

Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Urban & Community Forest (UCF) Sustainability Standard

A policy statement approved by resolution
of the National Association of State Foresters



INTRODUCTION

Standards and their associated certifications are effective at increasing engagement and improving performance. They are sector-developed guidelines for the appropriate planning, management, and care of a resource and their associated benefits and risks. Standards do not merely provide a roadmap to sustainable management; they also allow organizations to prove their efforts through third-party certification. The *SFI Urban and Community Forest Sustainability Standard* promotes sustainable *urban and community forests* based on 16 *objectives*. This standard is appropriate for *organizations* that own, manage, or are responsible for *urban and/or community forests*. These *organizations* can come from all facets of the *urban and community forest* sector, including, but not limited to: governmental *organizations* (i.e., municipalities, counties, states, provinces), non-governmental *organizations*, *Indigenous Peoples*, community groups, healthcare *organizations*, educational *organizations*, and corporate *organizations*.

BACKGROUND

Trees where we live, work, learn, and play have many benefits. They help us combat *climate change* by capturing greenhouse gases and mitigate the heating of cities while improving public health and wellbeing, providing recreation space, and so much more. Collectively, these trees and their associated environments make up our urban and *community forests*. Urban and *community forestry* is essential to maximizing the benefits provided by forests and trees, while minimizing the risks they can pose in our communities.

Considering the value of the benefits and how many people around the world live in cities and towns, maintaining the vitality of these resources is essential. SFI and its partners see a great opportunity to provide leadership in *urban and community forestry* and raise the profile of *urban and community forests* and trees as *green infrastructure* and *nature-based solutions* to human health, disparity, and environmental sustainability. Urban and *community forests* face significant threats and challenges, such as from *climate change*; *invasive* and *native* insects, animals, plants, and diseases; and water shortages. To counter these threats, raise awareness, and assist communities in managing these resources, *SFI* has worked with the *urban and community forestry* sector to create a standard for sustainable urban and *community forests*.

The goal of SFI's urban and community forestry work is to increase the resiliency and sustainability of our communities, both large and small. We will accomplish this goal by using trees and forests as natural solutions that improve community wellbeing, human health, and help us with many challenges including climate change. The new SFI Urban and Community Forest Sustainability Standard will help us reach this goal.

The [**SFI Urban and Community Forest Sustainability Standard**](#) for application in North America and potentially globally was developed collaboratively with five urban forestry leaders: American Forests, Arbor Day Foundation, the International Society of Arboriculture, the Society of Municipal Arborists, and Tree Canada.

The [SFI Urban-Community Forestry Task Group](#) reviewed all comments and developed the draft standard. The standard was approved by the SFI Board of Directors on May 16, 2023. The SFI standard development process is based on balanced representation from many different interest groups. This inclusion is also reflected in Task Group composition reflecting a diversity of interest groups as well as a balanced representation of expertise, gender, race and geographical location. Examples of interest groups included as part of the standard revision process include:

- Tree-based non-profit (US & Canada)
- Forest-based non-profit
- Utility Forestry/Vegetation Management
- Federal (US & Canada)
- International Urban Forestry
- State Forestry
- Municipal (over and under 500,000 population)
- University (large & small, public & private)
- Nursery Industry (US & Canada) Commercial
- Arboriculture and Urban Forestry Professionals
- Municipal Tree Care Professional Organization
- Community & Corporate Sustainability
- Forestry Professionals Organization
- Research
- Urban Wood Use
- Conservation (US & Canada)
- Underserved Communities
- Indigenous peoples
- Real estate/Homeowners Association
- Wildlife Professionals
- Allied Professions

This standard is based on 5 guiding **PRINCIPLES**:

- *Urban and community forests* and trees are vital for community well-being, health, *resiliency*, and sustainability.
- *Urban and community forests* and trees and their associated benefits should be accessible and available to everyone.
- *Urban and community forests* and trees depend upon understanding, awareness, appreciation, stewardship, and engagement by communities and people in order to thrive.
- *Urban and community forests* and trees require proper planning, care, and management to optimize benefits and *minimize* risks.
- *Urban and community forests* and trees are *nature-based solutions* to pressing issues and essential *green infrastructure*.

The *SFI* Urban and Community Forest Sustainability Standard strives to address the environmental, social, and governance issues that will help ensure the sustainability of our

urban forests. We can meet these *principles* by building our capacity, growing our network of support, and continually striving to improve our forests and *programs* through the following *objectives*:

- **Objective 1: Community, People, and Indigenous Rights**
- **Objective 2: Human Health and Well-being**
- **Objective 3: Conservation and Protection of Biodiversity**
- **Objective 4: Stewardship of Natural Resources including Air, Water, and Soil**
- **Objective 5: Forest and Tree Health and Vitality**
- **Objective 6: Special Sites, including Natural Areas**
- **Objective 7: Climate-Smart Management**
- **Objective 8: Urban and Community Forest Planning**
- **Objective 9: Management and Care of Urban and Community Forests and Trees**
- **Objective 10: Disaster Readiness, Response, and Recovery**
- **Objective 11: Capacity-Building**
- **Objective 12: Urban Wood and Community Forest Utilization**
- **Objective 13: Communications**
- **Objective 14: Science, Research, and Technology**
- **Objective 15: Legal and Regulatory Compliance**
- **Objective 16: Reporting**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The members of the National Association of State Foresters adopt the Resolution to:

- Support the SFI U&CF Sustainability Standard
- Promote the Standard to NASF Members
- Assist Organizations with Awareness and Certification Process for the Standard