

June 10, 2010

The Honorable James L. Oberstar
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Oberstar and Chairwoman Johnson,

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our strong support for House Resolution 2222, *The Green Communities Act*. We stand together in our interest to promote livable communities by improving green spaces and advancing urban forestry-related policies that provide multiple public benefits.

While communities across the country attempt to create green infrastructure plans, many lack the technical expertise to properly implement a greening program. We endorse the passage of *The Green Communities Act* as an effective means to provide much needed funds and expertise to communities wishing to expand their green infrastructure and support economic development.

The Green Communities Act, H.R. 2222, is unique in its scope as it addresses a national priority to increase the environmental sustainability of our towns and cities while at the same time addressing the on-going needs of job growth, economic development, and local investment. By creating a grant program through the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration, this legislation will help communities harness the economic development benefits of urban greening. This competitive program will award grants to 80 municipalities exhibiting an ability to innovate and collaborate. Municipalities will be directed to partner with one of five national non-profit groups to develop and plan a community greening initiative. Throughout this process the local community is also required to make an investment in the project with no less than 50% matching funds.

We believe *The Green Communities Act* can contribute to communities by allowing them to provide green infrastructure and its proven positive economic and social impacts.

- **Urban Forests Return a Value of Nearly Double the Costs**

A study in Modesto, CA found that for every \$1.00 dollar spent on maintaining urban trees the city created \$1.89 in benefits in the form of energy savings, stormwater runoff reductions and CO2 reductions.

- **Cleaned and Greened Urban Lots Increase Property Values by 37%**

A Wharton Business School Study found property values increased by 37% when an adjacent lot was cleaned, by 9% when trees were planted nearby, and by 28% if a neighboring streetscape was improved.

- **Shoppers Spend More Money in Areas with Trees**

National studies done at the University of Washington found that trees increase visiting time to shopping districts and that shoppers are willing to spend more money on products found in areas with a healthy tree population.

Given the current need to grow jobs and increase community investment — all while building an environmentally sustainable future — the undersigned organizations ask that H.R. 2222, *The Green Communities Act*, be given a hearing in your respective committees so that all members of your committee may better understand the benefits of this legislation.

We strongly support the interagency approach to this legislation. To assure maximum effectiveness, we recommend that federal legislation and programs recognize the need for coordinated delivery systems at the federal, state, and local level. We appreciate your dedicated attention to these issues and look forward to working with you to successfully pass *The Green Communities Act*.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Community Trees
American Forests
American Nursery and Landscape Association
American Planning Association
American Public Works Association
American Society of Landscape Architects
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Parks and Recreation Association
International Society of Arboriculture
Keep America Beautiful, Inc.
Society of Municipal Arborists
Tree Care Industry Association, Inc.