Tree City USA Standards

The Tree City USA program provides direction, assistance, and national recognition to your community. Meeting the four 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.

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

Starting an Application

New and recertifying communities may apply online at: [https://applications.arborday.org/community/city/](https://applications.arborday.org/community/city/).

Application portal opens on September 1st.

To create a new account, please [visit the application portal](https://applications.arborday.org/community/city/) and click on “Find your community.” Search your community name and state and if nothing appears, click on the “get started” link on the right. Here you can fill out the information for your community’s new account. [Here is a tutorial video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ) to walk through applying for recognition.

To update the account login information, please [visit the application portal](https://applications.arborday.org/community/city/) and click on “Find your community.” Search your community name and state. When you see your community, click on it. On the right side, click on “change login contact info” and update the login credentials to the new login contact. At the bottom of the page, please note your auto-generated username and input a new preferred password. When you press submit you will be signed into your application.

Your login username is always your community name and your state abbreviation with no spaces. Your username is not your email address. To view your username, please [visit the application portal](https://applications.arborday.org/community/city/) and click on “Find your community.” Search your community name and state. When you see your community, click on it. Your login username will be listed under the account information on the right.
Application Contact Information

☐ Input Mayor or Equivalent Contact information: name, title, address, email address, phone number
☐ Input City Forestry Contact information: 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 program and application.

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. 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
  • Indicate tree board meeting frequency (i.e., monthly, quarterly, etc.)
  • Input name and contact information of the Tree Board Chairperson
  • Input number of tree board members (up to 5), member names and email addresses; if more than 5 members, upload a roster of additional tree board members.

☐ Community has a Department Chair or City Manager
  • Input name and contact information of the Department Chair or City Manager

☐ Community has both a Tree Board and a Department Chair/City Manager
  • Input 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.

Required Evidence

☐ Indicate date current public tree care ordinance was established.
☐ Attach public tree care ordinance (for first time applicants or if ordinance has been revised)

Ineligible Ordinance Types:

- Unified Development or Zoning ordinances
- Landscape requirements for residential or commercial development
- Tree Protection ordinances for private property/development

*Unless ordinance includes a section on public tree care.
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tree Planting &amp; Initial Care</th>
<th>Tree Maintenance</th>
<th>Tree Removals</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Utility Line Clearance*</th>
<th>Other Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Planting supplies</td>
<td>• Pruning</td>
<td>• Labor &amp; Equipment</td>
<td>• Program administration</td>
<td>• Line clearance pruning</td>
<td>• Arbor Day program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tree purchases</td>
<td>• (contracted or in-house)</td>
<td>(contracted or in-house)</td>
<td>• Staff salaries</td>
<td>(contracted or in-house)</td>
<td>• Equipment maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Labor &amp; Equipment</td>
<td>• Insect &amp; Disease control</td>
<td>• Stump removal or grinding</td>
<td>• Public education</td>
<td>• Utility removals (contracted or in-house)</td>
<td>• Equipment purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Watering</td>
<td>• Fertilization</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Professional Training</td>
<td>(*cannot exceed $1 per capita)</td>
<td>• Storm damage cleanup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mulch</td>
<td>• Watering</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Memberships</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Brush pick-up, debris chipping, yard waste disposal fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Weed Control</td>
<td>• Mulch</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Ordinance development</td>
<td></td>
<td>(cannot exceed $0.50 per capita)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Annual Work Plan and Expenditures

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

- [ ] Attach NCFS Tree City USA Annual Work Plan
- [ ] Attach NCFS Tree City USA Financial Worksheet
- [ ] Input community tree management statistics
  - # Trees Planted
  - # Trees Pruned
  - # Tree Removed

Download the Annual Work Plan form and Financial Worksheet at:
[www.ncforestservation.gov/Urban/tcusa_application_process.htm](http://www.ncforestservation.gov/Urban/tcusa_application_process.htm)
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

☐ Input date Arbor Day observance was held.
☐ Attach current year Arbor Day proclamation, signed by the mayor (or equivalent)
☐ Attach evidence of an Arbor Day observance (at least one of the following)
  □ Program of events or agenda
  □ News release or newspaper article
  □ Photographs of the event
  □ Link to a website, social media post, or virtual event
  □ Tree board meeting minutes
  □ City meeting announcements
☐ Type-written page describing the day’s events

*Hint: Make a file of newspaper 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.

Signature Form

☐ After all required fields and attachments have been completed, click “Populate Signature Form”, print form, have mayor or top city official sign form. Scan signed form as a PDF document.
☐ Click “Scan and Upload the Signature Form” to attach signature form to application.
  • Do not send the form to the NCFS State Forester for signature. The form will be digitally signed when the application is approved by the NCFS.

For assistance in meeting the Tree City USA standards, contact your County Ranger:
ncreastforestservice.gov/contacts

For assistance with the application process, contact:
Mandy Tallman Marty, Program Assistant
mandy.tallman.marty@ncagr.gov
Jennifer Rall, Urban Forestry Specialist
Jennifer.rall@ncagr.gov

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