

FEB 2025



# FOSTERING COMMUNITY PROSPERITY & SAFETY THROUGH HEALTHY TREES



# Recommendations for the Trump Administration from the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition

In towns and cities of all sizes across America, healthy trees and forests represent highly visible and meaningful infrastructure—lowering the cost of living, creating jobs, growing local economic opportunities, and supporting healthier, more prosperous communities. Investing in tree-related programs where Americans live, work, and play is key to addressing Trump Administration priorities and advancing the legacy of President Trump’s Trillion Trees Initiative.

Healthy trees and forests in communities:

- Reduce the cost of living by **lowering energy bills** for heating and cooling
- Increase private and commercial **property values**
- Create an array of **good-paying private sector jobs** for all levels of experience
- Entice spending at **small businesses**
- **Save money** on the high price of managing stormwater runoff
- Encourage exercise to **improve health** and lower stress
- **Protect Americans** from extreme heat and air pollution
- Deter **crime** and improve sense of safety

- **Attract and grow** tourism and recreation economies
- Serve as vital habitat for **wildlife**
- **Enhance disaster resilience and protect infrastructure** from flooding and extreme weather
- Dampen noise from highways and busy streets
- **Reduce healthcare costs** and lost productivity
- Strengthen **domestic supply chains**
- Launch **economic opportunities** for innovative urban wood use and other tree-related businesses
- **Improve neighborhood satisfaction,** mental health, and overall sense of wellbeing

Simply put, trees and forests offer a flexible and cost-effective solution to a wide range of issues impacting communities, businesses, and families across America. The urban forestry sector not only contributes directly to the US economy—**employing more than 500,000 people and adding \$37 billion annually**—but there is also a multiplier effect that widely spreads the economic benefits far beyond the sector. A recent report estimated the total economic footprint of urban forestry at an **impressive \$61.9 billion** ([Arbor Day Foundation 2021](#)).

# Recommendations

Below are recommendations from the non-partisan Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition (SUFC) and its extended network for maintaining and expanding the benefits of healthy trees to all communities across America. SUFC unites over 40 groups representing the multi-billion-dollar tree care

industry, the horticulture industry, urban and state forestry professionals, a wide range of professional associations like arborists, city planners and public works professionals as well as forest, conservation, water, and wildlife nonprofit organizations.



## Invest in the Urban and Community Forestry Program at the USDA Forest Service

The Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) program at the USDA Forest Service collaborates with state forestry agencies, nonprofit organizations, and partners that manage and steward our nation's urban and community forests. The U&CF program is a model for how state and community-led priorities can be bolstered by federal investments.

The U&CF program quickly and efficiently distributes funds to shovel-ready projects for improving communities –serving as a valuable partner to states and community organizations and helping to remove barriers to growing and maintaining healthy tree canopy. The federal “seed” money provides resources necessary to initiate and stabilize local programs to manage trees for the optimal return on investment and ensure a consistency of care nationwide.

Every year, U&CF serves nearly 7,500 communities and over 203 million people in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. Territories, and affiliated Pacific Island Nations—

helping to maintain and protect approximately 12 billion trees. U&CF is a high-impact program and a smart investment, as **federal support is often leveraged 2:1 (or in many cases up to 5:1)** by states and partner organizations. For example, the program boasts well over one million volunteer hours each year.

With help from the U&CF program, communities of all shapes and sizes can curb threats to their trees and forests and maintain them as valuable green infrastructure with science-based, active management and proper disaster planning, response, and recovery. The cumulative benefit to the country of improved urban and community forest management serves our national interests and deserves continued and increased federal investment.

We encourage the Trump Administration to support this highly successful and efficient program through robust funding commensurate with the demonstrated and growing need across communities of all sizes.



# Treat Trees as Essential Community Infrastructure

Like working forests in rural landscapes, trees in all communities (lining neighborhood streets, in parks, along roadways and streams, and in yards) are working hard every day to provide valuable benefits. These natural capital resources augment the value of other types of infrastructure and offer flexible and cost-effective solutions to a wide variety of infrastructure-related issues.

Trees in communities reduce energy use for cooling and heating by 7.2% nationally, **saving consumers more than \$7 billion** ([Nowak et al. 2017](#)). These benefits support national self-reliance and help businesses and households save money that can be reinvested into other areas of the domestic economy.

Green infrastructure investments can also help address stormwater runoff as streets are being repaved, protect water quality while relieving pressure on aging wastewater utilities, and serve as sound barriers between communities and highways or railroads to improve safety and quality of life. Annually, **\$73 billion in benefits** are delivered to society in the form of air pollution and stormwater runoff mitigation ([Arbor Day Foundation 2021](#)).

Trees also help mitigate extreme weather and disaster impacts while protecting surrounding built infrastructure, which saves taxpayer dollars and preserves resources for national priorities. The value and benefits grow year after year, making planting and caring for community trees a truly wise investment for the public and private sector alike.

Furthermore, trees also offer significant economic value to homeowners and real estate investors by boosting property values. Homes with trees in their yard enjoy **property value increases of more than \$30 billion**, annually, in the US ([Arbor Day Foundation 2021](#)). A tree-lined neighborhood attracts new residents, businesses, and tourists, further fueling local economies.

We encourage the Trump Administration to look to current legislative vehicles for ideas on how to further integrate urban trees and forests into efforts related to infrastructure, disaster resilience, energy, and more.



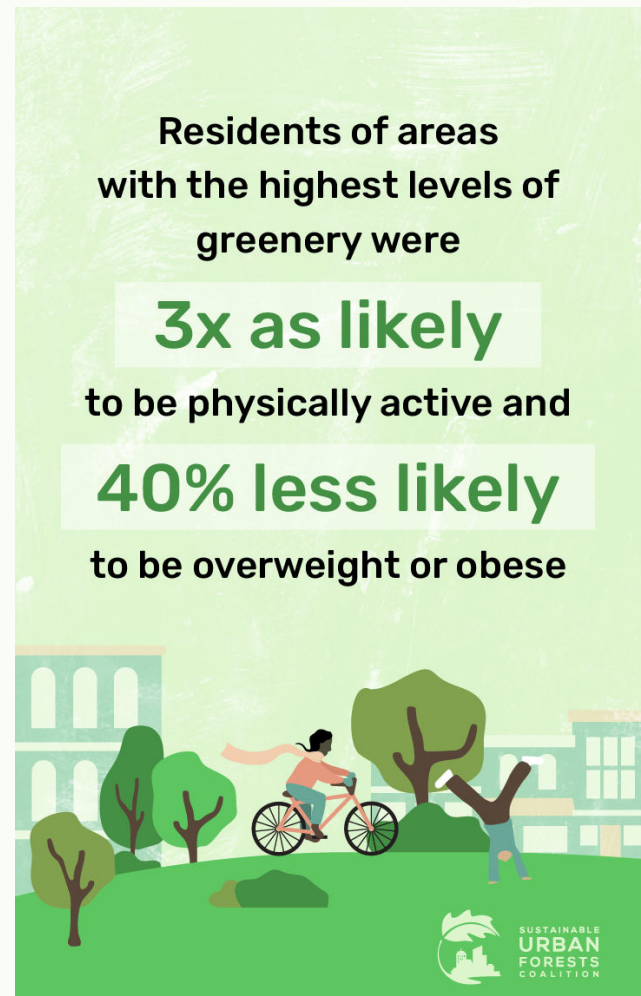


# Combat the Health Crisis with Investments in Trees

America has a health crisis. Asthma, obesity, and heart disease are just some of the chronic illnesses plaguing families and threatening vulnerable populations like children and seniors. Research has shown that tree-lined parks and large numbers of trees along streets help to reduce these illnesses by reducing air pollution, lowering stress, and encouraging more exercise, thus reducing health care costs. Overall, evidence indicates that exposure to green spaces could result in a multitude of health benefits and reduced mortality, with studies associating green spaces with reduced cardiovascular disease, better mental health, lower stress, immune system benefits, and improved pregnancy outcomes ([Rojas-Rueda et al. 2019](#)).

Of growing concern is the threat of extreme heat across all regions of the country. In 2024, the impacts of extreme heat **cost the U.S. an estimated \$162 billion**—equivalent to nearly 1% of the US GDP. Extreme heat not only represents a national economic crisis, it also **kills more Americans every year than hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes combined**. Extreme heat is most dangerous for children, seniors, people who work outside, and those with chronic conditions, but the quality of life for Americans is impacted when temperatures make it unsafe to go outside.

Once again, trees in communities are a key part of the solution to extreme heat. As nature's air conditioning, trees can potentially **cool homes and neighborhoods as much as 20 degrees Fahrenheit or more**, making them critical to the health and safety of



Source: BMJ (<https://bit.ly/3DeIK7U>)

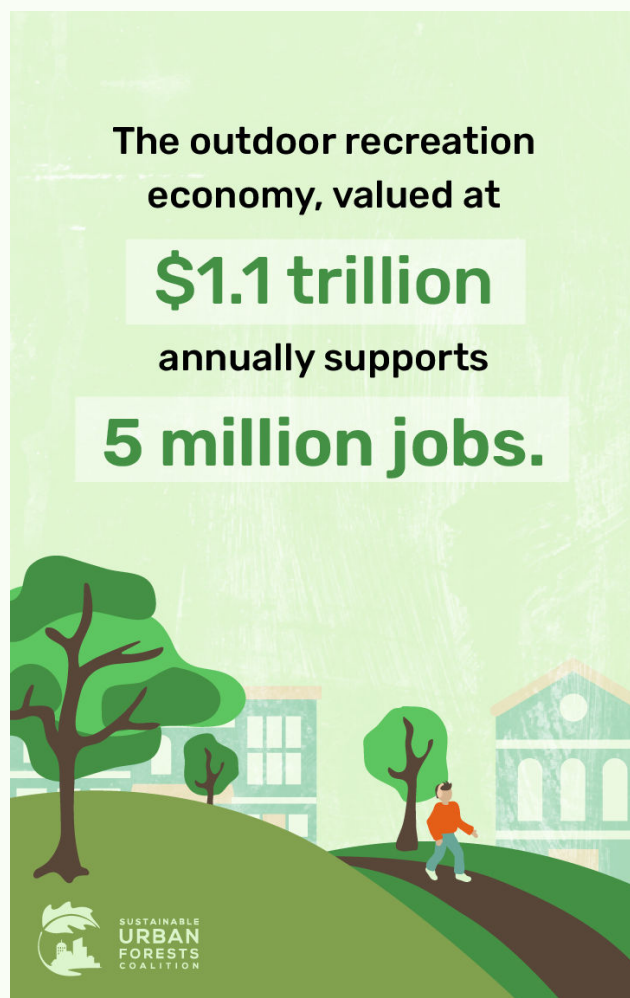
Americans, whether they are on job site, commuting to work, exercising, or playing outside. At the same time, trees also reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the rising need for air conditioning.

Increasing public and private investment in urban and community forests will help improve these costly health issues, while also providing economic and social benefits that increase the productivity and overall well-being of families and communities throughout the country.

We encourage the Trump Administration to create a Cool Corridors Federal Partnership modeled after the Urban Waters Federal Partnership to leverage data, research, and existing grant programs to convene local stakeholders and support community-led

pilot projects to address extreme heat and urban heat island impacts. In addition, we urge the Trump Administration to include extreme heat in FEMA's regulatory definition of a "major disaster" under the Stafford Act.

## Create Jobs and Economic Opportunity Through Trees



Source: ORR (<http://bit.ly/3XoNbTk>)

Urban forestry is not just an environmental necessity, it is also a robust economic strategy for fostering sustainable growth and domestic job creation. As populations expand, the need for urban and community forests increases, as does the need for trained individuals to help develop and maintain healthy and resilient urban forests in communities of all sizes.

Currently, the need for skilled labor to manage and care for trees has never been higher. There are tens of thousands of job opportunities in communities large and small across the country for local workers of all experience levels—jobs that cannot be shipped elsewhere.

- **Tree Maintenance and Care:** Urban forestry supports a range of industries, including tree planting, pruning, removal, and pest management, which provide jobs for arborists, foresters, laborers, landscapers and urban foresters.
- **Nurseries:** The demand for trees and plants drives economic activity in nurseries, garden centers, and landscaping companies.

- **Green Infrastructure Development:**

Investments in urban and community greening projects, such as parks and street tree programs, create jobs in urban planning, landscape architecture, construction, and horticulture.

- **Tourism and Recreation:** Furthermore, communities with robust urban forests attract tourism and outdoor recreation, both vital to the service economy. Green spaces encourage events and activities that drive spending in hospitality, retail, and transportation sectors.

Federal investment in urban forestry workforce development is an investment in the future health, sustainability, and resilience of American communities. Investing in job training programs helps people find work and continues to increase the return on investment for the trees in communities.

Building a successful workforce pipeline requires youth engagement, coordination with educational institutions, and collaboration with businesses to provide skills training and help eliminate barriers to employment. For example, arborist apprenticeship programs provide standardized training to meet employer needs and allow employees to learn on the job. These programs develop safe, competent, and productive employees—boosting employee retention and satisfaction and creating clear career advancement pathways and opportunities, which ultimately helps companies with recruitment efforts.

We encourage the Trump Administration to foster collaborations with NGOs, industry leaders, and educational institutions to amplify workforce initiatives and look to current legislative vehicles for ways to drive economic growth through urban forests and trees.



## Drive New Economies with Urban Wood

With more trees removed from urban areas than National Forests, urban wood utilization presents a unique opportunity to harness local resources, create sustainable local jobs, and support American industries. Urban wood utilization aligns with the principles of a circular economy by reducing waste and maximizing the value of local resources. By focusing on utilizing local resources, urban wood programs can generate employment opportunities for skilled workers in wood processing, manufacturing, and renewable energy. In addition, urban wood utilization programs offer cities and municipalities a cost-effective alternative to traditional wood waste disposal methods—lowering landfill fees, reducing the environmental impact of

waste management, and generating revenue through the sale of wood products.

With policies that promote urban wood utilization, we can maximize the economic potential of wood from our communities by transforming it into useful products, reducing municipal disposal costs, and creating high-quality jobs and new industries that strengthen community resilience and economic stability.

We encourage the Trump Administration to foster partnerships between municipalities, businesses, and educational institutions to pilot urban wood utilization projects and prioritize funding for projects that promote the reclamation and use of urban wood.



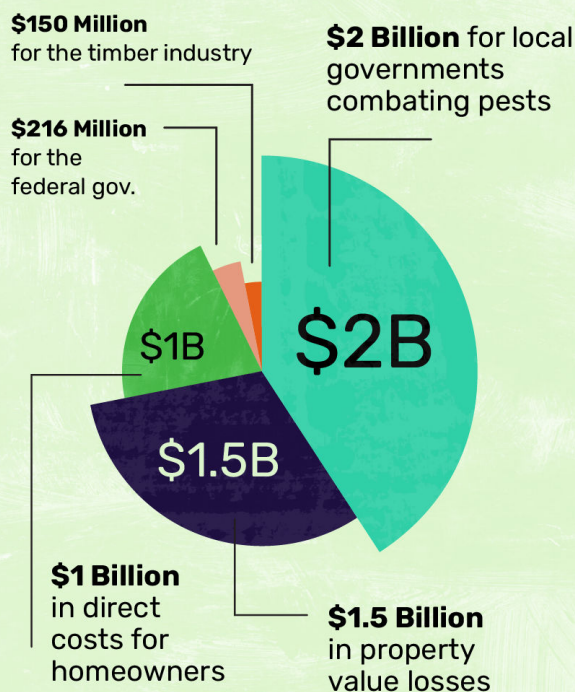


# Protect Urban, Rural, and National Forests from Pests and Disease

Forests across the country are threatened by increasing numbers of insects and disease pathogens introduced from abroad and entering this country through urban ports. As a result, municipal governments across the U.S. are spending an estimated \$2 billion each year to remove trees on city property

killed by non-native pests. Homeowners are spending an additional \$1 billion to remove and replace trees on their properties and are absorbing an additional \$1.5 billion in reduced property values. New pests such as the spotted lanternfly, South American palm weevil, invasive shothole borers, coconut rhinoceros beetle, and beech leaf disease threaten new areas.

## INVASIVE FOREST PESTS COST THE U.S. OVER \$4.5 BILLION ANNUALLY



SUSTAINABLE  
URBAN  
FORESTS  
COALITION

Source: The Harvard Gazette (<https://bit.ly/43j1HQh>)

Most infestations are first identified in cities (e.g., emerald ash borer in Detroit), especially port cities where international trade—a primary vector for insects and pathogens—is prevalent. These pests then spread to rural and wildland forests, where the full spectrum of forest values is at risk. By investing in programs that build capacity for local urban forest managers through early detection and rapid response, the risk of widespread canopy loss can be minimized. Furthermore, investments in tree monitoring and maintenance programs will improve tree health, thereby lessening our tree canopy's susceptibility to these insects and diseases, many of which attack unhealthy trees first. These investments in prevention and early detection can save millions of trees and billions of dollars.

A second USDA agency, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), has principal responsibility for preventing such introductions and responding rapidly to those that occur. Effective protection of urban forests requires strengthening APHIS' enforcement policies and enhancing resources devoted to containing emerging outbreaks.



# Invest in Research that Foresters and Arborists Need Most

There is an urgent need for research funding to establish benchmarks that can be used to scientifically measure the impacts of trees in communities and develop best practices to improve management. Key topics include urban heat reduction, public health improvements, flood mitigation, and extreme weather resilience. For example, arboriculture and urban forestry professionals need to know where and how trees can best be protected, restored, and managed to reduce storm damage, erosion, and sedimentation while moderating extreme heat and flooding events.

Another major research challenge facing the sector is the destruction of our nation's urban forests caused by non-native insects and diseases. The health of rural and wildland forests depends on proactive tree health monitoring and on Forest Service R&D creating and enhancing tools for pest detection and protective strategies, including chemical and biological controls and breeding of trees resistant to pests.

Urban forestry research funding sources are currently limited, resulting in research that is too often stuck in a permanent "pilot study" mode. Dedicated research investment is therefore needed to build evidence and develop strategies to boost the effectiveness of urban and community forest investments and maximize benefits to residents.

**The tree care  
industry contributes**  
**\$37 billion**  
**annually to the  
US economy**



Source: NIP Group (<https://bit.ly/4bDHil9>)

We urge the Trump Administration to specifically expand practical and actionable urban and community forest research under the Forest and Rangeland Research Program at the USDA Forest Service and leverage resources and opportunities for collaboration with other federal agencies.

# SUFC Members

## Additional Supporters

### National Organizations (34)

<i>Alliance for Community Trees</i>	<i>Citizens Climate Lobby</i>	<i>Society of American Foresters</i>
<i>American Forests</i>	<i>Corazón Latino</i>	<i>Student Conservation Association</i>
<i>AmericanHort</i>	<i>Davey Resource Group</i>	<i>Sustainable Forestry Initiative</i>
<i>American Society of Consulting Arborists</i>	<i>GreenLatinos</i>	<i>Urban and Community Forestry Society</i>
<i>American Society of Landscape Architects</i>	<i>Hispanic Access Foundation</i>	<i>Natural Areas Conservancy</i>
<i>Arbor Day Foundation</i>	<i>International Society of Arboriculture</i>	<i>Green Infrastructure Center Inc.</i>
<i>Bartlett Tree Experts</i>	<i>Keep America Beautiful</i>	<i>The Giving Grove</i>
<i>Carbon180</i>	<i>National Association of State Foresters</i>	<i>The Davey Tree Expert Company</i>
<i>Center for Invasive Species Prevention</i>	<i>National Wildlife Federation</i>	<i>Tree Care Industry Association</i>
<i>City Parks Alliance</i>	<i>Outdoor Power Equipment Institute</i>	<i>Trust for Public Land</i>
	<i>The Nature Conservancy</i>	<i>Urban Wood Network</i>
	<i>SavATree LLC</i>	<i>Wildlife Habitat Council</i>

### State/Regional/Local Organizations (47)

<i>Americas for Conservation and the Arts</i>	<i>Heartland Tree Alliance (KS)</i>	<i>Sustaining Our Urban Landscape (LA)</i>
<i>Aesculus Arboricultural Consulting</i>	<i>Juneberry Eco Services LLC (MI)</i>	<i>Tennessee Urban Forestry Council</i>
<i>Alliance for Cape Fear Trees (NC)</i>	<i>Keep It Moving Inc. (MI)</i>	<i>Texas Trees Foundation</i>
<i>Baton Rouge Green (LA)</i>	<i>Maryland Forestry Foundation</i>	<i>Tree CPR (TN)</i>
<i>Cacapon Institute (WV)</i>	<i>Michael T. Rains Consulting</i>	<i>Trees for Honolulu's Future (HI)</i>
<i>California Tree and Landscape Consulting</i>	<i>Michigan State University</i>	<i>The Keystone Concept (ID)</i>
<i>California ReLeaf</i>	<i>Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee (MN 's Urban Forest Council)</i>	<i>The Morton Arboretum (IL)</i>
<i>Casey Trees (DC)</i>	<i>Nebraska Forest Service</i>	<i>The Works, Incorporated (TN)</i>
<i>Civic Works (MD)</i>	<i>NOLA Tree Project (LA)</i>	<i>Treage LLC (FL)</i>
<i>Delaware Center for Horticulture</i>	<i>Openlands (IL)</i>	<i>Trees Atlanta (GA)</i>
<i>Denver Urban Gardens (CO)</i>	<i>Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PA)</i>	<i>Trees Matter (AZ)</i>
<i>DePaul University</i>	<i>Providence Neighborhood Planting Program (RI)</i>	<i>TreesLouisville (KY)</i>
<i>Environmental Community Action (GA)</i>	<i>ReTreeUS (NH)</i>	<i>TreePeople (CA)</i>
<i>Forest ReLeaf of Missouri</i>	<i>Sacramento Tree Foundation (CA)</i>	<i>The Park People (CO)</i>
<i>Foxfire Consulting (VA)</i>	<i>Smart Trees Pacific (HI)</i>	<i>University of Tennessee Knoxville - Tennessee Champion Tree Program</i>
	<i>Speak for the Trees (MA)</i>	<i>Your Children's Trees (CA)</i>