



# MICROSOFT AND TREES FOREVER CHANGE LANDSCAPES AND FUTURES



## Planting hope

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, better mental health, increased physical activity, and more. [Studies show that trees make neighborhoods and communities safer.](#) Apartment buildings with trees and other landscaping had 52 percent fewer total crimes, 48 percent fewer property crimes, and 56 percent fewer violent crimes than buildings with minimal or no vegetation. Trees, shrubs, and other vegetation planted in road rights-of-way reduce vehicular speeds and have other positive effects on driver behavior and perception. [A single mature tree can provide \\$3,790 in value over its lifetime, a 250% return on investment.](#)

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. Their newly launched program, 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 will have a powerful social and environmental impact because the program prioritizes underserved neighborhoods; neighborhoods that research shows already lack tree cover and need dedicated resources. Trees Forever and Growing Futures youth will plant 600-1,000 trees per year and will report all environmental benefits, quantified by partner [NGO City Forest Credits](#). As trees grow and thrive because of the care they receive from Growing Futures youth, the trees will improve resident's quality of life. The beauty of trees contributes to a sense of community and pride helping to plant hope.

## Sowing leadership

Growing Futures is a workforce development program aiming to employ 20-40 youth and supervisors each year with a special focus on youth from diverse backgrounds. Growing Futures will have a broad impact on the community youth, as these young people will develop leadership skills, engage with youth of diverse 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 150-200 people to be reached through this program, including the parents of the youth employed and students





who attend informational/educational sessions on the program. Multiplying that out over the first five years of the program, 850-1,200 people will be directly impacted, as well as at least 8,500 area residents indirectly impacted by the Growing Futures program.

## Reaping benefits

As part of the Community Environmental Sustainability Program, Microsoft awarded Trees Forever \$100,000 in support of Growing Futures. 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, Microsoft Program Manager, Community Environmental Sustainability. "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 leveraging City of Des Moines funds with community support along with the

support from Microsoft, Forever Trees has been able to set the stage for additional donors.

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 now working with with two long-time Microsoft partners; the Youth Emergency Services and Shelter (YESS), and the Science Center of Iowa. Trees Forever is hiring youth from YESS, and the Science Center is donating their space for free for Trees Forever to run education programs. 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 will look forward to seeing the results of the quantified environmental benefits of this project at the end of 2019.