

## Goal

To engage and inform leaders from public health, the insurance industry, private business, policy makers, the medical and wellness community on the value of trees and green space to improve and enhance mental and physical health.

## Background

The *Spreading the Canopy* project seeks to inform the public health sector and involve leaders in a conversation on the benefits of trees and green space. Over a three-year period, Trees Forever:

- Will establish five working collaborative groups across the United States – the first in Des Moines, the second in Sacramento, California, and three national cities to be selected;
- Hold the first collaborative and symposium in Des Moines to serve as a model on how to create a replicable process ensuring that trees and green space play an important role in healthy community and state initiatives;
- Create a *Spreading the Canopy* Guide and other online tools to market findings nationally, inspire others to use the model, and draw attention to the value of trees and natural areas in improving public health.

## Trees and Public Health

There is a substantial body of research indicating that our physical and mental health is positively correlated to having more trees and green space.

- Physical inactivity costs Iowa about \$4.6 billion annually in lost worker productivity. Expanding and improving parks encourages people to get moving, thereby reducing those costs.  
(<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/article/20121008/OPINION03/310080033>)
- Workers with workstation views that included green elements were more satisfied at work and had more patience, less frustration, increased enthusiasm for work, and fewer health problems. Not having nature views is associated with higher levels of tension and anxiety in office workers.  
([http://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm\\_Mental.html](http://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm_Mental.html))
- All other things being equal, patients with bedside windows looking out on leafy trees healed, on average, a day faster, needed significantly less pain medication and had fewer postsurgical complications.  
(<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=nature-that-nurtures>)
- Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years. Active living is one solution to turn back this trend. Trees contribute to perceptions of more walkable streets, which can promote more physical activity in children and youth.  
([http://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm\\_ActiveLiving.html](http://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm_ActiveLiving.html))



## Building Strong Partnerships

Throughout the *Spreading the Canopy* work process, Trees Forever will:

- Foster partnerships between public and private sectors to create a pipeline of support for urban and community forestry programs;
- Host multi-disciplinary working groups to develop better ways to respond to urban ecosystem issues and public health;
- Ensure equal access to resources so communities of all demographics, sizes, and locations can realize the benefits of developing a vibrant green infrastructure.

## Steering Committee Members Committed and Leaders Lending Support

- Mark Ackelson, President, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
- Dave Ahlberg, Product Manager, Energy Efficiency Programs, MidAmerican Energy
- Todd Ashby, Executive Director, Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Julia Badenhope, Associate Professor, Landscape Architecture, Iowa State University
- Diana Bishop Ewing, Development Officer, Mosaic
- Pat Boddy, Stewardship Director, RDG
- Michael Bousset, Governor Terry Branstad's Office, Healthiest State Initiative
- Richard Deming, MD, Medical Director, Mercy Cancer Center
- Mayor Frank Cownie, City of Des Moines
- Helen Eddy, Associate Vice President, Hy-Vee Health and Wellness
- Chuck Gipp, Director, Iowa Department of Natural Resources
- Joe Gunderson, Chair, Iowa Parks Foundation
- Tom Hadden, Executive Director, Metro Waste Authority
- Rick Kozin, Director, Polk County Health Department
- Mark Masteller, Chief Landscape Architect, Iowa Department of Transportation
- Chris McCarthy, Community Health Project Manager, UnityPoint Health
- Dennis Parker, Director, Polk County Conservation Board
- Shannon Ramsay, Founding President and CEO, Trees Forever
- Robert Riley, CEO, Feed Energy
- Chris Seeger, Associate Professor, Landscape Architecture, Extension Specialist, Iowa State University
- Kent Sovern, State Director, AARP Iowa
- Bill Stowe, CEO, Des Moines Water Works
- Paul Tauke, State Forester, Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources
- Margo Underwood, Trees Forever Board of Directors and IDNR Natural Resource Commission Chair
- Greg Welk, Professor, Health Promotion and Exercise, Iowa State University
- Jon Werger, Iowa Community Operations Manager, Blue Zones Project

## Research and Expert Advisory Panel

- Pramod Dwivedi, Public Health Director, Linn County
- Dr. Mary Northridge, Editor Public Health Journal, Columbia University
- Ray Tretheway, Executive Director, Sacramento Tree Foundation
- Dr. Lynne Westphal, U.S. Forest Service, Chicago Research Group
- Dr. Kathleen Wolf, University of Washington, Seattle

