

**NEWS
RELEASE**

September 25, 2012
CITY OF PADUCAH, KY



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Harvard University Recognizes City of Paducah's Tree Voucher Program as Bright Idea in Government

PADUCAH – The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University is recognizing the City of Paducah's Tree Voucher Program as one of its Bright Ideas in Government. The Tree Voucher Program is one of 111 innovative government initiatives evaluated and selected by a team of policy experts from academic and public sectors. The entire list of Bright Ideas in alphabetical order by program name can be found at <http://www.ash.harvard.edu/ash/Home/News-Events/Press-Releases/Innovations/Harvard-s-Ash-Center-Announces-111-Bright-Ideas-in-Government/2012-Bright-Ideas>.

The Tree Voucher Program was launched in March 2009 following the devastating January 2009 ice storm. Paducah Planning Director Steve Ervin says, "An estimated 50% of the trees in Paducah were either lost or weakened by the ice storm. Trees are a valuable asset to any community since they facilitate higher property values, local aesthetics, and pollution control. Plus, they improve the quality of life for residents." The City's Planning Department worked to develop the Tree Voucher Program to recover the urban forest canopy. Ervin adds, "Through this program, residents who may not have been able to afford or who did not consider planting a tree took advantage of the vouchers and enhanced the beauty of the city."

The Tree Voucher Program utilized an application process for a city resident to obtain a voucher for \$25 off a desirable tree species from a participating nursery. The Paducah City Commission approved setting aside \$32,500 for the vouchers and educational components. City staff coordinated with seven local nurseries for the program. The nurseries would retain the vouchers and return them to the City's Planning Department with a reimbursement request. Out of the 1250 available vouchers, 950 were issued with more than 500 redeemed. The remaining funds were used to provide trees for City parks, local schools, the airport, and tree give-away programs.



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Using the Geographic Information System (GIS), Planning Department staff tracked the addresses of most of the trees that were planted. The mapping shows that trees have been planted across the City.

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