

Urban Forests for Healthier Cities: Policy, Planning, Regulations, and Institutional Arrangements

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EXHIBIT # 51

Why Do Urban Forests Matter?

Urban forests provide city dwellers with many **ecosystem services**, or benefits that humans derive from nature.¹¹



Urban forests offer many benefits to residents, which are moderated by climate, geography, characteristics of the built environment, social and political conditions, and even individual or cultural identity. Image:

Cities4Forests.

For example, **well-planned, well-managed** urban forests have the potential to:

- **Contribute to the physical and mental health of urban dwellers** by buffering stress, creating inviting places for physical activity, and more ^{10, 23, 28}
- **Mitigate the heat island effect** by reducing temperatures through shading and evapotranspiration ^{18, 20,}

- **Reduce burdens on traditional water infrastructure and reduce run-off** by absorbing and filtering stormwater ¹⁶
- **Calm traffic and reduce driver speeds** when properly incorporated along roads and rights-of-way ^{19, 31}
- **Improve air quality** by removing harmful pollutants, like particulate matter, ozone, and smog, in certain contexts;²⁰ however, trees may also trap air pollution in urban canyons, create allergenic pollen or even emit pollutant precursors ^{17, 24}
- **Reduce noise** ^{20, 25}
- **Improve scenic quality and aesthetic appeal** ²⁰
- **Support local livelihoods** and provide fuelwood, medicine, and other goods ²³
- **Enhance community cohesion** by fostering social interaction, building environmental consciousness, and establishing a shared sense of place ^{23, 26, 30}
- **Increase food security for marginalized populations** in both developed and developing contexts ^{10, 14, 15}
- **Enhance agricultural productivity** in peri-urban agroforestry by improving site conditions and diversifying production for smallholder farmers ¹⁴
- **Sequester carbon**; however, pruning, fertilization, and irrigation of street trees may also result in CO2 emissions ²¹
- **Increase property values** and thus increase municipal tax revenue. In some cases, trees may also impose financial burdens on landowners related to tree care or removal or taxes related to property value ²⁰ or contribute to displacement of vulnerable groups ⁹
- **Increase residents' connection to nature** during resident engagement activities such as tree plantings, which may promote other pro-environmental behavior ²⁷
- **Increase equity**, as benefits from urban greening can be most impactful for disadvantaged groups ^{10, 30}
- Intercept rainfall and surface runoff to reduce erosion and sedimentation in urban areas and along coasts and streams ¹¹⁴



Cities4Forests helps cities around the world to connect with and invest in inner forests (such as city trees and urban parks), nearby forests (such as green corridors and watersheds) and faraway forests (such as tropical and boreal forests). We encourage our cities to better conserve, manage, and restore these forests, and we provide technical assistance for them to align local policy, share knowledge, and access peer-to-peer learning and communication activities for cities to take climate action together.



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