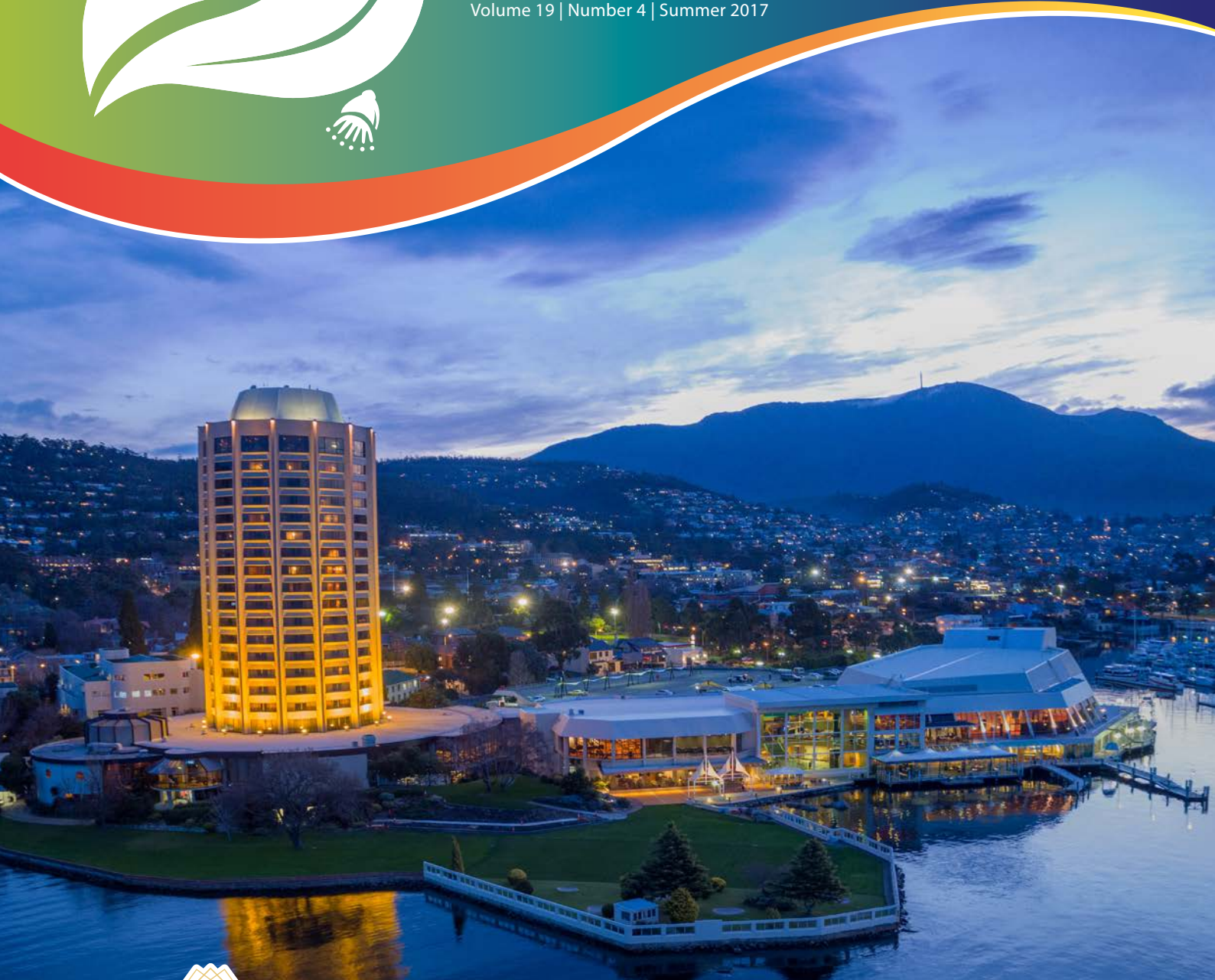


# the BARK™



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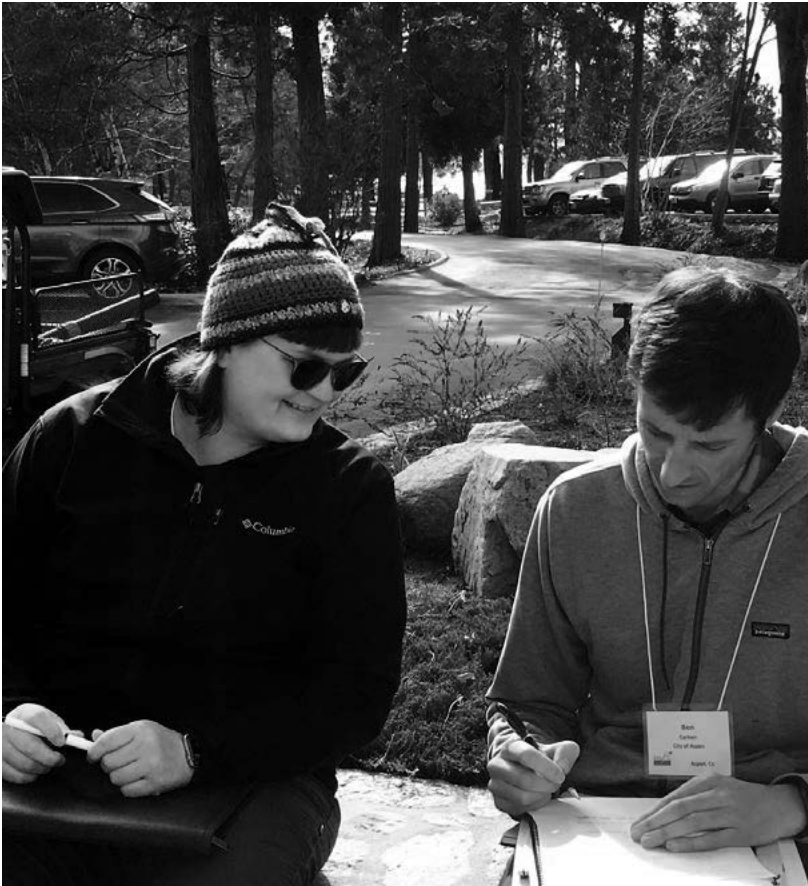


**CONFERENCE 2018**  
**Wrest Point | Hobart, Tasmania**  
**27th April - 1st May 2018**

This edition of The Bark is brought to you by Active Tree Services



Arboriculture Australia™



Wyoming Community Resource Forester Tara Costanzo (left) and Aspen, Colorado City Forester Ben Carlsen. Photo by Owen Croy

February 28, 2017

Dear MFI Cadre,

I wanted to send a quick note to thank you for the time and effort each of you put into making MFI a success yet again this year. I know it is no small thing to pull off a week like that, from the preparation in advance to the endurance needed during the week itself. I learned a lot from each of you, not just through what you taught, but how you interacted with each other and the time you took to share your knowledge and experiences over meals and at breaks. I'm looking forward to getting back to debrief with my manager (another MFI grad) to see what we can do in the next few months to affect the trajectory of SDOT Urban Forestry! I appreciate what you have done to raise the bar and help develop the next layer of Urban Forestry leaders. I'm thankful to be part of such a great professional network. I hope your transition back to "normal life" goes well this week.

Thanks again,

**Joshua Erickson, Urban Forestry Operations Manager for Seattle Department of Transportation, City of Seattle, Washington**

## Telling Your Story: Communicating with the Public about Your Urban Forestry Program

Written by Beth Corrigan, Community Trees Program Specialist, The Morton Arboretum

A robust urban forestry program needs to engage and educate citizens, public officials, and community leaders. Their support can make the difference between a vital, functioning program and one that struggles. Sharing the message that trees are a community asset is the key to building involvement and program capacity. As it is, members of the public rarely look at trees with any depth. They simply imagine that trees take care of themselves, grow without any help, and live "a long time." We know this perception could not be farther from reality.

As stewards of our urban forests, we need to share our expertise. By communicating what we know about the urban forest, we gain advocates and funding for trees. Time is always a scarce resource, but in the long run, time spent communicating with the public and officials is an investment that pays off.

One way to approach this is to understand our baseline of communication, assess effectiveness, develop goals, and then get help. Change takes time. Starting with an evaluation and then expanding our efforts slowly will make them more sustainable.

### What You Do Now

List the ways you communicate now, and grade the effectiveness of each method. Some possibilities are:

**Website:** Does the forestry program have a page of its own, distinct from the public works department, on your community's official website? Does the page explain, with pictures, what your program does? Are your name and contact information listed? Does the page link to your ordinances related to trees? Is the page up to date and do all the links work?

**Public contact:** Are you prepared with a short, clear "elevator speech," briefly explaining what your program does and why it's important, to use whenever you meet people in the community? If you have an opportunity to speak, are you prepared to share your program accomplishments as well as information from your tree inventory and your budget? Do you have at least one public event a year so that people have the opportunity to meet you and be involved?

The screenshot shows the City of Ithaca website's Parks & Forestry page. The header includes the City of Ithaca logo and navigation links for Government, Community, Services, and How Do I... A search bar is also present. The main content area is titled 'Parks & Forestry' and includes sections for 'Parks & Forestry Division', 'City Tree Inventory', and 'Community Voice'. A 'Contact Us' section on the right provides contact information for Jeanne Grace, City Forester, including phone, fax, and emergency numbers, as well as office hours and a Facebook link.

The urban forestry program web pages for Ithaca, NY and Oak Park, IL are noteworthy for being useful, easy to navigate, attractive, and thorough.

**Media:** Do you submit items to your municipal newsletter about trees and their seasonal care? Do you notify media of plans for planting, pruning, removals or other operations, and include your contact information? If your municipality has social media accounts, do you suggest posts and supply pictures? Do you have a list of contact information for local media and understand your municipal policy regarding communication with media outlets?

## Setting Goals for Improvement

Once you have established a program baseline and evaluated how well it is working, the next step is to set goals. Use simple language, avoid jargon, and share your position with openness and transparency. Volunteer key program information to the public before there is a problem or public controversy. There are many possibilities for increasing the effectiveness of your public communication, such as the following:

**Improve your website:** When searching online, your community's residents want to quickly find information that is easy to understand. Talk to your municipal IT staff about adding forestry pages to the municipality's website or improving those that exist.

Find other web pages that offer useful, research-based tree information, such as those of your state university's extension service, and link to them. Make sure that your page is tagged, searchable, and includes a Frequently Asked Questions page about your department and what it does. Add local pictures so the page feels credible and welcoming.

Whatever is most useful for you to know should be shared and accessible online: tree inventory data, your tree management plan, the number of trees planted/removed each year, schedules for tree pruning and maintenance, budget changes over time, and information about Tree City USA and Arbor Day events and programs.

As your page grows, you might include videos that illustrate what you do. Be sure to track how often they are viewed. Maps and GIS data can illustrate your program's reach. Potential resources for links include the Society of Municipal Arborists' EAB Toolbox and collected roundtables, Vibrant Cities and Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition resources, your state urban and community forestry program, and the U.S. Forest Service.

*Continue reading* ►



The Village of Oak Park | 123 Madison St. Oak Park, IL 60302 | village@oak-park.us

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VILLAGE SERVICES

- Village Services A - Z
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- + Business Services
- + Building Permits & Inspections
- + Development Services
- + Fire Department
- + Health Department
- + Housing Programs
- + Parking
- + Planning & Zoning
- + Police Department
- Public Works
  - B-Box Water Valve
  - Basement Flooding
  - Construction Project Updates
  - Cross-Connection Survey
  - Tree Care & Maintenance
  - + Water Quality
  - + Refuse & Recycling
  - Ticket Appeals



The Village of Oak Park is home to nearly 19,000 trees on parkways and other public landscaped areas. These trees represent more than 125 different species. But life in an urban forest is not always easy for trees that must survive conditions much harsher than in a park or other protected green space. Village foresters must continually monitor trees for damage, disease and insect infestations, with an eye toward public safety. Most trees also have a set life span. Removing trees and planting new ones is a basic part of the life cycle of an urban forest.

Click on the titles below to read more about each topic.

- ▶ **Alley Trees**
- ▶ **Brush Pick Up**
- ▶ **Construction Protection**
- ▶ **Contractor Recommendations**
- ▶ **Diseases**
- ▶ **Free Woodchips**
- ▶ **Mulching**
- ▶ **Parkway Plantings**
- ▶ **Private Property Trees**
- ▶ **Pruning**
- ▶ **Removals**
- ▶ **Tree Planting**
- ▶ **Swings/Items in Parkway Trees**
- ▶ **Tree Inventory**
- ▶ **Wasps and Insects**

CONTACT US

publicworks@oak-park.us  
708.358.5700  
South Blvd. @ Lombard Ave.

Useful Links

- Arbor Day Foundation
- Chicago Regional Trees Initiative
- Illinois Arborists Association
- Illinois Forestry Association
- International Society of Arboriculture
- Morton Arboretum
- TreesAreGood.org
- University of Illinois Extension
- U.S. Forest Service
- Village Tree Inventory

Other information to consider for your page includes recommended species, approved contractors, proper tree care, tree health monitoring, public and private property planting, brush pickup, protecting trees during construction, tree removals, and damage to trees.

**Reach out to local officials and the public:** Does your community have a tree board or commission and if so, are you making the

most of their support? For community engagement, do you hold a community-wide Arbor Day celebration and meet your residents? Do you visit the schools and offer programming? Have you done a talk on trees at your public library? Attended a "Coffee With the Mayor"?

**Connect with municipal departments:** Have you engaged other departments to share why trees are a community asset? Have you



*For every opportunity to speak in public, are you prepared to share highlights of your program's accomplishments? Photo by Michelle Sutton*

asked them to assist you with presenting financials, preparing an i-Tree analysis, or surveying your community to learn what they need and their understanding of trees? Try inviting other staff to attend your trainings to promote cross-functional understanding and advocacy.

**Build relationships with local newspapers and radio:** Have you built a relationship with local reporters? Are you available and helpful to reporters covering municipal affairs? Have you contacted your local editor to suggest stories about tree care or the benefits of trees? Do you have sample releases ready to go for events? Do you send notices to your local paper in advance of tree work, Arbor Day celebrations, and other operations? Have you appeared on public affairs news programs on local cable TV or radio?

**Involve schools:** Increase awareness of trees and their value among schoolchildren, who will take the message to their families. Lessons about trees can help meet school curriculum goals. Arbor Day poster or essay contests, tree plantings, and tree walks on school property are ways to engage students and their families. Use events with schools to meet Tree City USA requirements while engaging families. Science fair organizers are usually happy to have additional local exhibitors or judges.

## Get Some Help

Developing your public communications will take time. Look around for help and recruit new resources. Here are some possibilities:

**Get an intern:** The SMA Summer Intern Program provides funding for an intern for a set time period or to accomplish a specific project. Why not seek an intern or local student to work on improving public communications? Look to local community colleges or universities for students in need of class projects or experience for their resume. Students studying GIS, horticulture, and environmental science may be able to help you meet your goals. Many colleges have sustainability or green clubs that can also be a resource.

**Develop volunteers:** Look to the community for expertise on items such as writing articles, updating websites, posting on social media, entering work orders, preparing presentations, monitoring trees, and writing grants. Every community has folks looking for ways to give back. There are many online resources to assist with this if your municipality does not already support a volunteer program.

**Find new partners:** As your public relations capability grows, engage new audiences such as local business and philanthropic groups, the Chamber of Commerce, green industry professionals, garden clubs, watershed and stewardship groups, and hobbyists such as woodworkers.

Trees are part of every community's character, but the community needs to know more about their care. The management of the urban forest is a compelling story and there are many ways to tell it. Finding the right way to communicate and connect with every audience and potential partner will help you gain support and funding; it starts with telling the story of your unique urban forestry program.



*Why not seek an intern or local student to work on improving your program's public communications? Photo by Michelle Sutton*