

# Overview of Urban Forest Policies in Korea

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## Abstract

The rapid industrialization has led to fast growing urbanization. In 1970, the ratio of urbanization, the extent of population living in city areas over total population, was around 50%, but that of 2005 amounts almost 90%.<sup>1</sup> It indicates 90% population of the Nation live in city areas in the total land. Inevitably the urbanization caused to reduce green and open space for constructing buildings and houses. Practically even though green area has been designated in city planning decision, it would have tendency to be neglected. As a result, as of 2005, the proportion of green areas is 6.56m<sup>2</sup>/inhabitant which is below the 9m<sup>2</sup>/inhabitant recommended by the World Health Organization.

On the other hand, increasing five-day workweek and spreading “well-being” trend raised people’s interest in enhancing quality of life. People come to demand more green areas and forests in urban areas. In 2006 the result of Gallup Korea research shows that public demand for urban forests will continue to increase in the future. People come to draw their attention to invaluable benefits of urban forests, both tangible and intangible. For example, urban trees and forests provide clean air, recreation, carbon storage, habitat for wildlife, aesthetics, screening, noise reduction, dust traps and summer cooling. People want to enjoy urban trees and forests, neighboring forests, and enrich our lives through them.

In line with the response, Korea Forest Service has established a ten-year plan, **the Urban Forest Plan** in August, 2007. The Urban Forest Plan envisions “City in Forest and Forest in City”. The plan sets up the goal to serve beautiful and enjoyable green surroundings through urban forests. These are five strategies:

1. consolidate basic systems
  - A. build up and integrate information system related to urban forest management
  - B. conduct research on urban forest status on a regular base
  - C. integrate and enhance plans
2. construct criterions for managing urban forests
  - A. launch “the gross green volume” which indicates the degree to conserve and to strengthen volume of urban forests in a city

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<sup>1</sup> Status of urban planning, Ministry of construction and transportation, <http://www.moct.go.kr/EngHome/DataCenter/Statistic/list3.html>

- B. develop the sustainability index of urban forests
  - C. strengthen correlation among other related plans and programmes
3. Increase quantity and improve quality of green areas
    - A. Establish “Green Network”
    - B. Establish and expanding roadside trees, urban forests and school forests
    - C. Implement urban forest model in a pilot project and develop skills
  4. Consolidate the Urban Forest Governance which means enhancing citizen participation through mechanisms and programs
  5. Reform law and institution

Based on the five strategies, the Urban Forest Plan is to achieve “Urban Green Network” which would connect each green point in urban areas. Eventually the Urban Green Network would be composed of the Land Green Network through mountains across the country.

In order to reach the Urban Green Network, here are three key policies: establishing urban forests, street trees and school forests. To illustrate, the urban forest policy is to plant trees in nation or public owned land and to play a role in green core. The street tree policy would enhance their roles from only roadside trees to roadside forests in order to make more sustainable green areas. The street trees would play significant axis in the Green Network. Moreover, the school forest policy focuses on ensuring green space, involving children’s education, and cooperation among teachers, students, and inhabitants.

**< Components of the Urban Green Network >**

components	policies	function
Core (large scale)	Urban forests, forest park	Improve city landscape on a broad area Provide habitat for diverse wildlife
Medium point	School forest, biotop	Improve city environment in vicinity Provide habitat for small wildlife
Small point	Grove, woods	Directly contribute living environment Provide recreation spaces to citizen
Line corridor	Roadside trees, waterside trees	Connect each component Provide greenway for wildlife to move

The Urban Forest Plan is an outcome of endeavors to ensure green space taking into account intrinsic difficulties, such as lack of space and priority of land use. Favorably, local governments recently have increased their interests in urban forests policies and endeavored to establish urban forests in diverse ways.

I look forward to accomplishing the vision of the Urban Forest Plan, City in Forest and Forest in

city. Thus, we live in sustainable, beautiful, and pleasant urban forests and enrich our lives through them.