

Community Forestry Plan for Custer City Parks and Green Spaces

(Revised 2 June 2014)



Originally adopted by the City of Custer – Parks, Recreation & Forestry Board – Feb. 22, 2012
Revision reviewed by Parks, Recreation and Forestry Board on May 20, 2014
Adopted by City Council on June 2, 2014

Abstract: The City of Custer Community Forestry Plan describes actions and recommendations to enhance parks and green spaces. The plan provides 1) approved species list, 2) cultural practices, 3) cooperators, 4) budget, 5) recommended plantings for 2014 through 2017, and 6) a continuing education program. The investments of time and finances will build on Custer's commitment to creating a quality community for residents and visitors.

Original document (2012) prepared by Dave Thom and Steve Pischke. Revised document (2014) reviewed by Bob Morrison, Andy Bernard, Mayor Gary Lipp, Jeff Prior, Rex Harris, Tanya Olson, Steve Price, and Joe Uhrich.

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I. Introduction

The City of Custer with its 1,987 residents is nestled in the Black Hills at 5,318 feet elevation. This idyllic community, surrounded by ponderosa pine forests and meadows in the shadow of the Harney Range, is visited by 50,000 people per day in the summer and over 2,000,000 tourists annually who seek the beauty, history, recreation, landmarks and natural features of the area. Community leaders work to provide an aesthetically pleasing community to reside in and visit and to that end have adopted a community forestry program (Resolution No. 05-16-11A, adopted 5/16/11).

This community forestry plan provides information, guidance and objectives for managing public green spaces within the community of Custer City and constitutes the official comprehensive city tree plan for the City of Custer. Initially approved by the Park and Recreation Board on 2/22/2012, it is intended to be a working document that is updated periodically.

The City of Custer Park and Recreation Board is the official City Tree Board (Ordinance #690 adopted 6/20/11)¹ with authority to manage city trees and parks. The Public Works Director has responsibility for preparing the annual work plan and implementing the community forestry program. The City Trees and Forests Ordinance provides legal basis for the program and should be reviewed by the Park and Recreation Board periodically.

II. Community Forestry Goals

- a. *Tree City USA*® – a city seeks designation from the National Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the South Dakota Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry. Such designation will emphasize the importance of trees in the community with an identified plan to reach community forestry goals.
- b. A plan of work and regular funding for community forestry of at least \$2 per capita (\$4,000) annually.
- c. Annual Arbor Day celebration and mayoral proclamation with school, youth and civic participation.
- d. Plant and care for a diversity of locally adapted species that meet aesthetic and habitat goals.

Community forestry program priorities:

- Maintaining healthy community trees and forests, i.e. free of or resistant to insects and diseases and low/moderate fire hazard; including the surrounding 1-2 mile buffer.
- Planting a diverse mix of locally adapted shade and fruit trees in City parks and public places.
- Maintenance, trimming for clearance, and thinning existing trees, particularly for ROW maintenance and to reduce winter street shading
- Training city (county and school) employees, cooperators and volunteers in arboriculture.
- Complete city tree inventory (in cooperation with SD Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry).

¹ ORDINANCE #690 - Amends Title 12 Streets, Sidewalks and Public Places, by adding Chapter 12.14 City Trees and Forests to the Custer City Municipal Code, <http://www.custer.govoffice.com>.

- Review and updating of City park properties, to improve aesthetics while reducing maintenance cost.
- Maintain *Tree City USA*® designation through work planning, expenditures, proclamations and programs.

III. Accomplishments – 2012-14

- Tree City USA*® – the City was designated a *Tree City* in 2012 and received a 2-year certification in 2013. Designation signs were posted on the main entrances (4) into town.
- Budget and expenditures for community forestry should exceed \$2 per capita (\$4,000) annually. The City spent \$17,335 in 2012 and \$13,646 in 2013, mostly on mountain pine beetle control, tree planting and care, Pageant Hill disc golf course (in-kind labor), and park maintenance, plus an additional \$25,000 for a chipper.
- An Arbor Day celebration and mayoral proclamation with school, youth and civic participation was held in 2011, 2012, 2013, and May 12, 2014.
- Plant and care for a diversity of locally adapted species that meet aesthetic and habitat goals. The City has planted a variety of tree species in parks/streets in cooperation with Black Hills Power, Custer School District, and the Custer Lions and Rotary Clubs in the last 2 years.



Figure 1 - Pischke and Wollaston, Tree City sign installation, 2013

IV. Technical Contacts, Partnerships and Cooperators

Community Forestry Program Contacts:

<p>Forestry plan implementation: Bob Morrison, Public Works Director City of Custer City 622 Crook Street ctybob@gwtc.net</p>	<p>State policy and technical support: Andy Bernard, Community Forester SDDA - Div. of Resource Conservation & Forestry 3305 1/2 West South Street Rapid City, South Dakota 57702 605-394-5195 or 605-381-7279 andy.bernard@state.sd.us</p>
<p>City planning coordination: (vacant) City Planner City of Custer City 605-673-4824 ctyplan@gwtc.net</p>	<p>City Park, Recreation & Forestry Board Steve Pischke, Board Member 605-673-3067 Dave Thom, Volunteer 605-673-3953</p>

Additional Contacts (subject to change):

<p>Travis Peterson, Certified Arborist, City of Newcastle Public Works Department 307-746-6209(c) cityofnewcastletrees@rtconnect.net</p>	<p>Steve Price, Superintendent/Manager Rocky Knolls Golf Course 605-673-4481 or 605-517-1107 prycepoint@aol.com</p>
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Jeff Prior, Dakota Greens of Custer
605-673-5880
dakotagreensofcuster@live.com

Dana Garry, Manager
SD Dept. of Game, Fish & Parks – Mickelson Trail
605-584-3896 dana.garry@state.sd.us

Partners/Cooperators/Contributors:

The following agencies or organizations are cooperators with the City of Custer in planning and/or implementing a community forestry plan:

1. South Dakota Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry (SDRC&F) – Urban and Community Forestry Program
2. Custer School District – Joe Uhrich, Operations and Maintenance Supervisor
3. Custer Conservation District – Angie Keierleber, Office Manager
4. Custer Chamber of Commerce
5. USDA-Forest Service – Hell Canyon Ranger District
6. South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks – Mickelson Trail
7. Black Hills Power “*Power of Trees*” program (2012)
8. Boy Scout Troop 25 and Girl Scout Troop 71140.
9. Custer Lions Club’s “conservation program”
10. Custer Rotary Club (Gates Park)
11. Rocky Knolls Golf Course
12. Custer Mile High Garden Club

V. Education and Training

Education and training should be provided when needed and as offered. Consider:

- Designate a person on the Public Works Department staff as the lead person for tree care and seek certification through the International Society for Arboriculture. (<http://isa-arbor.com>). Tim Wollaston has been designated the City’s lead person for park and tree care.
- Regular continuing education opportunities available through:
 - International Society of Arboriculture (on-line and workshops)
 - SDSU Extension Service or SDDA-Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry (<http://www.sdstate.edu/sdces/resources/lawn/index.cfm>)
 - Wyoming Groundskeepers and Growers Association, Inc. (<http://wgga.org/>)

VI. Annual Work Plan

An annual work plan provides focus on priority work to be done and is required for *Tree City USA* designation. It should be prepared in consultation with the Park, Recreation and Forestry Board in August annually for the coming year. A sample for 2012 is attached as Appendix B.

The plan should include:

- An annual Arbor Day and Tree City USA awards ceremony, usually scheduled in mid-May.
- Tree care workshop for City employees, volunteers and residents addressing pruning, fertilization, insect and disease problems, watering requirements and proper mowing techniques around trees.
- Inspection and removal of hazardous, diseased or insect infested trees.
- Tree planting.
- An annual budget.
- Staffing and certification of the City Public Works Department (parks) employees.

- Public outreach programs including tree care newspaper articles and public mailings.

The annual work plan should be based on City priorities and a current tree inventory. One system is www.itreetools.org or <http://www.umass.edu/urbantree/mcti/>, but others are available in consultation with the SD Community Forester. Given the City's relatively small area an inventory system need not be laborious or expensive.

VII. Budget and Funding

The Community Forestry Plan will be supported through budgeted or in-kind contribution, by:

- 1) City allocation within the Public Works budget, separated for the City Tree Program, and be at least \$2/capita to meet *Tree City USA*® requirements, i.e. 1,987 x 2 = \$3,974. Historic expenditures have been above that amount. Community forestry investments must increase annually for a higher level of recognition, and possibly funding competitiveness, through the National Arbor Day Foundation and State and Federal programs.
- 2) Grants (matching) from the State of South Dakota and Forest Service community forestry program. These grants are for planning, training, forest health, and tree planting and care.
- 3) Other grants or in-kind sources including the Custer Conservation District, Custer School District, civic organizations, businesses and foundations.

VIII. Memorial Trees

Occasionally persons will request to plant a tree or erect a plaque in a city park or green space in memory of a loved one. The donation can be a value for all city residents, but may have implications about appropriate setting, appearance and long-term maintenance. The following policy will guide such donations:

- 1) Tree species and location will be consistent with the Community Forestry Plan and tree list.
- 2) Be approved by the Public Works Director.
- 3) Planting, care and maintenance of the tree will be the responsibility of the donor for the first year.
- 4) Any signing or plaques will not exceed approximately 4x6 inches and must be located within 12 inches of the ground.

IX. Recommended cultural practices:

1. Growing Space

It is recommended that trees be planted in available growing spaces considering resource availability for future care and maintenance of the trees. Planting spaces, particularly pavement plantings, require special planning. It is recommended that a certified arborist or landscape architect be consulted prior to developing project plans. Plantings and maintenance should consider power line clearance in the long-term. Trees must be cleared to a minimum of 6 feet on each side of any overhead line. Contact Black Hills Energy at 1-888-890-5554 before trimming trees close to existing power lines (<https://www.blackhillsenergy.com>).

2. Tree Health and Condition

Through the efforts of an active community forestry program, new tree plantings will eventually replace aging trees. An active “under planting” program should be considered. Young trees should be planted in areas where aging trees predominate. Once the newly planted trees reach maturity, the aging trees can be removed.

3. Invasive Species

Invasive species can be detrimental to ecosystems in displacing desirable native species. Noxious and invasive species lists are maintained by the State and also the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. The only invasive **tree** species currently listed for South Dakota is salt cedar (*Tamarix ramosissima* Ledeb.), although the list is subject to change. Consult these lists, Custer County Highway and Weed Department, Conservation District, or your local nursery for further information. The emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*), an introduced insect in the northeastern and central US is a threat to ash trees in eastern SD and plains, thus ash trees are not recommended for the long-term.

4. Tree Selection (form)

Trees are available at local nurseries for purchase and immediate planting throughout the season. Bare-root trees can be planted in the dormant season, balled and burlapped in the cooler months, and containerized stock throughout the year. Below are a few key characteristics useful in selecting a healthy specimen:

- ✓ a plant with relatively symmetrical shape
- ✓ a single, well developed leader (top)
- ✓ healthy and plump buds
- ✓ a reasonably straight trunk that tapers nicely
- ✓ bark free from cuts and scrapes
- ✓ pruning wounds that have healed over in a “doughnut” shape
- ✓ absence of frost cracks, sunscald, swollen areas, and evidence of disease or insect injury
- ✓ a stout root system
- ✓ horizontal branching

5. Mulching

Mulching the area around the tree base is important to maintaining a healthy tree. Mulch helps retain soil moisture, reduces competition from grass and weeds, protects the tree from lawnmower and string trimmer damage, and acts to minimize soil temperature extremes. Using properly composted organic mulch, such as straw, wood chips, or compost will allow for slow decomposition and contribute to soil composition. Avoid limestone rock. Be careful not to mound mulch around the stem as this provides a breeding ground for pests! Mulch should be composted to minimize transmission of insects and diseases. The City could consider developing a compost yard for City and resident’s use. For more information see <http://www.arborday.org/trees/tips/mulching.cfm>.

6. Pruning

Woody plants require some pruning on an annual basis to retain the natural shape of the tree, to remove damaged limbs or branches, or to prevent two or more branches from rubbing on

one another. Pruning is a process used to modify growth, whether to redirect growth and modify shape, or remove unnecessary wood in order to stimulate growth of the remaining buds. Although pruning is not necessary for newly planted trees, it should be done to correct weaknesses and to remove dead or diseased wood (e.g. black knot disease in cherries and plums planted in the Custer area). Detailed tips are available at: <http://www.arborday.org/trees/pruning/>.

The appropriate time to prune is determined by when the flower buds are formed. If the flower buds are formed the year prior to blooming, the correct time to prune is after flowering has been completed and before the buds for next year's flowers have been formed. None of the future flowers are compromised if pruning takes place in this manner. Those plants that produce buds on wood of the current season should be pruned during the dormant stage. More specifically, fruit trees are pruned to stimulate quantity and quality fruit production. Pruning should take place in late winter. Pruning should take place at temperatures above freezing to avoid pruning frozen wood. Heavy pruning should be done when the plant is dormant to allow for wounds to callous and heal before spring sap flows begin. Shade trees should be pruned during the late winter months with the exception of maples and birches. Maples and birches should be pruned in late summer due to 'bleeding' or heavy sap secretion when a cut is made.

7. Topping

Topping trees is not a recommended cultural practice. Tree care and utility companies should not use the practice. A longer term approach is to plant trees with a mature size appropriate to the site. The Custer tree ordinance prohibits the practice.

8. Planting

Public outreach on the proper way to plant a tree is important. The annual Arbor Day celebration is an ideal time to demonstrate proper planting techniques. Proper planning, implementation of a street tree ordinance and public education are essential to ensure proper planting of trees. Trees planted in Custer's public spaces must be at least 1¼" diameter at a point 6" above the root collar and at least 6-8 feet tall to meet South Dakota community forestry grant specifications. Trees smaller than this seem to be prone to early and late season freeze/thaw damage in Custer's high elevation drainages. Regular "deep" watering is critical to tree survival following planting. Brochures on planting techniques are available through the National Arbor Day Foundation at: <http://www.arborday.org/trees/tips/treePlanting.cfm>.

9. Appropriate Tree Species

Plant trees adapted to the local environment. It is recommended that no more than 10% of any tree species make up the overall tree population. See the recommended species list (Appendix A). Custer is in Plant Hardiness Zone 4b (refer to: <http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/>). Generally, planted trees should be adapted to hardiness zones 2-4. However, Custer lies in a high elevation valley with cold air settling and drainage conducive to frost damage and a shortened growing season, so hardiness zone selection does not necessarily guarantee success. Custer has extreme late spring and early fall freezes. Since 1942 the recorded low temperature² near Custer for key months affecting trees has been:

² NWS recorded data taken near Custer at 5,480 feet elevation and Lat/Long (decimal) = 43.77444/-103.61194. Matt Bunkers, NWS, January, 2012.

April: -15°F. September: 8° F.
May: 5°F. October: -5°F.

Note: These temperatures were at a hillside/hill top site and are not as low as anecdotally reported temperatures in the French Creek valley bottom. In the spring beware of moving trees that are budding or leafing out at low elevation nurseries and planting them at Custer's higher elevation where late spring freezes may damage them. Do not plant conifers where shading could cause winter ice buildup on walks or streets.

Proper soil pH (acidity/alkalinity) is important to tree survival and vigor. Preferred pH varies by species. The pH in Custer ranges from 6.3 to 7.2 and is suitable for most trees.³

10. Maintenance

Maintain and refurbish trees by maintaining mulch, barriers, deer fencing, rodent protection, guy lines, tree wrap, and protection from string trimmers and prescribed burning. Pay particular attention to pruning/removing **black knot disease** infected branches on the cherry and plum trees that are commonly planted and do well around Custer. Information available at (or many other sites): <http://www.hortmag.com/weekly-tips/qa/black-knot-disease> .

X. Parks and Public Green Spaces

Assessment - A general overview of the community "forest" indicates a need for action, to continue positive trends, and to add or adjust management practices:

- The mountain pine beetle is aggressively attacking ponderosa pine trees within and surrounding the city. City personnel have successfully cut and removed many infested trees over the last 3 years. The City is working cooperatively with the County and U.S. Forest Service to treat bark beetle infestations around the community. Continued vigilance is needed.
- The City improved its public green and park spaces by planting trees where needed. Planted trees generally appear adapted to the climate and are doing well and add to aesthetic appeal of public spaces. An increase of species diversity should be considered. Renovations at Way Park provide a pleasing setting in the center of the business district, a compliment to volunteer and City action.
- Past tree plantings, in some cases, have not been adequately maintained and trees have died due to excessive grass, drought, wildlife damage, burning or mower and string trimmer damage.



Figure 2 - Way Park volunteers, 2009

³ NRCS Custom Soil Resource Report for Custer and Pennington Counties Area, Black Hills Parts, South Dakota; provided by Deanna Reyher, USFS, 11/28/11.

- Tree thinning in Big Rock Park in recent years improved tree vigor, reduced fire hazard and beetle susceptibility, and provided a good site for a disc golf course. Prolific pine regeneration will need continued thinning.
- Recent utility and street improvements have prepared the City for new aesthetic improvements in parks and along streets through tree planting and care.
- While very functional, most City parks have dated barrier curbs and posts and some equipment that is showing wear.

Overall Priority – General priorities for community forestry and park projects are:

1. Prevent and reduce mountain pine beetle infestations within and surrounding the community.
2. Retain current park and street trees through proper maintenance, thinning overcrowded trees, and replacement where needed.
3. Plant new trees to foster community beauty and health.
4. Schedule a review and prepare a master plan for each of the City parks (perhaps one per year) by a landscape designer/planner to improve aesthetics and functionality.

A. Vicinity Map

See Appendix C, or:

http://www.custer.govoffice.com/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={5C1250F7-8456-4548-BA60-D56389A79AEF}

B. Custer School Campus

The Custer School District **Campus Master Plan** includes trees along French Creek and throughout the grounds. Elementary and high school construction is completed and included some landscape plantings. Additional trees and some replacement is needed in selected areas, but should be carefully planned using the Campus Master Plan. In 2012, approximately 22 trees were planted on school grounds under Black Hills Power’s *Power of Trees* program. In the near term the following is recommended:

1. Give additional attention to mulching, pruning, periodic watering, and browse protection for planted trees using staff, students and/or volunteers.
2. Replace trees (3-4) that died in the last several years and add several more trees along Wildcat Drive if consistent with the site plan.
3. Consider planting shrubs along French Creek that can serve as wildlife habitat, bank protection, and an outdoor laboratory in the long term. Additional trees along



Figure 3 – Planted aspen along French Creek looking east on school property.

the creek may affect creek flow and should be avoided unless sufficient distance from the creek bank.

4. Conduct Arbor Day planting ceremonies in cooperation with the City and school classes when needed to meet learning goals.

C. Mickelson Trail

The trail is a prominent visitor corridor used by bicyclists, horse riders and walkers/runners. At the northeast end of town the trail is bordered by ponderosa pines and includes the school athletic field. The segment near Lynn's Dakota Mart and the City gravel storage yard is prominent through town. Plantings have been done further west.

The following is recommended:

1. Laughing Water Creek bridge west to 8th Street – plant an estimated 16 trees along the 800' distance (about 50' spacing). Protect from browsing, bark damage and burning. Complete the planned channel work in Laughing Water Creek just upstream from the Mickelson Trail bridge.
2. General clean-up north of Highway 16A (from Shopko). Thin the pines adjacent to the trail. Consider clean-up, and/or tree planting/screening along the Mickelson Trail near the former Custer Sawmill site and at the maintenance storage area by the football field complex.
3. Plant about four trees near the trail on Trail View Estates (Custer County Housing and Redevelopment) as funding allows.



Figure 4 - Mickelson Trail looking east from 8th Street.

D. Big Rock Park/Pageant Hill

Situated in the SE corner of Custer is a green space known as Pageant Hill and Big Rock Park. It is approximately 70 acres with an open meadow along the junctions of 10th and Canal streets, grading southwest into ponderosa pine forest. An aspen clone, with vivid fall colors and habitat value skirts the upper edge of Pageant Hill. The meadow is mainly used for civic functions and has an older shelter planned for reconstruction in 2014. It is also the starting point for the 18-hole disc golf course. The park also includes two hiking trails, and an observation platform at the top of the Skywalk Trail, and another on Big Rock (near the Custer sign).



Figure 5 - Trail through Big Rock Park and thinned pine trees.

The ponderosa pines surrounding Big Rock were commercially thinned (logged) in two phases between 2002 and 2005. Since then prolific young pine and some spruce seedlings regenerated when the tree crowns were opened. Hand thinning and piling by volunteers is being done to make it easier to maneuver around the disc golf course. There is some western gall rust on the upper (south) portion of the hill. The City continues to monitor the trees for mountain pine beetles (MPB), has preventive sprayed the largest trees, and removed newly infested trees. Beetles have hit trees on private land. The pines should be managed for a variety of ages, especially featuring the very old (>200 years), orange barked, large diameter trees that add visual character and habitat value.



Figure 6 - Bark beetle pitch tubes on pine in Big Rock Park.

FUTURE NEEDS:

1. Continue to monitor for beetle infestations and cut and chunk or remove the beetle infested trees as they are located. Those on private land can be removed per city ordinance, particularly to protect the remaining large pines.
2. Remove most pine saplings within the disc golf “fairways”.
3. Thin and pile the overstocked saplings that are located outside (west of) the boundary of the disc golf course (proposed for 2014 with the USFS – Boxelder Job Corps program).
4. Spread any un-used chip piles (with City crews) in 2014.
5. Access road - fix drainage problems and add some surfacing. Intent is not to increase vehicle use, but to prevent erosion problems. Consider closing and reclaiming the road that runs on the north side of the water tank.
6. Trail - monitor the new (2011) trail surfacing and repair any rutting and improve drainage, perhaps with water bars or drain dips.

E. Harbach Park

The park area located on either side of Washington Street includes picnic shelters, playground equipment, Mickelson Trail, horse shoe pits, tennis/basketball court and a skateboard park. French Creek meanders through the park. Tree species occupying the park include flowering crab, Canadian cherry, cottonwoods and Black Hills spruce. There is a row of Canadian cherries along the south side of the tennis court (some replacement trees were planted in 2012).



Figure 7 - Harbach Park from 6th Street.

FUTURE NEEDS:

1. Prepare a master plan that includes minimum maintenance features and possible floodway modifications.

2. General upkeep and maintenance (pruning and mulching) of trees throughout this area. Monitor for black knot disease (see pg. 8)
3. Plant 2-3 additional trees at the east end of the tennis courts.

F. French Creek Park

Located on Gordon Street this park has two picnic shelters and playground equipment. French Creek runs the length of the park. It has a row of older cottonwoods by the access road, two bur oaks and several Black Hills spruce. It may include floodway modifications in the future.

FUTURE NEEDS:

1. Plant flowering shrubs, but not next to French Creek. Consider possible floodway modifications to be made in the future.
2. Plant about four taller shade and fruit trees. Need to be aware of power line for tall tree placement.



Figure 8 - French Creek Park looking west.

G. Washington Street

Washington Street was re-aligned and paved in 2010 and portions of the Mickelson Trail were reconstructed. The segment includes a horse corral and shelter and the City bulk water dispenser. Several trees were planted by the Youth House kids in 2009.

FUTURE NEEDS:

1. Plant about five trees between the trail and the street between 4th and 6th Streets.
2. Recondition the soil, sow grass, and plant about six trees to improve appearance near the Black Hills Power substation and utility area perhaps in cooperation with GF&P-Mickelson Trail and Black Hills Power.

The eastern end of this segment near 5th Street will be the future site of a veteran's memorial park. All sites will have to be evaluated for utilities, adequate space and compacted soil.

H. Inman Park

Inman Park is located at the junction of Lincoln and 8th streets. Laughing Water Creek meanders through this undeveloped area. A site master plan is being developed.



Figure 9 - Inman Park north up Laughing Water Creek.

I. Rocky Knolls Golf Course

Rocky Knolls is a 9-hole public golf course owned by the City of Custer but managed by the Custer Golf Corporation. The course gets about 50% of its revenue from out-of-area greens fees indicating its attractiveness to visitors and important contribution to the local economy and quality of life. The pond adjacent to the club house provides recreation, fishing, and wildlife habitat. Due to drainage structure problems, the pond was drained in late 2012, and plans for dredging are pending. Some soil from the pond-bed will be stockpiled for course improvements. The fairways, accented by rock outcrops, are bordered by ponderosa pine with clumps of aspen scattered throughout. About 60 beetle infested trees were marked by City crews and removed along the east edge of the property in January 2012. Additional trees were removed in 2013 and more are pending for 2014.



FUTURE NEEDS:

1. Continue to monitor and cut/remove mountain pine beetle infested trees.
2. Prepare a long-term landscape management plan for the property that would include the “undeveloped forested” areas, the fairways/roughs, and the grounds around the clubhouse facilities. The planning team should consider soil and water conditions (including wastewater re-use).
3. The landscape plan tiered to *Tree City, USA*® could include, as determined by the golf club board in suggested priority order:
 - a) New landscaping and fencing near the entrance gate and club house to improve first impressions. Plant about 8 assorted trees to provide shade and beauty.
 - b) Plant six to eight trees between the #8 green and the creek.
 - c) Plant six to eight trees between the #3 and #4 fairways to replace those that have been removed.
 - d) Plant about eight trees along the south side of the #9 fairway. Consider trees along the north side when the pond project is completed.
 - e) Plant flowering trees throughout to provide visual accents.
 - f) Use mulch and grass control around trees in fairways to prevent mowing and trimmer damage.



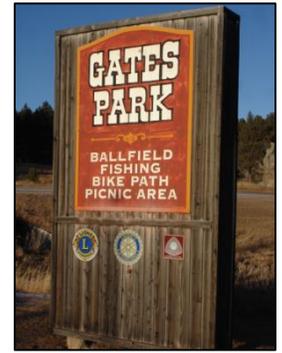
Figure 10 - Fairway on #9, looking west along pond.

J. Gates Park

Located on the west edge of Custer, adjacent to the golf course, this park has a baseball/softball field, vault toilet and a playground. Two benches and six trees were planted and wood chips spread by the Rotary, Lions, AmeriCorps and City in 2012. Several Canadian cherries along the fence that had black knot (fungus) disease were removed in 2013. A healthy population of willows is growing on the banks of French Creek. Beavers were a problem in the past.

FUTURE NEEDS:

- Plant additional fruit and shade trees on the north side of the parking lot and around the toilet.



K. Highway 16 West

The west entrance travelers encounter Gates Park (above) and a Custer entrance sign, then businesses, restaurants and motels/hotels. Consider the following to enhance this west entrance to the community:

1. Plant about six trees in the green space adjacent to the highway in front of the Holiday Inn (avoid the power line).
2. Custer entrance sign – plant two-three trees and some shrubs and do some landscaping.
3. Replace and/or plant additional trees along the highway and the pond (about 10-20) between the Custer sign and Wazi Lane.

L. Future Areas for Consideration

1. Custer Chamber of Commerce area/parking lot/volleyball courts.
2. Custer Cemetery – Consider long-term plan, which includes some thinning.
3. Custer entrance signs (4 total; west is discussed above) – consider landscaping and shrubbery for beautification, perhaps done by service, school clubs or senior projects. Consider deer-resistant, flowering potentilla shrubs or other flowering species for variety.
4. Gordon Street Extension (west) – newly constructed in 2011, the ROW could use some street trees, but plans may depend on sale and development of adjacent private land.
5. 5th Street (coming into town) – needs a fresh look after recent completion of new street lighting. Plan it in consultation with SD Department of Transportation. This is long-term.
6. Sidney Park Road – a long-term need as Stone Hill and the school property develops.
7. US Hwy 85 South (Custer Feldspar and Custer Gas areas) – a commercial area, and important entrance to the community, this area could be considered for street trees. It is private property and/or Department of Transportation highway right-of-way.
8. City Center property (former elementary school) – trees and playground equipment were added to the site in the mid-2000s. A facility vision and plan is being prepared. A landscape plan is being considered for that project.
9. Custer Sewage Treatment Plant – consider plantings for screening from Boot Hill housing development (6-10 trees), and also a possible nursery area for transplanted seedlings.
10. French Creek (east) along the Mickelson Trail, school property and highway right-of-way between the school fence and the Sidney Park Road intersection.

XI. Appendices

Appendix A - Tree List

See most recent approved City Tree List at:

[http://www.custer.govoffice.com/vertical/Sites/%7B98F72637-F268-4213-94DC-83E3753AFA0F%7D/uploads/Tree_List_Final_23Feb2012\(1\).pdf](http://www.custer.govoffice.com/vertical/Sites/%7B98F72637-F268-4213-94DC-83E3753AFA0F%7D/uploads/Tree_List_Final_23Feb2012(1).pdf)

Appendix B - Annual Work Plan (2014)

**City of Custer City Community Forestry Program
Annual Work Plan -2014**

This work plan is based on the Community Forestry Plan and the following priorities:

1. Maintaining healthy community trees and forests, i.e. free or resistant to insects and diseases.
2. Planting a diverse mix of locally adapted shade and fruit trees in City parks and public places.
3. Maintenance, trimming and thinning of existing trees.
4. Training city employees, cooperators and volunteers in arboriculture.
5. Conduct Arbor Day ceremony
6. Complete city tree inventory and complete/update park plans.
7. Maintain Tree City USA designation through planning, expenditures, proclamations and programs.

Goal	Work Item/Project	Cost	Who	When/Status	Remarks
1	Assess, mark and remove beetle infested trees and slash from City and adjacent properties w/cooperation of the landowners, e.g. Big Rock Park, and Rocky Knolls.	\$12,000 (8 acres @ \$1,500/ac)	City crew and/or contractors	Jan-June 2014	Contracted with Swedlund Logging
2	Plant trees on identified city property or streets (estimated 10 trees @ \$180/tree). Include mulch and tree protectors.	\$1,800	City crew and volunteers	May 2014	Partnership with Black Hills Power(?) and Arbor Day ceremony.
3	Install tree protectors (sun scald and animal damage) Thin sapling-sized pines in Big Rock Park (west of disc golf) w/ USFS-Boxelder Job Corps Center	\$2,000	City staff USFS and Park/Rec/Forestry Board	April –October, 2014	
4	City tree workshop – send employees, host a workshop, or do on-line training	\$500	Bob and SD RC&F	May/June 2014	Possibly w/school, county & golf course personnel and the public
5	Arbor Day tree planting, proclamation and ceremony (6 trees @ \$180 each)	\$1,080	Bob, Mayor and volunteers	May 12, 2014	w/Girl & Boy Scouts, Smokey Bear, SD RC&F and others
6	Complete City tree inventory (includes equipment)	\$1,000	City staff and volunteers	On-going	w/SDRC&F support
7	Park planning (Inman). Prepare year-end report and next year plans, Tree City re-certification form. Prepare SD community forestry grant application for following year.	\$500	Bob and Park/Rec/Forestry Board	November	

Community Forestry Program needs (for Park, Recreation & Forestry Board and City Council budget request):

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. Bark beetle treatment including contract | = \$12,000 |
| 2. Tree planting (16 trees @\$180/ea.) | = \$ 2,880 |
| 3. Education/training | = \$ 500 |
| 4. Tree inventory equipment | = \$ 1,000 |
| 5. Park master plan (Inman Park) | <u>= \$ 4,700</u> |
| Total - 2014 | <u>= \$21,080</u> |

Appendix C – Vicinity Map

See map of Community Forestry Plan - City Park Map at:

[http://www.custer.govoffice.com/vertical/Sites/%7B98F72637-F268-4213-94DC-83E3753AFA0F%7D/uploads/Custer_Parks_Map_Feb2012\(1\).pdf](http://www.custer.govoffice.com/vertical/Sites/%7B98F72637-F268-4213-94DC-83E3753AFA0F%7D/uploads/Custer_Parks_Map_Feb2012(1).pdf)

Appendix D – Tree Planting Summary

Tree Planting Summary – City of Custer (Estimated no. of trees for planning purposes. A more detailed site review is needed before ordering and planting. The year is subject to change.)			
Location	Number of Trees	Year	Remarks
Custer School District Campus (and Wildcat Lane (4))	22	2012	Done around the elementary and high schools in cooperation with Black Hills Power
Mickelson Trail (Trail and apartments)	4+16 = 20	2015	
Miscellaneous replacements (skate park and/or Hwy 16W or others)	10	2014-15	
Big Rock/Pageant Hill	0	NA	Thinning needed
Harbach Park		2015	
French Creek		2016	
Washington Street	6-10	2014	Cooperation with Black Hills Power
Inman Park	20	2015	Willows and other shrubs after site-plan is completed.
Rocky Knolls Golf Course	24	2014-2015	Locations as planned by golf board (see recommendations) in cooperation with City.
Gates Park area (additional trees)	10	2015	w/ Lions and Rotary Clubs
Highway 16 West	13	2016	
City entrance signs (4 trees &/or shrubs)	12	TBD	w/service clubs
Chamber of Commerce	4-6	TBD	