

Cities4Forests Declaration

Trees and forests are immensely valuable to cities and their citizens (Figure 1). Trees and forests provide multiple health benefits, sustain water resources, help to combat climate change, and protect global biodiversity. Specifically, trees within cities (the “inner forests”) clean the air, offset heat islands (and lower energy bills), and support human health and wildlife. Trees in watersheds surrounding cities (the “nearby forests”) contribute to cleaner air and drinking water, reduce flooding, and offer an escape from hectic urban life. And trees in the “faraway forests”—particularly in the tropics—sequester large amounts of carbon, generate rain for the world’s farm belts, provide a wealth of useful products, and host the majority of the world’s land-based biodiversity.

In return, cities can provide immense value to forests. Because urban areas are increasingly where people live and work, the public policies and procurement practices of cities—as well as the values, votes, and consumption patterns of citizens—have enormous potential to support the conservation, restoration, and sustainable management of forests.

Yet forests remain under threat. Each year, at least 5 million hectares (12.3 million acres) of forest—an area the size of Costa Rica—are permanently converted to other uses around the world, and many millions more are degraded. Forest loss and degradation contribute more than 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and have devastating impacts on local communities. Meanwhile, cities have become increasingly distant—both literally and figuratively—from the forests upon which they rely. Many citizens do not feel connected to forests, and city governments often fail to tap into forests as solutions to urban problems. As a result, too few cities are investing in forests as part of their strategies for addressing climate change, securing clean drinking water, improving public health, reducing air pollution, mitigating disaster risk, providing recreation opportunities, and meeting other urban development priorities.

We, the partners of Cities4Forests, seek to bridge this gap.

Cities4Forests is building a movement to catalyze political, social, and economic support among city governments and urban citizens to integrate the inner, nearby, and faraway forests into city development plans and programs, including city climate action plans. We share an aspiration to do what is within our power to reduce deforestation, restore forests (including more trees in cities), and manage forests more sustainably. With our varying mandates and capabilities, collectively we commit to doing our part to achieving the following outcomes:

- **Understand.** Assess city reliance and impacts on trees and forests.
- **Engage.** Raise awareness among citizens about the benefits forests provide, communicate what they can do to make a positive impact, and collaborate across government agencies to improve the health of trees and forests.
- **Innovate and Act.** Harness the power of forests to help achieve climate goals, secure clean and stable water supplies, reduce stormwater runoff, improve public health, provide recreation, and other benefits through new tools, local policies, voluntary programs, investments, and public procurement decisions.
- **Progress.** Engage on the three Cities4Forests levels (inner, nearby, faraway) over time, participating in at least one level by 2020, two by 2022, and all three by 2025.
- **Share.** Share insights, experiences, and innovations to inspire ambition and mobilize action among cities around the world.

We invite others to join us in committing to a world where cities and forests grow together.