

Branding the Urban Forest

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Urban forests, and other urban green spaces, improve the quality of life in our cities in many ways. The ecological, social and economic benefits of urban green space have all been demonstrated, yet it is not always easy for researchers or practitioners in urban forestry and urban greening to find a listening ear for their message: urban green space is not only a beneficial 'extra attraction' for a city; a good green infrastructure is just as essential as a good road infrastructure.

Branding, or marketing, the urban forest as an essential element of each city is something a growing number of urban foresters, but also an increasing number of other professionals, have realised is very much needed. Urban forests provide many benefits, but these are not always visible to the politicians or the general public. Urban foresters have to learn how to sell their product on a market where it is competing with public investments in things such as public transport, health care, schools, etc. This is not an easy task, as the approximately 80 participants of the 8th European Forum on Urban Forestry*) learned from a range of presentations, excursions and discussions.

At the forum, green infrastructure, a concept more and more used in the United States and the UK, was presented as one of the more integrative ways of thinking that is needed to get the message across. For a successful branding of urban green space it should be discussed not just among forest services or city green departments, but much more in a general city policy and planning context; and it should be discussed together with city planners, health departments, etc. Urban green infrastructure should become a logical element of city planning. The need for cross-sectoral cooperation in urban forestry can also be seen from the growing number of different professionals attending the forum. Foresters are no longer the dominating group as more and more planners, arborists and landscape architects attend the forum.



Photo by courtesy of Bostjan Hren, Slovenian Forest Service, showing the forum participants during a field presentation of adapted forest management in urban forests of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

A successful example of how urban forests can be branded and integrated into general city planning was shown in the Slovenian city of Celje, the host of this year's forum. In Celje a strategic partnership between the city administration and the Slovenian Forest Service has led to the development of a special brand, consisting of a logo and name, for Celje's urban forests, that is now used widely to advertise both Celje as a green and pleasant city to live in or come to for holidays, and Celje's urban forests in particular.

**) 8th IUFRO/EUFORIC European Forum on Urban Forestry, May 10-12, 2005, hosted by the Slovenian Forest Service and the city of Celje, Slovenia. The forum provided a successful platform for scientists and practitioners in urban forestry and urban greening, mainly from Europe but also from Asia and North America, to meet each other and exchange ideas. More information is available at www.efuf.org. The next forum will be organized in May 2006 in Florence, Italy.*