



Alliance for Community Trees  
American Forests  
American Nursery and Landscape Association  
American Planning Association  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
The Davey Tree Expert Company (including the Davey Resource Group)  
International City/County Management Association  
International Society of Arboriculture  
National Arbor Day Foundation  
National Association of Conservation Districts  
Society of American Foresters  
Society of Municipal Arborists  
Tree Care Industry of America  
TreeLink  
Utility Arborists Association

The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition (SUF<sup>C</sup>) is a national coalition to advance a unified urban forest agenda for our nation's communities. The Coalition views urban forests as the aggregate of all community vegetation and green spaces that provide benefits vital to enriching the quality of life.

## Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition National Agenda for Well Managed Urban Forests

The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition is a national coalition to advance a unified urban forest agenda for our nation's communities. Much more than city trees, urban forests include the aggregate of all community vegetation and green spaces in neighborhoods of large and small cities across the country, and that provide benefits essential to enriching community quality of life.

### ***Urban Forests: A Valuable Resource***

A well managed urban forest is a healthy forest. Healthy urban forests provide high value benefits –economic, environmental, and social. The economic value of a well managed urban forest includes increased property values<sup>i</sup>, lower taxes, increased local economic development<sup>ii</sup>, and a professional industry with the potential to employ many urban workers. In addition, cities with good environmental health attract the best and brightest workers which, in turn, attract businesses<sup>iii</sup>. Urban forests reduce infrastructure costs, providing cleaner air and water more efficiently and cost-effectively than traditional methods.

Trees around homes and buildings reduce energy use and costs. A home shaded by as few as three trees can cut energy bills in half. Homes sheltered from wind have winter heat savings of as much as 10.3 thousand BTUs or approximately \$52 annually<sup>iv</sup>. Urban trees store tons of carbon – between 400 and 900 million metric tons – and reduce smog and air pollution (NOX, SOX, particulates, etc.)<sup>v</sup>. Greening our communities also provides over 1.3 million jobs, and this number is projected to grow at a faster than average rate<sup>vi</sup>.

A primary environmental benefit of well managed urban trees is clean air and water. Trees store carbon and provide oxygen. Trees absorb air pollutants and act as natural filters to produce clean air; trees reduce air pollutants by 25% in cities and filter our airborne particles by one-quarter. Trees slow and filter rainwater to reduce storm water flow, especially during peak loads. More trees means less concrete for storm water control – a big savings in building costs. Federal laws require communities to improve the water quality of their storm water discharge by minimizing runoff and creating forest buffers for flood-prone areas.

Some of the more important but less recognized benefits of urban forests are their contributions to improved human well-being and health<sup>vii</sup>. Well managed urban forests can strengthen communities by empowering citizens<sup>viii</sup>, improving social ties<sup>ix</sup>, reducing crime<sup>x</sup>, and revitalizing neighborhoods<sup>xi</sup>. Trees add to our quality of life and make our cities and towns better places to live<sup>xii</sup>, work<sup>xiii</sup>, play<sup>xiv</sup>, and learn<sup>xv</sup>. A well managed urban forest may reduce incidents of asthma among both urban children and adults<sup>xvi</sup>. Urban forests make for more walkable cities and increase recreation benefits<sup>xvii</sup>. More active lifestyles combat obesity, improve cardiovascular health, increase longevity, and enhance physical development of children<sup>xviii</sup>. Experiences of urban nature help children be more disciplined<sup>xix</sup>, and can reduce attention deficit disorders<sup>xx</sup>. Hospital patients who have a view of nature recover faster from surgery and require less medication for pain.<sup>xxi</sup> The full potential of trees to reduce health care spending is an area worth further exploration.

## ***The National Agenda for Well Managed Urban Forests***

The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition will advance a national agenda for well managed urban and community forests. Only well managed urban forests can provide ecological services such as air and water quality and wildlife and fish habitat. But urban forests are degraded and threatened by human and natural forces, such as unplanned urbanization and landscape change, limited budgets, poor public understanding, lack of maintenance, catastrophic events, and insects and disease. As a result, some communities may undergo economic and social decline.

To work toward a vision of sustainable urban communities, we believe it is necessary to focus on urban forests as critical components and indicators of healthy urban ecosystems. Americans from all walks of life, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and political persuasions care deeply about trees and forests. We believe that actions to restore and maintain urban forest ecosystems represent a common objective among diverse interests, and will find broad support in communities across the nation.

The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition's agenda integrates our interests in urban areas, emphasizes the value of trees in sustaining well managed ecosystems and communities, and builds on broad-based public recognition that urban forests need restoration and stewardship. It presents a set of core values and goals that serve as a foundation for our policy activities, guiding our efforts to be proactive in the national public policy arena and in the arena of public opinion. It is an agenda that will change over time as we learn more about the social, economic, and environmental benefits of urban forests.

### ***Core Beliefs of the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition***

- Technical tools, information, and financial assistance are essential to help communities assess ecological issues related to trees and forests and to plan and implement actions.
- The economic and social value of the ecological services provided by urban forests needs greater consideration in natural resource and city planning and decision-making.
- Long-term investment is needed to restore and maintain urban ecosystem health and to build the capacity of communities to care for their urban forests.
- Planning for ecosystem restoration should be done at a large enough scale to address the broad issues of ecological health.
- Restoration actions must focus on maintaining the capacity of ecosystems to provide ecological services for all species.
- Private landowners must be reached with information about the ecological importance of their lands in the larger landscape and offered technical and financial assistance or incentives to help restore and maintain their lands in forest and conservation uses.

### ***Policy Goals of the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition***

- Ensure every citizen has ready access to quality forests, green spaces, and parks and that urban forests are managed to encourage greater physical activity to reduce chronic illness and disease risks.
- Increase support for research on the economic and social value of ecological services provided by urban forests.
- Increase technical and financial resources available to help communities assess ecosystem conditions and to plan and implement actions.
- Heighten recognition of the public benefits of the privately owned portion of urban forests, estimated to be 90% of the resource, and promote positive action by homeowners.
- Increase public and private investment in urban ecosystem restoration and in building the capacity of communities to maintain well managed urban ecosystems.
- Promote policies that encourage collaboration among agencies, the private sector, and non-profit organizations.

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