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Sean Stegall, Elgin city manager

Elgin to launch project for tree improvements

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Elgin took two large steps forward Wednesday night to preserve, grow and strengthen the city's tree population for years to come.

City council leaders signed off on a \$303,900 contract with Davey Resource Group to complete an inventory and management plan for city-owned trees.

And city leaders also announced that Davey Tree, an Ohio-based company that has offices in the Chicago suburbs, landed a \$1.8 million grant to partner with Elgin.

In the next 16 months, Davey will: develop a risk reduction plan to remove old trees and prune existing ones; host a tree planting campaign; create an invasive species readiness plan; and increase educational efforts.

The funding comes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Forest Service as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment

Act, or federal stimulus plan.

"The forest service was looking for some good cooperative partners," said Brian Borkowicz, Davey Tree district manager.

City Manager Sean Stegall said public-private partnerships like the one with Davey are important going forward as the city looks to reduce costs.

He also said the program dovetails with the city's goal of looking at trees as assets.

"It's part of our efforts to view our urban forestry as part of our infrastructure," he said.

The city granted Davey permission to go on city land and perform work.

Josh Behounek, urban forester with the Davey Resource Group, said other communities will look to the success of their program with Elgin.

"This has never been done before," he said.

The tree inventory is expected to be completed by March 2010.