



AMERICAN FORESTS
SINCE 1875



Tree Equity

Trees are more than scenery for our cities. They are critical infrastructure that every person in every neighborhood deserves — a fundamental right that we must secure. But a map of tree cover in America's cities is too often a map of income and race. That's because trees often are sparse in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. Ensuring equitable tree cover addresses social inequities so that all people can thrive.

Simply put, Tree Equity is about ensuring that all people experience the benefits of trees.

Everyone Can Benefit from Trees



Trees improve our health

By providing shade, trees help prevent heat-related illnesses and deaths — **they lower air temperature by up to seven degrees during the day and 22 degrees at night.** Trees also absorb pollutants, helping to clean the air, leading to fewer respiratory illnesses and making it easier to breathe. And trees help improve our mental and physical health, whether we are outside for work, play or relaxation.



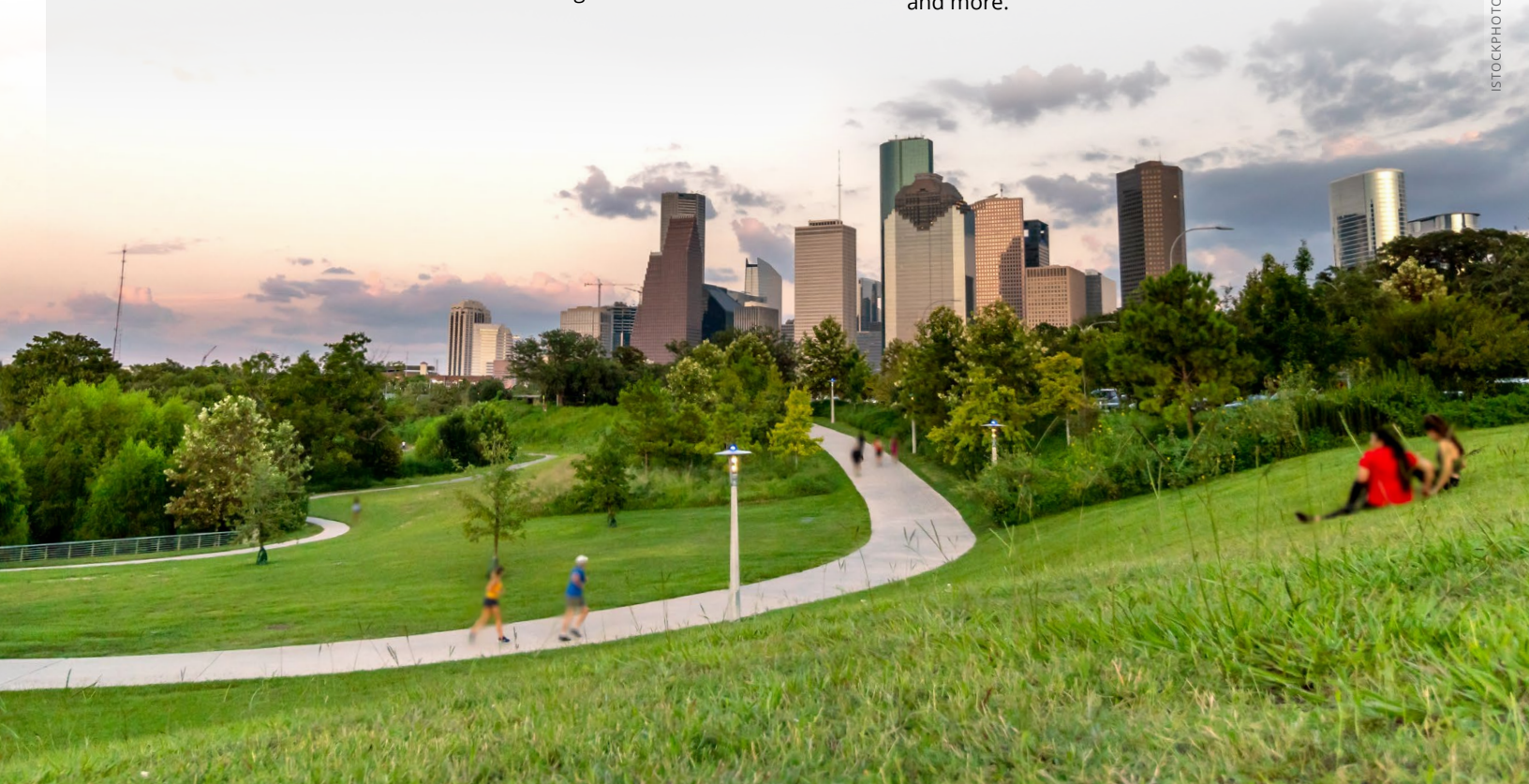
Trees boost the economy and add to personal savings

Planting and taking care of trees can create jobs all along the urban forestry pipeline, from growing seedlings in nurseries to digging holes, taking care of trees and making furniture. **For every \$1 million invested in urban forestry, 25 jobs are created or supported in various industries.** Trees also lower utility costs by shading buildings in the summer and blocking wind in the winter.



Trees help mitigate climate change

Trees in urban areas of the United States are responsible for **20% of all carbon emissions that forests in the U.S. capture and store.** That amounts to nearly 2% of overall U.S. carbon emissions. Also, more trees mean less time running the air conditioner and heater, saving millions of tons of carbon emissions. Trees help us adapt to climate change by absorbing water (which reduces flood risks), reducing air temperatures and more.



The Urgency

The scale and rate that trees are planted or naturally regenerate must increase if trees are to improve health, boost the economy and mitigate climate change.

In U.S. urban areas, we lose one tree for every two trees planted or naturally regenerated, according to a 2021 American Forests study with Dr. David Nowak of the U.S. Forest Service.



The loss is mainly due to

Natural disasters

Difficulty of growing trees in urban areas

Tree removal for development

Improper planting practices

Tree loss is a problem, given the role trees play in advancing Tree Equity and slowing climate change.

And it isn't a problem that's going away.

The projected loss of tree canopy in urban areas nationwide is

8.3% by 2060.

Nor are the threats to people who live in urban areas going away. For example, heat-related deaths are expected to increase 10 times the current average across eastern U.S. cities by 2050, partly due to "heat islands" that form in city neighborhoods that do not have many trees.



The Solutions

To create Tree Equity in urbanized America (places with at least 50,000 people), we need to plant 522 million trees from coast to coast, according to American Forests' Tree Equity Score tool. We also need to prioritize planting trees in the neighborhoods that need them most and caring for them in the right way.

American Forests works with government agencies, community groups, scientists, corporations and others to create necessary progress. **We use a three-pronged approach to reforesting America.**



1. INNOVATION

Our Innovation Lab creates and refines new tools that help empower urban forestry champions and advocates. Our Tree Corps model, for example, supports direct placement into urban forestry careers for job-seekers facing barriers to employment. This model equips employers with training and support to retain a diverse workforce. New hires — members of their local Tree Corps — gain access to paid training and support services like subsidies for transportation, childcare and housing.



2. PLACE-BASED PARTNERSHIPS

We facilitate stakeholder partnerships in cities that break down barriers and use scientifically-based data to develop and implement plans to plant trees and protect an area's existing trees. We advocate for local, state and federal policies and programs — as well as funding to support them — so we can bring the plans to life. Lastly, we plant and care for urban trees to be healthy and resilient for generations to come. We are helping: Phoenix create a Tree Equity program, Detroit make the financial case for planting trees at a large scale and creating tree nurseries (as well as related jobs) on underutilized land, Boston develop an equity-informed urban forest plan, and Baltimore develop an urban forestry training program that meets U.S. Department of Labor pre-apprenticeship standards.



3. MOVEMENT BUILDING

We inspire and empower actions — such as creating new urban forestry policies. We do so in various ways, including through [Vibrant Cities Lab](#), a joint project between the U.S. Forest Service the National Association of Regional Councils and American Forests. We also merge the latest research with best practices for implementing green infrastructure projects in communities. We offer innovative conservation financing through our partnership with City Forest Credits. And we collaborate and convene as necessary to build support for federal legislation related to urban forests, such as the proposed Climate Stewardship Act, which would result in an unprecedented federal investment in urban forestry.

**For more information about
Tree Equity, please visit
americanforests.org/TreeEquity
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