

URBAN FOREST INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH STRATEGY GUIDE

Purpose

This document provides general guidance to help communities communicate and translate the value of the urban forest to general audiences and decision-makers through the Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis program.

This guidance is based on leveraging existing community resources, networks, and media channels to broaden the reach of our urban forest stories as unfolded by Urban FIA data.

Key Takeaways

This guide is for non-communications audiences. It is meant for consumers of Urban FIA data and those who are planning, managing, and making decisions about public and private trees in the community.

There are five key takeaways to keep in mind and remember in the future as you continue to communicate about Urban FIA.

#1

Urban forest management is essential.

Effective management ensures that urban forests thrive and continue to serve as essential green infrastructure for our cities.

You care about the urban forest and the benefits it provides.

You also believe the care, management, and protection of the urban forest is vitally important.

That's the first takeaway — it's why you are in this course. It's why Urban FIA exists.

#2

For program personnel, an understanding of communications and outreach isn't just a "nice-to-have" skill - it's absolutely fundamental to the program's success and impact.

Programs, no matter how well-designed, cannot achieve their objectives in total isolation.

They rely heavily on effective communication to connect with stakeholders, build support, and ultimately deliver their intended benefits.

The Communications and Outreach Strategy Guide is not just for Communicators — it is for everyone who is invested in the program. Some of the outcomes can include:

- Reaching target audiences
- Building recognition and trust
- Building partnerships
- Securing funding and resources
- Translating technical information

#3

This Communications and Outreach portion of the course provides tools, resources, information, and best practices for you to connect with NON-FORESTRY audiences.

All communications and outreach guidance in this guide applies to all topics, all audiences, all media. The tools, resources, information, and best practices are provided for you to connect with NON-FORESTRY audiences.

They don't know what FIA is and probably don't and won't care.

It is the stories you tell with the information you learn through My City's Trees — how it affects your city, your urban forest, and subsequently the people, their health, comfort, savings, and safety that matter.

The numbers are cool.

The platforms are cool.

It's the stories that are impactful. Meaningful. And will make a difference.

#4

Urban FIA transcends boundaries across city departments and divisions, agencies, and organizations.

Urban FIA is designed to be a comprehensive tool that can be valuable across various city departments and divisions. How often are Urban Forestry, Public Works, Planning and Development, and the Health Department members in the same room or meeting?

How can Urban FIA data and insights inform urban forest stories from various departments?

Examples:

- Parks and Recreation (tree management, planning, and health)

- Public Works/Urban Planning (green infrastructure development, stormwater management, and heat island mitigation)
- Environmental Departments (air and water quality improvements, biodiversity, and climate resilience strategies)
- Emergency Services (understanding tree canopy can be relevant for wildfire risk assessment or post-storm recovery)
- Budgeting and Policy Makers (providing data-driven justification for urban forestry investments and policies)

By offering a unified, data-rich view of the urban forest, Urban FIA helps break down silos and fosters a more integrated approach to urban environmental management.

#5

Tie your news and data to relevant and timely topics and events.

We'll dig into what makes a topic or event newsworthy in the guide.

But quickly, a few main characteristics of an item being newsworthy are:

- Timeliness — the information is current and relevant to what's happening now
- Relevance — it matters to the target audience
- Proximity — it's of interest to the local or regional audience

What is happening currently in your city that we can tie Urban FIA data to that is relevant, timely, and in our proximity? Examples:

- Extreme heat, Urban Heat Islands, Healthy Trees, Healthy Lives
- Equity, plant trees where they can do the most good, Healthy Trees, Healthy Lives
- Disaster Preparedness, diversification, health, resiliency
- Climate Action Plan, trees contribute to climate variation mitigation primarily through carbon sequestration and reducing energy consumption
- Sustainability, environmental, social, and economic. Quantifying these benefits (often using Urban FIA) adds significant credibility and impact to a Sustainability Report

Communications and Outreach Strategy

Communications and outreach from the community/city are most effective using a mix of channels to keep their residents, businesses, visitors, stakeholders, employees, and City leaders informed about local happenings, services, and important information and to provide accountability.

There are several ways that communities and cities communicate already — this course will help you find those channels and communicate through them, leveraging existing community resources, networks, and media channels to broaden the reach of our urban forest stories as unfolded by Urban FIA data.

City/Community publications and updates

Make it common practice to include Urban FIA data in the city's periodic reports.

- **Reports** — financial reports, budget reports, departmental and project performance reports, strategic plans, and sustainability reports
 - Include periodic summaries of Urban FIA
- **Newsletters and updates** — City newsletters, departments such as Parks and Recreation, Public Works, Planning and Development, Utilities and Health, City Council Updates, and the outgoing messages sent through email, website posts, social media posts, and printed newsletters and mailers

When including an article in a City newsletter, use best practices for article writing:

- **Engaging headline**
 - Make it action-oriented or state the direct benefit. It should be concise (under 60 characters) and clearly tell the reader what they will gain by clicking.
 - Avoid: "News from the Department of Forestry"
 - Use: "Three Ways Your Trees Can Cut Energy Bills This Summer"
- **The preview text or lead paragraph**
 - The preview text is often 40-100 characters that elaborate slightly on the headline or provide a compelling reason to read the article or open the email.
 - Example: "See the common mistakes and how to fix them before the heat hits."
- **Your article structure must support quick reading**
 - Put the most important information in the first paragraph.
 - Keep paragraphs short. Limit paragraphs to 1–3 sentences.
 - Use lists and sub-headings. This breaks up text blocks and allows skimmers to quickly grasp the main points.
- **Your article should deliver a clear benefit or solution to the reader's problem**
 - Aim to teach the reader one new thing, solve one problem, or encourage one action. Don't try to cover too much ground.

- Include City-specific Urban FIA data and use it to offer solutions
- As secondary context, you can also describe Urban FIA, My City's Trees, and the benefits of using them.
- Talk about the benefits of the City managing the Urban Forest and its benefits to the residents
- **Have a clear call to action**
 - The primary goal of a newsletter article is often to drive traffic to a more detailed resource, like a webpage.
 - Use: "Read the full article," "Register for the workshop," or "Download the checklist."

You may use the provided template and plug in City-specific information or use it as a guide to write your own newsletter article.

EXAMPLE ARTICLE FOR A CITY NEWSLETTER

Growing Greener: How [Name of City or Community's] Trees Are Working for Us (and What Urban FIA Data Reveals!)

You see them every day — lining our streets, shading our parks, and gracing our backyards. But our city's trees are doing far more than just looking pretty. They are a vital part of our urban infrastructure, quietly working to improve our health, environment, and economy. Thanks to valuable data from **Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis (Urban FIA)**, we now have a clearer picture than ever of just how much they contribute.

Urban FIA is a nationwide program that systematically measures and assesses urban trees, providing robust data on their size, health, species, and the incredible benefits they provide.

The trees in our city are hardworking assets for a healthier city, delivering a wide array of benefits that directly impact our quality of life. Our city's trees act as natural air filters, absorbing pollutants like ozone, carbon monoxide, and particulate matter. Urban FIA data helps us quantify that [City or Community's] trees remove [X] tons of air pollution every year, leading to a healthier environment for everyone.

Strategically placed trees provide essential shade, significantly reducing the urban heat island effect. This natural cooling can lower ambient temperatures, making our parks and streets more comfortable, and reducing the need for air conditioning in homes and businesses. This saves energy and puts money back in our pockets, saving residents [\$X.X million] annually.

Tree canopies intercept rainfall, reducing the amount of stormwater runoff that overwhelms our drainage systems and carries pollutants into our rivers and streams. Their root systems also help water infiltrate the soil. Urban FIA helps us estimate that our trees avoid [X.X million] cubic feet of water runoff per year, helping to manage and protect our infrastructure and water quality.

Well-maintained trees and green spaces are a proven amenity that enhances neighborhood aesthetics and can increase property values. They also create more inviting commercial districts, encouraging foot traffic and supporting local businesses.

Studies show that access to green spaces reduces stress, improves mental health, and encourages physical activity. Our urban forest saves [\$X.X million] in health costs every year, and provides the backdrop for vibrant community life, offering places for recreation, relaxation, and social connection.

The insights gained from Urban FIA data are invaluable for [Name of City or Community's] planning efforts. They allow us to prioritize tree planting where benefits are most needed, identify areas for maintenance, and choose the right tree species for the right places. We can also monitor the health and growth of our urban forest over time and measure the effectiveness of our green infrastructure investments.

[Name of City's] urban forest is a living, growing asset that provides immense benefits. By understanding its value through Urban FIA, we can continue to nurture and expand this vital green infrastructure, ensuring a healthier, more resilient, and beautiful city for generations to come.

###

City/Community digital outreach

Webpages

A dynamic stream of information, incorporating text, images, videos, and other multimedia content. This includes breaking news, in-depth analysis, and human-interest features.

- **Writing for the web**
 - Online readers consume information differently from print
 - They scan, they click, and they have short attention spans
 - Your goal is to be clear, concise, engaging, and action-oriented
- **As with all written pieces, know your audience and purpose**
 - Who are you writing for?
 - What do you want them to do? (Learn something, contact you, visit a park, report an issue?)
- **As with newsletter writing earlier, optimize readability on a webpage**
 - Use clear headings and subheadings. These break up text, guide the reader, and allow them to quickly find relevant sections. Use descriptive titles.
 - Use short paragraphs. Aim for 1 – 3 sentences per paragraph.
 - Use bullet points and numbered lists.
 - Bold key information. Highlight key terms, phrases, or calls to action to draw the eye.
 - Front-load information (Inverted Pyramid). Put the most important information first in a paragraph or section. Readers should grasp the main idea even if they only read the first sentence.
 - Use multi-media (photos, links, videos, etc.) to drive home your messages.
- **Effective writing**
 - Grab attention immediately with strong, engaging headlines.
 - Use an active voice (ex: "We manage forests" instead of "Forests are managed by us"). It's more direct and impactful.
 - Avoid jargon, technical terms, and acronyms unless absolutely necessary, and if so, explain them simply.
 - Include a call to action. What do you want the user to do next? ("Learn More," "Contact Us," "Download the Guide," "Donate Here").

You may use the provided template and plug in City-specific information or use it as a guide to write your own newsletter article.

EXAMPLE ARTICLE FOR A CITY WEBPAGE

Counting on Houston's trees: How we can use data to help manage our vital urban forest

Houston, the largest city in the largest continental state in the United States, has an urban forest to match. Now, for the first time, information about Houston's trees is available online. The **My City's Trees website** is a free tool that makes community tree data accessible to the public.

With just a few clicks of a mouse, anyone with access to the Internet can explore Houston's urban forest, the benefits it provides, and the contributions trees make to the environment, economy, and the well-being of the city's residents.

Energy Savings

One key benefit is the amount of energy savings that trees produce for the community.

"We're very excited, because the timing for this web tool could not be better for us. We just received a grant from the U.S. Endowment for Forestry in Communities and American Forests to do a major urban forestry project. And one of the keys to this project is having a better understanding of our forests. This web tool gives us, for the first time, some information on the urban tree canopy that could really help our partners know what's going on with our forests," - said Jeff Taebel, Director of Community and Environmental Planning for Houston-Galveston Area Council

The Data

The Texas A&M Forest Service My City's Trees website is based on data gathered through the Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis program, a partnership between federal and state forestry agencies across the nation.

Urban FIA data reveals information about Houston's urban forest, such as tree species, age range, and canopy cover provided by trees. With regular surveys, My City's Trees will compare that data over time, showing change — including that resulting from urban forest management decisions.

"The fantastic thing about Urban FIA and My City's Trees is that the data is collected on a repeated basis, so it's not just a single snapshot in time. Communities will be able to utilize this information to make decisions about the future and to look back and see how those management decisions actually affected the urban forest," said Gretchen Riley, Texas A&M Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry Partnership Coordinator.

The Cities

Houston is the second Texas city, after Austin, to complete an Urban FIA survey and be included in My City's Trees. San Antonio is on deck to conduct a survey this year, as are several other cities across the nation. Once completed, they will also be included in the web app.

Watch the [My City's Trees video](#) and explore Houston's urban forest yourself by visiting [My City's Trees](#).

###

Social media (Facebook, X, etc.)

Platforms for news dissemination, feature stories, and user-generated content. It's a real-time feed where users can share opinions, discuss current events, and stay updated on a variety of topics.

Many cities and communities have social media pages.

- **Communications Team**

- Work with your City's communications department. Understand their goals, adhere to their guidelines, and actively participate in the planning and execution of social media campaigns.
- Your City's content curators are always seeking engaging content. You can help by providing great information and stories about Urban FIA in action.

- **Partners**

- The end goal of Urban FIA is better urban forest management with support and engagement from all sectors of the community.
- You can leverage partner agencies and non-profit organizations through social media by tagging entities with their page handles, sharing posts, and cross-posting content.

- **Templates and graphics**

- My City's Trees — Cities participating in the Urban FIA program may access City-specific social media graphics based on real data from My City's Trees.
- Download your City's Urban FIA data and graphics to use and share information about your city's urban forest on social media.
- Be sure to tag Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis partners, including USDA Forest Service, i-Tree, and Texas A&M Forest Service, in your posts.
- Urban FIA Program and Platforms — Even if your City data is not yet available in My City's Trees, we have developed social media graphics, messages, and templates on the topics of Urban FIA, data, and its platforms for you to use.
- Some of them can be customized to your City. There are also pre-made graphics with accompanying messages for you on topics like: Urban FIA is a Census for Urban Trees, The Power of Partnerships in Urban Forestry, Urban FIA can be used to monitor your Urban Forest, Urban FIA data can help inform management plans and hazard mitigation planning. All of these examples highlight the Urban FIA program, data, delivery platforms, and benefits.

Original social media content — In addition, if you would like to develop your own social media content, we have provided some best practice tips for the most commonly used social media platforms. [Link to resource document \(Snapshot Social Media Best Practices\)](#)

For some of the most common social media platforms used by cities, here are a few shortcuts on the strengths and uses of each channel:

Facebook: For broad reach, community building, and general updates and events, especially if your audience includes older demographics: Facebook is often the primary choice. A city will use Facebook often for detailed public meeting announcements, longer-form stories, human-interest highlights, and community group discussions.

- Use visuals
- Link to full article or report
- Include a call to action (“Read the full article,” “Check out the report”)
- Tag partners

X: For real-time news, quick announcements, public discussion, and engaging with media or public figures: X is the go-to. A city will use X for urgent traffic alerts or live updates during an event. Limit 280 characters (Use a character counter such as [Twitter Character Counter - Check your Tweet length and more!](#))

- Character count includes links, tags, hashtags
- Include a call to action (“Read the full article,” “Check out the report”)
- Tag partners
- Use relevant hashtags

Instagram: For visual storytelling, showcasing products and services, building a visual brand, and reaching younger, visually oriented audiences: Instagram is ideal. A city will use Instagram to showcase the beauty of city parks or promote local cultural events with stunning visuals. Always use visuals.

- Instagram is all about aesthetics. Prioritize high-quality visuals.
- Place your link in your page bio. You can’t place links in individual posts.
- Use short-form video - Reels
- Add on-screen text
- Use Instagram stories

Additional tips:

- Tag partnering and parent entities by @their platform page name
- Tag your location (city, specific forest, park) to increase local discoverability.
- Acknowledge and respond to comments genuinely. This shows your audience you're listening and value their input.
- Actively engage (like, comment, react, share) with partner agencies, relevant non-profits, local businesses, and community members. This expands your reach and builds relationships.

Typical sizes for social media photos and graphics [June 2025]

- X (Twitter) 1280 x 720 px
- Instagram 1080 x 1080 px
- Facebook 1080 x 566 px
- Stories and reels 1080 x 1920

Email newsletters

A cost-effective way to share important information, such as local news, upcoming events, and public services, while also building a stronger connection between the city and its residents.

Effective content for email newsletters follows the same writing guidance as those for newsletters from a City or community. See the City/Community publications section presented earlier.

You may use the provided example as a template and plug in City-specific information or use it as a guide to write your own email newsletter.

EXAMPLE EMAIL NEWSLETTER FROM A CITY

Email subject: Green & Growing: Simple Ways to Support San Antonio's Vital Urban Forest

Email body:

Dear Neighbor,

Look around our city, and you'll see a natural treasure thriving right alongside our buildings and streets: **our urban forest!** These aren't just pretty trees; they're vital, hardworking assets that significantly improve our quality of life every single day.

At the City of San Antonio, we're committed to nurturing this incredible resource. We even use advanced tools like **Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis (Urban FIA)** data to understand precisely how much our trees contribute and how we can best care for them.

So, how are our trees working for us? [Urban FIA data](#) helps us confirm these amazing benefits.

- Cleaner air. Our trees filter **7,304 tons** of air pollution every year.
- Cooler neighborhoods and lower energy bills. Our trees save **\$20.81 million** annually.
- Stormwater management. Our trees avoid **20.8 million** cubic feet of water runoff per year.
- A healthier, happier community. Our trees save **\$67.8 million** in health costs every year.

What can YOU do to help our urban forest thrive?

Caring for our urban forest is a shared responsibility, and every little bit helps.

1. **Water your trees:** Especially during dry spells, young trees need regular watering to establish strong roots. Even mature trees can benefit from a deep soak.
2. **Mulch matters:** Apply a 2-4 inch layer of mulch around the base of your trees (keeping it away from the trunk) to conserve moisture, regulate soil temperature, and suppress weeds.
3. **Know before you grow:** If you plant a new tree, choose the right species for the right place. Consider mature size, sun exposure, and proximity to utilities.
4. **Report issues:** If you notice a sick, damaged, or hazardous tree on public property, please report it to the San Antonio Urban Forestry Department at <https://www.sa.gov/Directory/Initiatives/Urban-Forestry>.
5. **Be Tree-Aware:** When landscaping or doing home improvements, be mindful of tree roots and branches, especially those of city trees.

By working together, we can ensure our city's urban forest continues to grow strong, providing invaluable benefits for generations to come. Thank you for being a part of our greener future!

Sincerely,

The City of San Antonio, Urban Forestry Department,
<https://www.sa.gov/Directory/Initiatives/Urban-Forestry>

###

Traditional media outreach

News, news releases

Keep the media and the public informed of current events, reporting the facts and educating audiences, spreading the word about something that's going on in the community.

How to pitch stories and reach out to local media outlets

Familiarize yourself with the local media landscape. This includes local newspapers (daily and weekly publications), local TV stations (news channels and programs), local radio stations, online news websites and community publications.

Understand who each outlet serves. This will help you tailor your news to their audience's interests.

Learn about the relationships your City or community already has established with the particular outlets and work through their communications team to connect with outlets.

You may also connect with media outlets directly. Media outlets often have a news desk with an email that you can contact. Journalists also prefer being contacted directly via email.

You can send them a news release for big announcements, or you may pitch a potential story.

A news release:

A good news release is a concise, compelling, and informative article that announces something newsworthy to the media. Its goal is to capture the journalist's attention and secure media coverage.

A news release needs to be newsworthy. Journalists look for:

- Timeliness — the information is current and relevant to what's happening now
- Relevance — it matters to the target audience of the media outlet
- Impact — it affects a significant number of people or has a substantial consequence
- Novelty — it's something new, unique, or unusual
- Proximity — it's of interest to the local or regional audience
- Human interest — it tells a compelling story about people

Tell your news right up front. The lead paragraph should contain the five Ws and H (Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How).

Write clearly and concisely, avoiding or explaining jargon and technical terms.

Be factual, avoiding editorial, advocacy, and opinions.

You may use the provided example as a guide to write your own news release. You may also use the provided template and plug in City-specific information to write your own news release.

EXAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

San Antonio's trees are working for the city

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — A recent census of San Antonio's urban forest counted 137.8 million trees in and around the city that work to reduce air pollution, temperatures and stormwater runoff, while storing carbon, improving human health and just plain beautifying the Alamo City.

An Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis survey revealed city-wide tree species, size range and health information about San Antonio's urban forest. This information is used to calculate ecosystem services provided by the city's trees and the values of those services.

Each year, San Antonio's urban forest works to remove more than 6,500 tons of air pollution, saving \$63 million in health costs. It also reduces stormwater runoff by over 380 million cubic feet and saves residents \$22 million — \$13.89/person — in energy costs each year.

"That's a lot of work!" said Gretchen Riley, Texas A&M Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program Leader. "Beyond beautification, trees are effective and efficient solutions to some of the challenges people and cities face."

San Antonio leadership can now better target efforts and priorities in their forest management plans to address climate and environmental challenges throughout the city.

"The survey tells us that the city's trees are currently storing 3.5 million tons of carbon — equivalent to the greenhouse gases emitted by 2.5 million cars driven for one year — and that live oaks are the largest contributor to storing this carbon," said Riley. "Having this information can aid in making forest management decisions into the future."

The city's Urban FIA data is collected on a repeated basis and made publicly available through the Texas A&M Forest Service My City's Trees website. My City's Trees will show up-to-date data over time, including changes such as growth when that data becomes available.

"Active urban forest management is an ongoing and ever-evolving process," said Riley. "That's the fantastic thing about Urban FIA and My City's Trees, it is not just a snapshot in time. Communities will be able to use this information to make decisions about the future and to look back and see how those management decisions actually affected the urban forest and the people living and working in the community."

San Antonio joins the Texas cities of Austin and Houston, as well as San Diego, CA, and Portland, OR, in completing an Urban FIA survey.

Bringing Urban FIA and My City's Trees to San Antonio has been a partnership between the City of San Antonio, Texas A&M Forest Service and both the Southern and Northern Research Stations of the U.S Forest Service.

Visit My City's Trees <https://mycitystrees.com> to explore the urban forest and find information on how trees are working for the city of San Antonio.

###

TEMPLATE NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HEADLINE: [Write a clear, active, and concise headline (e.g., 8-12 words/under 60 characters). It must state the most important information and the main takeaway.]

LEAD PARAGRAPH: [CITY, STATE] – [Date] – This first paragraph (1-3 sentences max) is the most critical part of the release. It must answer the who, what, when, where, and why of the article. It should be strong enough to stand alone and summarize the entire story. Write in Inverted Pyramid style — most important information first.

SECOND PARAGRAPH - SUPPORTING DETAIL: Provide context or background on the article. Why is this important right now? What is the problem being solved or the opportunity being addressed?

THIRD PARAGRAPH - KEY QUOTE 1 (THE AUTHORITY): Insert a compelling quote from a high-ranking official, director, or subject-matter expert. The quote should convey the importance and vision behind the article, not just restate facts.

"We believe this new [project/program/initiative] is a critical step forward for [City/community] as it directly addresses [key challenge, e.g., heat island effect, disaster recovery]. This commitment reflects our mission to ensure healthy, sustainable urban environments for all residents," said [Name], [Title].

FOURTH PARAGRAPH - ADDITIONAL DETAIL & EVIDENCE: Offer specific data (ideally from My City's Trees) with statistics or proof points to back up the lead paragraph. You can include the number of trees planted, the acres protected, or the grant amount awarded, etc.

FIFTH PARAGRAPH - KEY QUOTE 2 (THE PARTNER/BENEFICIARY): Include a quote from a key partner, stakeholder, or representative from the community that benefits from the announcement. This adds credibility and human interest.

"Working alongside the [City/community], we've seen firsthand how [project name] transforms neighborhoods. It's more than just planting trees; it's about investing in the long-term health and vitality of our community," said [Name], [Title of Partner Organization].

CLOSING PARAGRAPH AND CALL TO ACTION: Conclude by briefly summarizing the long-term impact and directing the reader where to find more information (website, download link, etc).

THE POUND SIGN SYMBOL (###) IS THE TRADITIONAL END MARK FOR A PRESS RELEASE.

###

MEDIA CONTACT:

[Name of Communications Contact/Spokesperson] [Title] [Email Address] [Phone Number]

Media Pitch

Craft a compelling pitch, or persuasive message, that aims to convince a journalist or editor to cover your story.

This will be attention-grabbing, highlighting what makes your story unique, timely, and relevant to their audience. Focus on why the audience should care.

Offer to provide any additional information: quotes from relevant people, high-quality photos or videos, data and statistics and a demonstration of the My City's Trees website.

You may use the provided example as a template and plug in City-specific information or use it as a guide to write your own media pitch.

EXAMPLE EMAIL NEWS MEDIA PITCH

Email subject:

Your City's Trees – A [\$XX] Million Asset – Making Our Community Healthier, Cooler, and Stronger

Email body:

We invite [News Outlet Name] to explore this significant story and help us showcase how our city is leading the way in sustainable urban development.

[Name of City or Community] Uses Groundbreaking Data to Uncover Million-Dollar Benefits of Its Urban Forest

[CITY, STATE] – [Date] – Beyond their beauty, the trees lining our streets, shading our parks, and gracing our neighborhoods are delivering quantifiable, multi-million-dollar benefits to our city. The City of [Name of City] is proud to announce insights from its recent participation in the Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis (Urban FIA) program, revealing the profound economic, environmental, and social contributions of our urban forest.

Urban FIA, a cutting-edge initiative by the U.S. Forest Service, provides a scientifically robust "census" of our urban trees. This data allows us to move beyond anecdotal observations to concrete figures, demonstrating exactly how our green infrastructure is working for every resident.

Key highlights from our Urban FIA data include:

- Significant Air Pollution Removal: Our trees collectively remove an estimated [X tons/pounds] of air pollutants annually, contributing to cleaner air and improved public health, particularly reducing respiratory issues.
- Millions in Energy Savings: The strategic shade and cooling effect of our urban forest are estimated to save residents [\$X million] annually in reduced energy consumption (e.g., lower air conditioning bills). This directly impacts household budgets and the city's overall energy footprint.
- Vital Stormwater Management: Our tree canopy intercepts approximately [X million gallons] of stormwater runoff each year, reducing pressure on our drainage systems, mitigating localized flooding, and protecting our waterways from pollution. This is a crucial defense against extreme weather events.
- Boosting Public Well-being: While harder to quantify directly in dollars, the data underscores the extensive green spaces our trees provide, which are proven to reduce stress, improve mental health, and encourage physical activity across all demographics. Data show that [Name of City or Community's] trees save [\$X] million in health cost each year.

"Our urban forest is a silent workforce, providing essential services that are often taken for granted," says [Name, Title, e.g., Mayor, City Manager, Urban Forestry Manager]. "The Urban FIA data provides us with the evidence to understand this critical asset better, enabling us to make smarter, data-driven decisions for its care and expansion. This isn't just about trees; it's about investing in the long-term health, resilience, and prosperity of [Name of City or Community]."

We propose a story that could include:

- An interview with [Name, Title] to discuss the findings and the city's commitment to urban forestry.
- A visit to a designated Urban FIA plot or a significant city park to visually demonstrate the benefits and the work of our urban forestry team.
- Testimonials from local residents or businesses benefiting directly from our urban forest.
- A look at our city's plans for utilizing this data to expand and manage our urban forest for future generations.

This is a timely and impactful story that affects every resident of [Name of City or Community], offering a unique blend of environmental importance, economic impact, and community benefit, all backed by credible scientific data.

To schedule an interview or for more information, please contact:

[Your name, title, phone number, email address]

###

Media advisory

When communicating with the news media about an urban forestry demonstration, a visit to an Urban FIA plot or a city street or park to visually demonstrate the benefits of urban forestry and Urban FIA, you can use a media advisory (also called a media alert or press advisory).

The media advisory is used to invite journalists to attend an upcoming event (your urban forestry demonstration) with the goal of securing their in-person coverage (photos, video, interviews). It's a brief, to-the-point announcement.

When you should use a media advisory:

- Highlight any photo and video opportunities like tree planting, visible environment improvements
- Reporters can attend and capture the action, speak with experts on-site, and get real-time reactions
- If your Mayor, a state forestry official, or a renowned arborist will be speaking or participating, highlight this in the advisory to attract attention

You may use the provided example as a template and plug in City-specific information or use it as a guide to write your own media advisory.

EXAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Insert Date]

MEDIA ADVISORY

[Name of City or Community] is hosting an urban forestry tour Update headline as needed

WHO: [Name of City or Community] in collaboration with the USDA Forest Service, i-Tree and Texas A&M Forest Service [and cooperating partners]

WHAT: [Name of City or Community] has been monitoring the health and sustainability of our urban forest and invites the public to join us for a tree tour around the community. Participants will see how stewardship and natural resource management of the urban forest provides ecosystem and ecological services as well as how it resists and rebounds from natural disasters.

WHEN: [Day, Month date, year]

[Time]

WHERE: [Location of the tour] Consider including a map and describing walking, driving considerations

WHY: The purpose of the educational tour is to demonstrate how the Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis program informs city planners and urban foresters with strategic data on public and private trees across our community. Knowing the health, condition, and trends affecting our urban forests makes decision-making about the management of those forests even more effective.

We are able to learn the value of our trees and how much they save us in energy and healthcare costs. Knowing tree species, size, and location helps our community weather the storms and optimize our health.

The more community members understand about our urban forests, the more supportive they can be in the management, enhancement and protection of the urban forest.

ONLINE: For more information visit [Website address]

VISUALS: [Mayor planting a tree, drone footage of new canopy areas, other]

CONTACT: [CONTACT NAME], [TITLE], [PHONE NUMBER], [EMAIL ADDRESS]

Video and television

You can connect with residents and audiences in a more engaging and accessible way.

Videos bring the story to life.

Videos can be provided to your local Television station via cable access channel or placed in any of the previous outreach pieces like newsletters, webpages, and multimedia news releases.

Check out the example video about My City's Trees. You may use it as inspiration or a guide to develop your own video. Also, please see the guidance and best practices provided about using short-form video and reels on social media.

EXAMPLE VIDEO FOR TELEVISION AND ONLINE VIEWING

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZljWjSbCOo>



Audio Public Service Announcements

PSAs are non-commercial announcements that promote programs, activities, or services of the city or community, or impart information generally regarded as serving the public interest. Radio stations still have a requirement to air PSAs for their audiences.

Provide the PSA template for a live reading on the air, or for a station to record the copy and play the audio file of the PSA.

Effective Writing

Every word and second counts, as you have to grab the listener's attention, convey a message, and prompt action before they change the audio station, post, or page.

Word count — A 30-second PSA should contain a maximum of 70 to 75 words. This limit is crucial because you need to leave room for: sound effects, music intro, pauses, and a clear, unhurried delivery of the call to action.

Write for the ear. The language should be simple, conversational, and direct. Avoid complex sentences, technical jargon, or multiple clauses.

Focus on a single, clear message.

Use a 3-part structure:

1. Grab immediate attention using a question, a startling fact, or an engaging sound effect.
2. Briefly state why the listener should care. Use strong verbs to convey urgency or opportunity.
3. Tell them exactly what to do and where to go. This must be the most clear and repeatable call to action.

You may use the provided example as a template and plug in City-specific information or use it as a guide to write your own audio public service announcement.

EXAMPLE AUDIO PSA

URBAN FOREST INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS — AWARENESS (EVERGREEN)

Replace the highlighted/bracketed portions with information specific to your community.

USE: IMMEDIATE
TIME: 30 SECONDS
ENTITY: [CITY OR COMMUNITY NAME HERE]

LIVE COPY:

There's a census for trees — and it is making it more effective than ever to grow and protect our urban forests.

Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis provides data on the health, quality, and composition of urban trees and forests. This helps when our planners and foresters are making decisions on public and private trees in our community. Knowing tree species, size, and location helps our community weather the storms and optimize our health.

Learn more at [WEBSITE ADDRESS SPELLED OUT] Example: T-F-S-WEB-DOT-T-A-M-U-DOT-E-D-U

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CONTACT:

[CONTACT NAME], [TITLE], [PHONE NUMBER], [EMAIL ADDRESS]

In-person outreach

- **Public meetings, town hall meetings, council meetings** — held to foster transparency, ensure accountability, and encourage public participation in decision-making processes. They provide a platform for citizens to share their opinions, concerns, and ideas on issues affecting their communities.
- **Community events** — fostering social connections, boosting local economies, and celebrating community identity.

Spokesperson preparation

When you are highlighting the services, information, and benefits of urban forests using the data lens of Urban FIA, be prepared to answer questions, elaborate and give explanations and examples, and present data, tools, and use case examples. You should identify who will be the main spokespersons for this subject matter.

- **Identify the spokespersons**
- **Spokesperson skills and traits**
 - The spokesperson needs excellent communication skills and needs to be articulate and able to adapt their communication style to different audiences.
 - The spokesperson will be comfortable and confident in front of groups, whether large or small. This includes maintaining eye contact, using effective body language, and projecting their voice.
 - The spokesperson must have a deep understanding of the community they represent, its mission, values, and policies, as well as Urban FIA as subject matter. They need to be able to answer questions accurately and authoritatively.
 - The spokesperson must be believable, trustworthy, and honest. They should inspire confidence and project integrity.
- **Prepare the spokespersons**
 - Messaging Guide
 - Communications and Outreach Strategy Guide
 - Branded presentation materials
 - Proficient in using and demonstrating My City's Trees and Urban Forest Stats online

Working with partners

Communicating the value of urban forestry data involves collaboration between stakeholders to achieve common goals related to the planning, planting, care, and management of trees in urban areas.

These partnerships are essential because they combine resources, expertise, and community support, leading to more effective and sustainable urban forestry management and programs.

You do this every day.

You know that partnerships can increase awareness and appreciation of the value of Urban FIA exponentially.

They can also potentially bring in more funding, personnel, and expertise.

Partnerships can enhance effectiveness through collaboration and have a greater reach of a wider audience and community.

Partnerships and community involvement foster a sense of ownership and stewardship, making the impacts of the urban forest more sustainable.

Identify and build relationships with partners.

- These may include government agencies, city forestry departments, parks and recreation, environmental agencies, non-profit organizations, tree advocacy groups, conservation organizations, community development corporations, local businesses, landscaping companies, utilities, community groups, neighborhood associations, resident volunteers, educational institutions, foundations, and grant-making organizations.

Benefits of urban forestry partnerships:

- Partnerships can increase awareness and appreciation of the value of Urban FIA exponentially. They can also potentially bring in more funding, personnel, and expertise. They can enhance effectiveness through collaboration and have a greater reach of a wider audience and community. Partnership and community involvement foster a sense of ownership and stewardship making impacts of the urban forest more sustainable.

Platforms that communities can use to deliver Urban FIA data

My City's Trees: <https://mct.tfs.tamu.edu>

Urban Forest Stats: <https://texasforestinfo.tamu.edu/urbanforeststats>

Urban FIADB-API: <https://apps.fs.usda.gov/fiadb-api/urban>

Urban DataMart: <https://research.fs.usda.gov/products/dataandtools/urban-datamart>

We are providing a cheat sheet that describes the spectrum of user capabilities and corresponding platforms available. This can be useful for you — and to audiences to whom you introduce Urban FIA.

Explore the different ways to access Urban FIA

My City's Trees

For general and non-forestry audiences, My City's Trees will be the most effective platform to access Urban FIA data.

Designed to be easy for anyone to use, My City's Trees summarizes key elements of the data and is updated annually.

From My City's Trees, you can also download (or read online) a Quick Start document with instructions on using the My City's Trees website.

<https://mct.tfs.tamu.edu>

Urban Forest Stats

Urban Forest Stats provides access to estimates produced by Urban FIA data, with nearly endless possibilities for customization. Using live connections to the USDA Forest Service Urban FIA database, it always serves the latest data available. Urban Forest Stats was designed to meet the needs of a wide range of users, so it has progressive levels of complexity that can be ignored or revealed as needed.

Through Urban Forest Stats, users have access to many more types of estimates than the subset displayed in My City's Trees and can choose how to summarize those estimates. Filtering capability, sampling errors, and data export options add to the value of Urban Forest Stats, as well as a two-page pdf summary report that pulls together key estimates.

Urban Forest Stats is available through a partnership between the USDA Forest Service and Texas A&M Forest Service.

<https://texasforestinfo.tamu.edu/urbanforeststats>

Urban FIADB-API

Urban FIADB-API, an application programming interface to pull data from the USDA Forest Service Urban FIA database, is what powers Urban Forest Stats. It is designed to meet the needs of technical users by allowing them to directly programmatically query the live Urban FIA database. While it requires more technical expertise than My City's Trees or Urban Forest Stats, it is a powerful tool for accessing Urban FIA data.

Urban FIADB-API is available through the USDA Forest Service.

<https://apps.fs.usda.gov/fiadb-api/urban>

Urban DataMart

Urban DataMart is available to individuals interested in conducting their own analyses using Urban FIA data, giving access to the full database in csv and SQLite format. It is the most complex option for accessing Urban FIA data but provides full flexibility. A detailed user guide is available to help users navigate the database structure.

Urban DataMart is available through the USDA Forest Service.

<https://research.fs.usda.gov/products/dataandtools/urban-datamart>