

## About the Urban Forest Initiative Grant Program

The Urban Forest Initiative (UFI) is a public/private collaboration between the City and County of Denver, the Downtown Denver Partnership along with their non-profit arm, Denver Civic Ventures, private property owners and community partners. The mission of the Urban Forest Initiative is to grow Downtown Denver's urban forest through education, built infrastructure, and maintenance.

As Downtown Denver continues to develop, the area's population is becoming more and more dense. The center city has the lowest tree canopy coverage of any major city in the U.S. Completed in 2017, The Outdoor Downtown plan highlighted that Downtown Denver's tree canopy coverage is only 4% —substantially less than the rest of the city, which averages 13% coverage. Denver Parks & Recreation established the goal of increasing the downtown tree canopy coverage to 10%.

During the public input process through which Denver Parks & Recreation's Game Plan for a Healthy City was developed, 98% of respondents said that city trees are of high importance to them. The grant funding provided through the Urban Forest Initiative will implement the Game Plan's strategies by leveraging both public and private funds to grow Downtown Denver's urban forest and improve the public right-of-way

## Benefits of Trees

Trees are vital to the environmental health of our city, along with the health and wellness of downtown's residents, employees and visitors. They provide ecological benefits, including habitat for wildlife; and mitigate the urban heat island effect—a direct result of higher air temperatures in areas of dense development. With our changing climate's unpredictable impacts, it is important to create a downtown that is resilient to flood and drought threats. More trees will increase the long-term sustainability of Downtown Denver.

It is estimated that Denver's tree canopy currently provides a value of \$122 million in annual ecosystem services such as stormwater management, air quality improvement, and cooling through shade.

## How the Program Works

The Urban Forest Initiative grant program is possible through the collaboration between the city, Denver Civic Ventures (DCV) and private investment. Private property owners in the downtown area are eligible to participate in the UFI grant program to improve their property's tree planting areas in the public right-of-way. The program reimburses private property owners for approximately two-thirds of the total project cost. This funding structure allows for an equal collaboration between the city, DCV and private property owners, each of whom is contributing approximately one-third of the overall project cost. All work will be completed under the authority of the Office of the City Forester.

DCV will administer and manage the Urban Forest Initiative grant program at no cost. DCV collaborates with the Downtown Denver Business Improvement District in the maintenance of over 18,000 trees through the BID Tree Health Program. DCV's relationships with downtown businesses and property owners allow them to leverage multiple funding streams through donations both from the corporate and philanthropic community.

Administered by Denver Civic Ventures, the city will fund one-third of the UFI grant program up to \$3 million. Through public-private partnerships, the grant program will grow and enhance the urban tree canopy in the public right-of-way.

## Beyond the Urban Forest Initiative grant program

Denver Parks & Recreation is leading congruent efforts to reach the goal of 10% canopy coverage within the downtown area. These efforts include, planting new trees and improving the planting areas in city owned and maintained properties around downtown. In addition, DPR is leading an interdepartmental effort to update Denver Forestry's rules and regulations; and revise citywide design standards and guidelines for tree plantings.

