



An urban forest issue brief

Growing Healthier Greener Business Districts



In Healthier Cities, Business Districts are Green

City streets and sidewalks are framed by green spaces filled with trees. Shoppers, diners and pedestrians abound, drawn by the shelter, shade, and beauty of the tree canopy. These green elements cool and buffer pedestrian and outdoor seating areas from the traffic and noise of the street. There are green views from building windows and rooftop gardens. Inside shops, retail activity and sales improve, new clientele are developed and new relationships forged.

Green business districts...

- Are attractive, pedestrian-oriented retail environments.
- Make shoppers and diners feel more comfortable.
- Create a unique sense of place that is a destination.
- Increase the value of properties and businesses.

Trees and green space are good for business.

Businesses thrive in green environments:

Customer Experience. 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 (the latter being preferable to consumers), trees send the signal that businesses care, which ultimately helps businesses attract shoppers and pay 8-11% more for goods and services.¹

Boost Office Rental Rates and Worker Productivity. Social researchers have found that individuals prefer buildings with good landscaping and shade provided by trees. In fact, commercial office properties having quality landscapes rent for 7% higher rates. And when psychologists analyzed the findings, they found positioning desk workers to have a view of urban greenery results in greater job productivity and satisfaction and reduced absenteeism.²

Smart Growth. 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, communities are better designing commercial land use to include multi-modal mobility. Some communities are redeveloping small mall zones based on "complete street" principles, expanding plantings, and redeveloping the character of the place.³

Recommendations:

- Support H.R. 4509, reauthorization of the National Small Business Tree Planting Program.
- Create smart development credits that jump start green business districts, provide technical assistance, and leverage public and private equity investments.
- Prioritize the integration of trees and green space in redevelopment plans. Encourage city planners to consider greening benefits by designing tree-lined streets and attractive parks.
- Work with business improvement districts, main street programs, and property owners/managers to provide long-term and consistent stewardship of trees, parks, and vegetation.
- Incorporate trees and landscaping at entrances to business districts and at key focal points to define and give identity.

References:

1. Wolf, Kathleen. "Public Response to the Urban Forest in Inner-City Business Districts." *Journal of Arboriculture* 29(3). May 2003.
2. Laverne and Winson-Geideman, Robert J. and Kimberly. "The Influence of Trees and Landscaping on Rental Rates at Office Buildings." *Journal of Arboriculture* 29(5). September 2003. pp. 281-290.
3. Brown, Ken. "Smart Growth Is Smart Business- Boosting the Bottom Line & Community Prosperity." June 29, 2004.

Tree Benefit Facts

Serving Size 1 Million City Trees (2" caliper)
Recommended Servings Per City about 40%

Costs

Volunteer Service \$0 Trees \$250 million

Annual Value*

Energy Conservation 30% less usage

Cost Savings \$10 million

Stormwater 350 million gallons captured

Cost Savings \$3.5 million

Clean Air 1,000 tons less air pollutants

Cost Savings \$5 million

Public Revenue 11% more for goods

Cost Savings varies by city

Property Value 1-10% higher

Cost Savings varies by city

Lower Crime 50% less violent crime

Cost Savings priceless

Total Cost Savings \$18.5 million

ROI within 14 years not including public revenue, property, and crime benefits.

* Annual Values are based on studies from the Center for Urban Forest Research, Center for Urban Horticulture, Lawrence Berkeley Lab, and the Univ. of Washington, and vary by city. Approximate values are indicated where the differences vary less significantly by city.

