

# living memorials

## what

Sacred green spaces for community and personal reflection in the wake of **September 11, 2001**.

Such is the want and instinct of humans to turn the energy of suffering and loss into meaning for the **future**. This initiative invokes the resonating power of trees and green places to bring people together and create lasting, living memorials to victims, families, communities, and the nation.

## why

In response to an overwhelming public desire to honor and memorialize the tragic losses that occurred on September 11, 2001, the U.S. Congress authorized the USDA Forest Service to create the **Living Memorials Project**. Backed by the professional, scientific, and financial support of the Forest Service, the Living Memorials Project has resulted in the planting of thousands of trees and the bloom of hundreds of acres of green space from New York City to Washington, D.C. The Living Memorials Project has inspired the reclamation of community parks and street trees, and renewed bonds between friends and neighbors through grassroots organizations that create local tributes to those lost and those who served others. The project involves Federal, State, City, and Community partners, but the spaces themselves are local neighborhood places available to all who seek to find personal peace and strength through nature.

## where

To date, the Forest Service Living Memorials Project supports 50 projects throughout the northeast and mid-Atlantic. Project sites range from forests, to parks, to community gardens, to civic centers, and reclaimed space (on previously underutilized sites). Stewards include state agencies, municipalities, environmental and community-focused nonprofits, and partnerships (often with informal community groups). These sites of social meaning have strong groups and function primarily as places for commemoration, community planting, reflection, and local events.

## design

Recognizing that restorative landscape design principles can be applied to public spaces, the Living Memorials Project solicited proposals from communities for healing places that could serve the public in the aftermath of September 11. Trees were a central component of these designs for several reasons: A tree is a universal icon that invokes an innate emotional response, and this simplicity of design resonates across socio-economic and cultural boundaries. Trees are a positive affirmation of life that celebrate the future.

Designing with trees does not mean decorating with trees, and The Living Memorials Project discourages communities from using trees as secondary elements to highlight sculptural or built monuments. Trees also grow and change over time, which differentiates a living memorial from a static architectural monument.

These are democratic spaces that provide common ground for reconciliation and healing, and The Living Memorials project hopes to expand and enhance these places to communities in need.

# project



"In a way [this tree] symbolizes the city: life under difficulties, growth against odds, sap-rise in the midst of concrete, and the steady reaching for the sun."  
E.B. White in "There is New York," 1948

[www.livingmemorialproject.net](http://www.livingmemorialproject.net)