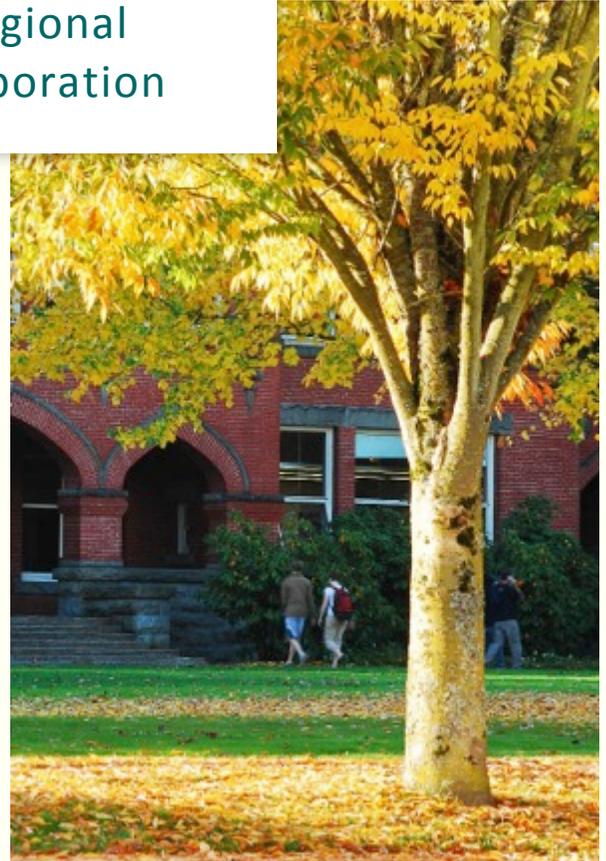
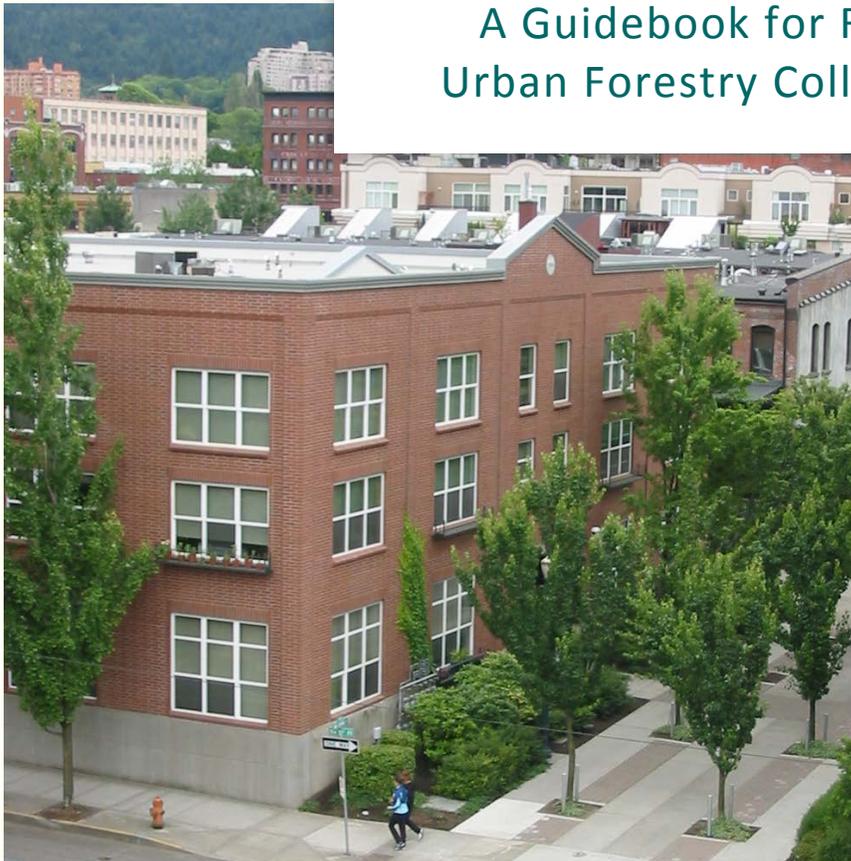




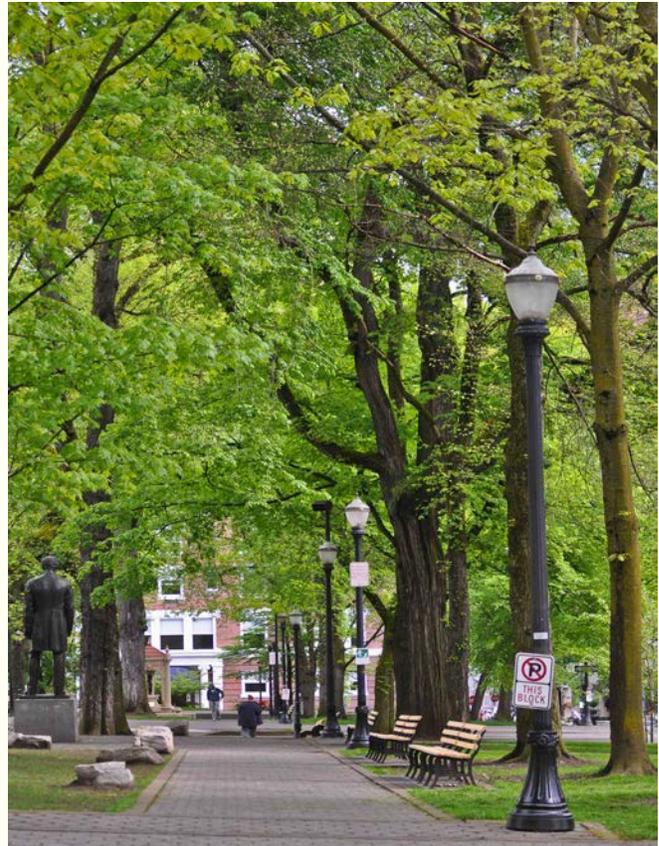
CULTIVATING A GREENER COLLECTIVE IMPACT

A Guidebook for Regional
Urban Forestry Collaboration



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Introduction

In the last few decades, the scope of urban and community forestry efforts has broadened as a variety of urban natural resource professionals focus their work on the urban forest and the ecosystem services it provides. Because the urban forest crosses geo-political boundaries, it can be complicated to address management issues in a coordinated way. Urban forestry efforts are often defined by municipal boundaries. One city might be a Tree City USA community, while an adjacent city may not be one, yet both cities may share the same urban forest. Multiple cities, counties, special use districts, and non-profit organizations can all play a role in managing the urban forest within a watershed or across a regional area. Consequently, a regional approach to urban forestry planning is an opportunity for many urban areas. Partnerships created through regional

approaches to urban forestry can lead to increased political support and an engaged citizenry committed to building healthy and viable communities for themselves and future generations.

This guidebook was produced by the *Portland-Vancouver Regional Urban Forestry Strategy (the Regional Strategy) Partnership* – a broad cross-sector group of individuals from state and local governments, regional and local non-profits, and industry professionals formed to create a sustained initiative focused on a regional approach to urban forestry and urban natural resource issues in the Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, Washington region. The guidebook is intended for use by urban natural resource professionals and organizations in other U.S. metropolitan areas who desire to take a similar regional approach to urban forest management.

This document describes each step of the *Regional Strategy* planning process structured under the framework of Collective Impact, a fairly new approach to solving more complex community challenges through creating large-scale, cross-sector collaboration. Additionally, this guidebook offers tools and suggestions collected along the way that can be applied to a variety of urban settings. Although the process is summarized at the region-wide scale, it can be applied to the local level as well where landowners, organizations, and managers come together to plan



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for sustainable growth that capitalizes on the valuable ecosystem services provided by the urban forest.

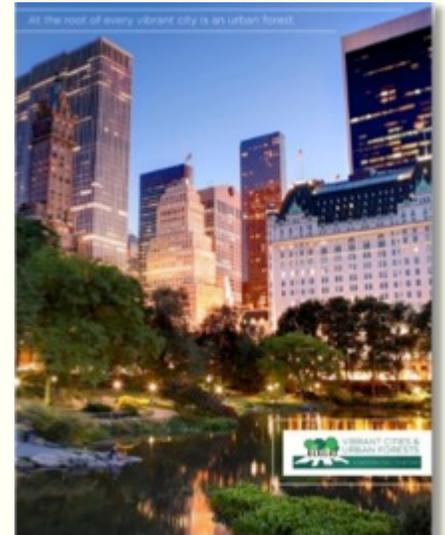
This guidebook is designed to equip the reader with tools to develop other regional urban forestry initiatives – making our cities, regions, and country as a whole more livable, healthy, and ecologically sustainable.

A National Call to Action

Cities in the United States and around the world face a plethora of issues related to the management of their natural environment. Problems such as forest fragmentation, rapid urbanization, urban heat islands, degrading infrastructure, environmental justice, human and environmental health concerns, and loss of green space are currently plaguing cities while natural features and ecosystem services provided by them are declining.

With these challenges at the forefront, the U.S. Forest Service convened the Vibrant Cities & Urban Forests Task Force. This group of national and local non-profit leaders, municipal and state officials, and authorities in health, urban planning, urban forestry, and sustainability, came together in 2010 to discuss and develop a common vision: that green infrastructure – in particular, sustaining and expanding vibrant urban forests – is critical to the health and well-being of cities and their residents.

Bringing a diversity of expertise and perspective to this effort, the Vibrant Cities Task Force produced a report called *Vibrant Cities & Urban Forests: A National Call to Action*. This report sets out to explore



the implications of integrating natural and built environments and outlines twelve specific recommendations to improve the quality of our communities and the necessary actions to make that happen. Together, these recommendations call for new approaches to urban forestry and span the subjects of education, stewardship, environmental equity, political support, and sustainability.

Specifically, Recommendation #6 of this report calls for the creation of comprehensive, multi-jurisdictional Urban Regional Natural Resource Plans. Multi-jurisdictional plans address urban natural resource planning across public and private ownership – encompassing landscape features not only within urban borders, but also extending to the surrounding region. Such plans recognize the collective benefits of the urban forest and that management should extend beyond traditional jurisdictional boundaries to be more holistic.



These plans and strategies should also be the result of community collaboration and public engagement to provide a unified roadmap for federal, state, and local interagency coordination in support of urban natural resources. Additionally, this recommendation identifies that these plans should be supported by metropolitan alliances within every metropolitan region. These alliances support cross-sector initiatives and act as the catalyst for region-wide collaboration not just in urban forestry, but across urban natural resource disciplines.

A Local, Regional Approach

In response to the *Vibrant Cities & Urban Forests* recommendation, the Oregon Department of Forestry and Washington Department of Natural Resources in coordination with various regional partners, created the *Regional Urban Forestry Strategy Partnership* (Partnership) for the Portland- Vancouver metropolitan region. The purpose of the Partnership is to help local jurisdictions achieve successful urban forestry programs that increase canopy cover, ensure the future health of urban forests, and allow for balancing of both urban density requirements and tree canopy targets. The Partnership also fosters a collaborative environment for best management practices, current research, and alternative planning approaches to be shared across sectors in the region.

With these goals in mind, the Partnership created a strategy that serves as a regional urban natural resource plan for the Portland-Vancouver region. The team documented the efforts of this three-year project, detailing the results of an ecosystem analysis, needs assessment survey, stakeholder workshops and forums, and local projects specific to the Portland-Vancouver region. The Partnership also serves as a replicable example of a regional urban natural resource planning process that other metropolitan areas in the U.S. can emulate. This guidebook is designed to facilitate the replicability of each stage of the *Regional Urban Forestry Strategy Partnership* in other areas, beginning with the framework of Collective Impact.



Strategy Approach

The Collective Impact Framework

Collaboration is nothing new. The social sector is filled with examples of networks and other types of joint ventures. But Collective Impact initiatives are distinctly different.

Collective Impact is the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a complex social problem.

In searching for a way to structure the *Regional Urban Forestry Strategy*, the Partnership wanted to extend beyond the typical collaborative environment to create a sustained energy and focus on urban forestry and urban natural resource issues throughout the Portland-Vancouver region. The Collective Impact framework provided that structure by offering practitioners, funders, and evaluators a way to think about, plan for, and implement different performance measurement and evaluation activities.

First articulated in 2011, Collective Impact involves a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a

structured process that is more rigorous and specific than normal collaboration among organizations. There are five conditions that, together, lead to meaningful results from Collective Impact:

1. ***Common Agenda:*** All participants **share a vision for change** that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon actions.
2. ***Shared Measurement:*** All participating organizations **agree on the ways success will be measured and reported**, with a short list of common indicators identified and used for learning and improvement.
3. ***Mutually Reinforcing Activities:*** A diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinate a set of differentiated activities through a **mutually reinforcing plan of action**.
4. ***Continuous Communication:*** All players engage in **frequent and structured open communication** to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.



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About the Regional Urban Forestry Strategy

The Portland-Vancouver Regional Urban Forestry Strategy Project was funded by the U.S. Forest Service through a 2012 Western Competitive Grant. Monies were dispersed between the strategy organizers and used to fund projects in Oregon and Washington separately and collectively as a region. Since its inception, the Regional Strategy project has reached out to over 100 different organizations and all 34 city and county jurisdictions in the Portland-Vancouver region. The resulting publication, *A Strategy for Advancing Urban Forestry Programs in the Portland-Vancouver Region* details the current condition of the Portland region's urban forest and strategizes about how we can increase canopy cover in the coming years. To obtain a copy of *A Strategy for Advancing Urban Forestry Programs in the Portland-Vancouver Region*, visit the Intertwine Alliance website at: <http://www.theintertwine.org/>.

5. **Backbone Support:** An independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative provides ongoing support by guiding the initiative’s vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources.

The *Regional Urban Forestry Strategy Partnership* used this Collective Impact framework to define its work. Each stage of the Partnership was crafted to ensure that it was having a true impact on addressing challenges to the urban forest throughout the Portland-Vancouver region. The following sections will document this process putting each in the context of the Collective Impact framework.

Learn More about Collective Impact

Collective Impact is a framework that is emerging worldwide as a best practice when addressing large-scale societal challenges. FSG, a nonprofit consulting firm specializing in strategy, evaluation, and research, has worked with many of the world’s leading corporations, nonprofit organizations, and charitable foundations in designing Collective Impact initiatives. Collective Impact articles have been published in the Harvard Business Review and the Stanford Social Innovation Review. Learn more about FSG and the Collective Impact framework at <http://www.fsg.org/>.



The Process

Step 1: Assemble project partners and establish a backbone organization

Cross-sector collaboration and integration across the private and public sectors is essential to collectively solve important issues facing our urban ecosystems. However, assembling project partners can be difficult, particularly when working across government and industry sectors on a regional landscape.

Creating and managing Collective Impact requires supporting infrastructure – often taking the form of a separate organization and staff to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative. These backbone entities organize clear and comprehensive communications, assure the alignment of stakeholder ideas goals, and actions, and frame issues in a way that presents opportunities as well as challenges.

In applying this framework, three options exist for establishing a backbone organization: 1) leverage the capacity of an existing regional organization, 2) develop a steering group culled from a larger number of stakeholders, or 3) create a brand new entity to facilitate project activities. This support structure may be different given the community and organizations involved. It is important to assess the interest and capacity of organizations that might serve as the backbone entity and determine what group has a pre-established presence with a variety of stakeholders that can bring broad involvement to an initiative.

For the *Regional Urban Forestry Strategy* project, the existing organizational network of The Intertwine Alliance was leveraged. The Intertwine Alliance is a coalition of public agencies, private companies, and nonprofit organizations all working together to tap new sources of funding, better leverage existing investments, and more fully engage residents with the outdoors and nature in the Portland area.



The Intertwine Alliance

In development for many years, The Intertwine Alliance was formally launched as a nonprofit in July 2011 with 28 partners. Today, The Alliance has more than 140 formal partners. This unique coalition exists to ensure a regional trail network gets completed; that natural areas are restored, and that people of all ages discover they can enjoy the outdoors near where they live. The Intertwine also aims to help their partner organizations build their capacity and become more successful.

The Intertwine Alliance is a member of the Metropolitan Greenspaces Alliance, a coalition of partners working for increases environmental conservation and stewardship in metropolitan areas around the country. This coalition is working to craft new state and federal policies that will yield more resources for conservation in urban and metropolitan areas. For more information about the Intertwine Alliance visit: <http://theintertwine.org>.

With a dedicated core staff, The Intertwine Alliance served as the backbone organization of the *Regional Urban Forestry Strategy* project, providing planning, management, and support of the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad of logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to function smoothly.

Additionally, due to its established presence in the Portland region and connection with local organizations, the Alliance was able to attract a diversity of local entities to this effort including universities, local city and county jurisdictions, watershed councils, and land trusts. Given the breadth of organizations working to enhance the quality of life in cities, the Partnership found that it was important to expand the scope of the project and be creative in looking for project partners. Partnerships with organizations or institutions focused on recreation, education, health care, equity and inclusion were also developed.

Step 2: Articulate a common agenda

Collective Impact requires all participants have a shared vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a united approach to solving it through agreed upon actions. Although

many organizations may appear to be working on the same issue, the Partnership quickly found that differences exist that may undermine the impact of the group. Although every participant need not agree on all dimensions of the problem, it is important that the primary goals of the Collective Impact initiative be articulated and agreed upon by the members of group.

The *Regional Urban Forestry Strategy Partnership* had to find this common ground among the different objectives of governments, non-profits, and community groups in order to establish this cross-sector initiative. After many discussions with project partners, one idea was articulated again and again – that we all agree on the rich returns of our shared investment, of which trees are key.

With this common agenda in mind, three goals were established for this project:

1. To *increase tree canopy*;
2. To *foster regional collaboration around trees*;
3. To *expand the capacity of agencies and organizations to address urban forest management*.

These broad goals served as the foundation for the Partnership, framing discussions and crafting projects and workshops. The goals were written to be broad enough to apply to diverse audiences while ensuring that the intentions of overall project were met.

By using this shared language, project partners were able to articulate how their own objectives and projects fit into the agenda of the larger coalition. Furthermore, formalizing this agenda provided a platform to discuss problems, explore solutions, and create support networks upon which urban forestry became the focus.

Step 3: Organize and conduct mutually reinforcing activities

The power of collective action originates from the coordination of many differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action. Each partner should be encouraged to undertake a different role based on its particular capabilities in a way that supports and is coordinated with the actions of others.

This principle guided the *Regional Urban Forestry Strategy Partnership* from its inception. In fact, the Partnership was designed as a series of mutually reinforcing activities in order to develop tools and processes to help jurisdictions solve urban forestry related problems across the region. These activities included:

A **needs assessment survey** to identify issues and barriers to urban forestry activities.

An **ecosystem analysis** to catalog existing resources, determine specific gaps and needs, and analyze the canopy cover and ecosystem services potential of the region.

Collaborative workshops for cities and counties to learn about urban forestry best practices and effective codes and policies and programs.

Stakeholder forums between jurisdictions and urban forestry stakeholders, including those from the development and advocacy communities.

Local projects that recognize that the level of urban forest management varies between cities and attempts to bring some cities “up to speed” with others.

A **regional urban natural resource strategy** to help cities achieve successful urban forestry programs that increase canopy cover, ensure future health of urban forests, and allow for balancing of density requirements and tree canopy targets.

Each of these activities was completed by different project partners, within their respective areas of expertise. While operating separately, however, each simultaneously reinforced the work of the overall Partnership and built upon each other in the development of a strategy for the region.





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Needs Assessment Survey

In order to get where you want to be, you have to understand your current situation. As with many planning efforts, this theory guided the Partnership, given the diversity of communities and breadth of tree-related programs operating throughout the Portland-Vancouver region. Accordingly, a program assessment survey was sent to city and county governments in the region. Conducted by the Oregon State University (OSU) College of Forestry, this survey targeted community officials (mayors, city councilors, city administrators, and county commissioners) and program managers responsible for trees in public works, parks and recreation, land use planning, and community development agencies. These two groups were selected based on their potential to initiate, promote, and implement urban forestry programs and projects within their jurisdictions.

The survey collected information on current management needs, barriers to program implementation or expansion, and future priorities of the community related to their urban forest. Additionally, questions explored current areas of importance to municipal and county tree programs. The survey built upon other assessments that had recently been conducted in the Portland-Vancouver region that evaluated urban forestry programs, focusing on local tree policies

Together, these surveys provided a baseline on activities and needs present throughout the region. Combined with the other accomplishments of the *Regional Strategy*, such as the mapping of forest canopy and documented feedback from workshops, the results of these studies provided the basis for evaluating the success of policies and programs taking place throughout the region over time.

Needs Assessment Journal Article

A summary of this project's needs assessment research is available in the following article:

Driscoll, A.N., Ries, P.D, Tilt, J.H., & Ganio, L.M., (2015). Needs and barriers to expanding urban forestry programs: An assessment of community officials and program managers in the Portland – Vancouver metropolitan region. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 14(1), 48-55.

Ecosystem Analysis

In addition to a high awareness of programs and policies in place, it is also necessary to fully understand the resource that you are planning for and managing. The costs to maintain and manage urban forests are substantial; however, the overall benefits of urban forests likely outweigh their planning and management costs. With proper planning and management, costs can be reduced and benefits enhanced.

The urban ecosystem can be assessed at a variety of scales utilizing an array of tools. Analyses can also be performed using data that already exists or by conducting new assessments, considering what data is needed to meet the common agenda of the collective and establishing a shared measurement system to gauge how success is measured and reported.

Under the guidance of The Intertwine Alliance, representatives from organizations and agencies around the region had recently created the *Regional Conservation Strategy* and *Biodiversity Guide* for the greater Portland-Vancouver region. These documents strive to build a common understanding of the region's biodiversity, provide detailed interactive mapping of the area's wide-ranging habitats, define

the challenges facing the local ecosystems, and offer a vision and framework for moving forward together to protect and restore natural systems.

By collecting data and synthesizing existing scientific information from around the region, these documents provide a single, consistent reference to guide conservation efforts collectively as a region. Whether used at the neighborhood, city, or regional scale, these tools serve as a technical reference and policy guide for practitioners and policy makers alike in increasing the size and health of the urban forest.

While the scope of the *Regional Conservation Strategy* may not be feasible for many communities, many innovative tools are currently available or under development that may help to minimize the costs and

The Regional Conservation Strategy – Mapping Land Cover

The *Regional Conservation Strategy* and *Biodiversity Guide* organizes the region's different types of land cover into a variety of classifications, including trees and regenerating forest, shorter vegetation such as shrubs and meadows, agriculture, open water, and developed lands such as buildings, roads, and parking lots.

A high-resolution (5-meter) land cover map of the region and a data-driven GIS model of conservation priorities were developed for this project. The land cover map represents a dramatic increase in resolution over previously existing data and allows for detailed analysis necessary to model biodiversity conservation priorities at an urban scale. These products can be used to identify high-value habitat in urban and near-urban landscapes, in riparian areas, and across the entire region. The intent is to encourage strategic, targeted investment in conservation where it will be most effective and will help achieve common goals.

In addition to this guide, the Intertwine Alliance developed an online viewer that makes consistent land cover information available at the regional, watershed and municipal scale. The *Regional Conservation Strategy* Viewer was presented to the region's conservation and urban forestry practitioners at workshops held in 2013 in conjunction with Intertwine Alliance summits. The viewer is now being applied to projects across the region. For more information on the *Regional Conservation Strategy* mapping data visit: <http://www.regionalconservationstrategy.org/>.

Understanding Conditions at Multiple Scales

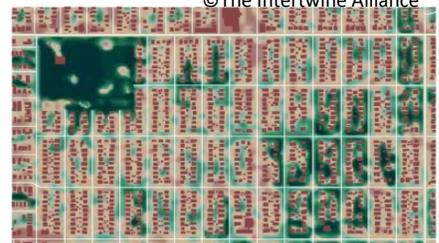
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Regional 1"=6.3 MILES, OR 33,333 FEET



Local 1"=0.85 MILES, OR 4,500 FEET



Neighborhood 1"=0.19 MILES, OR 1,000 FEET

boost the effectiveness of future urban forest management. The tools that can be utilized by local managers to explore, quantify, map, and plan for the urban forest include:

- **Geographic Information System (GIS)** – An easily available tool used by many jurisdictions, GIS software can provide a scientific, local benchmark for assessing the urban forest resource. GIS software works with maps and geographic information online and is used for creating and using maps, compiling geographic data, analyzing mapped information, and managing geographic information in a database. Urban tree canopy can be mapped in GIS using high-resolution infra-red imagery and LiDAR (light detection and ranging) data. This data is frequently used by many cities or counties, and may also be available for download from state agencies or local universities.
- **National Land Cover Data (NLCD)** – A 16-class land cover classification database, NLCD is available for free online, and includes the entire conterminous United States (the lower 48 states) at a spatial resolution of 30 meters. The NLCD is best used at a larger regional or state-wide scale. NLCD data is easily integrated with GIS or other mapping software and can be used to assess tree canopy and changes in canopy cover over time. For more information about NLCD visit: <http://www.mrlc.gov/>.
- **i-Tree** – This program is a state-of-the-art, peer-reviewed suite of urban forestry analysis tools for collecting and analyzing information on urban forests. i-Tree uses local data to statistically assess urban forest composition and its effects and values related to air pollution removal; carbon storage and sequestration; building energy use; and urban runoff, stream flow, and water quality. Software, training, and technical support are free. There are two i-Tree tools that can assist in conducting a regional ecosystem assessment.

i-Tree Canopy uses Google Maps aerial imagery to conduct a tree cover assessment. The user is able to assign boundaries on the online map to create a defined project area. i-Tree Canopy then generates random sample points within the project area. The user is able to zoom-in on each point and choose from a list of cover types for that point. The more points that are defined, the more accurate the cover estimate will be.



Using National Land Cover Database (NLCD) satellite imagery and data

(updated by Google Maps), *i-Tree Vue* can assess area land cover, which includes tree canopy and ecosystem services. Modeling with *i-Tree Vue* can be used to show future impacts and benefits of planting scenarios. Outputs such as carbon sequestration, pollution removal and carbon storage can be calculated based on modeling scenarios. Visit <http://www.itreetools.org/> for details on these tools.

- **Tree Benefit Calculator** – This free tool based on i-Tree’s street tree assessment tool called STREETS allows anyone to make a simple estimation of the benefits individual street-side trees provide. With inputs of location, species and tree size, users will gain an understanding of the environmental and economic value trees provide on an annual basis. This easy to use resource is available online at <http://www.treebenefits.com/calculator/>. The tool should be considered a starting point for understanding trees’ value in the community, rather than a scientific accounting of precise values.

Collaborative Workshops

After information was collected regarding the state of the Portland/Vancouver region's urban forest, a series of workshops were developed and held for cities and counties to learn about urban forestry issues.

These workshops invited natural resource professionals, policy makers, and the public to join in the urban forestry discussion. Specific workshop topics focused on marketing and communication strategies for urban forestry, and on best practices for effective tree codes, policies, and programs, including policy coordination, funding mechanisms, mitigation, and right-of-way issues. Additional ideas including partnerships with health organizations and youth engagement were also explored during these events.

These events occurred intermittently throughout the three-year project period and were hosted by The Intertwine Alliance. Some were part of the Alliances' bi-annual summits which attracted roughly 300 representatives from around the region per event. These routine gatherings also helped to establish consistent communication regarding efforts of the Partnership under the Collective Impact framework.

One of the main purposes of these workshops was to articulate the common agenda of the Partnership to other natural resource professionals and community leaders in the region. By designing these events to support a common agenda, regional initiatives can generate more interest, expand the urban forestry discussion, and attract additional potential partners and funders to support the urban forestry cause. Depending on the structure of the backbone organization and the interests of the broader community, these collaborative workshops could take a variety of shapes.

Stakeholder Forums

In addition to region-wide workshops, a series of smaller forums were conducted throughout the region targeting specific stakeholder groups. These forums

facilitated exchanges between jurisdictions and urban forestry stakeholders, including those from the development and advocacy communities.

Given the diversity of the Portland-Vancouver region, the locations of these forums were selected based on geographical and political considerations. The Partnership found that it was easier to target different audiences or geographic areas dealing with specific urban forestry related issues in this manner. These forums targeted 50 to 75 people on average.

Topics for these forums spanned a range of regional issues. For example, the results of the *Regional Conservation Strategy* were presented to specific jurisdictions or interest groups assisting in the interpretation and application of the data to meet their specific needs. Additionally, forums between public and private sectors indirectly related to urban forestry such as the health care sector were convened. These meetings provided an opportunity to educate industry professionals on urban natural resource issues and the numerous connections between urban forestry and other issues facing the urban environment.

Stakeholder forums can be designed to serve an array of needs for urban forestry initiatives. The small setting of these events provides great avenues for discussion and educational opportunities.



Local Projects

Finally, a series of local projects were designed throughout the project region. These projects recognized that communication and outreach efforts must differ depending on the audience targeted. Based in large part of the results of the needs assessment survey, local projects were developed to engage three distinct audiences:

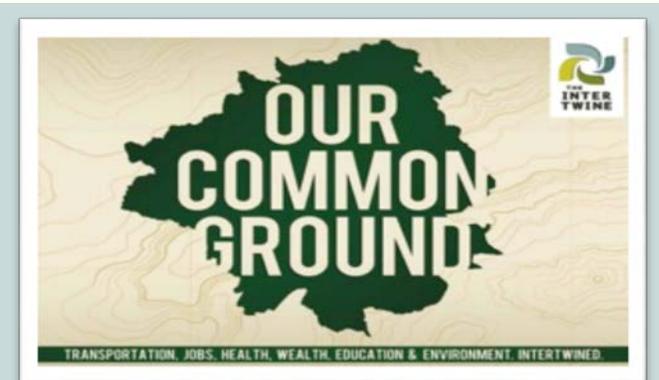
1. *Policymakers;*
2. *Practitioners; and*
3. *The Public.*

Local projects were designed to serve a variety of purposes. These projects recognize that not every community has the same needs, and were organized based on focused feedback provided at events. While the Partnership found it effective to target broad stakeholder groups individually, this focus may differ elsewhere depending on specific neighborhoods, jurisdictions, or underserved populations.

Each group was targeted in a different manner in an attempt to make the urban forestry discussion most relevant and engaging. For example, a report making the case for an investment in urban forestry was developed and presented to local and regional policy makers. This report, entitled *Our Common Ground*, detailed the benefits of the urban forest and offered a set of goals in achieving broad support for investment in natural systems.

Similarly, more technical focused projects were designed for local urban forestry professionals. For instance, a cooperative project was conducted to map Oregon white oak habitat. The project created an inventory and high quality map of Oregon white oak habitat in the Portland region to guide conservation, willing-seller acquisitions, and improve connectivity for oak-associated species. This map was created using the work of citizen scientists, natural resource professionals, and GIS technicians. Upon completion,

this map will be accessible to the public and will be used by local jurisdictions, conservation organizations, and other stakeholders who have an interest in protecting this native Oregon species. Finally, several urban forestry professionals from the region received leadership training through the nationally recognized Municipal Forestry Institute.



As part of this project, The Intertwine Alliance developed and published *Our Common Ground*, the case for investment in urban forestry and ecosystem services. *Our Common Ground* models a new approach to communicating about the complex topic of natural systems in the metropolitan environment. It provides engaging narratives mixed with data and infographics, presented in a graphically engaging style. The final page of the report issues three challenges to the region's leaders: to increase the amount of water managed by natural systems; to increase tree canopy; and to put in place a permanent source of support for managing natural area lands. About two dozen elected leaders have pledged to help meet these challenges. The Alliance is now working to develop a second Common Ground Report that will report on progress towards the challenges issued, as well as to explore the issues of health, equity and active transportation. The report will make the case for investment in urban forestry as a way to meet health and equity objectives.



An Urban Forestry Policy Summit was also held to present and discuss the most innovative and successful urban tree policies and strategies being implemented in the Portland-Vancouver Region. Additionally, this workshop addressed specific challenges that communities are facing and sought to find innovative solutions. This well-attended workshop documented best practices and discussions on how the region can work together to support implementation, and, following the Summit, the Partnership produced a tree ordinance best practice document that was based on the work of the participants. This event led to ongoing discussions of how regional urban forestry representatives can continue to network and leverage efforts.

Finally, the public was engaged through the *Our Common Ground* campaign. Spearheaded by the Intertwine Alliance, the *Our Common Ground* campaign takes a playful approach to engaging residents. Several partners collaborated to create a *Common Ground* video series that addresses a range of conservation issues. Another group of Alliance partners are working on a *Common Ground* mobile app that make exploring the region's parks, trails and

natural areas a fun, positive learning experience for all ages. The app will be interactive and will encourage residents to share pictures of native wildlife by uploading them to The Alliance website.

Strategy Document

Finally, this project resulted in the creation of a written document, *A Strategy for Advancing Urban Forestry in the Portland-Vancouver Region*. The Partnership ultimately determined that a “strategy” was a more relevant document than a “plan,” though it still fulfills the *Vibrant Cities & Urban Forests* vision.

The document describes each of the project’s activities, reporting on the results of the needs assessment survey, ecosystem analysis, and feedback generated from collaborative workshops, stakeholder forums, and local projects. It offers suggestions for the region regarding the future management of its urban forest and communications strategies realized over the course of this project. Although the three-year *Regional Urban Forestry Strategy* project has come to a close, the broader urban forestry initiative sustained by partners from around the region will continue to gain momentum.

Conclusions

The results of a region-wide urban forestry assessment and initiative can provide critical information for guiding comprehensive and adaptive management strategies. After documenting this innovative approach, other initiatives will be better equipped to strengthen urban forestry regardless of geographic area. Throughout the course of this project in the Portland/Vancouver area, the Partnership identified three key priorities that would be integral in making a regional urban forestry initiative successful in other regions:

1. The creation and distribution of targeted messaging about the ecological, social, and economic benefits and services of the urban forest that result in infrastructure investment.

There is a consistent need for increased political and public support surrounding urban forest management in the Portland-Vancouver region. However, given the range of benefits provided by urban trees and the distinct differences among audiences including community officials and general public, no “single message” will resonate across the board. Messaging must therefore be clear and compelling to individuals and jurisdictions and be specifically targeted to each audience individually, appealing to the social and political context in which they operate. A primary focus of this messaging must be to leverage the ecosystem service value of the urban forest into increased investment in its management.

2. The establishment of comprehensive and adaptive urban forest management tools that provide long-term support for the urban forest.

Whereas current management efforts tend to focus on sustaining a healthy tree population, a broader, more comprehensive management approach is needed. Cities and counties should be encouraged to develop and implement criteria necessary for sustainable resource management

including a comprehensive management plan, program funding, assessment tools, and an advisory organization such as a tree board. These tools and services can be developed in addition to more specific policy vehicles to ensure a sustainable urban forestry program that is created and maintained through a shared vision with programs that are on-going and responsive. State and national programs as well as urban forest researchers have provided several models for sustainable program management. Such models should be adapted for local jurisdictions and tools and resources provided to them to better accomplish these comprehensive management frameworks.

3. The structuring of an outreach model that connects urban forestry with the broader interests and objectives of the community.

Results from recent research efforts throughout the Portland-Vancouver region have confirmed the need to align urban forest management within the broader community framework, considering the needs of the local population and its regional context. Given the diversity of the forest resource and the breadth of connections that can be made to urban trees, urban forest and natural resource managers and professionals should widen the scope of their focus to make broader community connections. This cross-sector approach could include linkages to health care, community development, and youth engagement. Managers should consider the needs and attitudes of their community and structure management approaches as necessary to best address these needs, following local leadership and energy. Management activities should also be reassessed periodically to ensure the planning efforts remain relevant and align with current community objectives.

Feedback and reflection from the three-year project reveals that these recommendations can only be met by broadening traditional urban forestry discussions to include a diversity of audiences who all hold a vested interest in building healthy, sustainable communities. Knowledge of urban forest ecology and how to conserve urban natural resources are also critical to developing appropriate management strategies to enhance optimal urban forest cover and to sustain urban forest health and benefits into the future. Management plans that sustain or enhance healthy urban tree cover will be most successful when they incorporate local tree data and consider relevant local social and ecological factors and costs, including community desires relative to canopy cover and associated ecosystem services.

To achieve the recommendations, urban forest managers must continue building collaborative partnerships and establishing a collective vision for future action. The Collective Impact framework can be a useful structure for these types of projects. Regional urban forest plans and strategies can help ensure better integration of built and natural environments across urban, suburban, and rural landscapes. Additionally, these tools can focus on maximizing the amount and types of benefits derived from the urban forest for future generations.

With a regional approach, urban forestry professionals can work together to create a more unified roadmap for federal, state, and local interagency and inter-organization coordination in support of the urban forest. Using the information presented in this guidebook and the Collective Impact framework, the Partnership hopes that other regions will be better equipped to build their own regional urban forestry initiatives, making our cities and country as a whole more livable and ecologically sustainable.



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