Casey Trees®
WASHINGTON DC

People, Trees, & the Spaces We Share

5 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN | NOVEMBER 2026



Community Tree Planting | Lincoln Park, Southeast Washington, DC

Letter from the Executive Director



This year, Casey Trees celebrates 25 years. Milestones like this invite reflection: on the progress we've made, the difficulties we've overcome, and the legacy we're building together for the city and region we call home.

This strategic plan is the product of that reflection. Over the past year, staff, board members, and partners across the region came together, through working sessions, surveys, and honest conversation, to ask what Casey Trees should aspire to achieve in the years to come. What follows is the result of that work.

It's worth pausing on how much has changed since our founding. The DC of today would be unrecognizable to the DC of 25 years ago. The neighborhood coined "NoMa" didn't exist. Union Market was still a wholesale food terminal, not a dining and retail destination. Ivy City and Buzzard Point were largely industrial areas, not the growing residential neighborhoods they are now. Much of that growth has been good for the city; and continuing to prioritize trees and green spaces with growth and development will be paramount to ensuring that DC remains a resilient, sustainable, and livable city for future generations.

For a long time, DC was a beacon, a city other jurisdictions looked to for environmental policy and leadership. Growth and development are happening in every corner of our city, from RFK and Parkside in the Northeast, to Walter Reed and McMillan in the Northwest, to St. Elizabeths and the Bridge District in the Southeast, to the Wharf and Waterfront in the Southwest. Each of these places represents an opportunity to grow our tree canopy alongside growing neighborhoods. At the same time, budget pressures and shifting priorities have made that work harder than it used to be. We say that soberly, not bitterly. We believe DC can reclaim its role as a leader, and doing so starts with the people who live and work here choosing to make it a priority once again.

Here's what gives us hope: more people understand the connection between trees, climate, and community health than ever before. They understand, too, that the benefits of green space aren't shared evenly across our city. That's why this plan puts people at the center of our work. **Improving our tree canopy isn't only about how much of it there is; it's about the quality of that tree canopy, where it is, and who has access to it.**

We've learned that the communities who need trees most are often the hardest to reach, not because they don't care, but because trust has to come first. When we show up consistently, listen, and work alongside residents rather than around them, real change follows. And it multiplies: a single tree planted on one property shades not just that home, but the sidewalk, and the street — providing benefit to the entire neighborhood. What looks like one small act is, by design, a gift to everyone nearby.

Every one of us has a role to play, whether that's planting a tree, watering a young tree on your block, advocating for policies that protect our shared green spaces, or supporting the work of organizations like ours. This plan lays out where we're headed. Getting there will take all of us, together.

Yours in trees,

Andrew Schichtel
Executive Director

Mission

To plant and protect trees in the National Capital Region for the wellbeing of the communities we serve.

Vision

A future where every person, in every community, lives among thriving trees and green spaces.

Hillcrest Community Forest | Southeast Washington, DC

Our values

We care about the work we do, and we are thoughtful about how we do it. These values guide the decisions we make as an organization.



1 Thriving Together

Every tree, ecosystem, community – healthier and more resilient.

Trees and thriving communities go hand in hand. A healthier urban forest means cooler neighborhoods, better physical and mental health, lower energy costs, and more beautiful places to gather and live. We measure success not by trees planted, but by communities and nature flourishing together.

2 Rooted in Community

In partnership with communities, providing access to quality trees and green spaces through stewardship, conservation, and education.

The strongest urban forest is built with communities, not delivered to them. We listen to local knowledge and work alongside residents, schools, civic groups, landowners, and public partners to respond and expand access to trees and green space, especially in communities that have historically had less of both.

3 Keep Growing

Innovate, adapt, and implement best practices across all programs, continuously learning to benefit trees, the urban forest, and thriving community spaces.

We bring curiosity and a commitment to continuous improvement to everything we do, learning from communities, partners, research, and our own experience along the way. As our region grows and changes, so do we, always in service of people, trees, and the spaces we share.

4 Here for Good

Building an organization meant to outlast us, providing long-term resilience for our communities and urban forest.

Trees count in decades, not years, so we take the long view: protecting what exists, restoring what's been lost, and planning for the future. It's the same vision our founder, Betty Brown Casey, built this organization on, one meant to endure and serve for generations to come.




Emery Heights Community Center | Northwest Washington, DC


Banneker Place Apartments | Southeast Washington, DC


Langdon Park | Northeast Washington, DC

Our focus

People

Connect communities to the urban forest through inclusive partnerships, welcoming green spaces, and responsive programming.

Trees

Build a resilient, equitably distributed urban forest across the National Capital Region through coordinated stewardship, strategic investment, and cross-jurisdictional collaboration.

Spaces

Strengthen our organizational capacity to deliver lasting impact for the green spaces our communities share, and the influence to help lead and grow the field of urban forestry.

Our goals

- Strengthen Casey Trees' reputation as **a trusted, culturally relevant community partner** in priority neighborhoods across the National Capital Region.
- **Grow and diversify Casey Trees' education, volunteer experience, and workforce development programming** to deepen urban forest stewardship across all ages and learning contexts, with a focus on priority communities.
- **Strengthen Casey Trees' board and staff** by deepening community representation, broadening the range of experience and background, and investing in the growth of our people.

- **Measurably improve the tree canopy** and native green infrastructure across the National Capital Region.
- **Advance the policy, regulatory, and funding conditions** necessary to sustain a healthy regional urban forest.
- Significantly expand the region's protected green space and urban tree canopy through **strategic land conservation**.

- **Grow and diversify the philanthropic and earned revenue base** that funds Casey Trees' programming and operations.
- Transform regional green spaces — including Casey Trees' conservation sites — into **welcoming, community-stewarded places** that foster lasting connections to the urban forest
- Leverage Casey Trees' regional expertise to **strengthen and grow the urban forestry field**.


Cobb Park | Northwest Washington, DC

Why trees?

Trees make neighborhoods healthier, cooler, and more beautiful by improving air quality, managing stormwater, providing shade, and supporting wildlife. They can also reduce urban heat, energy costs, pollution, and curb the effects of climate change. When trees are thoughtfully incorporated throughout a neighborhood — in yards, along streets, and in shared spaces — their benefits reach beyond any one property. We envision a future where every community has a thriving tree canopy and enjoys the benefits of trees. To explore all the benefits trees bring our communities, visit caseytrees.org/benefits-of-trees.

1. **HEALTH & HEALING:** Trees have been shown to lower anxiety, reduce heart disease, and decrease patient recovery times.
2. **GATHERING PLACES:** Trees make shared spaces better for play, recreation, and community connection.
3. **SAFER STREETS:** Trees calm traffic, reduce noise, and make walking safer and more comfortable.
4. **COOLER COMMUNITIES:** Trees shade streets, transit stations, and homes to help counter extreme urban heat.
5. **ENERGY SAVINGS:** By shading homes in summer and blocking winter winds, trees reduce energy use and utility costs.
6. **VIBRANT BUSINESS AREAS:** Green streets invite customers to stay longer and support local businesses.
7. **HABITAT:** Trees provide food, shelter, and nesting places for birds, pollinators, and other wildlife.
8. **CLEAN AIR & WATER:** Trees capture air pollution and slow stormwater runoff before it reaches our rivers and streams.

Brookland/Michigan Park | Northeast Washington, DC



Tree canopy across the region

Tree canopy is the layer of leaves and branches that covers the ground when viewed from above. Jurisdictions across the National Capital Region have set goals to protect and expand tree canopy, including a wider, regional goal of maintaining at least 50% coverage and DC's goal of reaching 40% by 2032. View an interactive version of this map at caseytrees.org/canopy-map.

Tree canopy within the beltway

Jurisdiction	% Tree Cover
Washington, DC*	37%
Arlington County, VA	33%
City of Alexandria, VA	27%
City of Falls Church, VA	40%
Fairfax County, VA	46%
Montgomery County, MD	46%
Prince George's County, MD	38%



Claggett, P. R., McDonald, S. M., O'Neil-Dunne, J., MacFaden, S., Walker, K., Guinn, S., Ahmed, L., Buford, E., Kurtz, E., McCabe, P., Pickford, J. A., Royar, A., Schulze, K., 2025, Chesapeake Bay Land Use/Land Cover (LULC) Database 2024 Edition: U.S. Geological Survey data release, https://doi.org/10.5066/P14BEBRC

**District Department of Transportation Urban Forestry Division. (2022). Urban Tree Canopy by DC Boundary in 2020 (April 5, 2022) [Data set]. District Department of Transportation Urban Forestry Division. https://maps2.dcgis.dc.gov/dcgis/rest/services/DCGIS_DATA/Urban_Tree_Canopy/MapServer/4*

Our vision, already taking root

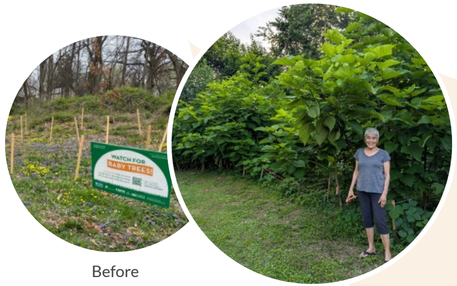
Growing the Next Generation

At Garfield Elementary, a Ward 8 school, Casey Trees partnered with FoodPrints, a nonprofit food and garden education organization, to bring tree and ecosystem education to students. Together, they planted 30 fruit and shade trees — expanding the school's edible garden and outdoor classroom while cultivating a greener campus and the next generation of tree stewards.



A Neighborhood Forest, Restored

At Langdon Park in Ward 5, a small but dedicated group of community partners, the Langdon Park Forest Stewards, partnered with Casey Trees and city agencies to restore a local forest patch. Together, they planted more than 350 trees and helped thousands of new native trees take root through Assisted Natural Regeneration. Through years of hands-on care, they revived the land. It's proof of what a few committed people can do.



Before

After



Before

After

Land, Protected for Good

In Riverdale Park, MD, a local landholder donated a quarter-acre parcel to create the Ravenswood Community Forest, a permanently protected community woodland. Casey Trees worked with the land donor and neighbors to clear invasive growth, plant native trees and plants, and install walking paths and natural play features, turning overgrown land into a shared place to connect with nature.

One Yard at a Time

Casey Trees works with residents across the District to plant thousands of trees and install native gardens each year. These plantings bring shade, beauty, habitat, and cleaner air to individual properties while helping create cooler, greener, and more resilient neighborhoods — one yard and home at a time.





From Farm to Street, and Beyond

At Casey Tree Farm, Casey Trees and the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) operate the official DC State Nursery, growing thousands of sustainably grown trees for parks, streets, schools, homes, and businesses across the District. Casey Trees also supplies trees to neighboring jurisdictions from Richmond, VA to Philadelphia, PA to Charleston, WV to Baltimore, MD, helping communities across the region meet their tree cover goals.

Reclaiming a Forest

At the former Lake Arbor Golf Course in Prince George's County, Casey Trees is partnering with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission to plant more than 10,000 native trees across 70 acres of unused fairways. Together, they're transforming ecologically stripped land into a thriving community forest that will support wildlife, improve environmental health, and connect residents with nature.



How you can make an impact



Plant a tree.
caseytrees.org/plant



Conserve land.
caseytrees.org/conserve



Donate.
caseytrees.org/donate

Thank you to our board of directors, staff, and the many community and government partners who helped shape this vision. Your time, insights, and trust made this possible.