



Trees Forever and Microsoft change landscapes and futures

Trees do more than just look beautiful. When trees are planted in a community, they provide numerous benefits such as better air quality, natural sun block, improved mental health, increased physical activity, and more. [Studies show](#) that trees make neighborhoods and communities safer. Additionally, engaging youth is critical to ending the cycle of generational poverty and providing skills to ensure job readiness. Tackling a lack of tree cover in neighborhoods historically impacted by redlining while training young leaders is a win-win for the community.

Moving towards tree equity with urban forestry projects

As part of the Community Environmental Sustainability Program, Microsoft awarded [Trees Forever](#) \$100,000 in support of their Growing Futures program. Trees Forever is a nonprofit organization with a mission of planting and caring for trees and the environment by empowering people, building community, and promoting stewardship.

Growing Futures aims to grow the next generation of trees and youth, side-by-side, in order to address workforce development needs, provide a path to green careers, and plant more trees. This unique approach creates powerful social and environmental benefits because the program prioritizes neighborhoods that research shows can benefit from [improved tree cover](#).

Trees Forever and Growing Futures participants are planting 600 to 1,000 trees per year and reporting all environmental benefits, quantified by partner [NGO City Forest Credits](#). City Forest Credits also issues carbon credits for trees planted, which Trees Forever can then sell to buyers to generate new maintenance funding for future Trees Forever projects. This means Trees Forever's operations will be more self-sustaining going forward. As trees grow and thrive because of the care they receive from Growing Futures youth, the trees will improve residents' quality of life. The beauty of trees contributes to a sense of community and pride helping to plant hope.

Sowing leadership among local youth populations

Growing Futures is a workforce development program aiming to employ 20 to 40 youth and supervisors each year with a special focus on youth from diverse racial backgrounds. Growing Futures will have a broad impact on the community youth, as these young people will develop leadership skills, engage with peers of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, receive arboriculture job





skills, and participate in enrichment activities (such as resume development, public speaking, and job shadowing).

Growing Futures further anticipates at least an additional 150 to 200 people will be reached through this program, including the parents of the youth employed and students who attend informational and educational sessions on the program. It is projected that over the first five years of Growing Futures, 850 to 1,200 people will be directly affected, as well as at least 8,500 area residents indirectly affected by the program.

Reaping benefits from local partner organizations

In addition to supporting the much-needed growth of the tree canopy, a partnership between Microsoft and Trees Forever's Growing Futures program will deepen the connection Microsoft has with community and demonstrate the shared values the company has with area residents. "Microsoft is pleased to partner with Trees Forever and support the Growing Futures program to empower young people and care for trees in Des Moines," said Holly Beale, Community Environmental Sustainability Program Manager at Microsoft. "Microsoft aspires to enable a sustainable future by empowering every person and organization on the planet to thrive in a resource-constrained world. Our support for the Growing Futures program is an extension of that commitment."

The City of Des Moines also pledged \$200,000 per year for five years to Trees Forever's Growing Futures program. Trees Forever is committed to raising private contributions

through corporate support, grant requests, and individual donations to fund Growing Futures. By capitalizing on City of Des Moines funds with community support along with the support from Microsoft, Trees Forever has been able to set the stage for additional donors.

"Trees not only store carbon as a global atmospheric benefit," said Beale. "They also bring the local resilience benefits of storm water reductions, energy savings, and air quality improvements. And best of all, this project brings together so many local stakeholders to connect the trees with social equity and economic benefits to people and the larger community."

Microsoft's efforts have not gone unnoticed. According to Shannon Ramsey, Founding President and CEO of Trees Forever, "The Trees Forever Growing Futures youth employment program would not have been possible without our Microsoft partnership. They've been so supportive, helpful and positive—always encouraging other partners to help out and work together. They have been with us every step of the way from planning to getting our first youth employees out planting and watering trees on the streets of Des Moines."

Trees Forever is hiring youth from the Youth Emergency Services and Shelter (YESS), and the Science Center of Iowa (SCI) is donating space for educational programs; both YESS and SCI are long-time Microsoft partners in the Des Moines community. The ability to bring different organizations together is just one of the many benefits realized from Microsoft's community partnerships.

Looking ahead

Microsoft datacenter employees have potential volunteer opportunities with Growing Futures and look forward to seeing the results of the quantified environmental benefits of this project within the year.