

WHAT DO WE HAVE?

Historical Background

Shade Tree Commission

The City's awareness of the need to protect its urban trees can be documented as early as 1879, when its first tree preservation ordinance was adopted, making it illegal for people to tie their horses to street trees. In 1895, the Civic Club of Allegheny County was formed to better municipal government, improve social conditions, increase educational opportunities, and create a more beautiful city. In 1904, a Forestry Committee was created within the Civic Club to advocate for the City's involvement in tree care and pest protection. The committee sent frequent requests to the City to enforce the law by fining drivers for tying horses to trees, and the chair of the Forestry Committee published several articles on how to beautify Pittsburgh by planting and pruning trees. [12]

As a result of Pennsylvania legislation allowing municipalities to create commissions to regulate the planting and care of street trees, and with the urging of the Civic Club of Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh created a Shade Tree Commission in 1910. The Commission chose trees that were the most suitable for Pittsburgh's streets and advised homeowners on proper tree care. William Grimes, a graduate of Yale Forestry School, was appointed the first City Forester. By 1914, funding for the Commission was cut and the Commission was disbanded. [12]

The Shade Tree Commission was re-established in 1998 in response to the recommendation from the Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) report, *Pittsburgh's Urban Forest: Planting for the Future* [13]. Today, the Shade Tree Commission is a nonprofit organization, linked to the Mayor's Office, tasked with restoring and maintaining the City's tree population and directing the expenditure of funds from the Shade Tree Trust Fund to advance urban forestry initiatives. [12]

Carnegie Mellon University Report

A consortium of Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) graduate departments conducted a study of Pittsburgh's urban forest in 1995. The report, *Pittsburgh's Urban Forest: Planting for the Future*, described an urban forest that was clearly in decline. The CMU report made three key recommendations: re-establish the Shade Tree Commission, improve the maintenance of young trees, and conduct a comprehensive inventory of Pittsburgh's street trees. [13]



In 1879, Pittsburgh adopted a tree preservation ordinance, making it illegal for people to tie their horses to trees. The fine was \$5.00 or 10 days in the workhouse.

Municipal Forestry Program

In 1914, a Street Tree Division was formed within the City's Bureau of Parks. The Street Tree Division took over the responsibilities of the dissolved Shade Tree Commission, including the care and planting of street trees, and the care of young trees in the City's nursery located within Highland Park [12].

During prosperous times in the 1970s, the Forestry Division, located within the Department of Public Works, maintained a staff of over 30 people, including a City Forester. By the 1990s, with the decline of the economy and population within the City, the Forestry Division was reduced to a staff of 12 people. Continued funding cutbacks restricted the Division's ability to plant and properly maintain trees. [12]

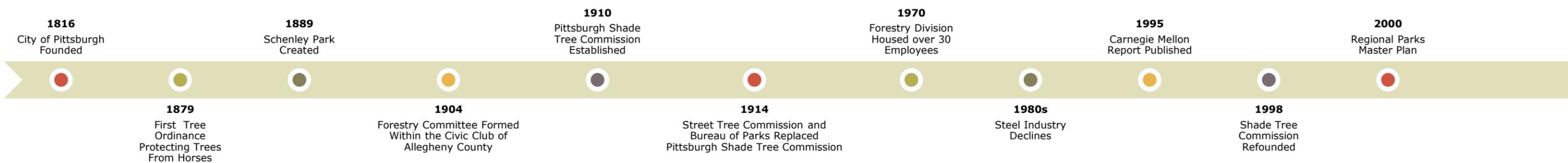
An urban forester position was created within the City Planning Department in 2008. The primary responsibilities of the Urban Forester included reviewing proposed developments, serving on the Shade Tree Commission, and supporting neighborhood greening projects. The City Forester position within the Forestry Division remained responsible for operations, permitting, technical support, and was primarily consumed with conducting inspections of sidewalks to assess damage caused by city trees and related liability. [12]

In early 2012, with the departure of the City Forester, the position of Urban Forester and their responsibilities were moved to the Forestry Division within the Department of Public Works. The Urban Forester assumed the responsibilities and title of the vacant City Forester position.

Today, Pittsburgh's Forestry Division includes a City Forester, Forestry Foreman (second in command), and 14 supporting staff; they are responsible for the care of over 30,000 street trees, forested rights-of-way, and an extensive network of parks and other greenspaces. Due to budget constraints, the division does not have staff to conduct preventive care and operates only in crisis-management maintenance. The City Forester works to coordinate with nonprofit groups involved in the care and maintenance of trees, reviews development plans for impacts to city trees, reviews and approves permits, provides technical support, and works with the Forestry Foreman to clear the backlog of requests to inspect and assess property and sidewalk damage caused by city trees, and to coordinate contracts related to tree pruning. The Urban Forester position remains vacant within the Forestry Division.



Stanton Avenue photos from 1940 before trees were planted to present day showing the current canopy.



Parks

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy was founded in December, 1996 by a group of citizens concerned with the deteriorating conditions of Pittsburgh's parks. In 1998, the Conservancy signed an official public-private partnership agreement with the City of Pittsburgh with the mission to improve quality of life for the people of Pittsburgh by restoring the park system to excellence in partnership with the City. [14]

Today, Pittsburgh's park system comprises 2,887 acres and includes 5 large regional parks (the four historic regional parks and the newly created Emerald View Park) and 141 smaller parks. [14]

Schenley Park, the first city park, was created in 1889 from land donated by Captain Edward Schenley and his wife, Mary. Schenley Park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district between the neighborhoods of Oakland, Greenfield, and Squirrel Hill. The park is made up of 434 acres, making it the second largest park in Pittsburgh. [14]

Highland Park was created to address Pittsburgh's need for a municipal water system. In 1879, a drinking water reservoir was created for the City in an area surrounded by public land and green space. People were attracted to the site for its scenic beauty, and the reservoir became increasingly popular for picnics and passive recreation. In 1889, the City established Highland Park by ordinance; this park is 378 acres and includes the Reservoir Loop, a favorite trail for walkers and joggers. [14]



April 17, 1923 tree planting event at Schenley Park.

Riverview Park is a jewel of Pittsburgh's North Side. Created in 1894, the park predates the City of Allegheny's annexation to the City of Pittsburgh in 1907. Formed largely from farmland, today's Riverview Park is 259 acres and is known for its dense woodlands, steep hillsides, and wooded trails. [14]

Frick Park today includes 644 acres and is the largest park. It opened in 1927 and includes land bequeathed by Henry Clay Frick. Recently, 106 acres were annexed to the park through the process that created the Summerset at Frick Park housing development and restored the Nine Mile Run stream valley. Frick Park now stretches from its northern borders in Point Breeze down to the Monongahela River. [14]

Emerald View Park, formerly known as the Grand View Scenic Byway, totals 257 acres and was transferred from the Allegheny Land Trust to the City in 2010. The park overlooks the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers and preserves the scenic views from the Mount Washington hillside. The Mount Washington Community Development Corporation together with the City of Pittsburgh oversees the management of Emerald View Park. [14]

Tree Pittsburgh

Members of the Shade Tree Commission and concerned citizens recognized a long-felt need for a nonprofit organization dedicated to the health and well-being of our urban forest. In 2006, Friends of the Pittsburgh Urban Forest was founded with the mission to enhance the City's vitality by restoring and protecting the urban forest through tree maintenance, tree planting, community education, and advocacy. The organization's vision is to be a leader in creating a healthy, attractive, and safe urban forest by inspiring and engaging citizens to maintain, plant, and protect trees.



Tree Tenders assisting with tree mulching along East Liberty Boulevard.

In 2010, Friends of the Pittsburgh Urban Forest changed its name to Tree Pittsburgh.

TreeVitalize®

TreeVitalize® is Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) partnership to restore tree cover in Pennsylvania communities, educate citizens about planting trees as an act of caring for our environment, and build capacity among local governments to understand, protect, and restore their urban trees. The program began in southeast Pennsylvania in partnership with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. In 2004, the Pennsylvania DCNR launched TreeVitalize® to increase public awareness of the importance of community trees, and to reverse the loss of tree cover in the state's metropolitan areas. In 2008, the Pennsylvania DCNR expanded the TreeVitalize® program to the Pittsburgh region, and a Project Director was hired through the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. Today, TreeVitalize® Pittsburgh is a joint project of Allegheny County, The City of Pittsburgh, the Pennsylvania DCNR, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and Tree Pittsburgh. By the end of 2012, TreeVitalize® will have planted 20,000 trees in the Pittsburgh region.



TreeVitalize® planting demonstration in the Manchester neighborhood.



Urban Forest Management Framework

A successful urban forestry program requires organized leadership; comprehensive baseline studies; dedicated personnel; effective community involvement; adequate funding; and a coordinated planning effort to protect, manage, and grow the urban forest. [15]

Pittsburgh, much like other financially constrained cities, relies on assistance from many public and private entities to manage the urban forest. These partners understand that the public investment and stewardship of the urban forest produces benefits that far outweigh the costs and that investing in Pittsburgh's green infrastructure makes sense economically, environmentally, and socially. The complexity of managing so many partners presents challenges. Having many different partners can lead to roadblocks, inefficiencies, and makes coordinating projects challenging.

The existing management framework described below includes several current plans and resources related to urban forest management and review of the roles and responsibilities of the primary public and private entities that are collectively responsible for the future of our urban forest.



Urban forest partners include Tree Tenders.

Existing Urban Forest Management Resources

Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances, Title Four: Public Places and Property, Article XIII: Trees is the legal framework for jurisdiction, protection, funding, and maintenance standards for the urban forest and establishment of the Shade Tree Commission (<http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=13525>). [16]

Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances, Title Nine: Zoning Code, Article VI: Development Standards includes landscaping and tree requirements intended to encourage planting appropriate vegetation and the preservation of existing vegetation to enhance the built environment, to protect and sustain the natural environment, and to reduce potential nuisances by requiring a visual screen (<http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=13525>). [16]

Regional Parks Master Plan (2001) contains a history of each of the four historic parks, environmental conditions, and recommendations for future projects and maintenance (Appendix E). [17]

An Ecological and Physical Investigation of Pittsburgh Hillside (2004) describes the beneficial role of natural wooded hillsides and considers the use of zoning restrictions to protect them. Steep slopes account for approximately 11% of the landscape within Pittsburgh's city limits (Appendix E). [18]

Street Tree Inventory and Management Plan (2005) is a comprehensive, seven-year action plan for Pittsburgh's inventoried tree population. The management plan includes an analysis of the current tree population, the environment in which they grow, and maintenance needs, as well as long-range management recommendations (Appendix E). [1]

Park Tree Inventory (2007) is a park and greenspace tree inventory of four prominent parks—Schenley, Highland, Riverview, and Frick. Data were collected for over 5,600 publicly managed park trees, including landscape trees and trees with associated heightened risk (Appendix E). [2]

Municipal Forest Resource Analysis (2008) provides the benefits of street trees and the cost of maintenance was calculated using the 2005 street tree inventory and i-Tree Streets benefits modeling software from the USDA Forest Service. The results of the analysis are still used today to promote management decisions that will improve human health and environmental quality (Appendix E). [3]

The Allegheny Riverfront Plan (2010) establishes six vision goals for the Allegheny Riverfront. The vision for the plan recognizes the benefits that trees provide and recommends a tree canopy goal of 40% cover (Appendix E). [19]

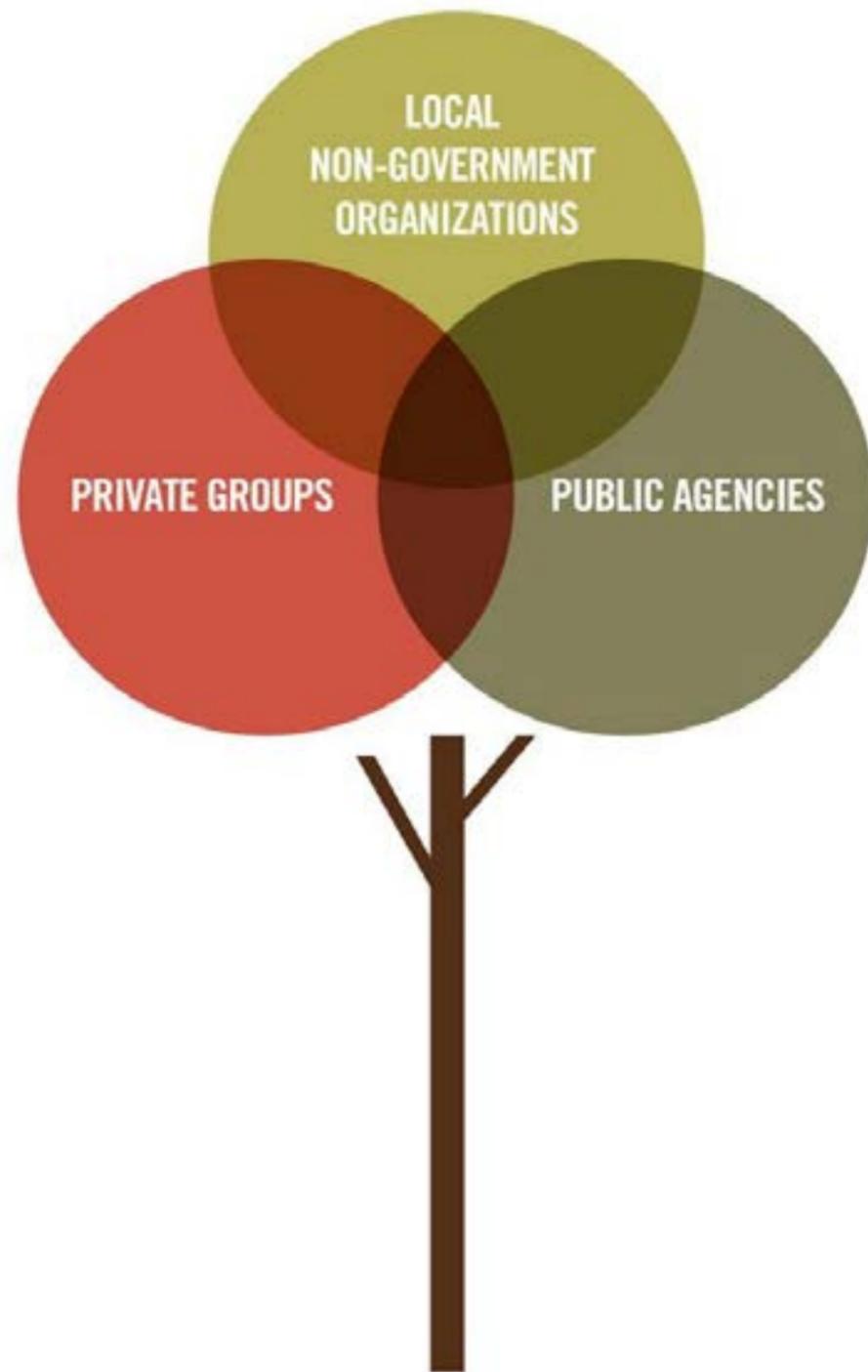
Pittsburgh Regional Parks Natural Areas Study (2010) is part of a multi-phased, natural areas program for the long-term study of the ecological management of Schenley, Highland, Riverview, and Frick Parks (Appendix E). [20]

i-Tree Ecosystem Analysis (2011) assessed the vegetation structure, function, and value of the entire urban forest (public and private) in Pittsburgh. Data collected from field plots located throughout Pittsburgh were analyzed using the i-Tree Eco model developed by the USDA Forest Service (Appendix E). [4]

Urban Tree Canopy Analysis (2011) was performed based on 2010 data and using the USDA Forest Service's Tree Canopy Assessment Protocols. Establishing tree canopy goals is crucial for communities seeking to improve their green infrastructure. A tree canopy assessment is the first step in this goal-setting process, providing estimates for the amount of tree canopy currently present in a city as well as the amount of tree canopy that could theoretically be established (Appendix E). [6]

OpenSpace PGH (estimated completion date, 2012) is one component of PlanPGH and will address issues of ownership, management, maintenance, and connectivity of Pittsburgh's open space systems. The Open Space Plan will provide the City a clear direction in land use and infrastructure decisions by identifying the best use of Pittsburgh's vacant, green, and recreational spaces and their associated programming (<http://planpgh.com/>). [21]

PlanPGH (plan adoption, 2014), the City's first Comprehensive Plan, has the goal of enhancing quality of life in Pittsburgh through the effective and efficient use of its natural systems, infrastructure, cultural assets, recreational amenities, and economic resources. This Urban Forest Master Plan is the detailed planning effort that will help implement the vision and goals of the Open Space Plan (OpenSpacePGH), which is one component of PlanPGH (<http://planpgh.com/>). [21]



Local Non-Government Organizations

- Mount Washington Community Development Corporation** works with the City of Pittsburgh to oversee the management of Emerald View Park.
- Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy** works in partnership with the City to restore the City's park system.
- Tree Pittsburgh** is dedicated to enhancing the City's vitality by restoring and protecting city trees.
- Tree Tenders** is a group of volunteers organized and trained by Tree Pittsburgh dedicated to making a difference in Pittsburgh by planting and caring for our trees.
- TreeVitalize® Pittsburgh** is a Pennsylvania DCNR partnership to restore tree cover in Pennsylvania communities, educate citizens about planting trees as an act of caring for our environment, and build capacity among local governments to understand, protect, and restore their urban trees.
- Urban EcoSteward Program** is a group of volunteers trained by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy who maintain specific sections of park land.
- Western Pennsylvania Conservancy** protects and restores exceptional places to provide our region with clean waters and healthy forests, wildlife, and natural areas for the benefit of present and future generations.

Private Groups

- Cemeteries** maintain trees on large parcels of land owned by private cemetery organizations.
- Duquesne Light Company** supports Arbor Day activities, provides volunteers, and coordinates with the Forestry Division to provide line clearance where street trees and overhead utilities intersect.
- Residents** plant and maintain trees on their properties and volunteer through the Tree Tender and Urban EcoSteward Programs.
- Private Universities and Colleges** conduct research related to urban forestry related issues and provide interns to many nonprofit groups. Plant and maintain trees on campuses.
- Tree Care Companies** work under contract and in partnership with the urban forest partners to provide expertise and tree care.

Public Agencies

- Allegheny County** is responsible for managing nine county parks.
- Bureau of Building Inspection** is responsible for inspecting and assessing sidewalk and property damage caused by trees.
- Department of City Planning** sets the framework for the City's development through policy and development review by the Planning Commission and through administration of the zoning ordinance.
- Forestry Division**, part of the Department of Public Works, is responsible for removing, pruning, and planting trees; inspecting, permitting, installing holiday trees, and enforcing ordinances.
- Streets/Parks Maintenance Division** is a division of the Department of Public Works responsible for maintaining trees within Pittsburgh 's parks and along streets.
- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources** is responsible for maintaining and preserving the state's 117 state parks and 20 state forests; providing information on the state's natural resources; and working with communities to benefit local recreation and natural areas.
- Pennsylvania Department of Transportation** plants and maintains trees along state and federal highways.
- Pittsburgh Shade Tree Commission** is commissioned by the Mayor's office with the task of restoring and maintaining the City's tree population.
- Public Universities and Colleges** conduct research related to urban forestry related issues and provide interns to many nonprofit groups. Plant and maintain trees on campuses.
- United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service** provides grants and technical assistance to urban forestry related projects.