



AGENDA INFORMATION **TIFFIN CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATION**

DATE:	July 16, 2026
AGENDA ITEM:	Discussion and Consideration of Approving a Professional Service Agreement with Samara Natural Resources Consulting for the Urban Forestry Development Grant and Council Action as Needed
ACTION:	Motion

Background

The City of Tiffin was recently awarded an Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Urban Forestry Development Grant, funded through the USDA Forest Service Inflation Reduction Act, to advance the City's long-term urban forestry initiatives. The grant supports the development of a comprehensive urban forestry program focused on improving public safety, strengthening the City's tree canopy, building internal staff expertise, and establishing a long-term management strategy.

To assist with implementation of the grant, staff solicited a proposal from Samara Natural Resources Consulting, a firm specializing in urban forestry planning, tree management, and municipal forestry programs.

Under the proposed agreement, Samara will provide professional services including:

- Development of a comprehensive Urban Forestry Management Plan with species diversity guidelines, canopy coverage goals, maintenance standards, planting strategies, invasive species management recommendations, policy review, and a 10–20 year implementation roadmap.
- Assistance with updating and analyzing the City's GIS-based tree inventory in coordination with the Iowa DNR.
- Canopy and heat-vulnerability analysis to identify priority planting locations.
- Public engagement through two public meetings and an Arbor Day tree planting event.
- Four hands-on staff training workshops covering proper pruning, planting, and tree safety practices.
- Assistance with preparing one City employee for International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Arborist Certification.
- Field assistance with tree pruning, hazard reduction, and strategic tree planting identified in the City's grant application.

The project is anticipated to begin in July 2026 and conclude in late 2027 with completion of the Urban Forestry Management Plan and adoption by the City Council.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the Professional Services Agreement with Samara Natural Resources Consulting in an amount not to exceed \$26,600. The proposed services will fulfill key

requirements of the City's IDNR Urban Forestry Development Grant while providing long-term benefits through the development of a comprehensive Urban Forestry Management Plan, enhanced staff training, improved tree management practices, and strategic investment in Tiffin's growing urban forest.

ATTACHMENTS: Proposal

July 15, 2026

Ashley Platz
Assistant City Administrator
City of Tiffin
Submitted via email: aplatz@tiffin-iowa.org

Dear Ms. Platz,

Samara Natural Resources Consulting is pleased to submit the following proposal at your request, providing the City of Tiffin with assistance fulfilling the components of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Urban Forestry Development Grant. Outlined in this proposal is a Scope of Services estimated Cost and Timeline.

Urban Forestry Grant Project Overview

The City of Tiffin has been successful in securing an IDNR Urban Forestry Development Grant through the USDA Forest Service Inflation Reduction Act. The City of Tiffin's grant submission proposes a coordinated urban forestry initiative focused on long-term planning, building internal staffing capacity, improving public safety and tree health through proactive roadway pruning, and strategic new tree planting in high-use community spaces. As one of Iowa's fastest-growing communities, the City of Tiffin recognizes the need to proactively manage its tree canopy to ensure that public spaces remain safe, healthy, shaded, and resilient.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

Urban Forestry Plan Development

Samara will work with staff throughout the planning process to develop goals, gather information and review industry best management practices to implement, as needed, and incorporate them into a comprehensive urban forest management plan. Samara will work with the City of Tiffin to prepare a management plan, which will include:

- Species diversity guidelines
- Canopy coverage goals
- Maintenance pruning cycles
- Planting strategies
- Invasive species management
- Policy Review
- Planning priorities
- A 10-20 year budgeting and implementation roadmap.

It is Samara's understanding that a public tree inventory and management plan was formerly completed in 2014 by the IDNR and will be updated in 2027 by the IDNR. Samara will work with the IDNR to utilize updates and recommendations of the GIS-based tree inventory. In addition to completion of the management plan, Samara will take part in two (2) Public Meetings and one (1) Arbor Day Tree Planting Event in an effort to support public outreach of plan implementation.

Task 1 – Planning-Inventory-Outreach

Task Items	Description	Estimated Cost
Urban Forestry Management Plan	Management, Maintenance and Planting Plan development	\$12,000
Urban Tree Inventory	Assist with updating and analysis of GIS-based tree inventory	\$3,000
Canopy & Heat-Vulnerability Analysis	Assist with identifying low-canopy/high-priority planting zones	\$2,000
Public Engagement & Outreach	Two Public Meetings, One Arbor Day Tree Planting Event	\$1,600
Subtotal 1		\$18,600

Staff Training and Education

Samara will work with City staff to review current maintenance practices to develop appropriate technical support taking into consideration current staff capacity, knowledge and equipment.

- Samara will provide four different hands-on workshops with staff that will cover pruning, planting and safety practices aligned with industry best management practices.
- Samara will provide test prep assistance for City staff to take the International Society of Arboriculture Arborist Certification Exam.

Task 2 – Training

Task Items	Description	Estimated Cost
Pruning & Planting Training	Four different hands-on workshops for staff to review pruning, planting and safety standards	\$4,000
Arborist Certification	Assist with one City staff credentialing (ISA Arborist test prep)	\$1,000
Subtotal 2		\$5,000

Tree Pruning and Strategic Planting

Samara will work with City staff in the field to provide hands-on technical support to perform necessary pruning of city trees and tree planting per the grant proposal. With assistance from Samara, the pruning and planting tasks will review and reinforce the training components in the hands-on workshops, putting into practice what was learned.

- Samara will provide assistance to City staff with structure pruning, clearance pruning, deadwood removal and hazard reduction at locations identified in the grant proposal.
- Samara will provide assistance with City staff for planting trees at locations identified in the grant proposal.

Task 3 – Pruning and Planting

Task Items	Description	Estimated Cost
Tree Pruning	Assist City staff with structural pruning, clearance pruning, deadwood removal, hazard reduction	\$2,000
Tree Planting	Assist City staff with tree planting	\$1,000
Subtotal 3		\$3,000

TOTAL	\$26,600
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Costs include travel time, setup, preparation, coordination, research and data collection.

All work will be performed on a time and materials (T&M) basis and will not exceed these costs without prior approval.

PROJECT TIMELINE*

July–September 2026:

- Launch project
- Begin Urban Forestry Plan research, review and development
- Begin review of Tree City USA qualifications
- Begin Inventory review

September–December 2026:

- Urban Forestry Plan work
- Training workshops (2)
- City staff credentialing work

December–July 2027:

- Public meeting #1
- Training workshops (2)
- Conduct pruning on Stephans & Kimberlite Streets
- Arbor Day Planting Event
- Conduct planting along walking trail
- Continue staff training
- Publish maintenance standards

August–November 2027:

- Staff completes certification
- Inventory completed
- Finalize Urban Forestry Plan
- Final reporting
- Public meeting #2
- Council adoption of the Urban Forestry Plan
- Closeout & reimbursements

*Project Timeline is based upon coordination with City staff, contractors and stakeholders and may be affected by weather, schedule conflicts and unforeseen circumstances. Timeline details will be determined in coordination with City staff as the project progresses.

Prepared by:

Zachary Hall

Samara Natural Resources Consulting

Contact Information:

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