



May 21, 2009

The Honorable Allyson Schwartz
330 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Schwartz,

We are pleased to endorse your bill, H.R. 2222, the "Green Communities Act." This legislation will provide critical support for our country's green infrastructure by investing in the health and livability of the environment where 80% of Americans live: our cities, towns, and villages. Trees are not just pretty things to have. When landscapes around the built environment are well-planned, they are intricately tied to economic development, neighborhood stabilization, public health, and more.

In healthier cities, business districts are green. Consumers say that green communities are more appealing places to shop, facilitate positive merchant interactions, and often have higher product quality. Whether tree-lined streets or pocket parks, trees send the signal that businesses care, which ultimately helps businesses attract shoppers. Business leaders recognize that smart growth provides quality of life, market opportunities, and stable investments. Because trees enhance economic stability by attracting businesses and tourists, some communities are even redeveloping small mall zones based on "complete street" principles, expanding plantings, and redeveloping the character of the place.

Healthy urban forests are key safe and healthy communities. Property values of homes with trees in the landscape are 5-20% higher than equivalent properties without trees, and even newly landscape trees in the front yard can increase home sales prices by 1%. By helping families and individuals secure dependable, healthy, affordable housing, we increase their chances of success in all areas of their lives. Part of that equation calls on developers and city planners to go beyond just addressing the affordability issue to include a focus on health and environmental impacts.

Specifically, we are most supportive that H.R. 2222 merges Community Greening Initiatives with nonprofit organizations in the implementation of neighborhood stabilization, economic development, and public health measures. Such outreach will only be sustainable when residents and community leaders are engaged in such meaningful, impactful, and innovative ways.

We look forward to working with you in securing passage of H.R. 2222 and for the appropriate funding necessary for the U.S. Department of Commerce to executive the program.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Community Trees

President

Shannon Ramsay

PRESIDENT & CEO
Trees Forever
www.treesforever.org

Treasurer

Riyad Abu-Sharr

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
Star Marketing Group
www.starmarketinggroup.org

Secretary

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California ReLeaf
www.californiareleaf.org

Kelly Caffarelli

PRESIDENT
The Home Depot Foundation
www.homedepotfoundation.org

Anna M. Dooley

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Greenscape of Jacksonville
www.greenscapeofjacksonville.org

Scott Fogarty

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Friends of Trees
www.friendsoftrees.org

Guy Hager

DIRECTOR
Parks & People Foundation
www.parksandpeople.org

Ray Tretheway

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Sacramento Tree Foundation
www.sactree.org

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Marcia Bansley

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Trees Atlanta
www.treesatlanta.org

Donna Curtis

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Shreveport Green
www.shreveportgreen.org

Alice Ewen Walker

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
alice@actrees.org

Alliance for Community Trees

4603 Calvert Road
College Park, MD 20740

T 301.277.0040

F 301.277.0042

E info@actrees.org

www.actrees.org