

# Welcome Eric North!



By Ashley Reichard



As most of us are aware at this point, Gary Johnson has since retired from the Urban Forestry team at the University of Minnesota. However, this brings the great news that Eric North has rejoined the team to replace the irreplaceable. After less than one year, Eric has already proven his abilities and skills to successfully manage our team and the future of the UFOR Lab. This interview summary should help give you an idea of what he hopes to bring to the UFOR programs and to the students at the University of Minnesota.

Let us begin with some fun facts and background about Eric. He didn't start out in urban and community forestry; he returned to school for a career change and quickly fell into this world. By returning to school, he has been able to complete a Bachelor's degree, a Master's degree, and a PhD in urban forestry at the University of Minnesota. This definitely sets Eric apart from other academics and professionals in that he is one of the few to have all three degrees in this topic area. And to think, this was all the product of a trip to Kenya where a local guide emphasized restoring native trees! During his schooling, Eric has helped with the Minnesota Tree Inspector Program, worked with Rebecca Koetter and Dave Hanson on the Tree Care Advisor Program, working with other community volunteers, as well as consulting as an expert witness on legal cases.

After completing the triad of degrees, Eric North was hired as faculty at the University of Nebraska: Lincoln to design and build a Regional Forestry Program which is much like the UMN's Urban and Community Forestry Program. Previously, this college did have a forestry school which lasted a short time. They decided to bring this back nearly 100 years later with the help of Eric. During this time, he was able to work with different community groups and students to help build a base of committed individuals to work with urban trees. The main priority of all of this work was to engage those with passion and interest to look closer into our "silent sentinels" .

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But now, Eric is back in Minnesota! Eric's favorite aspects of urban and community forestry is learning the answers as to why the things are the way they are, better understanding human interactions with the urban landscape, and understanding how to model tree growth over time using tree rings. As said by the man himself, "Education is filling in the gaps" . Specific to the Tree Care Advocate Program, Eric is interested in seeing how the program can increase capacity and acceptance of remote learning to reach more corners of Minnesota and to build relationships and gain better an understanding of the communities that reside here. While he does not plan huge expansions to what our program does, the main goals would be to further mobilize volunteers to work directly with their community, to continue to act as technical support, and to use this program as a resource. A more specific goal is to have a Tree Care Advisor in every community if that is sustainable to make those goals happen.

I think that will give you a good basis for understanding Eric and what his vision is. If you every have questions for Dr. North, he encourages folks to email him ([nort0105@umn.edu](mailto:nort0105@umn.edu)), to set up Zoom calls, or to visit him in his office (330 Green Hall). You can also find more information about Eric's past work and current responsibilities on his [Faculty Page](#). It should be mentioned, Eric asks everyone to be patient as he is still getting situated and settled. The goal is to not screw anything up at this time!

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