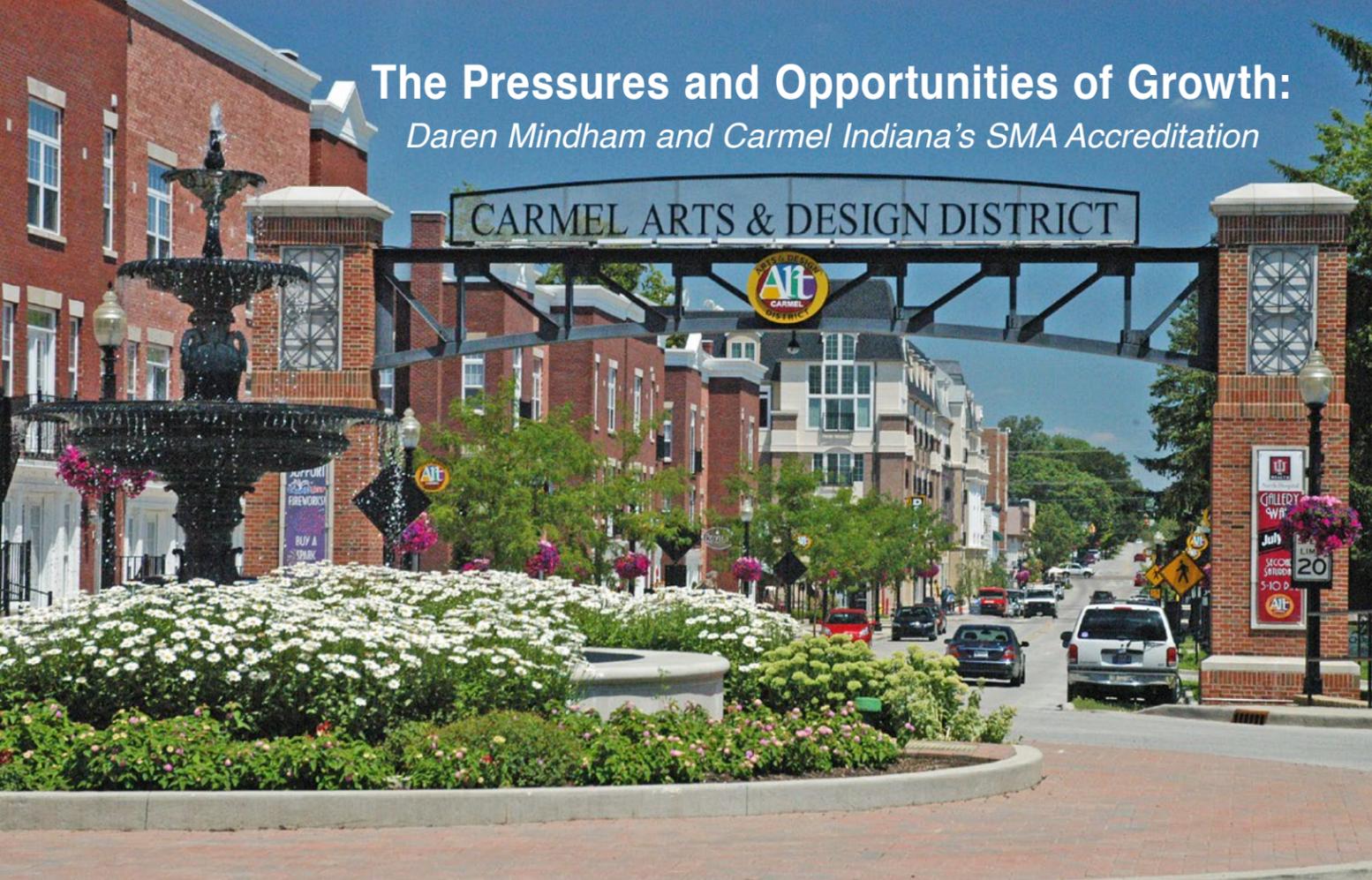


The Pressures and Opportunities of Growth:

Daren Mindham and Carmel Indiana's SMA Accreditation



Located in the center of Old Town Carmel, the Arts & Design District is home to interior designers, art galleries, specialty shops, and restaurants. Photo by City of Carmel, Nancy Heck

Carmel, Indiana has been on the Money magazine "Best Places to Live" list several times in recent years, ranking #1 in the nation in 2012 and #3 in 2014. Adding another feather to the City's cap, Carmel's urban forestry program has recently become SMA-accredited, under the leadership of urban forester Daren Mindham. Congrats to Daren and to Carmel!

Can you tell us about your educational trajectory?

Daren Mindham: As a teenager in the 1990s in rural southwest Wisconsin, I knew I wanted to go to college for a degree in natural resources. After looking at wildlife and forestry majors, I was told urban forestry would be the next big trend. So, I decided that the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point was the way to go, as it has a great forestry program. I graduated with a B.S. in Urban Forestry in 1999.

Please tell us about your career trajectory and some peak moments.

DM: After a few years in Wisconsin with a landscape company learning the tools of the trade and simply how the business world works, I decided that I better use my degree to get a job working for a city. I packed my bags and moved to Indianapolis to work for the Parks and Recreation Department.

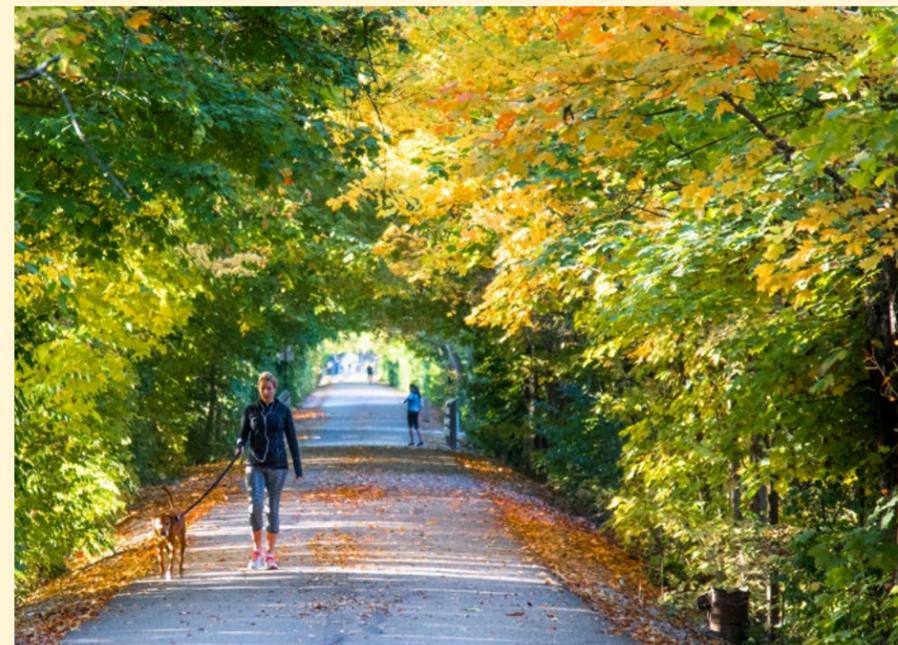
A year after that, it was on to Carmel, Indiana (a suburb of Indianapolis), where I am today molding the urban forest of a suburban community that has more than doubled in size in the last 15 years.

Peak career moments:

- Discovering the emerald ash borer in Carmel, Indiana, when at the time we were a far outlying southern point (2006)
- Attending the Municipal Forestry Institute, Lake Arrowhead, California (2007)
- Receiving a Home Depot Foundation Award of Excellence for Community Trees - Carmel was runner-up and received \$25,000 (2008)
- Being one of the 22 professionals in North America invited by Dr. Greg McPherson, USFS, to the Municipal Tree Planting Initiatives Workshop in Los Angeles, CA (2010)
- Earning Accreditation with the Society of Municipal Arborists for the Carmel Urban Forestry Program (2015)



The Carmel Urban Forestry Committee's annual fall planting project invites volunteers and specifically high school students to help plant street trees. They believe involving the students will strengthen their desire to care for the environment as adults. Photo by Carmel Urban Forestry Committee



Opened in 2001, the Monon Greenway is the Carmel section of the Monon Trail, a rail trail which runs from just north of downtown Indianapolis through Carmel to the north. Photo by City of Carmel, Beth Maier

How do you manage Carmel's urban forest?

DM: The program has grown along with the City. Just before I started as urban forester in 2004, Carmel had a population of 37,000 and about 20 square miles (52 sq km) of city. Carmel, in the fifth fastest growing county in the country, has now grown to nearly 86,000 in population and an area of 50 square miles (129 sq km). Managing Carmel's urban forestry program has been a great opportunity to bring about an award-winning program that is known in the state as a place of urban forestry leadership. However, there are challenges that come with annexing rural areas and arbitrary subdivisions with uninspected street trees and long areas of wooded rights-of-way.

Given the rate of growth, Carmel decided that placing the urban forester in the planning and zoning department was crucial. Most of the newly planted landscaping is within new subdivisions and large commercial blocks. Detailed ordinances along with regulating the species diversity, planting locations, and planting details is essential to ensure this new landscaping is designed and installed properly. Many of the old farm roads are being turned into streetscapes with roundabout intersections; in each case, the decision needs to be made whether to preserve or remove fencerow trees. New street construction is designed with intricate landscaping plans and street trees providing instant, aesthetically pleasing views. For all these reasons, housing the urban forester position within planning and zoning has been very effective.

What types of trees are your best performers?

DM: It is hard to grow almost anything compared to other areas in the Midwest, as Carmel is located in central Indiana, which has heavy clay soils. However, we have found the following trees to work: elm (*Ulmus*), Japanese zelkova (*Zelkova serrata*), oak (*Quercus*), tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), and Japanese lilac tree (*Syringa reticulata* 'Ivory Silk'). As Carmel has been brutally hit with the emerald ash borer, nearly all the

Carmel, Indiana Quick Facts

Human Population: 85,927

Street Tree Population: 24,000

Total Forestry Expenditure: \$400,000

Number of Forestry Staff: 2

ash trees have been removed. Species diversity going forward is foremost; our recommended tree list can be found at www.carmelurbanforestry.com.

How do you complete your landscaping work?

DM: Carmel is a small city with only two dedicated forestry staff. I contract out most of the work including tree planting, tree removal, and nursery purchases. This enables me to accomplish a large project at one time without feeling like I do not have enough staff or time left in the season. Generally, our ash tree removal and seasonal tree planting projects require a lot of workers at one time and not necessarily throughout the year.

How does the community get involved?

DM: We have a seven-member, may-appointed urban forestry committee via Tree City USA certification that hands out tree seedlings at the farmers market and assists with neighborhood tree planting and pruning projects involving homeowners in the fall. Also, Arbor Day celebrations have been an ongoing mission to invite the community to get involved in tree planting.

One of our award-winning projects was Tree Stars Day. The Tree Stars Project helped the children of Little Star Center learn life skills and give back to the local ecosystem. The Little Star Center provides therapeutic intervention and programs for children with autism. Trees Indiana provided curriculum for the children that included such concepts as the benefits of trees, a tree's life cycle, and tree biology. Planting trees at the Little Star Center allowed the children to provide continued care for the trees and to observe their cycle of life. "Research



Settled in 2000, the 686-acre (278 ha) Village of Westclay is a planned unit development located on the west side of Carmel. It is known for its English style and boasts many parks, ponds, and a small neighborhood atmosphere. Photo by Leslie Lane



Carmel's White River parallels the entire eastern boundary of the city. Along the way, you can enjoy wooded areas, newer subdivisions, and scenic views. Many Carmel parks offers nature trails, athletic fields, playgrounds, and opportunities to fish and boat on the water. Photo by City of Carmel, Nancy Heck



One of the many outdoor events that takes place at the center of Old Town Carmel. Photo by City of Carmel

indicates a direct link between exposure to nature and healthy childhood development and we're very excited to promote this opportunity to the children of the Little Star Center," said Carol Cavell, executive director of Trees Indiana.

How has your community reacted to receiving SMA accreditation?

DM: My relationship with the Society of Municipal Arborists (SMA) began when I became one of the students of the Municipal Forestry Institute in 2007. Recently, it has been a great honor to have Carmel's application for SMA Accreditation approved. Our city is proud of this accreditation as it was recently mentioned in the Carmel "State of the City" address. It's a great way to make the public more aware of the accomplishments of your urban forestry program.

Advice for readers who are at the helm of a relatively new urban forestry program?

DM: One piece of advice for someone trying to develop a newer urban forestry program is to both customize and standardize. Do not leave the options up to the developers and contractors on how you want to grow your urban forest. The community relies on the urban forester's expertise and ability to set stan-

dards. Take the guesswork out of the hands of the contractors and laborers.

Among many other guidelines, Carmel has specific tree planting details for the landscape plans, species diversity requirements, approved tree lists, detailed commercial landscape ordinances, minimum soil volumes, and rules against topping. Without these regulations, you leave yourself open to a volcano-mulched Bradford pear tree, planted too deep with the wire basket on and later topped.

Anything else you wish to add?

DM: I like the Carmel Urban Forestry Handbook preface that says, "Urban forestry combines three professional traditions: that of the arborist, whose focus of concern is the health of the individual tree; that of the landscape architect, who helps find the fit between natural environments and human needs, including the need for beauty; and that of the forester, whose specialty is the management of the whole forest and its entire life cycle."

The idea that urban forestry is an important attribute to a community is one of the many reasons why Carmel, Indiana has been ranked so high in *Money* magazine's "Best Places to Live." 🌿