Your Role

Urban areas across the nation have tripled in extent since the 1950s.[5] Chances are that you are among the 80 percent of Americans who live in the urban and community forest. There are many ways to invest in community forests and support sustainable local programs that protect, manage, maintain, and plant trees.

The Urban and Community Forestry Program

Your State forestry agency and the U.S. Forest Service work together with cities and towns, nonprofit organizations, tree care professionals, neighborhood groups, and volunteers, to create greener, more livable communities.

These agencies provide technical, financial, and program management assistance on a variety of issues, including urban forest inventories and management plans, natural resource assessments, tree ordinances, volunteer projects, and tree planting, care, and protection. For more information, contact your State Urban Forestry Coordinator.

United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry
Newtown Square, PA

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USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Improving the Nature of Cities and Towns

Urban and Community Forestry Program

Trees in Your Community

The trees in your community, and you, are part of a vital resource—the urban and community forest.

This forest is made up of the trees in yards, along streets, beside rivers and streams, in parks and other green space areas, and around the buildings in your community.

Because of their close proximity to people, urban and community forests are dynamic ecosystems where humans interact with trees, other vegetation, soil, wildlife, waterways, and other natural resources.

Trees are an integral part of these forested communities. Some call community trees the “green infrastructure.” Like the built infrastructure, trees have tremendous economic and social value in the urban environment.

Here's what you can do to ensure the future of your community forest:

- Form or participate in a shade tree committee to support programs that promote a healthy urban forest and raise awareness among residents and community leaders.
- Encourage your community to develop an urban forest management plan. A plan, often based on a tree inventory, can be used to prioritize tree care, planting, and removal.
- Work with and support your local tree warden, city forester, arborist, or other professional who cares for community trees.
- Encourage your community to develop tree policies and ordinances that protect existing trees and encourage proper tree care.
- Plant new trees to increase canopy cover. Well designed planting increases the benefits that trees provide.
- Urge your community to become a Tree City USA. This program, sponsored by the National Arbor Day Foundation, recognizes communities that care for their urban forests.

Trees Pay Us Back

Properly cared for, trees are a valuable and growing asset worth 3½ times the investment.[1]

Healthy community trees mean…

Healthy People

In a year, 100 large 40-year-old trees remove 31 tons of carbon dioxide and 420 pounds of other air pollutants.[1]

Safer Communities

Tree-filled neighborhoods have lower levels of violence and are more conducive to social interaction.[2]

Improved Water Quality

In a year, 100 large 40-year-old trees capture about 370,000 gallons of rainwater, reducing soil erosion and the cost of storm water management.[1]

Homeowner Savings

Strategically placed trees can save up to 56 percent on annual air-conditioning costs. Evergreen trees that block winter winds can save 3 percent on heating costs.[1]

Better Business

In tree-lined commercial districts, shoppers visit more frequently, shop longer, and pay more for goods and parking.[3]

Higher Property Values

Each large front yard tree adds 1 percent or more to the sale price of a home.[4]

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1. McPherson, E.G.; Simpson, J.R.; Peper, P.J.; Gardner, S.L.; Vargas, K.E.; Xiao, Q. 2007. Northeast community tree guide: benefits, costs, and strategic planting. PSW-GTR-202, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
2. Sullivan, W.C.; Kuo, F.E. 1996. Do trees strengthen urban communities, reduce domestic violence? Arborist News 5: 33-34.
3. Wolf, K.L. 1999. Nature and commerce: human ecology in business districts. In Kollin, C., ed. Building Cities of Green: Proceedings of the 1999 National Urban Forest Conference. Washington, DC: American Forests: 56-59.
4. Anderson, L.M.; Cordell, H.K. 1988. Residential property values improve by landscaping with trees. Southern Journal of Applied Forestry 9: 162-166.
Neely, D., ed. 1988. Valuation of landscape trees, shrubs, and other plants, 7th ed. Urbana, IL: International Society of Arboriculture.
5. Northern Research Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2008. Urban Natural Resources Stewardship. www.nrs.fs.fed.us/urban/landscape_change/ (March 20, 2009).

Additional information to help you take action

Your participation is needed to protect and enhance your community forest. A variety of partners are available to assist you with information and resources:

Your State Forestry Agency's Urban and Community Forestry Program
www.stateforesters.org

U.S. Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry
www.na.fs.fed.us/urban
610.557.4103

Alliance for Community Trees
www.actrees.org
301.277.0040

American Forests
www.americanforests.org
202.737.1944

i-Tree
www.itreetools.org

International Society of Arboriculture
www.treesaregood.com
217.355.9411

Arbor Day Foundation
www.arborday.org
888.448.7337

Society of Municipal Arborists
www.urban-forestry.com

TreeLink
www.treelink.org
801.363.3435