



**TREE
REPORT
CARD
2014**

SEVENTH ANNUAL
TREE REPORT CARD

2014

WELCOME



Casey Trees is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit committed to restoring, enhancing and protecting the tree canopy of the nation's capital.

We pursue our mission through education, community action and research.

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Metrics Explained.....	4
Metrics in Detail	
Tree Coverage.....	6
Tree Health	8
Tree Planting.....	10
Tree Protection	12
Summary.....	14
Recommendations.....	15
Acknowledgements	16



SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



THE SUSTAINABLE DC PLAN (SDC) SET forth three seemingly contradictory goals to accomplish by 2032:

- 1) Grow Washington, D.C.'s population from 650,000 to 850,000 people
- 2) Cover 40 percent of the District with a healthy tree canopy
- 3) Ensure that all residents are within a 10 minute walk of a park or green space

Our city's leaders should be applauded for their ambition but can trees and green spaces — the heart of livable communities — realistically be preserved and expanded when the District is in the middle of a construction boom?

Given what we know about trees and what previous editions of the Tree Report Card have shown, these two goals can be attained but it won't be easy, given the complexities of land ownership. Twenty six percent of D.C. land is owned by the Government of the District of Columbia, 27 percent by the U.S. Federal

Government and the remaining 47 percent is in private hands. This means that coordination between District and Federal governance, and private property owners is essential to success.

But despite the organizational challenges complex land ownerships pose to attaining the District's 40 percent canopy goal, it's important to remember that trees don't recognize Council Wards, Advisory Neighborhood Commissions or property boundaries. They make all neighborhoods cooler, greener and more livable. So please join us in planting and caring for trees anywhere in D.C. to help create an enduring, beautiful and green legacy for generations to come.

Mark Buscaino
Executive Director

A+

METRICS EXPLAINED

EACH PERFORMANCE METRIC, DESCRIBED below, is given a letter grade between A and F, with A representing excellence and F, representing failure. Grades are then assigned a “+” or “-” to identify a range of performance within the letter grades. Grades for each metric are then averaged into one final grade.

Tree Coverage measures the area of a tree’s crown viewed from above and ultimately the progress toward achieving the District’s 40 percent by 2032 canopy goal outlined in the SDC. Tree crowns, commonly referred to as canopies, produce most of a tree’s benefits, including shade to reduce energy use, particulate removal to clean the air we breathe and storm water mitigation to preserve our waterways.

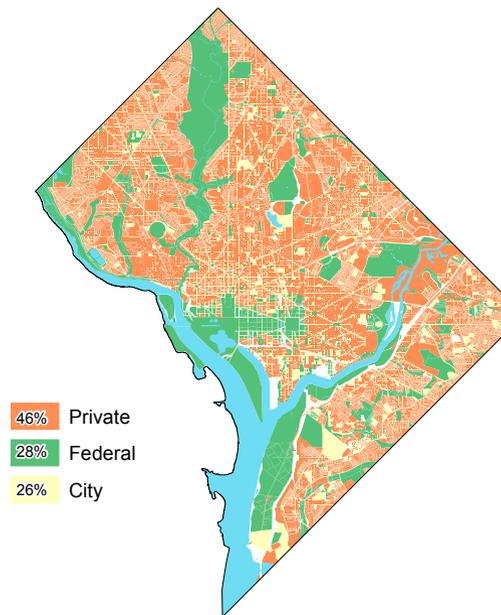
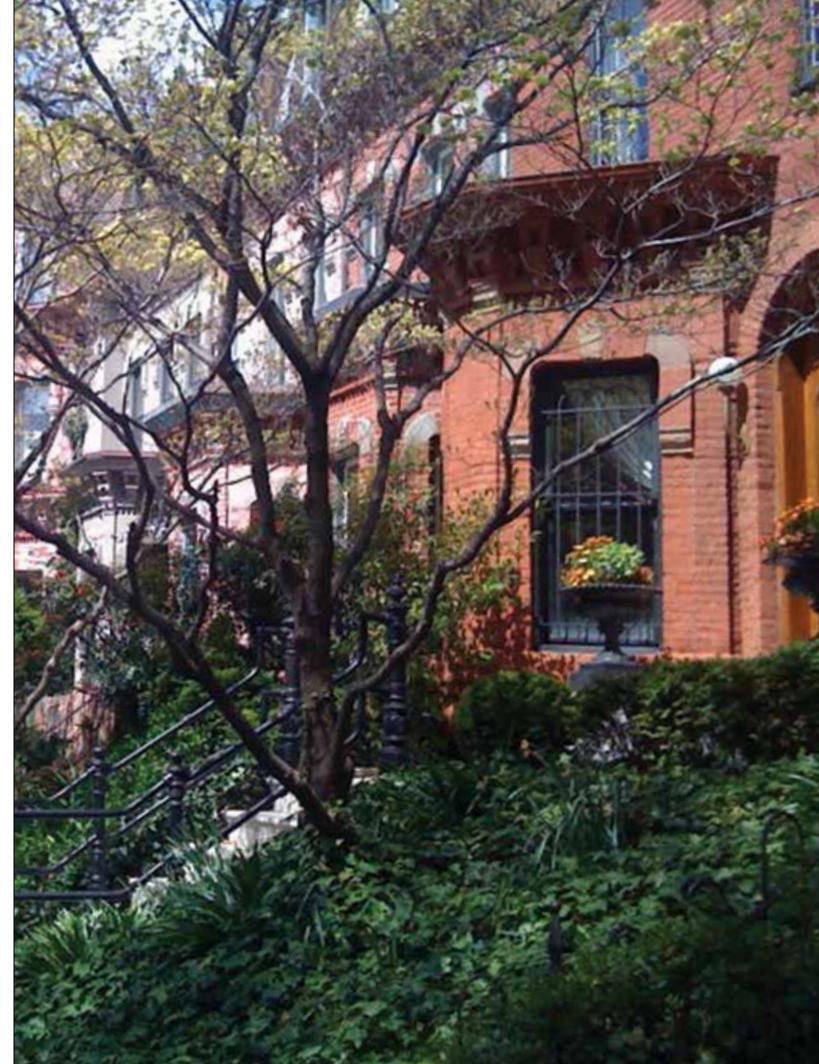
Tree Health measures tree condition, species, sizes and types. This allows us to understand the susceptibility of D.C.’s urban forest to pest and disease infestations, its future composition, longevity and related information.

Tree Planting measures annual tree planting numbers and compares that to what must be planted to achieve D.C.’s 40 percent canopy goal.

Tree Protection measures the impact of the Urban Forest Preservation Act of 2002 (UFPA), which aims to protect healthy “Special Trees” — trees 55 inches in circumference or greater — by charging a fee to discourage their removal and ensuring their replacement when they are removed.

Three submetrics assess if:

- UFPA’s fees and fines have kept pace with inflation
- Replacement trees are surviving at a high enough rate to replace Special Trees that have been cut down
- Fees/fines are being used for replacement tree planting



^
Land ownership in Washington D.C.

In 2014, 12,503 trees were collectively planted on private and public property, far surpassing the 10,648 number that needed to be planted.



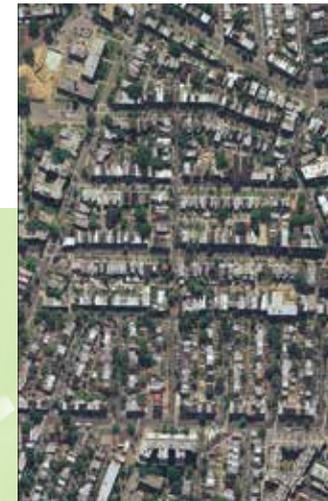
METRIC:
**TREE
COVERAGE**

A-
2014

TREE COVERAGE

THROUGH THE USE OF SATELLITE IMAGERY, we can track D.C.'s tree canopy trends. In 2011, the University of Vermont Spatial Analysis Lab estimated the District's canopy at 36 percent, which translates to an A- grade ($36/40 = 90$ percent) for Tree Coverage.

Please note: Tree Coverage is assessed only once every five years. In the summer of 2015, Casey Trees will resurvey the extent of D.C.'s tree canopy using satellite imagery. This data will be reflected in the Tree Report Card for 2015 that will be released in April 2016.



Canopy comparison from above with similar amounts of impervious surface but vastly different canopy coverage numbers.

...trees don't recognize Council Wards, Advisory Neighborhood Commissions or property boundaries. They make all neighborhoods cooler, greener and more livable.

Previous Grades for Tree Coverage:

A- (2013); A- (2012);
B+ (2011); B+ (2010);
B+ (2009); B (2008)

HEALTH

METRIC:
TREE HEALTH

B-
2014



TREE HEALTH

TREE HEALTH IS MEASURED EVERY FIVE years using the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's i-Tree Eco program and data collected from 201 sample sites. Results show that 82.4 percent of D.C.'s 2.5 million trees are in good to excellent condition, a B- grade for Tree Health.

Please note: In the summer of 2015, Casey Trees will resurvey the condition of D.C.'s trees with i-Tree Eco. This data will be reflected in the Tree Report Card for 2015 that will be released in April 2016.



⤴
Location of 201 randomly selected plots to assess condition and health of the District's trees.

Results show that 82.4 percent of D.C.'s trees are in good to excellent condition.

Previous Grades for Tree Health:

B- (2013); B- (2012);
B- (2011); B- (2010);
B- (2009); A+ (2008)



PLANTING

METRIC:
TREE PLANTING

A+
2014



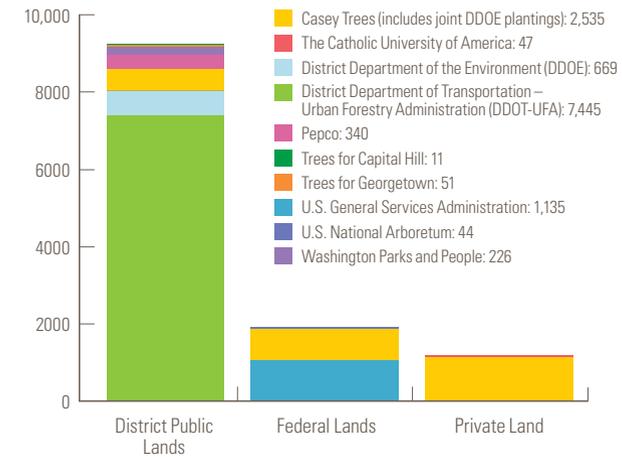
Previous Grades for Tree Planting:
A+ (2013); A+ (2012);
A+ (2011); A+ (2010);
C- (2009); B (2008)

TREE PLANTING

EACH YEAR FOR THE NEXT 17 YEARS, at least 10,648 trees must be planted across the District for the city to achieve its 40 percent by 2032 canopy goal. This annual planting target is greater than that used in prior Tree Report Cards because the number is now based on the Sustainable DC's revised goal date of 2032 rather than the city's previous target of 2035.

In 2014, 12,503 trees were collectively planted on private and public property, far surpassing the 10,648 number that needed to be planted. This results in a grade of A+.

Tree Planting Numbers



^ Though much of the District's plantable space is on private property, the majority of trees in 2014 were planted on city or federally owned land.



METRIC:
TREE PROTECTION



Previous Grades for Tree Protection:
D- (2013); F (2012);
Incomplete (2011);
F (2010); C+ (2009);
C (2008)

TREE PROTECTION

SUBMETRIC 1:
Is the UFPA discouraging the removal of healthy Special Trees?

Based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), if the \$35 per-inch fee set in 2002 kept pace with inflation, the fee would be \$46 in 2014. Today's fee is outdated by 12 years, making it 24 percent less effective than the one originally set in discouraging the removal of Special Trees, resulting in a C grade.

SUBMETRIC 2:
Are replacement trees effectively replacing canopy removed?

Periodic assessments are required to determine if replacement trees are replenishing canopy lost when Special Trees are removed. However, the city chooses not to monitor replacement tree survival rates. Due to the lack of data, the submetric grade is an F.



SUB-METRIC 3:
Is the Tree Fund being administered properly?

The UFPA requires that the District use Tree Fund money — funds accrued from collected fees and fines — to plant trees, ensuring that trees removed are replaced. An examination of Fiscal Year 2014 Tree Fund receipts and disbursements showed that these monies were indeed used for tree replanting, resulting in a grade of A+.

Averaging the three submetrics produces a final Tree Protection grade of 59 percent or F.

SUMMARY

THE FINAL GRADE REPRESENTS THE EFFORTS of many groups and individuals to achieve the District's 40 percent by 2032 canopy goal. Based on the grades for Tree Coverage (90 percent), Tree Health (82.4 percent), Tree Planting (100 percent) and Tree Protection (59 percent), D.C.'s combined 2014 grade is a B-.

While this grade remains steady — the District earned a B- in 2012 and 2013 — there are things to celebrate.

- Tree planting remains high, mostly due to street tree planting by the District Department of Transportation-Urban Forestry Administration. In 2014, DDOT-UFA planted 7,445 street trees — 60 percent of the 12,503 total trees planted in D.C. We applaud the District for this milestone, but offer caution. Street trees are important but represent only a piece of the puzzle. To ensure a robust, enduring canopy, trees must also be planted on other lands, including parks and schools, private residential and commercial property and on lands owned by the Federal and District of Columbia governments.

- Pepco and the District have started to underground overhead utility wires in some parts of the city. As this project plays out, it may mean more and larger trees for neighborhoods citywide.
- The Sustainable DC Omnibus Act placed the UFPA on a “pay to play” platform. Long fought for by Casey Trees, this strengthens UFPA by increasing the number and quality of trees planted as replacements, while reducing administrative oversight costs.



RECOMMENDATIONS

THE 40 PERCENT BY 2032 CANOPY GOAL cannot be attained solely by planting street trees. Significantly more trees must be planted on private property and other public lands which will give trees the necessary soil volume to reach their full potential size at maturity.

- We urge the Council of the District of Columbia to pass the Transportation Reorganization Act (TRA), which carries two provisions to strengthen the UFPA.
 - First, the TRA ensures that 50 percent of collected fees and fines are targeted toward tree plantings on private lots, where they have a better chance of long term survival.
 - Second, the TRA creates a Tree Canopy Advisory Committee that would construct a more inclusive process to better coordinate the District's policies and actions toward attaining the 40 percent canopy goal.
- The UFPA's fee and fine structure is out-of-date and must be adjusted to account for inflation to make the fee an actual deterrent to removing healthy Special Trees.
- The District does not monitor survival rates of replacement trees, which is critical to understanding how to best invest limited tree planting resources. We ask the new Administration to reconsider its stance on this issue, and Casey Trees stands ready to provide assistance in conducting this important work.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CASEY TREES THANKS THE FOLLOWING cooperators for planting and caring for trees in the District, and for sharing data on their efforts, which has been compiled and published in this report:

The Catholic University of America
District Department of the Environment
District Department of Transportation-
Urban Forestry Administration
Pepco Holdings, Inc.
Trees for Capitol Hill
Trees for Georgetown
U.S. National Arboretum
U.S. General Services Administration
Washington Parks and People





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