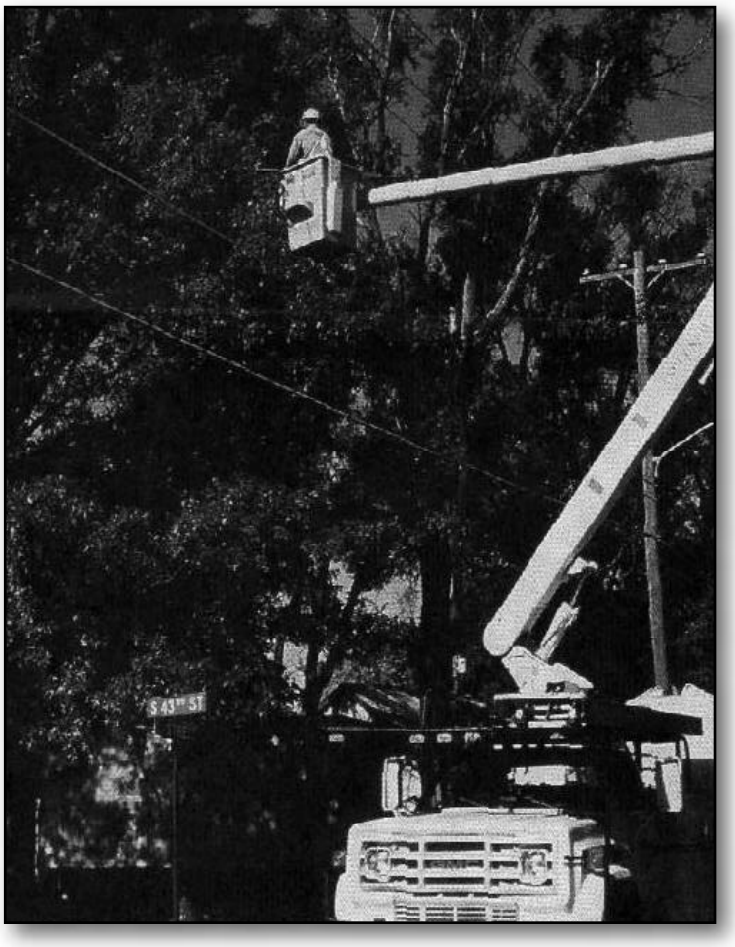
Urban & Community Forest Master Plan

Town of Atwater, NY



Prepared by:
Atwater Bureau of Forestry
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in Cooperation with
NY Dept. of Environmental Conservation

November, 1998

Introduction

The urban forest of the Town of Atwater represents a considerable economic and environmental asset to the community. A tree care maintenance program, based on the results of a windshield survey of 100 percent of the Town's public street trees has been prepared, allowing for prioritization, scheduling, and budgeting for urban and community forestry programming in Atwater. Improved tree health and survival will result in long term benefits and reduce public liability by elimination of hazardous conditions.

The development of a progressive, long range urban and community forestry maintenance program based on preliminary research, inventory and study will provide the foundation for an ongoing program that will result in a healthier and safer community forest in Atwater.

At this time of increased environmental awareness, it seems hardly necessary to point out the major contributions of plant life to community health, and the benefits provided by urban and community trees. By protecting against the harshness of the urban environment, green plants make a difference between an unhealthy city or town and a wholesome human community. Tree lined streets and canopied parks are not only inviting, but are natural providers of important aspects of the quality of life. As their beneficiaries, we rely on them to clean our air, provide dynamic buffers, reduce noise, conserve our soil, and add to the visual quality of our community.

Acknowledging their major contribution to Atwater, the goal of this management plan is to provide a strategic approach to sustaining the urban and community trees on a short and long-term basis. The development of a realistic and achievable budget is also provided. Additionally, opportunities for cooperative partnerships between the Town, individuals, agencies, organizations and utility providers is offered as a mechanism to improve the quality of the urban and community forestry program in Atwater.

This Strategic Plan is provided as a tool to be used for garnering public support, cooperation and funding in the reforestation of Atwater. The devastation of the 1998 Ice Storm has presented a serious challenge to the fiscal and physical resources of the community, but the development of this planning document will provide the opportunity for full recovery in a reasonable and realistic time frame.

Findings

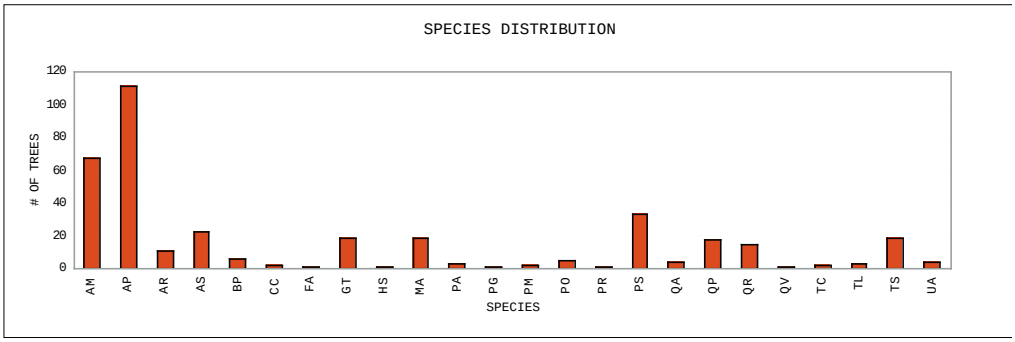
A team of inventory specialists conducted a sample windshield survey of the public street trees of Atwater in October, 1998. The following analyzes the results of the inventory and provides recommendations and guidelines for a strategic maintenance program in Atwater.

There are approximately 16,000 trees growing along the public streets of Atwater. Within the Town's 48.4 square miles there are 217 miles of roadway. This estimate indicates that there are about 74 pubic trees per mile of roadway or 0.42 street trees per Atwater resident.

Species Distribution:

There are fourteen different Genus types found growing along the streets of Atwater. The species distribution follows:

Acer	57 %
Quercus	10 %
Pinus	9 %
Gleditsia	5 %
Malus	5 %
Tsuga	5 %
Betula	2 %
Carpinus	1 %
Picea	1 %
Platanus	1 %
Pseudotsuga	1 %
Tilia	1 %
Ulmus	1 %
Fraxinus	<1 %

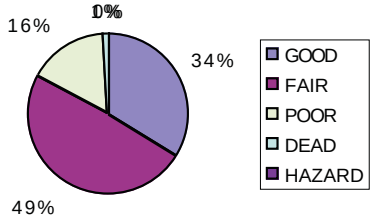


Findings

Condition Assessment:

The percentages of the overall condition assessment of the street trees found in Atwater:

Good	34 %
Fair	49 %
Poor	16 %
Dead	1 %
Hazard	<1 %

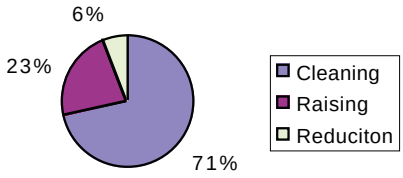


Management Needs:

The following outlines the specific management needs of the street trees of Atwater, as found in the sample survey. Noted are the representative percentages of the pruning classes.

Crown cleaning	59% of trees need this care
Crown raising	19% of trees need this care
Crown reduction	5% of trees need this care

PRUNING TYPES NEEDED

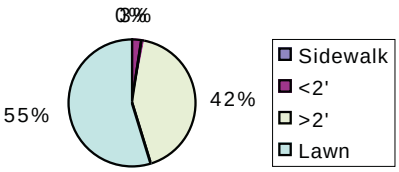


Planting Location:

The following describes the planing locations for the street trees growing in Atwater. Trees The majority of the street trees are planted in planting sites that are greater than 2 feet in width, with most found growing in open lawn areas:

Growing in sidewalk	<1 %
In areas <2' width	3 %
In areas >2' width	42 %
Growing in open lawn	55%

PLANTING LOCATION



Findings

The initial windshield survey also revealed other major findings including:

• There are approximately 16 trees that have been classified as hazardous.

• High priority maintenance needs include sign clearance (40 trees), removals (75 trees) and safely trims (628 trees).

• Species diversity is very low, with only 4 species comprising 90 percent of the population

• The occurance of damaged or raised sidewalks was noted 32 times.

• Damage from the 1998 Ice Storm has left some trees in a condition that will require monitoring over an extended period of years.

• Many locations have undesirable species of trees growing along the roadway, resulting in increased maintenance requirements.

• Most of the trees that require pruning are found in the Southwest quarter of the community.

• Improper pruning of many trees (98 trees) was observed, primarily the result of emergency work during the immediate Ice Storm recovery operations.

• Overhead utilities impact approximately 42% of the trees along the streets.

• Many trees show signs of increased sucker growth during this past growing season.

Budget

FY 1999 Budget

Personnel		
	Contracted	$22,000.
	In-House	$8,000.
Equipment		
	Maintenance	$1,500.
	Purchase	$1,000.
Disposal		$400.
Overhead/Insurance		$1400.
Planting	$500.	
Total		***$34,800.***

FY 2000 Budget

Personnel		
	Contracted	$28,000.
	In-House	$11,000.
Equipment		
	Maintenance	$1,900.
	Purchase	$1,500.
Disposal		$500.
Overhead/Insurance		$1900.
Planting	$500.	
Total		***$44,800.***

FY 2005 Budget

Personnel		
	Contracted	$40,000.
	In-House	$22,000.
Equipment		
	Maintenance	$5,500.
	Purchase	$5,000.
Disposal		$800.
Overhead/Insurance		$6000.
Planting	$500.	
Total		***$79,300.***

Recommendations

Vision & Goals

The development of an urban and community forest management program for Atwater should include mission and goals statement. The development of these items should be accomplished in order to fully define the Town's focus and commitment to the urban and community forestry program.

Vision: To sustain a healthy, safe and appealing public street and park tree population in the Town of Atwater.

Goal: To effectively mange the urban and community forest of Atwater in an effective manner through sound fiscal, personnel and operational management, utilizing in-house and contracted services and building a team of effective proponents for the trees in the community.

Short-Term Action Items

- Remove hazard trees on public right-of-ways.
- Trim trees to clear traffic signals and signs, street lights, pedestrian and vehicular traffic and buildings.
- Perform systematic trimming of trees containing hazardous defects.
- Plant new street trees to replace those eliminated by ice storm and subsequent maintenance operations.
- Establish a routine systematic trimming cycle for all trees along the Town's right-of-ways.
- Monitor trees on annual basis for structural, disease or cultural problems.
- Improve species diversity in new plantings.
- Identify potential partners for urban and community forestry programming in the community.
- Inform the public of ongoing efforts and long-term strategies for Ice Storm recovery and reforestation.

Recommendations

Long-Term Action Items

- Development of Street Tree Ordinance for the Town of Atwater.
- Increase public education and involvement in the planning, care and maintenance of the community trees and forests.
- Work toward the development of a community Tree Board to provide guidance and recommendations to the Town for care and maintenance of the community forest.
- Increase the fiscal budget for urban and community forestry operations.
- Develop working partnerships with local and regional utilities, agencies and organizations to improve effectiveness and efficiency of urban and community forestry operations.
- Increase the number of trees planted on public lands and along the streets.
- Develop a 100% inventory of all street and park trees, using state-of-the-art technology and mapping methods.
- Develop a comprehensive set of specifications for contracted services.
- Provide training to in-house personnel on all phases of urban and community tree care.
- Work with state highway and transportation agencies on developing standards and criteria for care of trees growing on state roadways.