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.

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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 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 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.

Parks provide the necessary plantable space and important neighborhood amenities deserving of our collective attention and investment.
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-planting D.C.
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.

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

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.

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 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.
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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 compiled 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