

**PLANNING AND URBAN FORESTRY IN THE
RURAL-URBAN FRINGE OF CHICAGO**

An Abstract of

A Thesis

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by

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ABSTRACT

This applied thesis project is based on an eleven-month urban forestry internship served with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The internship was assigned through the Peace Corps Fellows program at Western Illinois University. The main goal of this internship was to assist growing communities at the edge of the Chicago metropolitan region with implementing and enhancing their urban forestry programs. The area covered included Kendall, Will, Kane, Grundy and Kankakee counties in northeastern Illinois.

These counties are among the fastest growing in Illinois. This growth causes an increased need for addressing aesthetics and quality of life issues early in the planning process for these communities. Urban forestry is a vital component to proactive urban planning and the preservation of green space. Several communities in this area to the south and west of Chicago recognized the importance of addressing urban forestry issues. Five communities, which were all facing similar growth issues, were assisted extensively throughout the internship to implement and enhance urban and community forestry programs within their municipalities. The case study chapter of this applied thesis project details the activities and accomplishments of these five communities.

This thesis first explains the connection between urban forestry, urban planning, and geography. With this background in mind, the project then outlines the actions and processes undertaken first to make contact with these communities and then describes how assistance was provided throughout the internship. Examples of assistance provided include conducting tree inventories, the development of tree ordinances, and assistance for Tree City, USA recognition. Meetings were held for these communities to encourage

networking between communities and to facilitate the dissemination of information concerning best practices in urban forestry. These meetings, three in total, are also summarized in this thesis project. The thesis ends with suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the internship position as well as steps communities can take to continue to improve their urban forestry programs. Also, communities facing similar urban encroachment may find the results from this experience useful in determining steps that need to be taken to preserve and even increase the livability of their own communities.