



## **Fostering Thriving Communities through Healthy Urban and Community Forests**

### **URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY SMART INVESTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION**

January 2017

It is projected that 90% of Americans will live in cities and towns by 2050. Creating and strengthening these communities in preparation for this national growing trend is key to our nation's survival. Our country boasts 136 million acres of trees and forests in our cities and towns, representing important infrastructure that supports a higher quality of life for Americans—not just on a personal level, but also on a global economic plane. The mere existence of trees—in addition to being vital in the creation and maintenance of healthy humans and desirable communities—is responsible for enormous contributions to the economic state of our country. The tree-trimming industry alone generates \$17 billion annually in the United States.

Besides being vital to our individual existence, trees and forests provide many social, economic, and environmental benefits to our families, communities, and also our nation. Of course, it takes many years for trees to grow, so it is essential to take steps now to continue to build the urban forests necessary to maximize past and future investments.

Urban, suburban, and rural towns and municipalities face billions of dollars in costs to remove dead trees attacked by pests and diseases. Local governments face the added costs of replenishing the dead or dying trees that shade streets, homes, and businesses; doing so benefits communities by reducing energy costs and consumption, cutting the high price of managing stormwater runoff, increasing property values, strengthening local businesses, and improving public health. While urban forestry certainly adds to the beautification of the landscape, it is not simply an environmental or aesthetic issue—its existence translates into plain dollars and cents: do more now, pay less later. Not investing in trees and forests—from a purely fiscal standpoint—amounts to disinvestment.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Below are the recommendations from the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition (SUFC) for improving our communities through the maintenance and expansion of our urban and community forests. SUFC consists of more than 30 groups representing the multi-billion dollar tree-care industry, state forestry professionals, a wide variety of professional associations from city

planners to public works professionals, along with forest, conservation, and water nonprofit organizations that understand the value and return on investment of planting and maintaining trees where people live.

### **Increase understanding and stewardship of the benefits of, and threats to, urban and community forests.**

The work to expand the awareness of urban forests—the benefits trees provide and the threats they face—is an emerging market. Greater investment is needed to expand and improve existing urban and community forests as they provide social and economic benefits to their communities, including managing stormwater runoff, purifying water, reducing air pollution, creating both wind and sound barriers, and providing places for recreation. There is also a need to address growing threats to trees, such as invasive pests and diseases. The Emerald Ash Borer has killed over 25 million ash trees in 15 states across the midwest and northeast, and is continuing to spread to other states. Preventative management can save millions of trees and millions of dollars. The costs of removing these diseased trees is an estimated \$10.7 billion. With greater awareness, communities would not only add to citizen knowledge, but also encourage increased funding through public and private sources, which further increases the return on investment for this natural capital resource.

### **Create more job opportunities in urban and community forestry.**

The need for skilled labor to manage and care for trees is high. There are thousands of such job opportunities in communities large and small across the country for local workers, jobs that can not be shipped elsewhere. Investing in job training programs will help people find work and continue to increase the return on investment for the trees in our communities. In addition to skilled labor opportunities, there are numerous entry-level positions available to help bolster communities. 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 forests in communities of all sizes.

### **Include natural capital in all infrastructure investments.**

Investing in America's infrastructure is an Administration priority, as it should be. The benefits of natural capital resources, including urban forests and trees, will enhance communities and augment the value of other types of infrastructure. Trees offer flexible and cost-effective solutions to a wide variety of infrastructure-related issues. For example, green infrastructure investments can help address stormwater runoff as streets are being repaved, protect water quality while relieving pressure on aging wastewater utilities, and serve as soundbarriers between communities and highways or railroads to improve safety and quality of life. In addition, adding trees to the landscape of new and upgraded housing increases property values. Integrating urban and community forests into infrastructure projects will help reduce costs, increase revenue, and strengthen our communities.

### **Increase support for urban and community forestry to bolster public health benefits.**

Public health is a national issue; asthma, obesity, and heart disease are some of the chronic illnesses plaguing our cities and towns. Research has shown that tree-lined parks and large numbers of trees along streets help to reduce these illnesses by reducing air pollution and

encouraging more exercise, thus reducing health care costs. Trees and greenspace in our communities provide physical and mental benefits for individuals, from youth to the elderly, by reducing stress. Increasing public and private investment in urban and community forests will help improve these public health issues, while also providing economic and social benefits that increase the overall well being of families and communities throughout the United States.

**Address the needs of underserved communities with urban and community forestry.**

The Administration recognizes the standard of living disparities between communities; the existence of fewer trees in these underserved neighborhoods is a visual reminder of that disparity. Studies have shown that increasing greenspace and trees in low-income neighborhoods can help address issues such as health, crime, and domestic violence and elevate the well being of those communities while reducing costs. More trees encourage people to enjoy being outside, thus deterring crime, and by reducing stress, the existence of trees help reduce the number of domestic violence incidents. By utilizing urban forests to alleviate some of society's ills, the well being of all communities will rise.

**SUFC MEMBERS**

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| Alliance for Community Trees                     | National Association of Conservation Districts  |
| America In Bloom                                 | National Association of Landscape Professionals |
| American Forests                                 | National Association of State Foresters         |
| AmericanHort                                     | National Recreation and Parks Association       |
| American Planning Association                    | National Wildlife Federation                    |
| American Public Works Association                | Outdoor Power Equipment Institute Foundation    |
| American Rivers                                  | The Davey Foundation                            |
| American Society of Consulting Arborists         | Society of American Foresters                   |
| American Society of Landscape Architects         | Society of Municipal Arborists                  |
| Arbor Day Foundation                             | Student Conservation Association                |
| Bartlett Tree Foundation                         | Tree Care Industry Association                  |
| Center for Invasive Species Prevention           | TREE Fund                                       |
| Clean Air Task Force                             | The Trust for Public Land                       |
| Green Infrastructure Center                      | Utility Arborist Association                    |
| International City/County Management Association | U.S. Water Alliance                             |
| International Society of Arboriculture           | Water Environment Federation                    |
| Keep America Beautiful                           |   |
| National Association of Clean Water Agencies     |   |