standards, contact your County Ranger:

https://www.ncforests-service.gov/contacts/contacts_main.htm

For assistance with the application process, contact:

Urban Forestry Program Assistant
Mandy Tallman Marty
mandy.tallman.marty@ncagr.gov
919-857-4823

Urban Forestry Specialist
Jennifer Rall
jennifer.rall@ncagr.gov
919-857-4841

https://www.ncforests-service.gov/Urban/tcusa_programs.htm