



# NEWS RELEASE

**For immediate release**

---

**April 19, 2016**

Contact: Bill Prokop, City Manager, 843-525-7000

## **Beaufort named ‘Tree City USA’**

The Arbor Day Foundation named Beaufort a 2015 Tree City USA in honor of the city’s commitment to effective urban forest management.

As part of the city’s work to keep its trees healthy, dozens of trees in the Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park were fertilized in March. The week of April 18, 14 unhealthy and hazardous trees will be removed from the park. These trees are primarily in the west parking lot, but there are also two large Willow oaks in the park that require removal.

Beaufort met the Tree City USA program’s four requirements: A tree board or department; a tree-care ordinance; an annual community forestry budget of at least \$2 per capita; and an Arbor Day observance and proclamation.

“We have a long history in Beaufort of working to protect, preserve and enhance our trees, especially the live oaks that help create that signature image of our city,” Beaufort City Manager Bill Prokop said.

Trees provide multiple benefits to a community when properly planted and maintained, said Dan Lambe, president of the Arbor Day Foundation. “They help to improve the visual appeal of a neighborhood, increase property values, reduce home cooling costs, remove air pollutants and provide wildlife habitat, among many other benefits.”

Started in 1976, the Tree City USA program is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The program is sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters.

Beaufort has been a Tree City for 25 years according to Trees SC, formerly the South Carolina Forestry Commission.

As part of its work to protect and enhance the “urban forest,” in 2004 Beaufort leaders commissioned a study of all trees in public areas, including the Open Land Trust property within

the city and city parks. “We learned that 61 percent of our urban forest is oaks, and within that, 40 percent is Laurel oak,” said Eliza Hill, the landscape architect in the City of Beaufort’s planning and development services department.

“There is a general guideline for tree diversity that proposes to reduce the risk of catastrophic tree loss due to insects and disease. The urban tree population should include no more than 10 percent of any one species, 20 percent of any one genus, or 30 percent of any family -- so our focus has been to decrease the Laurel oak population and increase tree diversity.”

To do that, when trees are removed, the city has tried to replant -- as funds are available -- with a greater diversity of trees including Elms, Bald Cypress, Maples, Black Tupelo, Magnolia and Southern Red Cedar, Hill said.

One area of common complaint is when overhead utility companies trim trees. South Carolina Electric & Gas prunes different sections of city trees every five years. Hill hosts a seminar on proper pruning techniques for all members of the contracted company before start of work and supervises as work is ongoing. When the pruning is done, she rides the entire circuit with a private consulting certified arborist to check the work.

The city also works to help keep struggling trees healthy. For instance, the Drake elms in front of the hospital administration building on Ribaut will receive an application of a growth regulator to prevent the necessity of utility pruning in the future.

One of the city’s goals, Prokop and Hill said, is to start a tree-planting program. The goal would be to plant a minimum of 25 trees each year along city streets. So far, most new trees have been planted with grants such as Community Development Block Grants for streetscape improvements.

Last year, the city added 20 Bald Cypress trees to the city’s “tree farm” in Southside Park, and plans are in the works to plant another 20 Trident Maples there this spring. Additionally, a number of Sabal and Butia palms were rescued from construction work on Boundary Street and were replanted in the new dog park area at Southside Park.

**END**