



**TREE  
REPORT  
CARD  
2015**

EIGHTH ANNUAL  
TREE REPORT CARD

2015

# 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.

To get involved, visit [caseytrees.org](https://caseytrees.org).

## CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	3
Spotlight.....	4
Metrics .....	8
Tree Health .....	8
Tree Coverage.....	9
Tree Planting.....	10
Tree Protection .....	11
Summary.....	12
Recommendations.....	13
Retrospective .....	14
Acknowledgements .....	16



# SUMMARY



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**OVER THE PAST DECADE THE DISTRICT AND** its partners have accomplished a great deal toward achieving the city's 40 percent canopy goal. One example is particularly telling — tree planting numbers have skyrocketed. In 2008, the year we first started tracking tree numbers, partners collectively planted 4,000 trees. In 2015, tree planting numbers exceeded 12,000.

But achieving a canopy goal is a marathon, not a sprint — and there are many hurdles on the roadway to success. Trees planted today will take years before their canopy can be assessed, seasonal droughts can set back planting efforts and development will continue to take a toll on D.C.'s trees.

Despite these challenges an enormous opportunity is within our grasp — more tree plantings in city parks could help fill the gap between the existing 36 percent canopy and the goal of 40 percent. Our analysis shows that more robust planting in Federal and District-owned parks could get us to within one percent of the goal.

But how do we get there?

We challenge the District and the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) to:

- Set individual park canopy, tree planting goals
- Increase park tree maintenance budgets
- Assign the management of tree planting and tree care for all District-owned lands to the Urban Forestry Administration (UFA)

These actions would not only ensure more shade in our city's parks, they would also help improve city and federal parklands — gems of our nation's capital — now and for future generations.

Thank you for your continued support of our efforts. I look forward to planting a tree with you soon!

Mark Buscaino  
*Executive Director*





## PARKS

**PARKS PRESENT AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY** for the District and its partners to realize the city's 40 percent canopy goal.

That is why the 2015 Tree Report Card, our eighth annual, highlights parks. Parks provide the necessary plantable space and important neighborhood amenities deserving of our collective attention and investment.

For example, Rock Creek Park, Lincoln Park, and the National Mall are three iconic, federally-owned parks that provide innumerable yet tangible benefits to the nation's capital. D.C.'s smaller, city-owned parks such as Langdon Park, Takoma Recreation Center, and Garfield Park are equally important and beloved by residents.

It's hard to imagine Washington D.C. without

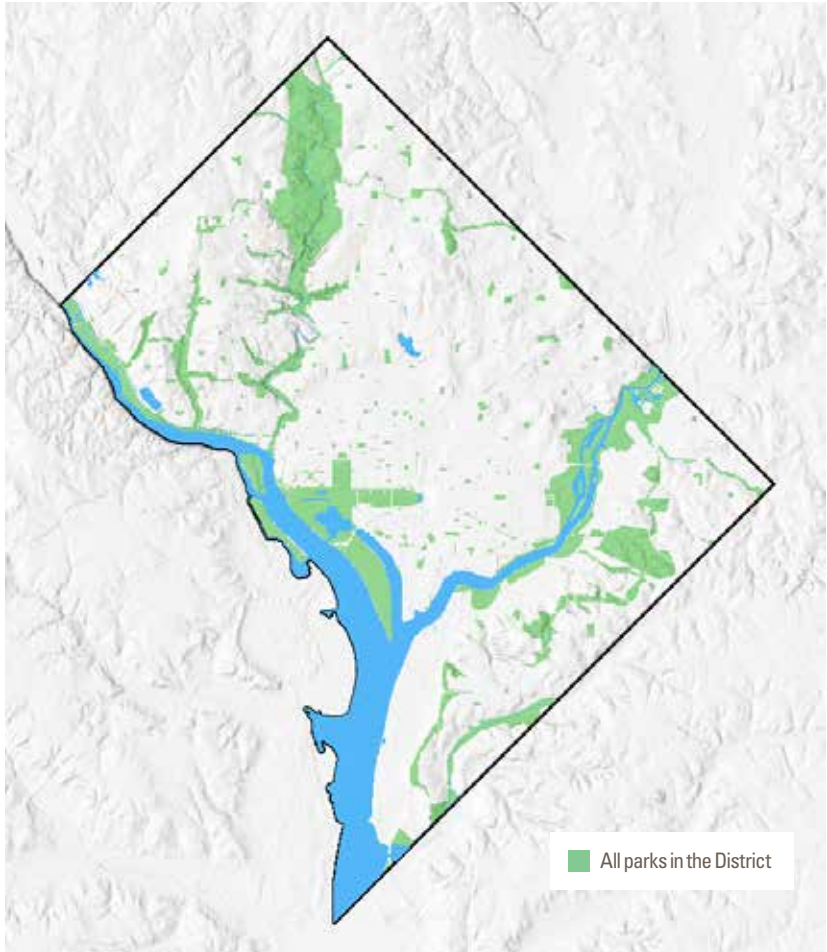
**Parks provide the necessary plantable space and important neighborhood amenities deserving of our collective attention and investment.**



these treasures, and even more difficult to imagine these parks without trees — but some are already in that state. In fact, 87 D.C. parks have less than 20 percent canopy. And many trees in these parks are in poor condition or declining health.







### D.C. PARKS

Planting more trees in D.C. parks will bring countless benefits to local residents. A good example of this is Yards Park in Southeast D.C. Once an industrial brownfield, Yards Park is now a grassy strip with newly planted trees that will over time transform this site into a shaded, green oasis.

Simply said, trees make parks more enjoyable, increase their use, reduce upkeep needs, and help the city achieve its 40 percent tree canopy goal. Parks are a viable and practical solution for re-treing D.C.



BEFORE



AFTER

Yards Park, Southeast D.C., once an industrial brownfield is now a grassy strip with newly planted trees.

Trees make parks more enjoyable, increase their use, reduce upkeep needs, and help the city achieve its 40 percent tree canopy goal.



A+

## METRICS EXPLAINED

THE TREE REPORT CARD RATES THE District's urban forest based on four metrics: **Tree Coverage**, **Tree Health**, **Tree Planting**, **Tree Protection**; and their relationship toward helping the District reach the 40 percent canopy goal by 2032.

Each metric is assigned a numeric score and grade, and an overall grade is determined by averaging the individual metrics. Grades for each metric since 2008 are detailed in the Retrospective on page 14.

B-

Results show that 83 percent of D.C.'s trees are in good to excellent condition.

B-

2015

### TREE HEALTH

Tree Health measures tree condition, species, size, and type. This metric helps us understand how resilient the District's trees are in terms of potential threats due to pests and disease, and helps predict the urban forest's longevity and future composition.

Every five years data is collected from 201 sample sites across the District using i-Tree Eco. Our 2015 survey determined 83 percent of D.C.'s 2.4 million trees to be in good to excellent condition, resulting in a B-.



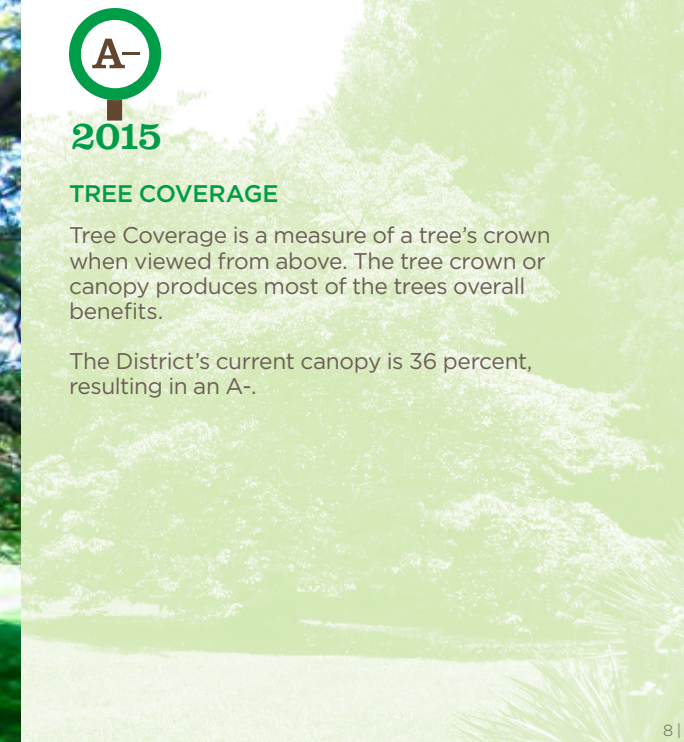
A-

2015

### TREE COVERAGE

Tree Coverage is a measure of a tree's crown when viewed from above. The tree crown or canopy produces most of the trees overall benefits.

The District's current canopy is 36 percent, resulting in an A-.







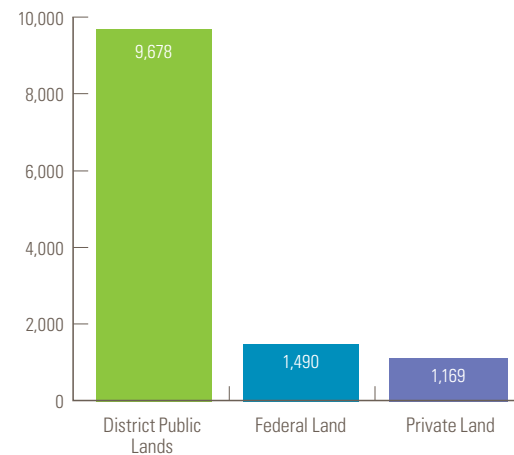
2015

### TREE PLANTING

Tree Planting is a count of annual tree planting numbers compared to the total number of trees that must be planted to reach 40 percent canopy cover citywide.

A minimum of 10,648 trees must be planted annually for the next 16 years to reach the goal. In 2015, 12,337 trees were collectively planted on private and public land resulting in an A+.

### 2015 Tree Planting Numbers



Though much of the District's plantable space is on private property, the majority of trees in 2015 were planted on city or federally owned land.



2015

### TREE PROTECTION

Tree Protection assesses the impact of the Urban Forestry Preservation Act (UFPA) of 2002, a law intended to slow the removal of healthy trees 55 inches in circumference or greater, and ensure replacement trees are planted when they are cut down. Under UFPA, the removal of a Special Tree requires a fee, or fine to be paid if removed illegally, to fund replacement plantings.

#### SUBMETRIC 1:

Is UFPA discouraging the removal of healthy special trees?

Based on the Consumer Price Index, if the \$35 per-inch fee set in 2002 kept pace with inflation, it would have been \$47 in 2015. Therefore, the current fee is 24 percent less effective, resulting in a C grade.



#### SUBMETRIC 2:

Are replacement trees effectively replacing canopy removed?

Periodic assessments are necessary to determine if replacement trees are replenishing canopy lost when Special Trees are removed. However, these replacement trees are not surveyed to determine if they are alive or dead because no legal requirement mandates it. With no data, the submetric grade is an F.

#### SUBMETRIC 3:

Is the Tree Fund being administered properly?

UFPA requires D.C. to use Tree Fund money, funds collected from fines and fees, to plant replacement trees. An analysis of Fiscal Year 2015 Tree Fund receipts and disbursements show funds having been used for tree replanting, resulting in an A+.

The average of these submatrices, results in an F.

## SUMMARY

## CASEY TREES' TREE REPORT CARD MEASURES

the collective efforts of many groups and individuals working to achieve 40 percent canopy by 2032. Based on the percentages for Tree Coverage (90 percent); Tree Health (83 percent); Tree Planting (100 percent); and Tree Protection (59 percent), D.C.'s overall grade for 2015 is B-.

While this year's grade holds steady from previous years, several extremely positive developments occurred in this reporting year that are worth highlighting.

- The District's Department of Energy and Environment and the District Department of Transportation co-hosted a Tree Summit in December 2015 to determine how to better collaborate internally, and with other stakeholders to achieve the canopy goal. The Tree Summit, attended by more than 100 city and federal agency staff, nonprofits, and businesses has generated new and strengthened existing partnership efforts.

- Mayor Muriel Bowser, by Executive Order, created the Urban Tree Canopy Coordinating Council to accelerate tree planting and protection efforts among all stakeholders.
- The District co-launched Canopy3000, an exciting new initiative to get an additional 3,000 trees planted on private and public lands across D.C. to bring collective tree planting totals to 15,000.

During the creation of this report, the D.C. Council is considering the Tree Canopy Protection Amendment Act (TCPAA) of 2016, legislation co-introduced by Councilmembers Charles Allen (Ward 6) and Mary M. Cheh (Ward 3). This critically needed legislation would update the UFPA, helping to better protect trees and bolstering public and private efforts to reach 40 percent canopy.

B-

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**FIRST, WE ARE PLEASED TO SAY THAT ONE** of our key recommendations included in the 2014 Tree Report Card, the creation of a Tree Canopy Coordinating Council, was adopted in 2015. And if the D.C. Council passes the TCPAA this spring, many of our other recommendations will also be implemented.

These successes demonstrate the value of the Tree Report Card. And that is why we are using this platform to introduce additional recommendations that will grow and safeguard canopy cover citywide.

We ask Mayor Bowser to:

- Adopt a 50 percent canopy goal for all Department of Parks and Recreation managed properties.
- Initiate a planning process to create designs for neighborhood parks that incorporate more trees and better growing spaces, make parks safer and increase use.

- Prepare and execute an Open Space Plan that increases residential connections to city greenspace as called for by the Sustainable DC Plan.
- Place conservation easements on city-owned greenspaces to ensure they remain green for the continued benefit of future generations of Washingtonians.



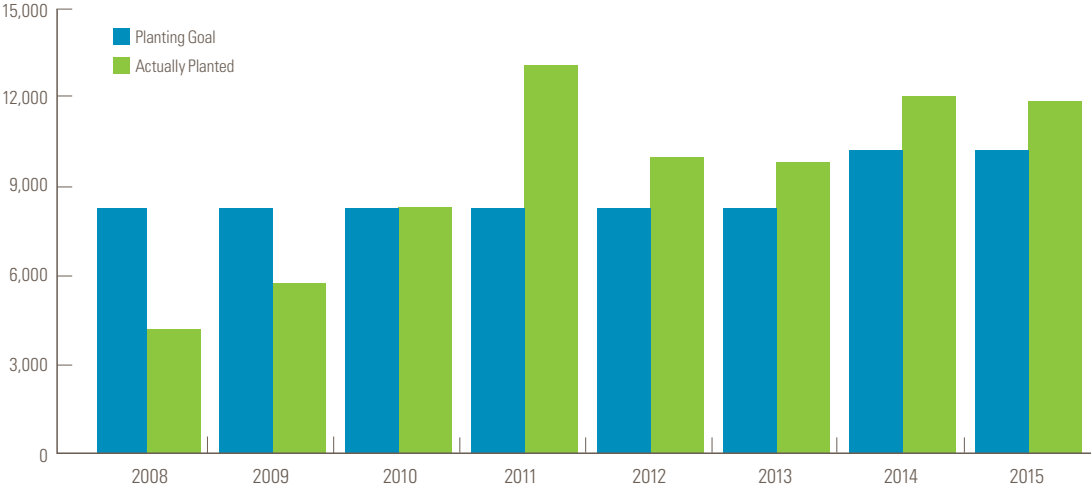


RETROSPECTIVE

THE 2015 TREE REPORT CARD IS Casey Trees' eighth such publication. Grades for all years are as follows:

CATEGORY	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Overall	B-	B-	B-	B-	Incomplete	C	B-	B
Coverage	A-	A-	A-	A-	B+	B+	B+	B
Health	B-	B-	B-	B-	B-	B-	B-	A+
Planting	A+	A+	A+	A+	A+	A+	C-	B
Protection	F	F	D-	F	Incomplete	F	C+	C

Yearly D.C. Tree Plantings



The District co-launched Canopy3000, an exciting new initiative to plant an additional 3,000 trees across D.C.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**CASEY TREES THANKS THE FOLLOWING** cooperators for planting and caring for trees in D.C. as well as sharing their data to assess the collective efforts which have been complied and published in this report:

Bowser Administration and in particular:

- Department of Transportation,  
Urban Forestry Administration
- Department of General Services
- Department of Parks & Recreation
- Department of Energy & Environment

- Anacostia Watershed Society
- The American University
- The Catholic University of America
- Crispus Attucks Development Corporation
- D.C. Water
- Gallaudet University

- George Washington University
- Groundwork Anacostia
- Pepco Holding Inc.
- Restore Mass Ave
- Rock Creek Conservancy
- Sustainable DC partners
- Trees for Capital Hill
- Trees for Georgetown
- U.S. General Services Administration
- U.S. National Arboretum
- U.S. National Park Service
- Washington Parks and People







3030 12th Street NE  
Washington, DC 20017

202.833.4010

[caseytrees.org](http://caseytrees.org)



#24598



#8510