



# The 17th Annual Tree Report Card

THE STATE OF DC'S TREES

## WELCOME

Casey Trees' mission is to restore, enhance, and protect the tree canopy of our nation's capital. We pursue that mission through tree planting, education, community action and land preservation. To guide our work, each year we publish a Tree Report Card (TRC) that measures progress toward achieving the District's 40% tree canopy goal, and the extent and condition of DC's trees.





# Executive Statement

**LAST YEAR** was a banner year for tree planting. Casey Trees, together with the city and our countless community partners, collectively planted over 16,000 trees - the most in at least a decade. This year's tree report card highlights just some of those community partners, as well as our efforts to plant, care for, and protect trees throughout their lifecycle. Tree planting is important; however, our tree canopy cannot increase through tree planting alone.

For several years now we've emphasized that, despite a lot of tree planting, DC has lost about 500 acres of canopy, an area the size of the National Mall. This year I want to showcase a bright spot - a 3% canopy increase (about 600 acres) over the last 10 years, seen across the river in Arlington - that's right - a 3% increase...

Across the U.S., cities large and small are starting to realize that while tree planting is needed to maintain and increase canopy, preservation of existing trees is essential - Arlington's canopy grew because its existing, mature trees got bigger. This is why Casey Trees continues to push for more tree protections through the Tree Preservation Enhancement Amendment Act of 2025.

Currently DC's tree laws protect less than 15% of its trees. If passed, the Enhancement Act would increase that to 20%, a small change but still an improvement. I urge you to speak to your Council Member - ask them to get the Enhancement Act passed now.

While this TRC covers 2024 metrics, it would be a disservice to not recognize what's already transpired in 2025. For us at Casey Trees and similar non-profits working to keep urban areas across the US green, hundreds of millions in grant dollars are either on hold, or have been cancelled by the new administration. Many tree non-profits have ceased operations, and even if funds are restored, staff have moved on and the damage will take years to reverse.

Given the new uncertainties in public funding, Casey Trees has begun to shift its fundraising more towards private and individual donations to bridge the gaps and ensure more stability moving forward. If you see value in trees we plant and the tree protection laws we're fighting for, please consider making a donation and supporting our efforts. Thank you in advance for your generosity.



**Mark Buscaino**

Executive Director



**Andrew Schichtel**

Chief Operating Officer

## SPOTLIGHT

# Partnerships in Protection throughout the Lifecycle of a Tree

Tree protection begins before a seed is ever planted and – ideally – extends beyond its lifespan. In our mission to restore, enhance, and protect the canopy of our nation's capital, we work closely with city and community partners, striving to keep trees protected throughout their lifecycle.

## Young Trees

Young trees are especially vulnerable; they are not protected under DC law, and they require more attention and care than mature trees to survive their first few years.

Through the efforts of DC's Urban Forestry Division, the District has planted tens of thousands of street trees city-wide, and the numbers are impressive. Currently, DC's street boxes and planting strips are "fully stocked," meaning that all of the places where a tree can be planted – are planted – with 175,000 trees. Few if any cities of DC's size and population can claim this success story.

However, maintaining all these trees – especially upwards of 50,000 new vulnerable trees, is an enormous challenge. To assist in this important work, Casey Trees continues to encourage the City to adopt models that dozens of other jurisdictions across the country have embraced, deploying volunteers to conduct rudimentary treatments to help small trees survive and thrive. One such successful model is Baltimore's TreeKeeper volunteer program, which cares for thousands of trees across the city. Just as important as these programs for the trees themselves, engaging volunteers helps create community, creates "tree supporters," and facilitates neighborhood connections that can lead to additional tree planting on nearby private lots through the City's free tree program.







## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

### City of Hyattsville

In response to a 2019 study revealing a 30% loss in tree canopy over the previous decade, the City of Hyattsville launched an ambitious initiative to plant 750 new trees. Last year, the city planted over 500 trees, and the city continues to partner with Casey Trees to plant and care for young trees to expand the city's tree canopy. Through structural pruning programs, tree planting projects, and community tree care events, they ensure trees grow strong and healthy while engaging residents in preserving Hyattsville's urban forest for future generations.





# Mature Trees

Mature trees form the backbone of our city's canopy; providing shade, water and air filtration, and habitat for wildlife that our natural environment needs to thrive. Protecting mature trees is critical, newly planted trees can take decades to grow and provide the same benefits.

We advocate for tree protection laws and conservation programs and work directly with developers to make sure that DC is growing in a way that is green and sustainable. Currently, we support legislation to reduce the size threshold for Special trees from 44" to 25" in circumference, which would provide protection for about 20% of our city's trees. This would ensure the next generation of trees have a chance to grow and become tomorrow's biggest canopy providers.

Additionally, invasive plants pose a large threat to mature trees – by stunting their growth and shortening their lifespan. By joining an invasive plant cleanup event, you help protect the next generation of trees and give them a much-needed boost.



## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

### Chesapeake Climate Action Network & Ward 8 Woods

Removing invasive vines is crucial for tree health because these aggressive plants can suffocate trees by blocking sunlight and air from reaching the bark, competing for soil nutrients, and adding excessive weight that can cause branches or even entire trees to collapse. By removing invasive vines, we help trees thrive, ensuring they continue to provide essential benefits to our communities. In the last year, our partners at the Chesapeake Climate Action Network have held over 30 invasive removal events all across the city and engaged volunteers to remove vines and save 1,298 trees. Similarly, our partners at Ward 8 Woods Conservancy have pulled vines from 1,837 trees and removed 285,000 pounds of trash from forests in Wards 7 and 8.





## Future Trees

To increase our city's tree canopy, we not only need to protect existing trees, we also need to protect space for future trees to grow. The District currently has more impervious surface than tree canopy, and we want that to change. While a growing city is great, we need to make sure that growth is done sustainably.

Casey Trees is an Accredited Land Trust, and the only one working across DC to conserve greenspace for trees and people. We steward 8 permanent conservation areas, including forest patches, food forests and pocket parks. We work with neighbors, city and private partners to keep them green and accessible. Conservation easements allow us to set aside greenspaces and forests from development, for the benefit of our tree canopy and our communities into the future.



### PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

## DC Department of Energy and Environment

The DC Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) is leading comprehensive restoration activities at Kingman and Heritage Islands, a city-owned conservation area spanning 47 acres. Recent efforts include removal of invasive species to make way for the planting of nearly 12,000 trees, with plans to add another 25,000 native shrubs and perennial plants. These restoration activities aim to preserve rare ecosystems, support local wildlife and provide a natural oasis for residents and visitors in the heart of Washington, DC.

# A Greater Urban Forest

Our urban forest is made up of individual trees, of all different species, all at different points in their lifecycle. When trees are planted, cared for, and protected throughout their life cycle, they grow to become a part of a greater, thriving urban tree canopy. It is this tree canopy that brings the benefits of trees to cities like Washington, DC, that not only improves our environment, but brings human health benefits and enhances urban life for all.

## Tree Benefits



### ENERGY SAVINGS

**\$4.2** Million

(Annual savings in residential energy costs)

### HEALTH SAVINGS

**\$11.4** Million

(Annual avoided human health impacts from pollution removal)



### WATER POLLUTION REDUCTION

**30,000,000** Cubic Feet

(Surface/stormwater runoff diverted from the sewer system annually)



### AIR POLLUTION REMOVAL

**318.2** Tons

(Atmospheric pollutants removed from the air every year)

### CARBON STORAGE

**487,200** Tons

(Carbon stored by the city's trees every year)



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# Metrics



The Tree Report Card is Casey Trees' annual evaluation of DC's urban forest. It looks at where our successes have been over the past year and highlights where improvements can be made. This year, Casey Trees is pleased to announce that the District received an overall grade of A-.

## Grade Components Explained

The Tree Report Card rates Washington DC's urban forest based on four metrics: Tree Coverage, Tree Health, Tree Planting and Tree Protection. Each metric is evaluated using a standard formula and given a letter grade. This year's overall grade of A- is based upon the average of four categories that are graded individually and explained in detail below.



METRIC 1

### Tree Coverage



This metric measures the quantity of tree canopy covering District land. Aerial imagery – both satellite and fly-over images – are used to measure the City's tree canopy from above and track progress toward DC's 40 percent tree canopy goal. Recently collected data measured the change from 2015-2020, and showed tree canopy decreased from 38% to 37%, or a loss of 1%. For this reason, Tree Coverage receives an A- grade.



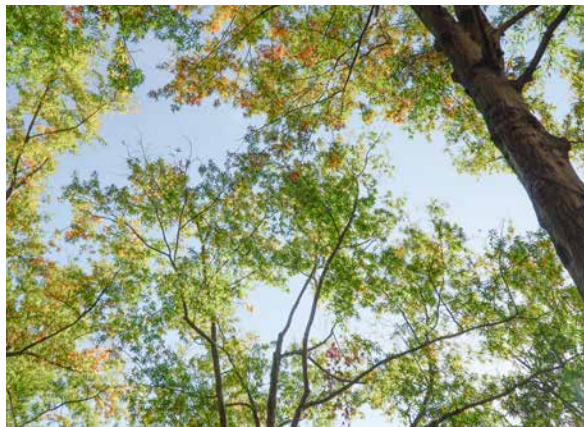
METRIC 2

### Tree Health



This metric evaluates the quality of tree health and condition across the District on all lands – private and public – both DC and federally-owned. The grade was taken from the results of the U.S.D.A. Forest Service's (USFS) Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) survey. FIA is a sampling method used by USFS research to assess forests across the United States. More recently it is being deployed to look at the conditions of trees in US cities, DC being one of them.

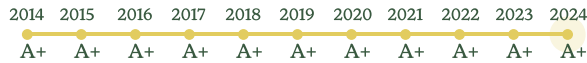
From the FIA results, there are approximately 2 million trees within the District of Columbia. Of these 2 million trees, 91% of fell into the condition class of either "excellent" or "good," resulting in a tree health grade of A-.





### METRIC 3

## Tree Planting



This metric compares the number of trees planted each year to the number required for the City to meet its 40% canopy goal. In total, 16,713 trees were planted by the City and its partners in 2024. This is the largest planting total for the District in the past decade and far exceeds the City's annual planting target of 10,500 trees. The Tree Planting score for this year's Tree Report Card therefore receives an A+ grade.



### METRIC 4

## Tree Protection



This metric measures the effectiveness of the City's laws in protecting Special and Heritage trees. The Tree Protection score is based on the average of three sub-metrics listed below, given pass/fail grades. With two passing submetrics and one fail, this year's Tree Protection grade is a C+.

#### SUBMETRIC 1

##### Are the fees/fines required to remove Special trees keeping pace with inflation?

The fee to remove a Special tree, set in 2016, is \$55 per inch of circumference. In order to keep pace with inflation, that figure should be about \$73 today. While this difference may seem small, it translates to a loss this past year of about \$540,000 in fees, equivalent to approximately 1,350 fewer trees planted.

This is the fifth year we have made this recommendation, and though the Tree Enhancement Amendment Act of 2025 does now include a provision to capture inflation increases, this legislation has yet to be passed. We therefore give this submetric a Incomplete, withholding a grade until next year.

#### SUBMETRIC 2

##### Are fees and fines being used to plant replacement trees?

The Urban Forest Preservation Act requires that fees and fines from tree law violations collected into the Tree Fund be used to plant trees on public and private land. Over the past four years approximately \$300,000 in fines collected through Notices of Infraction were directed by the Office of Chief Financial Officer to the General Fund rather than the Tree Fund and so are not being used to plant replacement trees. Casey Trees has petitioned the Office of Chief Financial Officer to address this issue, but until rectified, this metric receives a Failing grade.

#### SUBMETRIC 2

##### Are Heritage trees being protected according to the law?

We do know that most Heritage trees are being protected: There were 354 Heritage Trees threatened by removal or harm that were preserved through institution of a tree preservation plan, 15 illegal removals of Heritage Trees and 23 Stop Work Orders issued in order to save Heritage and Special Trees from damage and destruction. While any illegal removal of a Heritage Tree is cause for concern, the number of illegal removals has declined from previous years, indicating our newly strengthened tree laws are working. Therefore, this metric receives a Passing grade.



# 2025 Recommendations



## 1 Pass the *Tree Enhancement Amendment Act of 2025*.

Passing the Act would lower the Special Tree threshold from 44" circumference to 25" circumference and protect more of our younger canopy. It would also increase fees and fines for the removal of Special and Heritage Trees to account for inflation.

## 2 Ensure all fees and fines are deposited to the Tree Fund as required by law.

Fines collected through the Office of Administrative Hearings have been misdirected to the City's General Fund. Casey Trees has asked Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) to prioritize getting this process rectified last year and are still awaiting a procedural fix.

## 3 Support the *Natural Areas Conservation Program Amendment Act of 2025*.

This legislation would support management of our city forest patches and natural areas and is currently under consideration by the DC Council.

## 4 Protect community green spaces and forest patches from being developed.

By working with District agencies, communities and private landowners we can identify greenspace that could be conserved to provide our residents access to nearby nature.

## 5 Green our city's schoolyards.

As spotlighted in our Tree Report Card last year, our city's public schools average 11% tree canopy, far lower than the citywide goal of 40%. When students are taught in a green learning environment, they not only internalize the benefits that trees and greenspace offer – they also pass that lesson along to others in the communities where they live.

# Acknowledgements

## District of Columbia

Department of Energy and the Environment  
Department of Parks and Recreation  
Department of Transportation: Urban Forestry Division  
District Department of General Services  
Office of the Chief Technology Officer  
Office of the Mayor  
Office of Planning  
Office of Zoning

## Federal

USDA Forest Service  
General Services Administration  
National Park Service

## Universities

American University  
The Catholic University of America  
Gallaudet University  
Georgetown University  
George Washington University  
Howard University  
University of the District of Columbia

## Local & Regional

11th Street Bridge Project  
Accenture  
Alice Ferguson Foundation  
American Institute of Architects  
American Technology Services  
Anacostia Coordinating Council  
Anacostia Waterfront Trust  
Anacostia Watershed Society  
Arbor Day Foundation  
Baltimore Tree Trust

Bank of America  
Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories  
Blue Drop  
The Brendan & Helen Bechtel Foundation  
Building Bridges Across the River  
Capital Nature  
Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdioceses of Washington  
Chesapeake Bay Trust  
Chesapeake Climate Action Network  
Chesapeake Conservancy  
City of College Park  
City of Fairfax  
City of Hyattsville  
City of Mount Rainier  
City of Takoma Park  
Crimsonbridge Foundation  
Clean Air Partners  
DC Environmental Network  
DC Greens  
DC Sustainable Energy Utility  
DC Water  
Edgewood Alley Green  
Enterprise Mobility  
Fairfax County  
Forbright Bank  
Friedman-French Foundation  
Friends of Anacostia Park  
Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens  
Friends of the National Arboretum  
Friends of Oxon Run  
The Garden Club of America  
George Frederick Jewett Foundation East  
Green Spaces for DC  
Groundwater Anacostia  
HITT  
Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake

Joe's Movement Emporium  
The Kristina & William Catto Foundation  
Land Trust Alliance  
Latham & Watkins LLP  
Living Classrooms  
Montgomery County  
The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation  
Monumental Sports & Entertainment Foundation  
Mount Olivet Cemetery  
National Capital Planning Commission  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
National Links Trust  
NatureBridge  
Nature Forward  
Nature Sacred  
Potomac Electric Power Company  
Prince George's County  
Providencia  
Share Fund  
Sustainable DC Partners  
Sylvamo  
TD Bank  
The Nature Conservancy  
T-Mobile  
Trees for Capitol Hill  
Trees for Georgetown  
Truist Charitable Fund  
Trust for Public Land  
Urban Adventure Squad  
Verizon  
Ward 8 Woods  
Washington Parks and People  
Washington Spirit  
Washington Wizards  
Zenith Community Arts Foundation