



Northern Kentucky Urban & Community Forestry Council (NKUCFC) 2008 Issue Paper: Forests and Livable Communities

Communities across the country, including Northern Kentucky, are increasingly more aware of livability issues. Government officials, private businesses, and individual citizens are trying to address the quality of life in their communities and how they can sustain and improve it. The awareness comes from wanting to improve livability for the people who currently live, work and visit, but also wanting their communities to be recognized for their livability in order to attract new people of talent and skill.

Urban forests can play a major role in how communities address their livability. We believe this because urban forests not only include individual trees but also parks and greenspace, trees lining streets, small remnants of woods and forests, and the relationship of such to air, water, wildlife and people. Urban forestry programs work towards protecting, managing, enhancing and promoting urban forests with the best interest of people in mind.

DISCUSSION ITEMS - How do you see the role of urban forestry in the Principles for Livable Communities (established by the Local Government Commission) listed below?

1. The community should have a center focus that combines commercial, civic, cultural and recreational uses.
2. The community should contain an ample supply of specialized open space in the form of squares, greens and parks whose frequent use is encouraged through placement and design.
3. Public spaces should be designed to encourage the attention and presence of people at all hours of the day and night.
4. Each community or cluster of communities should have a well-defined edge, such as agricultural greenbelts or wildlife corridors, permanently protected from development.
5. Streets, pedestrian paths and bike paths should contribute to a system of fully-connected and interesting routes to all destinations. Their design should encourage pedestrian and bicycle use by being small and spatially defined by buildings, trees and lighting; and by discouraging high speed traffic.
6. Wherever possible, the natural terrain, drainage and vegetation of the community should be preserved with superior examples contained within parks or greenbelts.
7. The community design should help conserve resources and minimize waste.
8. Communities should provide for the efficient use of water through the use of natural drainage, drought tolerant landscaping and recycling.
9. The street orientation, the placement of buildings and the use of shading should contribute to the energy efficiency of the community.

Additional Information (from Local Government Commission on Trees and Healthy Communities):

- Trees stimulate downtown business – Univ. of Washington studies found that consumers will shop more often and longer in downtown business districts with street trees and other landscaping than in districts without, and they are willing to pay more for parking and up to 11% more for goods and services.
- Trees calm traffic and encourage walking – Tree lined streets provide visual interest and slow traffic encouraging more people to bike, walk and meet their neighbors.
- Trees improve climate and save energy – Neighborhoods with well-shaded streets can be up to 10 degrees F cooler than neighborhoods without street trees. Three well-placed trees around a home can lower air conditioning by up to 30% and windbreak trees can save up to 25% on winter heating costs.
- Trees clean the air – Research shows that 100 trees can remove five tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere per year, and can remove about 1,000 pounds of ozone and 300 pounds of particulates.