

# The Forest on Main Street



The Connecticut Urban Forest Council Volume 3, fall, 2004

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- Urban Forestry in  
Milford*

and

*The Urban Ecology  
Collaborative*



*The Forest on Main Street is the official  
newsletter of the Connecticut Urban Forest  
Council.*



*A summer's day in New Haven's urban forest.*

## Partnering for Tomorrow - Urban Forestry in Milford

by Mary Ludwig - Milford Tree Commission

In 2003, Milford received the Connecticut ReLeaf Award. Connecticut ReLeaf is an incentive program created by the CT Urban Forest Council to acknowledge quality urban and community forestry efforts, in municipalities, neighborhoods, and institutions. But, in 1999, Milford's urban forest was in crisis management mode. Trees were being taken down and not replaced along the City's streets and in parks. There were budget issues, questions about the value of trees, and conflicts between trees and other priorities. To address these problems, residents formed a nonprofit organization that became Milford Trees Inc. (MTI).

### The Beginnings

One of the first things that MTI undertook was the drafting of an ordinance creating a five-member Tree Commission. MTI presented this ordinance to the Mayor and Board of Alderman, and it passed. The Commission was charged with taking a tree inventory of Milford's public trees - along the streets and in the parks - and with keeping this information up-to-date. Other duties involved developing an Urban Forest Management Plan and educating the public about the importance of trees. Not surprisingly, the Tree Commission forged a close relationship with MTI. As a nonprofit, MTI's role complements that of the Tree Commission, just as the commission supports the work of MTI.

In June 2000, eleven Milford tree enthusiasts attended the Meskwaka Tree School, to learn about tree biology, proper tree care, planting and maintenance, species identification, tree inventory techniques and public outreach. This three-day program, run by Bob Ricard with the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System, is held each June in New London, at Connecticut College.

The Milford team came home inspired. Determined to move forward on the tree inventory, they put up flyers and posters, sent out mailings and wrote press releases to get volunteers for this effort. To start things off, CT DEP Foresters Fred Borman, Chris Donnelly and Rob Rocks gave an introductory course to a core group of volunteers. Closer to springtime, 65 volunteers were brought together for an all day session on tree inventory basics. The volunteers learned how to record each tree, identify the species, measure its diameter, map the tree's location, rate its condition and characterize maintenance needs. It was a lively and informative day for the trainees. When the leaves came out on the trees, the inventory teams hit the streets.

### First Plantings

While the tree inventory progressed, areas without trees were discovered. One such area was on Monroe Street, in a section with a wide esplanade. Students from Milford's Alternative Education School's "Operation Habitat", with the help of Tree Warden Irwin Langewisch and the Department of Public Works, planted forty-eight

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## The Forest on Main Street

The Forest on Main Street is a publication of the Connecticut Urban Forest Council.

Editor . . . . . Susan W. Stotts  
Assistant Editor . . . . . Chris Donnelly  
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Or reach us at our website:

[www.CTUrbanForestCouncil.org](http://www.CTUrbanForestCouncil.org)

## The Urban Ecology Collaborative: Sharing Experience in Urban Ecology Research, Restoration and Education

by Jocelyn Hittle, Urban Resources Initiative

Across the country, organizations are striving to improve the environment of the cities through education, community-driven restoration, and hands-on stewardship. Each city faces different challenges and has programs that take different approaches. Nevertheless, there is a great deal regarding community forestry, restoration, and education that cities can share and shape to fit their own needs. There is no need to “reinvent the wheel” when modifying a few of its spokes will do.

The Urban Ecology Collaborative (UEC) is pioneering this intercity sharing of information and tools. It is an alliance of organizations and agencies from six cities—Baltimore, Boston, New Haven, New York City, Pittsburgh and Washington, DC—that brings together knowledge, experience, and an ability in problem-solving for the mutual benefit of the member organizations.

### Innovative and Effective

The creation of the UEC did something remarkably simple: it took a network of ideas and of tool-sharing that already existed informally and gave it structure. By formalizing this network, cities across the northeast are better able to pool resources and address common, specific issues.

In addition to the city agencies and not-for-profit organizations in the six cities, the U.S. Forest Service is a critical partner of the UEC. Through synthesis and analysis of the large body of data collected by the member cities, the Forest Service is going to be able to conduct research in the relatively new field of urban ecology. As a federal body, the Forest Service is able to see the trends that are unique to certain cities and the trends that exist on a larger scale.

### UEC's First Year

The UEC was launched at a meeting in November of 2002. This meeting addressed the challenge of devising an organizational structure that works for each of the various member organizations and agencies. Since that November meeting, the groups within the UEC have been actively exchanging resources, materials, and models. Among the activities undertaken by the UEC in its first year was a weeklong training at New Haven's Common Ground Charter School, led by Boston's Urban Ecology Institute Field Studies Program.

### The Future of the UEC

Environmental work at the local level has been going on for years. Many in the environmental sector believe that these local efforts have only increased in importance. The Urban Ecology Collaborative is a unique way to bring together local organizations, improving their effectiveness through the sharing of information and tools and the simultaneous creation of an urban ecology database for regional research. The UEC's synthesis of this data can have national significance and applicability. Therefore the UEC serves not only as a model for linking local organizations to each other, but also as a connection between local work and work at the regional and national level.

*Jocelyn Hittle is a Masters of Environmental Management candidate (2005) at the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. She is interested in restoration ecology and land use issues.*

## Partnering for Tomorrow - Urban Forestry in Milford

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trees here. The trees were purchased using funds from a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant obtained by Steve Wing - Tree Commission Chair, MTI, and the City's Office of Community Development. It took a year and a half to complete the cooperative effort, with the project being a successful learning experience for all involved!

In the meantime, two and a half years and many volunteer hours later, information on Milford's 17,000 public trees had been collected. This information was entered by a team of eight MTI volunteers into a tree inventory program developed by David Bloniarz, Director of the US Forest Service's Northeast Center for Urban Forestry. Under the direction of Milford's GIS Professional, Mark Goetz, this data set was entered into the City's ARCView system. Milford also updated their engineering maps to show tree location. The tree inventory database is now accessible by the Tree Commission, Milford Trees Inc., the Tree Warden, Public Works and other City Agencies and Officials.

In order for volunteers to work in the GPS/GIS environment, further education was necessary. Mary Ludwig, Vice Chair of the Tree Commission, took a GPS training course on using a handheld unit, so that the tree inventory could be updated more accurately and with greater efficiency. Other volunteers tried out the unit and saw that it was easy and fun to use. Later in the year, Ludwig took the "Geospatial Technologies at Work" course offered at UConn. As a consequence of all these efforts, work on the Urban Forest Management Plan, a Commission priority, is now proceeding.

### Further Efforts

Along with the tree inventory program, MTI members have enjoyed getting their hands in the soil. The City provided property for a tree nursery, with seedlings obtained through grants from the National Tree Trust. Nursery directors Meg Bieler and Regine Vitale organized work parties to maintain the 1,900 trees planted. Public Works is in the process of building a deer excluder fence and of providing the nursery with an upgraded irrigation system, invaluable during hot summer months when the 13 species of trees planted will all need water. While these nursery trees grow, larger trees (3" caliper) from local commercial nurseries are being planted along the City's streets. Funding for these trees has come from various sources. Lorraine Rahgo, MTI's Secretary and a retired teacher, has led 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from Live Oaks School through a mini-version of the larger Milford Tree Program by planting 25 seedlings on the school's property.



*The Monroe Street tree plantings were among the first for the City of Milford and its volunteer tree program. These trees were planted by the Department of Public Works and students in the Alternative Education Program, with assistance from Milford Trees Inc.*



*Milford is one of four Connecticut communities designated as a Connecticut ReLeaf Community in 2003.*

Public outreach is part of the Meskwaka challenge. Mary Ludwig and Kate Orecchio, MTI's President, have spoken to communities throughout Connecticut. Recently, they returned to Meskwaka to give a presentation on Milford's Municipal Tree Inventory. Also, Mary has given presentations on "Milford GIS and Tree Inventories" and "Milford's Notable Trees." Another outreach activity is MTI's quarterly newsletter, *Leaflets*, produced by Meg Bieler, Mary Ludwig and Regine Vitale. *Leaflets* seeks to educate the public about tree related issues and to keep MTI members and the community up to date with tree events. The Norwalk Tree Alliance graciously posts

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## Partnering for Tomorrow - Urban Forestry in Milford

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*Milford's Shadyside Tree Volunteers, at work in the City's tree nursery.*

the newsletter on their website, at [www.norwalktreealliance.org](http://www.norwalktreealliance.org).

The Tree Commission worked with the Planning and Zoning Commission on the first comprehensive revision of their tree-related regulations in 30 years. Since 2001, the Tree Commission has reviewed 150 of the applications that have been submitted to Planning and Zoning. P&Z routinely incorporates the Tree Commission's comments and recommendations into the conditions of approval.

### Ongoing Challenges

MTI's President, Kate Orecchio, is heading up a project entitled "Trees Along the Post Road". This project will involve a diversified group of community members and officials, business owners, legislative leaders and state

agencies. The idea for this project came about when the CT Post Mall donated 60 shade trees to the City. The project is only in the beginning stages, but there is great hope that the group will see many shade trees planted along the Post Road in the not-too-distant future.

Another goal is the creation of an arboretum on public properties in the downtown area. Potential sites include the City's Green, the Government Center and the land surrounding the North Street duck pond. A broad diversity of native species will provide both educational opportunities and the chance for a mile-long walking tour!

Milford is indeed a very active community with regards to its urban forestry program. It has come a long way in just five years. This happened because dedicated volunteers stepped forward and encouraged others to do so, because elected officials and staff members in City Government vigorously supported volunteer efforts, incorporating them into the City's work plan, and because good sources of support and information were available from the UConn Extension System, CT DEP Division of Forestry, Connecticut College and the US Forest Service. The beneficiaries, of course, are not just the citizens of Milford of today, but those of the next several generations as well. Milford sincerely hopes that their efforts will be a useful model to other Connecticut communities, who might find ideas to borrow in this summary of the City's urban forestry activities.

### Connecticut ReLeaf Communities

In 2003, the Connecticut Urban Forest Council initiated a program to recognize communities with exemplary urban forestry programs, entitled 'Connecticut ReLeaf Communities'. Cities, towns, neighborhoods or institutions such as schools may apply for designation as a Connecticut ReLeaf Community. Standards for this designation are set by the Council, and include such criteria as citizen involvement, professional development, inter-agency cooperation and planning and management.

This past year, four communities were designated as Connecticut ReLeaf Communities. On November 3rd, at this year's Urban Forest Conference, the Council will designate additional communities for this recognition.

The four communities designated in 2003 are:

#### Cities

Milford

#### Towns

Glastonbury

Groton

#### Neighborhoods

The Farmington Avenue Neighborhood (Hartford)

Plaques signifying this honor along with highway markers were presented to each of these designees.

## Tree Planting at BJ Park in Bridgeport

The City of Bridgeport has received an Inner City Urban Forestry Grant from CT DEP and the US Forest Service. As a part of this grant, the City is planting trees at Leroy Brown, Jr. (BJ) Park. BJ Park is named for an eight year old from the neighborhood who was murdered for being a witness to a shooting. BJ was very active in the North End Boys and Girls Club - BJ Park is a city park adjacent to this club. The city and the surrounding neighborhoods are seeking to create an 'urban oasis', including a playground, for the kids of the area.

This past June, in one day, people from throughout the city - including volunteers, landscapers, representatives of Groundworks Bridgeport, a work crew from the near-by Bridgeport Correctional Center and city employees - planted 120 arbor vitae, 8 lindens and host of shrubbery at BJ Park. The following are pictures from that planting.



*Two workers from Resource Services prepare the planting holes for the arbor vitae using a soil auger. BJ's mural is in the background.*



*As the trees are removed from the trailer, Tree Warden Phil Handy discusses the day's plan with Sabine Kuczo of the City Planning Office.*



*Resource Services of Bridgeport supplied the trees and donated their time for this effort. This included moving the heavy linden rootballs.*



*Watering early, often and as needed is essential in the success of these plantings, especially during a June as dry as this year's.*



*A crew from the Bridgeport Correctional Center helped with the trees.*



*It was not long before it was business as usual on the basketball court.*

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## **TREES MEAN BUSINESS**

**Wednesday, November 3rd, at the Mountainside Inn in Wallingford, CT**

The 16th Annual Conference on Urban and Community Forestry in Connecticut will take place on Wednesday, November 3rd at the Mountainside Inn in Wallingford. The theme for this year's meeting is "Trees Mean Business". Cost for registration is \$40 per person and includes lunch. Arborist and Certified Tree Warden credit hours are available, as is the opportunity to earn CEU's towards the renewal of the Landscape Architect's license.

The Schedule for the day is as follows:

8:00	Exhibit Area Opens
8:30 - 9:00	Registration and Visit with Exhibitors
9:00 - 9:15	Welcome <i>Colleen Murphy-Dunning, President, CUFC</i>
9:15 - 10:15	Creating Better Consumer Experiences with Trees: Research and Design <i>Dr. Kathleen L. Wolf, University of Washington</i>
10:15 - 10:45	Visit with Exhibitors
10:45 - 11:45	The Many Contributions of Trees to Vibrant Communities <i>Dr. Lynne Westphal, USDA Forest Service</i>
11:45 - 1:15	Awards Ceremony and Lunch (provided)
1:15 - 2:15	Community Design Centers: a Planning Model for Urban Forestry <i>Kristin Schwab, University of Connecticut</i>
2:15 - 3:15	Trees Are Our Sense of Place <i>Leslie Kane, Environmental Planner, Guilford</i>

This is sure to be a worthwhile conference for a wide range of audiences, including municipal officials, planners, landscape architects, tree wardens, arborists, tree commission members, volunteers and tree supporters of all types. For information, please visit the CUFC website ([www.CTUrbanForestCouncil.org](http://www.CTUrbanForestCouncil.org)). See you there!

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