

PRESS RELEASE

45 Cities Pledge to Conserve and Restore Forests, Citing Public Health, Water and Climate Benefits

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Amman, Auckland, Jakarta, Johannesburg, Mexico City, Oslo, Sacramento and more cities representing over 164 million residents join Cities4Forests initiative.

EDITORS NOTE:

For updated information and a list of current cities, visit the [Cities4Forests website](#).

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, 12 September 2018 – Floods and landslides are wreaking havoc on cities from Bangkok to Bangalore. Urban heat islands are exacerbating sweltering temperatures from Los Angeles to São Paulo. Concerns about drinking water are growing from Bogota to Johannesburg to Jakarta. Rising sea levels threaten Miami and Mumbai alike. Now, a coalition of cities has emerged to protect their residents from these threats by deploying a highly underrated resource: forests.

Today at the [Global Climate Action Summit](#), 45 cities across six continents joined the [Cities4Forests](#) initiative, committing to conserve and restore their forests while making residents more aware of the vast benefits of trees. Cities joining include Addis Ababa, Bogotá, Kigali, Kochi, Quito, São Paulo, Toronto and Vienna, with many more across the globe and in the U.S. such as Detroit, Los Angeles, New York City, Oakland, Salt Lake City, Seattle and Washington, D.C.

“Cities have invisible footprints on faraway forests that most people aren’t aware of. The commodities that we consume - timber, paper, palm oil, beef, soybeans – can be responsible for destroying forests. And the benefits that forests provide to cities are underappreciated too,” said **Frances Seymour**, Distinguished Senior Fellow at World Resources Institute. *“The more we learn about how trees interact with the atmosphere, the more we realize how forests influence the climate on both a local and a global scale. Forests are an important source of climate resilience and stability for people, no matter where we live.”*

Trees and forests are immensely valuable to cities and their residents. The Cities4Forests initiative works at three levels: inner, nearby and faraway forests. Trees within cities—the **inner forests** in parks, boulevards, and yards—help filter air, moderate temperatures and lower energy bills. Trees in the watersheds surrounding cities—**nearby forests**—buffer against flooding and landslides, lower water treatment costs, offer exercise opportunities and give residents an escape from hectic urban life. Trees in **faraway for-**



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ests, particularly in the tropics, sequester carbon to help combat climate change, generate rain for the world's farm belts, provide an array of essential products and medicinal ingredients, and host the majority of the world's land-based biodiversity.

"As the City of Trees, we in Sacramento recognize the important role forests play in promoting clean air and water, and enhancing the quality of life of all residents," said **Mayor Darrell Steinberg**, of Sacramento. *"From their ability to curb climate change to the miles of hiking and biking trails they provide, without forests, our city cannot truly thrive. Cities4Forests will help us, and other cities, share the best ways to prioritize, restore, and protect the trees that make our communities vibrant and healthy."*

"As Antananarivo is hit by cyclones and tropical storms every year, I fully understand the importance of protecting and restoring trees and forests inside and nearby our city," said **Mayor Lalao Ravalomanana**, of Antananarivo, Madagascar. *"Green areas can reduce our risks from natural disasters, support climate action strategies and contribute to a more healthy and resilient environment."*

The 45 founding cities of Cities4Forests include cities from every continent except Antarctica, representing 164.9 million residents in their metropolitan areas (see the full list below). Participating cities share a commitment to reduce deforestation, restore forests and help manage forests both inside and outside city limits. Each city joining the Cities4Forests initiative has committed to:

- **Understand.** To assess their reliance and impacts on trees and forests.
- **Engage.** To raise awareness among residents about the benefits forests provide, communicate what people can do to make a positive impact and collaborate across government agencies to improve the health of trees and forests.
- **Innovate.** To harness the power of forests to help achieve climate goals, secure clean and stable water supplies, reduce stormwater runoff, improve public health and provide recreation.
- **Act.** To implement new tools, local policies, voluntary programs, investments and public procurement decisions to meet these goals.
- **Progress.** To engage at the three Cities4Forest scales (inner, nearby, and faraway forests), participating in at least one level by 2020, two by 2022 and all three by 2025.
- **Share.** To share insights, experiences, and innovations to inspire ambition and mobilize action among cities around the world.

"Conserving our forests is a top priority in Mexico City's climate action plan," said **Tanya Müller García**, Mexico City's Secretary of Environment. *"In fact, 59% of the city's territory is conserved land that provides multiple environmental benefits – absorbing carbon emissions, protecting our water supply, regulating the city's temperature and creating space for biodiversity. These benefits are fundamental for Mexico City's sustainability and for our residents' quality of life. And we recognize that forests outside of the city's boundaries need to be protected too. Mexico City is the first local government in Latin America to launch a Forest Carbon Bond. Now with our commitment to Cities4Forests, we continue advancing even more ambitious climate goals."*

Cities4Forests is managed by World Resources Institute, Pilot Projects and REVOLVE. Cities joining the program can benefit from their technical assistance to measure tree cover canopy and prioritize where



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to plant trees for maximum benefit; increased capacity to apply for funding for tree planting; advice on where to look for financing to protect watersheds or restore degraded areas; help writing sustainable procurement guidelines for timber, construction materials and paper products; and much more.

“I am an enthusiastic city dweller in a capital surrounded by deep forests. I know how vital these accessible, yet quiet forests are to the health and well being of the people of Oslo,” said Norway’s Minister of Climate and Environment, **Ola Elvestuen**, who is supporting the initiative. *“Indeed, forests are incredibly valuable to cities and urban citizens for contemplation, exercise, by providing improved air quality and cleaner drinking water. Still, forests further away – particularly in the tropics – are even more important. They support rainfall for food production and food security worldwide and they combat climate change by storing massive amounts of carbon. Halting and reversing tropical deforestation is critical to retain these benefits, and only with cities and their citizens on board can we succeed.”*

City officials will also benefit from a peer-to-peer exchange network to learn from other cities and highlight success cases, and a citizen engagement and communications package.

Cities4Forests is also endorsed by the Brazilian National Front of Mayors and Jalisco State, Mexico

“The FEMSA Foundation is pleased to support Cities4Forests as a platform to scale up green infrastructure strategies in Latin America for sustainable urban development and water security. We envision a pipeline of innovative projects to emerge from the founding cities, blazing a pathway for scale and replication,” said Mariano Montero Zubillaga, Director of the FEMSA Foundation.

To join the partnership please contact [John-Rob Pool](#).

For updated information and a list of current cities, visit the [Cities4Forests website](#).





The following cities have signed the Cities4Forests Declaration:

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|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Accra, Ghana | 19. Jakarta, Indonesia | 37. Sacramento, USA |
| 2. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | 20. Johannesburg, South Africa | 38. Salem (OR), USA |
| 3. Aguascalientes, Mexico | 21. Kigali, Rwanda | 39. Salt Lake City, USA |
| 4. Amman, Jordan | 22. King County (WA), USA | 40. Salvador, Brazil |
| 5. Antalya, Turkey | 23. Kochi, India | 41. São Paulo, Brazil |
| 6. Antananarivo, Madagascar | 24. Lin'an, China | 42. Seattle, USA |
| 7. Auckland, New Zealand | 25. Little Rock, USA | 43. Toronto, Canada |
| 8. Baltimore, USA | 26. Los Angeles, USA | 44. Vienna, Austria |
| 9. Belo Horizonte, Brazil | 27. Mérida, Mexico | 45. Washington, DC, USA |
| 10. Bogotá, Colombia | 28. Mexico City, Mexico | |
| 11. Campinas, Brazil | 29. New York City, USA | |
| 12. Culiacán, Mexico | 30. North Little Rock, USA | |
| 13. Detroit, USA | 31. Oakland, USA | |
| 14. Eugene, USA | 32. Oslo, Norway | |
| 15. Greater Manchester, UK | 33. Philadelphia, USA | |
| 16. Guadalajara, Mexico | 34. Portland (OR), USA | |
| 17. Haifa, Israel | 35. Quito, Ecuador | |
| 18. Honolulu, USA | 36. Raleigh, USA | |



Additional Quotes

“As Addis Ababa’s population increases, we are increasingly aware of the importance of forests in and around our city in achieving our development goals. We are proud to be a city that is fighting to restore, protect, and utilize forests – to the benefit of our citizens, environment, and economy.” – **Mayor Takele Uma Benti**, of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

“Auckland’s urban forest helps clean the air and stormwater, cools and beautifies urban spaces, and brings nature to Aucklanders’ doorsteps. Auckland and Cities4Forests are united in a common goal: recognising the wide range of measurable benefits forests provide in making our lives healthier, happier and more gratifying.” – **John Mauro**, Chief Sustainability Officer of Auckland, New Zealand

“Cities4Forests is supporting our program to a greener and healthier 21st century for Bogotá. The forests we want to create in our future “Van der Hammen” reserve in the north of the city will be essential to help us become resilient to the impacts of climate change and supply clean water, while also providing jobs and boosting infrastructure, public health and recreation.” – **Mayor Enrique Peñalosa**, of Bogotá, Colombia

“The City of Detroit is excited to be a part of Cities4Forests to amplify our work to restore a vital tree canopy in our city to provide the safety, cooling, air quality, and stormwater benefits of trees to more Detroiters. We are actively exploring innovative opportunities to utilize vacant land throughout our city to create a better quality of life for all Detroiters and this opportunity fits right in.” – **Brad Dick**, Group Executive of Infrastructure of Detroit, USA.

“Jakarta’s government recognizes that trees and forests in Jakarta provide a multitude of benefits to urban residents, including providing clean air, high quality drinking water and recreation space. Cities4Forests is one of the efforts of the City of Jakarta to implement its 2017-2022 development plan, particularly in relation to the rehabilitation and restoration of the urban environment, the establishment of Jakarta as a Green and Safe City, as well as the improvement of water and air quality.” – **Oswar Mungkasa**, Deputy Governor for Spatial Planning and Environment of Jakarta, Indonesia

“Oslo is surrounded by the forest and the fjord. By joining Cities4Forests, the city of Oslo reaffirms the importance of maintaining and restoring forests and natural landscapes for our local welfare and for the global climate.” – **Raymond Johansen**, Governing Mayor of Oslo, Norway

“Quito is a city that grows together with its nature, where trees and forests are treated as an integral component in planning nature based solutions for sustainable development. We are thrilled to be part of the Cities4Forest initiative as it will be a great support to continue our work in ensuring ecosystem services and connecting rural and urban areas.” – **Mayor Mauricio Rodas**, of Quito, Ecuador

“The city of São Paulo is proud to be part of Cities4Forests and will measure efforts to conserve and enlarge green spaces. Urban forests contribute to the regulation of humidity and temperature, air quality control, health and lifestyle of citizens. Our municipality has 30.4% of the territory covered with Atlantic Forest and to preserve this biome, a treasure in fauna and flora, is one of our management priorities. We are in this challenge together! Containing the environmental imbalance in cities contributes to a better world for all.” – **Mayor Bruno Covas**, of São Paulo, Brazil

“Cities are places of creativity and connection. Cities4Forests will harness this energy, helping cities co-design new ideas that connect citizens to the trees and forests just outside their doors and to the



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vital global forests that we all depend on. – **Scott Francisco**, Founder of Pilot Projects Design Collective

“Cities4Forests addresses the greatest challenge of our times: reconciling our relationship with nature so that future generations can live in a cleaner and healthier world.” – **Stuart Reigeluth**, Founder of REVOLVE

About the World Resources Institute (WRI)

WRI is a global research organization that spans more than 50 countries, with offices in the United States, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and more. Our more than 700 experts and staff work closely with leaders to turn big ideas into action at the nexus of environment, economic opportunity and human well-being. Learn more at www.wri.org.

About Pilot Projects

Pilot Projects Design Collective is a systems thinking and design consultancy based in Montreal and New York City. We help organizations ‘co-create a better world’ through inventive projects combining culture, infrastructure and the natural environment. Pilot Projects has expertise in architecture, urbanism, participatory design, project assessment and forest ecology, with services ranging from visioning and facilitation to complete project design and implementation. Co-create with us: www.pilot-projects.org

About REVOLVE

Based in Brussels and Barcelona, REVOLVE is a communication group fostering cultures of sustainability. REVOLVE coordinates publications, curates photo exhibitions, organizes forums, and publishes a quarterly magazine about water (winter), nature (spring), energy (summer) and transport (fall). Recent city-forest REVOLVE activities include publications (e.g., magazine highlighting forest-city linkages), communications campaigns (e.g., photo exhibition on green buildings), and events (21 March forum on city-forest linkages). REVOLVE will lead on citizen engagement and communication packages, including visual identity development, campaign messaging, digital portal management, media relations, photo exhibitions, educational material, impact reporting and other communication tools. Start revolving: www.revolve.media

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