



**Lewiston – Auburn
Community
Forest
Board**

**Strategic Plan
2024-2028**

Mission Statement

Lewiston-Auburn Community Forest Board (LACFB)

The Community Forest Board of Lewiston - Auburn (Auburn Community Forest Working Group) seeks to enhance the quality of life for all citizens in the twin cities by improving and preserving their community forests. This mission is carried out by three efforts: to educate citizens of all ages about trees and trees' contributions to the common life of the communities; to encourage both public policies and private practices that protect forest resources; and to facilitate long-term planning and funding for comprehensive care of natural environments within our Twin Cities.

Ordinances establishing Lewiston Auburn Community Forest Board (Auburn Community Forest Working Group)

Lewiston Maine City Charter

Joint Agencies, Boards and Committees
Community Forest Board

City of Lewiston Ordinances

Chapter 78 Vegetation
Article III Community Forest

Auburn Maine City Charter

Article V Boards, Commissions and Committees
Division 5 Sustainability and Natural Resource Management Board (SNRB)
Sec 2-482 Standing Working Groups
The Community Forest Working Group

City of Auburn Ordinances

Chapter 56- Vegetation
Division 1
Sec 56-19 Tree Maintenance
Sec 56-20 Cutting, Damaging or Removing Plants in Public Spaces
Sec 56-21 Shade Trees
Division 2 Public Woodlot Management
Division 3 Street Tree Sustainability

Lewiston/Auburn Community Forest Board

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Continue Tree City USA certification for both Lewiston and Auburn.

Justification: Tree City USA certification communicates the importance of the urban forest to our citizens and has a positive influence on the public perception of the Twin Cities around the State and beyond.

Objectives:

- a. Meet Arbor Day Foundation requirements for certification by
 - a. Maintaining a tree board or department
 - b. Having a community tree ordinance
 - c. Spending at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry
 - d. Celebrating Arbor Day (Arbor Week in Maine)
 - i. Arbor Week proclamation
 - ii. Arbor Week City events
 - iii. Participate in the State of Maine Arbor Week event
 - e. Filing appropriate annual paperwork to maintain certification.
- b. Maintain communications with other certified municipalities and campuses to exchange ideas and benchmark best practices.

Goal 2: Manage a comprehensive Street Tree Inventory to provide information needed to plan an effective urban forestry program.

Justification: Knowledge about number, location, species, and condition of trees, available as data and a map, will inform an urban forest plan and serve as communication tools with the public and city staff. Data will allow tracking of changes to the urban forest over time.

Objectives:

- a. Maintain a database and map of street trees.
- b. Remeasure a sample of street trees annually.
- c. Keep the inventory current by recording data on trees planted and trees removed.

- d. When appropriate, consider using volunteers to collect information, including Bates students.

Goal 3: Manage the Tree Nursery on the North Auburn Road

Justification: The nursery, established in 2015, provides Lewiston-Auburn with a supply of young trees for replanting. There are spaces for about 250 trees, and planting and removals are occurring annually. Experience has been gained, establishing opportunities to improve species selection, deer browse prevention, maintenance, water management and timing of tree removals. Both cities contribute to maintenance of the nursery with help from volunteers.

Objectives:

- a. Reestablish a power supply to enable watering in years of drought.
- b. Determine if drainage can be established to lower the water table in years of heavy rain.
- c. Optimize purchase of new trees for a diverse mix of species suitable for the site and the urban forest.
- d. Review efforts to reduce deer browse and explore if fencing could be added that would be cost effective and deter deer.
- e. Add informational signage to communicate with the public that frequent adjacent trails.
- f. Enlist more volunteers for summer weeding, mowing and brown-tail moth control.

Goal 4: Plan for the arrival of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and manage its presence.

Justification: EAB is an invasive insect that has already devastated ash trees across the Lake States and much of the country. It has been detected in Maine and more recently in Androscoggin County, including in Lewiston (2023). Action is necessary to preserve select street trees and to replace others as ash trees succumb to this pest. There are over 200 ash street trees in Auburn and a similar number in Lewiston. Several trees in Lewiston have died and have been removed. Dead ash trees become brittle and hazardous in about 5

years. Removal of dead ash trees and replacement with other species will be costly. The cities need to start planning and anticipate the significant costs that EAB will impose on the city budgets to maintain public safety and the urban forest.

Objectives:

- a. Identify important ash trees that are candidates for treatment.
- b. Work with Maine Forest Service and other sources to determine best practices used to combat EAB in individual trees.
- c. Work with Maine Forest Service to get EAB biological control efforts to include Lewiston-Auburn.
- d. Communicate with homeowners with ash street trees to increase understanding of EAB symptoms and provide early warning to city arborists. (This was done through a Project Canopy grant in Auburn several years ago, but more is needed.)
- e. Develop a way to forecast ash tree demise so the cities can budget appropriately.

Goal 5: Compile a list and map of “Notable Trees of L-A”

Justification: Several years ago, LACFB partnered with Bates students to develop a list of significant trees in L-A. The trees were identified because of species, size, or historical significance. Some are in public spaces while some are on private property but visible from the street. Work was underway to develop a map, a website, and a route for viewing the trees. A series of events interrupted the work. This project could increase public awareness and interest in the community forest and be an asset for both cities.

Objectives:

- a. Review progress to date.
- b. Review the list of “notable trees” and develop a final recommendation.
- c. Engage resources to develop a map and a trail description.
- d. Develop a way for the public to utilize this resource, for instance:
 - a. A website
 - b. Posting on city sites
 - c. Brochures and maps
 - d. A GIS system

Goal 6: Promote the equitable distribution of increased numbers of street trees across neighborhoods.

Justification: As is the case in many cities across the US, the distribution of street trees in Lewiston-Auburn is unequal. Greater numbers of trees are found in wealthier neighborhoods dominated by single family homes on larger lots. The benefits of street

trees include but are not limited to improved air quality, better temperature regulation and reduced energy costs, improved mental well-being, decreased run-off, increased property values, and improved aesthetic value. Street trees are valuable public infrastructure. In both cities, many of the existing trees are aging and will eventually need to be replaced.

Objectives:

- a. Establish distinct neighborhoods to monitor.
- b. Use the street tree inventory (see Goal 2) to track the trends over time, identify high priority neighborhoods for planting, and facilitate planning. Cumulative DBH (diameter at breast height) is used by some urban forestry programs as a surrogate for canopy coverage, a key factor for environmental benefits.
- c. Research best practices to establish street trees on streets with limited green space.
- d. Collaborate with Planning Boards to promote tree planting on development projects, and road rebuilds, to increase the number of street trees and the community forest canopy.

Goal 7: Improve public awareness of invasive species and appropriate control methods.

Develop a plan to reduce invasive species, including Asiatic bittersweet, Japanese knotweed, Norway maple, multi-flora rose, honeysuckle, and barberry, in public spaces.

Justification: Proliferation of invasive plant species is affecting the flora and fauna in Lewiston-Auburn. Invasive species out-compete native species and have negative impacts on wildlife habitat. There are opportunities for individual landowners to reduce their spread. The Cities should provide positive examples of doing so.

Objectives:

- a. Continue outreach and education to the community by coordinating with state agencies, drawing on success stories in other communities, and providing resources to local citizens.
- b. Develop plans to implement control measures with focus on Simard-Payne Park, the Auburn Riverwalk and adjacent parks, both Pettengill Parks, and school grounds.

Goal 8: Deter tree vandalism.

Justification: Street trees are frequently damaged by people breaking their branches or peeling their bark. These actions provide entry points for disease and may affect tree vigor. Damaged trees are not as valued by the public.

Objectives:

- a. Develop a presentation to give to public and area schools promoting the value of the community forest to the urban environment and discussing the problems posed to street trees when their bark is damaged.
- b. Implement an Adopt-A-Tree Program or neighborhood watch to increase neighborhood engagement with their street trees. (See guidance in SFI Urban and Community Forest Standard).

Goal 9: Advocate for landscaping at the new Edward Little High School (ELHS).

Justification: Due to budget constraints, landscaping including tree planting at the new ELHS is limited. This location is ideal to increase public awareness of the community forest and provide an example of its value.

Objectives:

- a. Engage with the Auburn School Department to influence the landscape design.
- b. Explore Project Canopy grant opportunities through the Maine Forest Service. Project Canopy recently received significant federal grant funds that the ELHS project might qualify for.

Goal 10: Advocate for the city arborist function, budget, and staffing in both cities.

Justification: Historically, the city arborist function in both cities has been a low priority. As climate change impacts us, the need for a viable urban forest will increase. Proper planning and support will require more resources than at present.

Objectives:

- a. Increase City Council awareness of LACFB, perhaps by presenting the new strategic plan.
- b. Improve public awareness of the increasing importance of the urban forest infrastructure to quality of life in Lewiston-Auburn.
- c. Advocate for a budget, including staffing, that supports the maintenance and improvement of the urban forest.

Goal 11: Recruit and maintain an active board with members from both Lewiston and Auburn.

Justification: The strength and impact of the LACFB depends on an active membership.

Objectives:

- a. Continue to interact with City officials who may have knowledge of citizens interested in serving.
- b. Continue efforts to engage students at the high schools.

- c. Use the new strategic plan as a recruiting tool and resource to help new members engage with the Board.
- d. Look for opportunities to publicize LACFB activities and successes.