

INVESTING IN URBAN TREES

Usually, as town officials, we think about our municipal trees primarily in terms of what they cost. Yet, when we invest in stocks or funds, how many of us think of these assets only in terms of the fees, rather than their total portfolio value? When we consider new fire trucks or municipal buildings, we weigh both the costs and the benefits. It is time we do the same for our community trees and forests.

Trees are one of the most **valuable investments** we can make in our communities. They provide varied benefits and, as trees grow, their benefits multiply. And yet, trees rarely get credit for the benefits they provide, because these benefits rarely show up in our tree budget.

It is said that education is a critical investment, because a good education will yield ten-fold down the road. It is the same with trees. What's more, trees don't move to the sun-belt for a better job when they grow up.

What Are These Benefits of the Municipal Forest? And Where Do They Show Up In the Town Budget?

- **Trees contribute to local tourism**, a more stable economy, and higher tax revenues.
- Over 1.2 million people travel to Massachusetts each fall, just to see fall foliage, generating as much as \$300 million to our local economy.
- Shoppers would rather shop on tree-lined village streets and commercial areas.
- **A beautiful municipal forest can raise property values**, property taxes, and transfer taxes.
- People would rather buy a house in a community with beautiful tree-lined streets and a tree-lined downtown, than in one without trees. Research has shown that roughly 7%-15% of property value is attributable to the trees and landscaping, and that means 7%-15% of local taxes.
- **The municipal forest contributes to tree and forestry-related businesses**, including sugaring, nursery, landscaping, and tree work.
- **Trees reduce storm water management and drinking water costs.**
- Trees in a community can reduce runoff by 20%, and peak storm water flow by 30%, thus significantly reducing the risks and costs of flooding.
- Trees also contribute significantly to cleaner water and lower drinking water costs.
- **Trees help clean the air**, reducing ozone, SO₂, NO₂, and CO₂.
- **Residents collect and grow produce** from trees and community gardens.
- **Trees provide beauty**, offer serenity, raise the quality of life for our citizens, and help build a sense of community.





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Some Aspects of a Strong Municipal Forestry Program

Consider investing in the environmental, economic, and social future of your community by strengthening your municipal tree and forest program in the following areas.

Let us help you:

Understand and Plan for your Trees and Forests:

- Complete a public tree survey or inventory.
- Set clear and tangible objectives for your program.
- Lay out policies to protect and manage the municipal forest, in a way that reduces costs and increases the investment.
- Move your community away from “reactive” urban forest management toward a more “pro-active” approach.

Invest:

- Put town fiscal resources into good planning, management, planting, and maintenance of the municipal forest. Invest between \$2 and \$5 per capita.

Encourage Citizen Involvement:

- Establish a citizen Tree Board or Tree Committee.
- Involve citizen volunteers in a tree survey or inventory.
- Create a volunteer planting program.

Institute Staff and Citizen Training:

- Train your staff and citizens to be good stewards of your community forest.

Become a Tree City USA:

- Whether you are a town or city, seek recognition as a Tree City USA community and garner public attention and national recognition for your commitment to community trees and forests.

First Steps You Can Take to Improve Your Municipal Forestry Program

- 1) Set objectives. Bring together your Tree Warden, town leaders, active citizens, and forestry professionals to brainstorm initial objectives and actions to improve your program.
- 2) Form a Tree Board or Committee.
- 3) Contact DCR’s Urban & Community Forestry Program for assistance.

Bureau of Forestry
Urban & Community Forestry Program
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In Partnership with:
USDA Forest Service and
the Massachusetts Tree Wardens' &
Foresters' Association

