

# USDA invests \$1 billion for nearly 400 projects to expand access to trees and green spaces in communities and neighborhoods nationwide through Investing in America agenda

## USDA Press Release

**WASHINGTON, September 14, 2023** - Today, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service is awarding more than \$1 billion in competitive grants to plant and maintain trees, combat extreme heat and climate change, and improve access to nature in cities, towns, and suburbs where more than 84% of Americans live, work, and play. Communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and several U.S. Territories and Tribal Nations are receiving funding, covered by the Justice40 Initiative and made possible by President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act—the largest climate investment in history.

The Forest Service selected 385 grant proposals from entities working to increase equitable access to trees and nature, and the benefits they provide for cooling city streets, improving air quality, and promoting food security, public health and safety. The funding was granted to entities in all 50 states, two U.S. territories, three U.S. affiliated Pacific islands, and several Tribes through the Forest Service's [Urban and Community Forestry Program](#).

"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."

The Urban and Community Forestry Program is the only program in the federal government dedicated to enhancing and expanding the nation's urban forest resources. This is the largest single USDA Inflation Reduction Act investment to date in urban and community forests.

"Today's landmark funding from the U.S. Forest Service will increase urban access to nature, improve air quality, keep city streets cool during sweltering summers, tackle the climate crisis, and create safer, healthier communities in every corner of America," said John Podesta, Senior Advisor to the President for Clean Energy Innovation and Implementation. "That makes a huge difference for the grandmother who doesn't have air conditioning, or the kid who has asthma, or the parent who works outside for ten hours a day. This investment will create not just greener cities — it will create healthier and more equitable cities."

"President Biden set a bold goal to cut in half the number of people that do not have access to parks and nature by the end of the decade," said Brenda Mallory, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. "This funding will expand access to green space in underserved communities nationwide, advancing the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to environmental justice and our Justice40 Initiative."

This announcement is part of President Biden's [Investing in America agenda](#) to advance environmental justice, generate economic opportunity, and build a clean energy economy nationwide. The grants are made possible by investments from President Biden's [Inflation Reduction Act](#), the largest climate investment in history and a core pillar of Bidenomics. The Urban and Community Forestry Program is part of President Biden's [Justice40 Initiative](#), which works to ensure the overall benefits of certain federal investments reach disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution and underinvestment.

The grant funding was open to community-based organizations, Tribes, municipal and state governments, non-profit partners, universities and other eligible entities. In total, the Forest Service received 842 applications requesting a total of \$6.4 billion in funding, an indication of the urgent nationwide need to plant and maintain more urban trees.

Studies show that trees in communities are associated with improved physical and mental health, lower average temperatures during extreme heat, and increased food security, and create new economic opportunities. This historic funding will help the Forest Service support projects that increase tree cover in disadvantaged communities, provide equitable access to the benefits of nature, and deliver tangible economic and ecological benefits to urban and Tribal communities across the country.

Grantees used the [White House Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) to help identify disadvantaged communities. This geospatial mapping tool identifies disadvantaged communities that face burdens in the categories of climate, energy, health, housing including nature deprivation, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, workforce development, as well as associated socioeconomic thresholds.

More information about the funded proposals, as well as announcements about the grant program, is available on the [Urban and Community Forestry Program webpage](#).

More information on the historic Inflation Reduction Act is available on the White House Fact Sheet: [One Year In, President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act is Driving Historic Climate Action and Investing in America to Create Good Paying Jobs and Reduce Costs](#).

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