



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS

The Many Benefits of Community Forestry

What are community forests?

Community forests comprise 39% of the nation's tree cover and provide critical "green infrastructure" across the country. They are made up of trees of all shapes and sizes – lining neighborhood streets, shading yards, and defining parks – in every neighborhood, town, and city across America. **Collectively, every year community forests provide \$18.3 billion in cost savings related to reductions in air pollution, energy use, and greenhouse gases.**

Community forests help create networks of green spaces that provide a wide range of ecosystem services, and can even mitigate the effects of extreme weather and a changing climate. Their value appreciates and grows year after year, making planting and caring for community trees a truly wise investment.

Community forests provide economic solutions by:

- **Creating environments that encourage consumers to purchase more.** Studies have shown that shoppers will spend 9% to 12% more for goods and services in central business districts that have high-quality tree canopies. Shoppers also travel greater distances to visit these districts and spend more time there once they arrive.
- **Boosting home values, and in turn, property tax revenue.** The presence of larger trees in yards and on streets can increase home values by 3% to 15%, recent studies suggest. In Portland, Oregon, specifically, street and yard trees have increased home values by about \$1.35 billion and property tax revenues by \$15.3 million.
- **Reducing residential heating and cooling costs.** Community forests across the United States reduce electricity use by 7.2% or 38.8 million MWh (worth \$4.7 billion annually) and heating use by 246 million MMBtus (worth \$3.1 billion annually).
- **Increasing rental return for commercial office space.** A study found that rental rates for commercial offices were 7% higher if located adjacent to trees.
- **Contributing to greater worker satisfaction and productivity.** Studies have found that cognitive function, morale, and health outcomes for employees can improve with exposure to nature, in turn, decreasing absenteeism (which costs employers \$2,500 to \$3,400 on average per worker annually) and presenteeism (which costs employers as much as \$160 billion per year).



Community forests are at risk.

Invasive species, severe storms, extreme weather, and development pressures are eroding community forest resources across the country. Nationally, 175,000 acres (or 36 million trees) of community forests worth \$96 million in benefits are lost every year, limiting communities' ability to meet environmental requirements and reducing Americans' quality of life.

Natural disasters, such as hurricanes and wildfires, often overwhelm the resources of communities and require substantial federal assistance to respond adequately. Sound, long-term federal and state investment in community forestry programs reduces the costs of natural disaster recovery.

More investments in community forests could:

- Save the United States up to \$11.7 billion in avoided health care costs annually
- Boost high school graduates' lifelong income by \$1.3 billion annually
- Avoid \$928 million in costs resulting from crimes annually

Federal investments are needed at the local level.

State forestry agencies work in partnership with the USDA Forest Service to provide critical assistance to communities in establishing and managing local community forest resources. These investments, made available to states through the **Urban and Community Forestry Program**, are leveraged with state funds and improve the quality of life for millions of Americans every year. **Recently, with Urban and Community Forestry grants:**



Florida and **Georgia** teamed up to distribute and plant trees in residential areas for energy conservation as part of the Energy Savings Trees Program.



Michigan helped communities through its Coastal Green project to plant and improve water quality.

Nebraska held tree risk assessment and management workshops to help communities proactively manage their forests for increased public safety.

Washington, D.C. supported collaboration among diverse groups to increase community tree canopy cover in underserved areas.



Colorado mapped, valued, and prioritized green infrastructure in its South Platte watershed to improve water quality.

Virginia and **North Carolina** combined forces to implement measures to manage the destructive emerald ash borer in their communities.