

The New Haven Street Tree Inventory: Final Report on the Spring 1998 Pilot Project

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Introduction

The New Haven Street Tree Inventory is an important first step towards better management of New Haven's urban ecosystem. Street tree inventories help cities anticipate problems in the urban forest and show where new street trees need to be planted. More importantly, volunteer street tree inventories build community awareness and respect for the urban forest.

The New Haven Street Tree Inventory was initiated by the Urban Resources Initiative (URI) and the New Haven Department of Parks, Recreation, and Trees (Parks Department) with funding from the USDA Forest Service and the Connecticut Division of Forestry. The methodology for the inventory was provided by the USDA Forest Service Northeast Center for Urban and Community Forestry. This report outlines some of the experiences gained in organizing the pilot inventory conducted in the spring of 1998.

Personnel

Leigh Shemitz, director of URI was the inventory organizer and helped with basic logistics and coordinated initial contact between URI and the Parks Department. Pam Kressmann, associate director for recreation at the Parks Department, was able to help coordinate the advertising, classroom space, T-shirts, and lunches for the training and inventory day. David Bloniarz, from the USDA Forest Service Center for Urban and Community Forestry located at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, is the foremost expert on volunteer street tree inventories and provided advice throughout the planning of the inventory. He also participated in all aspects of the training process. Fred Borman, Connecticut state director of urban forestry, participated in the orientation training and the actual inventory. Although he was willing to help with the day-long training at Edgerton Park, he was not able to due to a prior commitment. Julie Herbst, an intern at URI, helped answer volunteer questions at the orientation session and the inventory.

Methodology

The methodology for the New Haven Street Tree Inventory was developed by David

Bloniarz. David has shown that well trained volunteers using the methodology he developed, can be equally as accurate as professional urban forestry consultants. The Street Tree Inventory Volunteer Training Manual provides all the necessary information for an experienced forest professional or URI worker to conduct a training.

One of the things that should be modified from the original New Haven training manual is the street tree key. A more extensive dichotomous tree identification key would be easy to create (see attached key made by Prof. Tom Siccama). This would include more of the common street trees and make identification less confusing to the volunteers.

Unfortunately, GIS maps were not ready for the pilot inventory. We used block plan maps available through the city planning office. Future inventories should use the maps created by the city's new GIS system, which will use the GIS ArcView program. Since the trees will eventually be entered into the GIS system, using the street maps produced by the GIS will make digitizing easier .

Advertising/PR

The logo, poster, and pamphlet were designed by Michael Chung, a student at the Yale School of Art and Architecture. The original negatives for these items will be available at the URI office. The pamphlet contains a blank spot for a stamp to show the date, time, and place of the training and inventory, so it may be used in consecutive years. These stamps can be purchased at Perkins Stamp Shop on Elm Street.

One thousand pamphlets and three hundred posters were printed for advertising. The pamphlets were distributed to the Parks Department's mailing lists and the posters were distributed to businesses downtown. Pam Kressmann, associate director for recreation at the Parks Department, attended the management meeting for the neighborhood of Newhallville to inform community members about the inventory and encourage volunteer participation.

The major problem with the pilot inventory was lack of volunteers. This was probably due to the timing of advertising and press releases. It seemed much of the advertising came too late. For example, a TV news crew did a story on part of the training and a New York Times article about the inventory was published after the inventory. A story or advertising in the New Haven Register two to three weeks before the training and more attention to community groups will be necessary to attract more volunteers. This should probably be done jointly with the Parks Department and URI , rather than relying solely on the over-worked Parks Department. Bonnie of the Parks Department was helpful in developing and distributing press releases, but again much of her effort was too late to help recruit volunteers. Due to the low number of volunteers, it was difficult to tell which advertising methods worked best.

Voice mail was set up at the Parks Department to get an advanced count of how many volunteers would be participating in the training. All advertisements included the voice mail number for the Parks Department in order for people to sign up.

Volunteer Training

The volunteer training took place in two parts. The first part took place on a Wednesday night and was intended as an introductory session. Dave Bloniarz, Pam Kressmann, and Fred Borman gave a slide presentation, spoke about street inventories in other cities, and spoke about the importance of the street tree inventory to the city of New Haven. They stressed the fun of participating in a volunteer street tree inventory as well as presenting a basic overview of the full day training.

The full day session was carried out the following Saturday at the Carriage House in Edgerton Park with lunch provided by the Parks Department. Although the facilities were excellent, the species diversity of street trees within the park and in the immediate area was low. We ended up driving to the Davie's mansion, located across the street from Marsh Hall, so that Prof. Siccama could lead the volunteers through a diverse tree identification course.

Even though Edgerton Park has excellent classroom facilities in the carriage house, a new location should be found for the training because of the low diversity of street trees. A copy of the training schedule is attached to this document.

Inventory Day

The original date of the inventory, Saturday, May 2, was canceled due to rain. Thirteen volunteers attended the inventory on the rain date, Sunday, May 3. The meeting place was the Lincon Bassett school in Newhallville. Fred Borman, David Bloniarz, Leigh Shemitz, and Julie Herbst (URI) circulated among the volunteers to answer questions. Lunch was once again provided by the Parks Department at Edgerton Park.

Loose ends

The database has not yet been developed because the GIS system is not complete at the Parks Department. They anticipated getting the system up and running by April 1998, so it *should* be ready soon. The maps used in the inventory were accurate so that the tree location will be recognizable on the city's new GIS maps. Digitizing tree location using a mouse should not be a problem. Excel or Access were considered the best option for data storage.

The volunteers that participated in the inventory should be contacted when the next inventory takes place. This should help to facilitate the growth of a citizen advocacy group, arguably the most important aspect of the street tree inventory.

Suggestions for the future

URI and the New Haven Department of Parks, Recreation, and Trees should decide how they are going to use the information gathered by the Street Tree Inventory. Pam Kressmann is waiting for an Urban Forester to be hired so that she/he can use the inventory data for better street tree management. One of the major problems at the Parks Department is that Pam is not in charge of the people carrying out management of the street trees. There is a disjunction between the people collecting and storing the data and the urban forest 'managers'. The managers need to see the importance of the inventory.

Rather than hiring an urban forester, it would be possible for URI to hire a student to continue with the inventory and from the data collected help make actual management suggestions with the city. This relationship could be made consistent among transient students by including Forestry School faculty and the Parks Department. It would rekindle the historic active management role that the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies has had with the Parks Department and the city of New Haven (Dean Henry Graves was director of the Parks Department earlier this century). As suburbs continue to sprawl across the landscape, urban and community forestry are going to become increasingly more important branches of resource management. It is important that URI, the Parks Department, and Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies realize this and continue to strive for new and innovative approaches to urban resource management of New Haven.

New Haven Street Tree Inventory

Volunteer Training

Edgerton Park, New Haven

April 25, 1998

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9:00 - 10:30 STREET TREE INVENTORY BACKGROUND

(Edgerton Park Carriage House)

**GIS and tree management, logistics, safety, street tree definition,
measuring and determining DBH and a tree's location**

Dr. David Bloniarz NE Center for Urban and Community Forestry

10:30 - 12:30 TREE SPECIES IDENTIFICATION

(Greely Memorial Laboratories, Yale University)

Professor Tom Siccama Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

12:30 - 1:00 LUNCH (Edgerton Park Carriage House)

1:00 - 2:30 TREE CHARACTERISTICS (Edgerton Park)

determining condition of trees, problem tree awareness, pruning classes

Jon Wagar and Leigh Shemitz Urban Resources Initiative

Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

2:30 - 2:45 BREAK

2:45 - 3:15 DATA MANAGEMENT

David Bloniarz, Leigh Shemitz, and Jon Wagar

3:15 - 3:30 QUESTIONS AND LOGISTICS FOR INVENTORY DAY

New Haven Street Tree Inventory

Volunteer Orientation

Sage Hall, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

April 22, 1998

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7:00 - 7:15 REGISTRATION

7:15 - 7:30 WELCOME

Jon Wagar URI, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

Pamela Kressmann Deputy Director for Recreation, New Haven Department of

Parks Recreation and Trees

7:30 - 8:30 STREET TREE INVENTORIES

David Bloniarz Northeast Center for Urban and Community Forestry

Fred Borman CT Department of Environmental Protection, Forestry

Division

8:30 - 9:00 LOGISTICS

Jon Wagar and Pamela Kressmann