



MONTANA URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

Continuum of Tree Care Community Support Announcement

The Montana Urban and Community Forestry Association (MUCFA), with funding from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) through an Inflation Reduction Act grant is offering support to four rural, low income, and/or low canopy communities with populations under 5000. Assistance includes tree inventories, tree care and management plans, pruning, hazard tree removal and replacement, and tree planting for species diversification.

Program Purpose

The Continuum of Tree Care is MUCFA's approach for meeting communities exactly where they are in their urban forestry efforts. Every community may be at a different stage, some have active tree boards and updated inventories, while others are just beginning to organize or revive their tree care efforts. Our program is designed to support communities at any stage while helping them move toward long-term tree management.

A current tree inventory and a tree care & management plan form the first step of this continuum. These tools give communities a clear picture of what trees they have, their condition, and what actions are most needed. With this information, communities can make strategic, informed decisions about activities such as small and large tree pruning cycles, trees of critical safety concern, and planting locations for species diversification and improve canopy equity (ensuring trees are planted in areas with low tree cover).

Communities that do not yet have an inventory or an updated one may still request support for advanced activities. However, because these activities rely on accurate tree data, applicants must explain the urgency or special circumstances, such as immediate public safety risks, storm damaged trees, or critical hazard removals, that justify moving ahead before completing an inventory and management plan.

This continuum approach ensures that every funded activity is strategic and aligns with long term community care, while still allowing flexibility for communities facing urgent needs.

What the Program Supports

- **Tree Inventories** — Communities can apply for conducting or updating an inventory. MUCFA will provide a tree inventory consultant to lead the work, while communities must dedicate at least two staff or volunteers to help collect the data and learn how to keep the inventory updated over time. Awarded communities receive a tablet for ongoing inventory maintenance. Communities applying for an inventory must also commit to developing a tree care & management plan.
- **Tree Care & Management Plans** — MUCFA will provide a management plan consultant to guide the development of the plan, which is based on a current tree inventory (updated within the last 5 years). Plans are tailored to each community, but typically include: analysis of tree inventory data, recommended tree care and maintenance practices, pruning cycles, a list of desirable and undesirable species, identification of trees requiring priority management, and strategies for public education and community involvement. Awarded communities must have staff, tree/park board members, or volunteers available to dedicate time towards providing input into the plan.
- **Medium & Large Tree Pruning** — This support is available to communities with a current inventory, unless justification is provided. MUCFA will fund a contractor to perform the pruning. Although not required, communities are encouraged to dedicate public works staff or facility/maintenance staff to assist with the cleanup so more trees can be pruned within the project scope.
- **Hazard Tree Removal & Replacement** — This support is available to communities with a current inventory, unless justification is provided that the trees provide a critical safety risk due to structural defects, disease, or storm damage. MUCFA will fund a contractor for hazard tree removal. Communities are encouraged to assist with the cleanup to maximize the number of trees that can be removed and replaced. MUCFA recommends replacing two trees for every removal and can support the purchase of trees and planting supplies (e.g. fencing, mulch, water bags). Communities should provide staff or volunteers to plant replacement trees with MUCFA's guidance.
- **Tree Planting for Species Diversification** — Limited funds are available for tree planting for species diversification. Communities interested in planting trees are encouraged to apply for one or more primary activities (such as inventories, management plans, pruning, or hazard removals) and include a small planting

component within their project. Typical planting support covers up to approximately \$1,000 in trees and supplies. Communities must provide the planting labor. MUCFA offers a hands-on planting workshop and consultant guidance to support successful planting and establishment.

Additional Community Capacity Support

- Establishing or rejuvenating a tree board
- Create or update guiding documents such as a tree board charter and tree ordinance
- Trainings on tree planting, small and large tree pruning, tree selection, etc.

Typical funding amounts are between \$4500-\$6000 for consultant/contractor time and tree purchases. This amount covers consultant, or contractor time and tree planting costs only; training and additional capacity support are budgeted separately.

Fund Management: MUCFA directly manages all grant funds and pays consultants, contractors, and operational expenses on behalf of awarded communities. Funds are not distributed to communities.

Matching Funds: No financial cash match is required. However, awarded communities must commit staff or volunteer time to participate in meetings, planning sessions, trainings, and implementation activities.

Typical funding amounts are between \$4500-\$6000 for consultant/contractor time and tree purchases. This amount covers consultant, or contractor time and tree planting costs only; training and additional capacity support are budgeted separately.

Eligibility & Requirements:

- Community population under 5000.
- Must qualify as a low income and/or low canopy community. Please confirm this eligibility through this [mapping tool](#) - areas shaded **purple** or **yellow** qualify.
- Must engage staff, tree board members, or other volunteers.
- Must identify a primary individual to oversee the coordination and implementation with MUCFA.

Project Timeline

August 24: Call for Applications

September 31: Application Deadline

October 1-4: Review Committee Evaluation

October 5-9: Award Notification & Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

October 9, 2026-December 31, 2027: Project Implementation

December 31, 2027: Final Reporting

Application Process

Submission: Applications can be submitted online or via email to MUCFA.web@gmail.com

Technical Grant Writing Assistance: Applicants may receive up to two 1-hour coaching sessions for writing their application and project planning. Please make requests to MUCFA.info@gmail.com no later than August 24, 2026.

MONTANA URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

Continuum of Tree Care Community Support Application

Application Deadline: September 31

Submission Instructions: Submit completed applications online or via email to mucfa.web@gmail.com

Response Guidelines: Please provide clear and concise responses to the following questions. Open ended questions should be 1-3 paragraphs in length.

PART 1 – General Information

1. Applicant Information

Organization Name: City of Libby, Montana

City/Town/Community: Libby, Montana

Primary Contact Person: Hugh Taylor

Title: Mayor

Mailing Address: 952 E. Spruce Street, Libby, MT 59923

Phone Number: (406)283-1710 cell

Email Address: mayor@cityoflibby.com

Tax ID or EIN (if applicable):81-6001285

Secondary Contact Person: Gary Beach

Title: Deputy City Administrator

Phone Number: 406(871)-9292 - Cell 406(293)-2731 - Office

Email Address: deputy.admin@cityoflibby.com

PART 2 – Community Context and Need

2. Describe your community's current continuum of tree care status. Include:

- **Existing urban forestry components (tree/park board, tree ordinance, charter, Tree City USA status, etc.)**

The City of Libby has had a tree ordinance since 1993 when the city first became a Tree City USA (33-year member). For most of that time they have also had a functioning tree board. About five years ago the tree board became inactive due to attrition although some work continued as the former mayor was dedicated to maintaining and planting of city trees. The city maintained their Tree City USA

status and continued to celebrate Arbor Day throughout. Some tree planting continued along with some pruning work and disease control. As of February of 2026, the city once again has a functioning tree board. Part of the tree boards schedule of work is to review and redraft the tree ordinance through the winter of 2026-2027 to better reflect Libby's specific needs and plans.

- **Who manages public trees (public works, parks, mayor, clerk, volunteers, tree/park board)**

Management of the city trees is a cooperative effort including the mayor, the city administrator and the deputy administrator, the public works department and the tree board. The city also relies on volunteers.

The current mayor is very supportive of caring for and planting city trees and encourages additional work in the city, recently allowing for a small budget to address tree issues. This support follows through to the city administrator and the deputy. They suggested the budget line item for tree work, and they field calls from citizens that have concerns with city trees. They discuss the situation with the tree board and the public works crew for recommendations resolving the issues.

The tree board does light maintenance including pruning, animal protection and tree planting, and the Arbor Day events with the assistance of the public works crew who handle the heavy work, including tree and branch removal, watering system installation and maintenance, and tree planting preparation.

Volunteers often help with planting, pruning and animal protection under the supervision of the tree board.

- **Whether you have a tree inventory, when it was last updated, and its format (GIS, TreePlotter, TreeKeeper, spreadsheet, paper, etc.)**

The City of Libby had a tree inventory conducted in 2021. The data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet and must have been converted to the new TreePlotter program as the data appears in the new DNRC Urban and Community Forestry statewide database. The tree board has plans to update the inventory in the next few years, but if the TreePlotter allows inventory updates through the new database, it may occur sooner.

- **Recent urban forestry activities/projects within the last 5 years**

The city extended the six-block Lincoln Boulevard for two more blocks, and 12 trees were planted in two consecutive years, six each year, as part of two separate Arbor Day celebrations.

During other annual Arbor Day celebrations in the past five years, three trees were planted in Firemans Park to replace a dead tree and landscape the new playground equipment installed in the park. Two trees were planted at City Hall two years ago and last April four trees were planted to replace two dead lodgepole removed from Firemans Park and two trees that had blown down in the Libby cemetery during windstorms last winter and spring.

A 2025 MUCFA grant allowed the city to remove trees on Utah Ave and Louisiana Ave that were considered hazard trees due to stem rot or split boles, and other that had died from disease and insect problems. Also addressed with those funds are the pruning of two large, legacy Siberian Elms.

- **Any recent tree related challenges (challenges with tree board recruitment, storm damage, hazard concerns, drought stress, pests/disease)**

Libby has experienced several summers in a row of high summer temperatures which seem to be more prevalent of late. This year we had 90+ degree temperature for more than 30 days in a row. While the city has augmented their watering systems, high temperatures are still a challenge in the boulevards where the trees rely on the adjacent homeowner to water them in the summer months. That effort is entirely voluntary.

Instead of snow in December of 2025, Libby received several inches of rain along with warm temperatures. The ground didn't freeze and a strong windstorm on December 17 resulted in extensive blowdown in the area, some of which occurred in the city. That windstorm was followed by another more severe windstorm in March of 2026. Several trees around town were lost through blowdown or breakage. Other trees sustained limb breakage or were root sprung. Most of the windthrow or broken trees were legacy Englemann spruce and ponderosa pine. Some concerned landowners that felt their homes were threatened by remaining large spruce and had them cut down, including some city trees.

The large, urban deer population in Libby is a constant source of damage to city trees, particularly in the fall when the bucks like to rub or practice fighting on the trees. Many young trees are damaged during this time if they are not adequately protected and sometime even when they are!

3. Primary support requested? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ A. Tree Inventory
- ☐ B. Tree Care & Management Plan
- ☒ C. Medium to Large Tree Pruning
- ☒ D. Hazard Tree Removal and Replacement
- ☐ E. Tree Planting for Species Diversification

(Note: Communities may propose multiple activities, but final scope will be based on available budget and overall project feasibility.)

4. Additional capacity support requested (check all that apply)

- ☐ F. Establishing or rejuvenating a tree board
- ☒ G. Create or update guiding documents such as a tree board charter and tree ordinance
- ☒ H. Trainings (tree planting, small and large tree pruning, and/or tree selection)
- ☐ I. Other trainings: _____
- ☐ J. Other support: _____

Part 3 – Project Scope, Feasibility, & Impact

5. Explain why your community needs support for the activities selected above.

The wind events of the winter of 2025-2026 resulted in a large amount of damage to crowns on city trees, including broken and twisted branches and split boles. The city had a great deal of large tree pruning to do prior to the windstorms and it was being addressed as the city could afford, but the city doesn't have money or capacity to accomplish aerial pruning work without a contracted arborist. This is also true of hazard tree removal. The MUCFA grant would allow the city to address pruning several damaged trees and some hazard tree removals. The city would also like to use some funding for stump grinding where trees have been removed in the past and stumps remain. It is necessary to include stump grinding in order to create additional planting sites.

6. **Estimate the scale of work needed for consultant, contractor, and/or tree planting support for the primary activity(ies) you selected. Typical funding amounts are between \$4500-\$6000 for consultant/contractor time and tree purchases. This amount covers consultant, or contractor time and tree planting costs only; training and additional capacity support are budgeted separately.**

It is anticipated based on last year's awarded bid from a local contractor that the city could aurally prune 4-5 trees, grind four stumps with possible removal of one hazard tree with an award of \$6,000. Last year's quote for pruning large trees was \$750. With current inflation and fuel prices the estimate for aerial pruning work is \$820 per tree. Stump grinding was bid at \$425 per stump, with this year's estimated costs being \$475 per stump. This goal would only be achievable with assistance from the public works crew. Their assistance with slash removal and hauling would allow the money granted to be used for work that the city does not have either the skills or the equipment to perform.

Please use the guidance below to estimate your project scope:

- A. **Tree Inventory:** Estimated number of public trees to be inventoried. Typical consultant cost: approximately \$700 per 150 tree inventoried. Cost may be lower or higher depending on how much data collection support your staff or volunteers can provide.
- B. **Tree Care and Management Plan:** Typical consultant cost: approximately \$1500 for leading the development of a management plan.
- C. **Pruning:** Estimate the number of medium/large trees needing pruning, including species and priority locations. Typical contractor cost: approximately \$400-\$1200 per tree, depending on volunteer or staff assistance with cleanup.
- D. **Hazard Removal and replacement:** Estimate the number of hazard trees needing removal and identify priority locations. Typical contractor cost: approximately \$700-\$3000 per tree, depending on volunteer or staff assistance with cleanup. Indicate whether you would like the contractor to remove the stumps. Please also estimate the number of replacement trees you would like to plant.

Commented [PP2]: I would add a range from \$1500-\$3,500 depending on the size and location of the tree . Check with Fred and Colter.

E. Species Diversification Planting: Identify priority planting sites and estimate the number of trees you would like to plant. Explain how the trees will be cared for their first 5 years including watering and structural pruning. Typical projects support 5–15 trees, depending on species, size, and supplies needed. Please indicate whether you need support purchasing supplies (fencing, stakes, mulch, arbor guards, waterbags, etc.).

7. Please list the staff, volunteers, or partners who will participate in the project related activities and their roles.

City administrator/deputy city administrator – grant and contracting administration.
Public works department – labor and equipment use for debris removal including hauling.

Tree board – prioritize trees and stumps for treatment.

Partners – Flathead Electric Cooperative (FEC), various landowners – FEC would assist with dropping service lines if necessary for safety. Landowners buy-in for allowing access to property as needed for safe and efficient treatments, and possible electrical service interruption.

8. Explain in detail what type of training or additional capacity support (as indicated in Question 4 above) will your staff, tree/park board, volunteers, or community members need?

At this time, the city tree board has identified three areas where support is needed based on the schedule of work. The City of Libby needs to update their shade tree ordinance to customize it to Libby's needs and future plans. Help with ordinance writing would be helpful to facilitate development of a good and encompassing ordinance.

As part of the ordinance, the tree board anticipates a need for training in regard to tree selection and placement. Identifying trees best suited to Libby's climate and needs, including commercial landscaping, wildlife control, height restrictions, preventing sidewalk damage and reducing maintenance required by the public works department.

Assisting residents to maintain their own trees and be able to identify potential problems with their trees and city trees. This would include local training on insects and diseases affecting local trees and proper pruning methods.

9. How will you ensure the maintenance and sustainability of the project, and move towards the next step in your continuum of tree care based on this support.

The City of Libby will ensure the long-term maintenance and sustainability of this project by incorporating the work completed through this support into our existing tree management process. City staff routinely inspect public trees and respond to concerns reported by residents. When an issue is identified, staff assess the tree and site conditions, gather information, and present the findings to the City Tree Board for review and direction. The Tree Board includes volunteers with professional forestry and arboriculture experience, including the County Forester, a DNRC forester, and individuals associated professionally with arborist work.

When specialized tree work is required, the City typically utilizes commercial arborists, while City staff assist with site preparation, cleanup, and debris removal. Trees planted, evaluated, or maintained through this project will become part of this existing inspection and maintenance process.

This support will help the City move toward the next step in its continuum of tree care by becoming more proactive and systematic in how public trees are managed. Improved inventory information, planning, training, and prioritization will allow the City and Tree Board to identify potential hazards earlier, schedule maintenance before problems become emergencies, plan for replacement of aging or declining trees, and improve species and age diversity throughout the community.

By combining the experience of the Tree Board, regular observation by City staff, professional arborist services when needed, and continued use of City and grant funding for future tree work, Libby intends to maintain and build upon the benefits of this project well beyond the period of MUCFA support.

Certification & Signature

By signing below, I certify that the information provided in this application is accurate and that our organization/community is committed to implementing this project if awarded funding.

X *Hyd R Taylor II*

Thank you for applying to the Continuum of Tree Care Community Support Program!
For questions, please contact Kelly Franklin at mucfa.info@gmail.com