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**For Immediate Release**

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**U.S. Forest Service Releases the Nation’s Next**

**Ten-Year Urban Forestry Action Plan (2016-2026)**

Fast-forward to 2026: communities are healthier and happier. Everywhere – whether large or small, urban or rural, wealthy or economically challenged, culturally homogenous or richly diverse – our communities are embracing their trees as essential partners for community health, using them for a host of purposes to increase environmental sustainability, economic prosperity and community resilience. Trees are no longer just for communities that can afford to plant them, now they are considered essential medicine for community health and wellbeing.  They are controlling stormwater, cleaning our air and water, providing green spaces for children to play and walk to schools, improving community mood, diminishing autism and ADHD, and improving the health of our natural environment.

Think this is a pipe dream? It’s not a dream, but a real plan developed by our nation’s urban forestry community. This vision is at the heart of the Ten-Year Urban Forestry Action Plan, just released by the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council after 18 months of intensive planning and engagement.

The National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC) is an appointed advisory council to the Secretary of Agriculture on urban forestry and related issues. NUCFAC was created to bring together the wide variety of voices raised about a common concern: the present health and future preservation of America’s urban forests that sustain our communities. This plan synthesizes the full spectrum of views that exist across the nation concerning urban forests, community health and well being, and serves as a foundation for practical policy on urban forestry for the United States and its territories.

“Urban communities will continue to grow and grapple with development and the impacts of climate change will be felt more keenly in our daily lives,” said Liam Kavanagh, Chair of NUCFAC. “Urban forestry, and the full range of ecosystem services it encompasses, responds to those challenges with a unique set of resources and attributes that can make communities across the country more sustainable, resilient and equitable.”

The Plan provides specific goals, actions and recommendations for improving the status of urban and community forestry in the United States. In addition, the Plan identifies research needs, messaging and communications needs, innovative funding, and collaborative opportunities for urban forestry initiatives. Notably, this plan also serves as a framework for funding and recommendation priorities for the USDA Forest Service’s National Urban and Community Forestry program and the program’s National Challenge Cost Share Grants. This Plan is to be used by the urban forestry community including but not limited to the fields of environmental health, community health and wellness, forest health, urban planning and urban design, stewardship and community building, and community resilience and engineering.

The recommendations for improving urban and community forestry constitute the majority of the Plan and is organized into seven goals; Planning; Human Health; Diversity, Equity and Leadership; Environmental Health; Management; Funding; and Education and Awareness. Each goal is accompanied with its own actions, sub actions and targets for benchmarking progress. The urban forestry community, including the Forest Service and other applicable Federal agencies, will be able to partner to implement the Action Plan as a guide to implement and expand urban and community forestry for the next ten years (2016-2026).

You can find this Action Plan online at the USDA National Urban and Community Forestry website (<http://www.fs.fed.us/ucf/nucfac.shtml>). If you are interested in helping to implement this plan you can 1) participate in USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Cost Share grant, 2) share with NUCFAC the goals and strategies you are currently working on, 3) check the NUCFAC website to learn about annual priorities and Plan updates, 4) join your community’s urban forestry network (local government, private practitioners, non-profits, and grassroots activists) or 5) contact Nancy Stremple, Executive Staff to NUCFAC, if you have ideas about how to implement this plan located at this website: [www.fs.fed.us/ucf/nucfac.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/ucf/nucfac.shtml)

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