Illinois Urban and Community Forestry: Enhancing Community Development

Illinois is investing U.S. Forest Service dollars and expertise to build self-sustaining, decentralized urban and community forestry infrastructure and programming.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program is a key player in the state's $3.7 billion urban forestry economic engine (*2022 Wisconsin/NMSFA 20-state urban forestry economic analysis*). The state's urban and community forests support 88% of Illinoisans by mitigating winter winds and summer heat, lowering energy costs, improving air quality, reducing noise pollution, capturing carbon dioxide, increasing property values, and minimizing stormwater infiltration.

The community return on investment in trees is green in more ways than one. For every public dollar spent locally on trees, **$4 in public benefits are generated**. In all, the Illinois Urban and Community Forestry Program annually assists, on average, over **500** cities, towns, and villages, with **10+ million** residents benefiting from the added tree canopy capacity.

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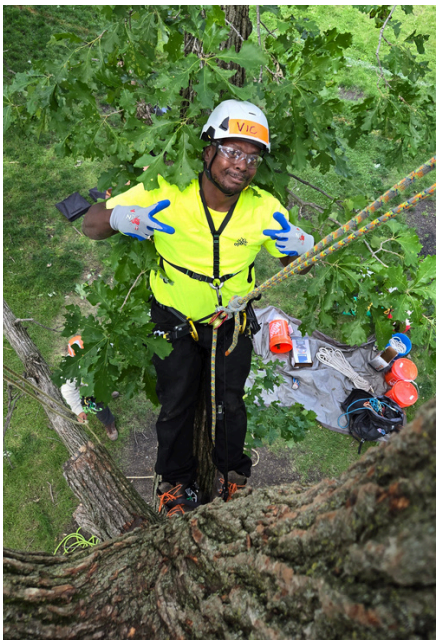
Illinois Department of Natural Resources works with partners across the state's urban forestry sector to create a multi-dimensional program.

Illinois has become the fastest-growing Tree City USA program in the nation, with 60 new Tree City USA-recognized (TCUSA) communities in the last six years and a total of 230 TCUSA communities.

Under a USDA Forest Service Forest Action Strike Team project, a team of Illinois industry experts created an Emerald Ash Borer Forest Strike Team Protocol and Forest Management Community Guidebook to provide other states with insightful planning.

Partners annually leverage Forest Service Core funding through IDNR UCF programs to advance urban forestry initiatives through the 21st century.

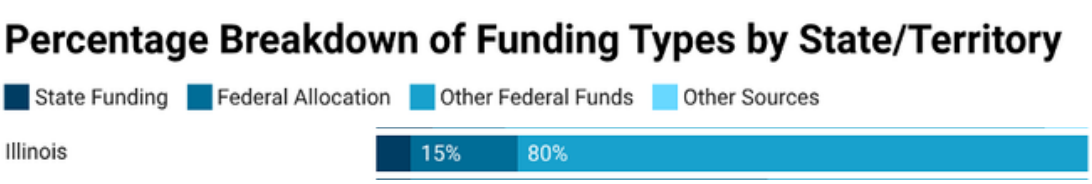
IDNR supports training at all levels across program partnerships. In partnership with Openlands Treekeeper and the Illinois Arborist Association, the Illinois UCF program utilized Forest Service Core funding to initiate entry-level tree-climbing workshops for Treekeeper students and volunteers.



Forest resilience is key for storm readiness. The IDNR UCF program created a public information video, "Are Your Trees Storm Ready," [QR code below] to communicate to community residents the need for proactive tree care. The IDNR UCF program has also partnered with the Forest Service to train a state Strike Team that can be activated after a storm to conduct tree risk assessments.

IDNR continues to support state legislation such as the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Act and the Legacy Tree Program to help facilitate the growing urban and community forestry program.

Scan to watch "Are Your Trees Storm Ready:"



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