



Forest Service News Release

USDA Forest Service makes historic investments in equitable access to trees and nature in Southern Region through Urban and Community Forests grants

ATLANTA, September 14, 2023 — The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today the USDA Forest Service is investing more than \$1 billion in nearly 400 projects nationwide to increase access to trees and the social, health, and economic benefits they provide.

Of the total funding, the Forest Service awarded \$209 million to community-based organizations, tribes, municipal and state governments, non-profit partners, universities, and other eligible entities across the Southern Region. These investments will plant and maintain trees in disadvantaged urban communities, tackle the climate crisis, and support jobs and workforce development.

The funding, made possible by the Inflation Reduction Act, is part of a historic \$1.5 billion investment in the Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program. The funding supports local communities and the organizations that serve them as they work to increase tree cover in disadvantaged spaces and boost equitable access to nature.

"These investments arrive as cities across the country experience record-breaking heatwaves that have grave impacts on public health, energy consumption, and overall well-being," said Secretary Vilsack. "Thanks to President Biden's Investing in America agenda, we are supporting communities in becoming more resilient to climate change and combatting extreme heat with the cooling effects of increased urban tree canopy, while also supporting employment opportunities and professional training that will strengthen local economies."

Examples of projects funded includes:

- \$15 million for *ForUsTree: Creating an Inclusive Community Canopy within Houston and Harris County, Texas*
- \$15 million for *South Dallas Neighborhood Greening Initiative, Texas*
- \$12 million for *Louisville Equitable Forest Initiative, Kentucky*
- \$10 million for *Miami-Dade County Department of Parks, Recreation and Outdoor Spaces, Florida*
- \$10 million for *Promoting Tree Equity and Urban Forestry Workforce Diversity in Atlanta, Georgia*
- \$10 million for *Gateways to a Greener Jackson* in Jackson, Mississippi

Funding amounts by Southern states are:

- Alabama - \$9.5 million
- Arkansas - \$4.2 million

- Florida - \$29.1 million
- Georgia - \$17.5 million
- Kentucky - \$14.5 million
- Louisiana - \$24.3 million
- Mississippi - \$16.8 million
- North Carolina - \$9.2 million
- Oklahoma - \$3.5 million
- Puerto Rico - \$8 million
- South Carolina - \$6.7 million
- Tennessee - \$16.3 million
- Texas - \$31.6 million
- Virginia - \$17.7 million

**The funding for Puerto Rico is managed by the International Institute of Tropical Forestry*

“Investing in urban community forests is investing in people. Trees and nature improve mental health, increase home values and provide other ecological benefits, such as cooling communities during summer’s heat,” said Regional Forester Ken Arney. “I am thrilled to see such an investment in the Southeast. This builds upon on our long-standing tradition of connecting people with the benefits of nature.”

The Urban and Community Forestry Program supports the Justice40 Initiative, which aims to ensure that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and lack access to trees and nature.

All grant funding will flow to disadvantaged communities thanks to our applicant tool, which used the White House Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool to identify eligible communities. This geospatial mapping tool identifies communities faced with significant burdens, such as climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development.

The Forest Service supports vibrant and healthy urban communities through supporting healthy urban forests. More information about the funded proposals, as well as announcements about the grant program, including specific projects funded, is available on the [Forest Service website](#). You can access a fact sheet on this funding [here](#).

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