

Rethinking Approaches and Outcomes for Urban and Community Forestry

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Sustainable forest management is an essential component of climate resilience. Communities managing and protecting their forestland is the foundation on which broader climate resilience efforts can develop. Urban tree planting initiatives often miss a crucial component of sustainable forest management—wood use. Annually, 3-4 billion feet of urban wood is sent to landfills every year after being cut down.

Urban wood use programs could breathe new life into densely forested areas. Teaching and training residents to manage their forestland for biodiversity, timber, and non-timber forest products could be a major economic boost for the community. Historically, many communities in the United States had sawmills, lumberjacks, furniture makers, and forest management professionals all working in tandem to ensure their towns had healthy and productive forests.

Over the past three decades there has been a decline in these sawmill towns and cottage industries but an increase in demand for sustainably sourced wood. Encouraging communities to think about sustainable wood use and forest management will help fill this gap.

Author Biography

James Williams is a project forester at the Center for Heirs Property Preservation in South Carolina and Atlanta Forest Products. James helps landowners and communities manage their forest resources for timber and non-timber forest products. Most small landowners do not have access to large timber markets but are able to find alternative markets by leveraging high value forest products. Helping landowners create value from small scale, sustainable forest management operations is better for the environment and creates opportunities for landowners to tell their stories.

These same principles apply to urban wood. Trees that fail naturally or are removed should be put to their highest and best use. As part of the lifecycle management of trees, James works with arborists and homeowners on ways they can give their tree life after it's removed.

James graduated from Brown University