



Management Planning

Urban Forested Natural Area Roadmaps



Introduction

This roadmap presents a recommended approach to create management plans for urban forested natural areas (i.e. management frameworks, natural resources plans, habitat management plans) or to improve or implement a management plan if you already have one. A management plan details which conservation and restoration activities will be accomplished within a specified timeframe and location. Management plans vary in scale—they can apply to individual sites or the whole city. We recommend planning at both scales to encompass both site-level and city-wide management.

The following are some key considerations for conducting assessment and monitoring in urban forested natural areas. Your process may not occur in the order listed; this is a cyclical process with contextual considerations.



Urban Forested Natural Area Roadmaps

These roadmaps provide guidance for local organizations across the country to protect, restore, maintain, and increase access to millions of acres of urban forested natural areas. Informed by the experience of the [Forests in Cities Network](#), over 40 practitioners from 20 cities around the country contributed to their development.

To access the other roadmaps visit fic.naturalareasnyc.org.

Before the Management Plan

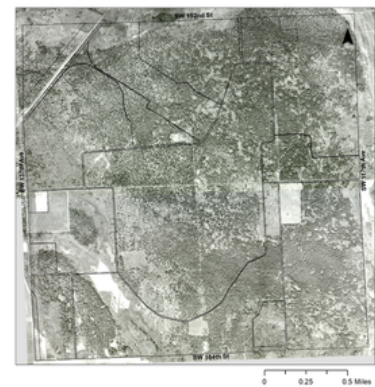
Define scale

Begin by determining the area included in your plan and the context. For example, [a specific park](#), forest site or stand, a natural area, [a type of ecosystem](#), [a certain jurisdiction](#), or [all forested natural areas within the city](#). The scale and context and how urban forested natural areas are featured will guide planning efforts. This may be determined by your resources and goals.

- The creation and implementation of management plans requires resources. Start by securing funding for the creation of the plan.
- Determine necessary staffing for developing the management plan, including internal staff or contractors. The next step is determining staff and expertise needed to implement the plan.

Gather background information

First, determine if a management plan exists for the area, and evaluate the age, quality, and context of any existing management plans. Citywide or large landscape plans might not need updating as regularly as smaller site-level plans where management has been conducted. Review the historical ecology, land use history, management records, and community context of the site and summarize within the context of your management plan goals. Determine which data has already been collected. Consider whether passive or natural regeneration is possible or preferable.



This figure is a historical aerial photograph from [Miami-Dade County's Management Plan for the Richmond Pine Rocklands](#)

Writing a Management Plan

Management plans can include multiple components documenting the processes above, including funding requirements or sources, staffing, regulatory requirements, background information, timeline for management, goals, policy and land protections, community engagement, and climate change considerations. [Look at the management plans of other cities](#) for reference.

Define goals and timeframe

Management plans define what should happen within a certain amount of time. Determine the goals for your management plan, and what to measure to determine success. Ensure goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). Management plans can prioritize forest management based on a variety of factors including [climate change](#), biodiversity, equity, community preferences, public access and it will depend on your goals to determine how to contextualize your plan.

- Include a variety of perspectives, especially the organizations and people who will be needed to implement a management plan. See [community engagement and stewardship resources](#) for more examples of community outreach from the Network. Be conscious of who defines ecological goals and who benefits from them in your context
- Your plan can be aspirational but should also be achievable, meaning you may not have the current funding capacity to carry out the plan, but it should be realistic that you can secure it. Having a management plan can help to secure funding for implementation.

After the Management Plan

Publicize the plan

Creating a plan and releasing it to the public and practitioners is a great way to increase support for natural areas. It can also help you raise the funds to complete the plan.



Implement the plan

Work with partners to implement the plan. Determine criteria that prioritizes where you will work first. Some common ways forested natural area care is prioritized include funding, staffing, policy or legal mandates, having an active community group, lack of tree canopy, introduced species, or pest management.



Assess and monitor success

Evaluate the success of the plan, based on the goals in the plan at regular intervals (we recommend every five years for city-wide plans and more frequently for site-level plans). See the [assessment and monitoring resources](#) for more information about monitoring success. Note that success is often determined by funding and staffing constraints. Be sure to publicize results in compelling and easily-accessible formats, which can help advocate for funding to implement the plan.

Update the plan

You may want to use this plan as a template for other areas. Update your plan on a regular basis depending on your plan's timeline to continue to meet your city's needs. Make provision for emerging threats such as new diseases, climate impacts, and introduced species.

Access the Other Roadmaps

- [Assessing and Monitoring](#)
- [Mapping](#)
- [Ordinances, Laws, and Policies](#)
- [Community Engagement and Stewardship](#)
- [Trails and Public Access](#)