

**FINAL REPORT**  
**FOREST SERVICE GRANT NO. G-5-96-20-083**

**NOTE:** Please review the following information and revise/complete as necessary.

**Issued to:** Our City Forest

**Mailing Address:** 595 Park Avenue, Suite 100, San Jose, CA 95110

**Project Name:** The Impact of Trees on the Sale and Lease of Business Property in San Jose

**Contact Person/Principal Investigator:**

**Name:** Rhonda Berry

**Mailing Address:** Same as above

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**E-Mail Address:**

**Web Site Address (if applicable):**

**Date of Award:** September 9, 1996

**Grant Modifications:** N/A

**Date of Expiration:** December 31, 1997

**Funding:** Federal Share: \$25,000 plus Grantee Share: \$36,000 = Total Project: \$61,000

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**FS Grant Manager:** Sonia Tamez

**Address:** USDA Forest Service, 630 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94111

**Phone Number:** (415) 705-1274

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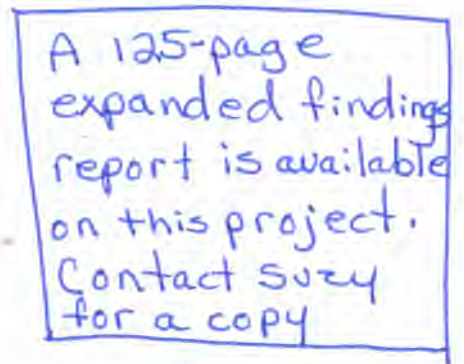
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**Provide an abstract on your project and its results (approximately 200 words):**

This project conducted research to determine how trees impact commercial properties in the San José metropolitan area. A valid methodology to study the relationship between tree cover and the viability of commercial businesses was developed based on the availability of pertinent data. Aerial photos taken in 1971 and 1996 were utilized to measure the tree canopy of 30 shopping centers and 6 downtown areas.

A positive association between business viability and tree cover was found. A high degree of association exists between increased tree cover and the presence of high-end offerings of goods and services. That retail offerings have converted from a local market service base to a broad area market where there are many trees is also a good indication that urban land values in these areas have also greatly increased over the same time period. All obviously successful shopping centers and downtowns have many trees, while poorer shopping centers have few.

Study findings will provide the public with hard data regarding the relationship between trees and commercial business viability. The final products: a written report, a user-friendly informational brochure and a slide presentation - are being utilized by to distribute the findings to various interested audiences. The ultimate impact of the project will be to influence commercial property owners and managers towards a greater appreciation of, and investment in, the urban forests living under their domain.



A 125-page expanded findings report is available on this project. Contact Suzy for a copy.

**Project Objectives:**

This research project was intended to generate data to determine if trees have a measurable financial impact on commercial properties in the San Jose metropolitan area. Objectives/products of study listed below:

- Conduct research - gather data
- Compile/analyze data and prepare report
- Develop layperson's informational brochure
- Develop research project slide presentation
- Develop plan for to present study findings to business community

**Objectives met successfully:**

All objectives were successfully met except for business presentation plan. This plan has been discussed at length but is not finalized.

**Objectives not met:**

Only one objective has not been completed: development of business presentation plan.

Development of this plan to present findings to a business audience is in progress. The tentative plan calls for a two-hour lunchtime presentation to be conducted in October, 1998, to an audience of local commercial property realtors and business owners. This plan will be finalized in August, with invitations going out by the end of that month.

**What have been the major research findings of the project?**

- A high degree of association exists between urban tree cover and the presence of high-end offerings of goods and services.
- Tree plantings form a significant part of all the revitalization efforts in the six downtowns included in the study, which were changed from local neighborhood centers to broad market centers serving a much wider clientele.
- Sylvan ambiance, shown to be of value in improving residential areas, proves to enhance commercial areas as well.
- All obviously successful shopping centers and downtowns have many trees, while poorer shopping centers have few, although a few aberrations are seen.

**How did the project increase the knowledge we have about urban forestry?  
How will the public benefit?**

Little research has been conducted regarding the impact of trees on commercial property, thus, this study helps fill a void in urban forestry research data. The findings offer information and insight to urban foresters, students of urban forestry and business property owners and managers. The easy-to-read brochure will provide the interested layperson with a quick-read and the business forum will provide a friendly, but more in-depth discussion.

Greater appreciation for the value of trees on commercial property should result in decision-making that will enhance the state of urban forests on various commercial properties. In return, and over the long-term, the public as a whole will benefit as increased social, environmental and health benefits are realized.

**What recommendations might you make for community foresters or others who might benefit from your project?**

We recommend that local community foresters familiarize themselves with the study and its findings and use the information to educate their own local commercial property owners, commercial property managers, and business owners.

**What specific quantifiable results were produced?**

Please find enclosed:

1. Final report
2. Hard copy version of slide presentation/photos
3. Copy of brochure

**How were results disseminated to the public?**

1. A presentation of the study findings was conducted for a group of urban forestry volunteers in March, 1998. (summary attached)
2. The final report has been forwarded to a real estate writer at the San José Mercury News.
3. The brochure will be distributed to local, regional and national realtor and business organizations in July, 1998.
4. A forum will be conducted in October, 1998 to an audience of Silicon Valley area business owners and commercial property realtors.

**List the active partners:**

Dr. Richard Ellefsen, Professor of Geography, San José State University  
Cheryl Anderson, San José State University Graduate Student  
Ken Baurmeister, San José State University Graduate Student  
Michael Barbour, San José State University Graduate Student  
Rhonda Berry, Our City Forest President & CEO  
Irma Balderas, Our City Forest Board Chair  
Laurel Prevetti, Our City Forest Board Member  
San José Downtown Association  
Valley Fair Shopping Center - The Hahn Company  
San José Board of Realtors  
San José Metropolitan Area Chamber of Commerce  
San José Mercury News

**Photo or Illustration:**

Many applicable charts and photos, with captions, are contained in the enclosed report.

**If a no-cost time extension was granted for this project, what was it used for?**

Not granted.

**How would you evaluate the grant process?**

Very streamlined and efficient. Some communication problems were resolved, however, in regards to grant reporting process. For example, which office does the grantee keep informed? These have been resolved.

**This report was prepared by:**

Name: Rhonda Berry  
Title: President & CEO  
Phone number: (408) 988-7337  
Date: 06/26/98

# Study concludes trees are a smart investment.

Recent research conducted in California indicates that planting trees is a viable investment for commercial property owners and downtowns.



Foxworthy Shopping Center, 1971.



Foxworthy Shopping Center, 1997.

## The Study

Researchers measured changes in growth and number of trees, the urbanscape, and types of goods sold ("high end" versus "convenience" goods to indicate the amount of revenue generated) for thirty (30) shopping centers and six (6) downtowns in the San Jose Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area for the years 1971 and 1997.

## Businesses Profit from Trees

The study concludes that in most every case where there was a marked increase in tree canopy cover from 1971 to 1997, there was also a marked increase in the number of higher end, more profitable stores.



Downtown Willow Glen, 1997.

Furthermore, a statistical analysis of all types of shopping areas in the study, indicates that as the number of more profitable stores increases, so does the number and size of planted trees.

Although greater tree canopy cover is not the sole determinant, it certainly improves the environmental ambiance, contributing to the business' ability to attract customers and increase revenue.

## Trees Benefit Customers

Customers are attracted to retailer spots that display a sense of community pride. This is typified by downtown Los Gatos, California, which underwent a transformation in 1996 from a largely barren main street into a

beautiful, tree-lined shopping district. The addition of 191 trees and related landscaping improvements created a more welcoming and pleasant atmosphere.

The benefits of trees are well documented in urban forestry literature. Shade canopy, for example, can reduce temperatures up to 10 degrees, helping to mitigate urban heat islands created by the heat absorption of asphalt and cement.

One mature tree can cool the air as much as five air conditioners, creating a more comfortable environment for customers. Finally, what shopper doesn't aim for a tree-shaded parking space when contending with warm weather temperatures?



Popular parking lot, Los Altos, 1997.

Trees also foster a sense of place. Interesting and beautiful landscapes identify a shopping area in the customer's mind, creating a pleasant memory and positive association.



## Optimize your investment

- Proper planting techniques and tree maintenance are essential to insure that you receive the most returns on your investment. Your local tree planting organization or your municipal arborist can provide the technical information you need.
- Planting and caring for trees present opportunities for you to meaningfully connect with customers. Your local tree planting volunteer organization can provide the contacts that you need to involve community members in a successful volunteer tree planting or tree maintenance event.
- Assess the value of your current tree inventory. It's worth more than you may think--as much as 20% of your property's value!

Nonprofit Org  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
San Jose CA  
Permit 2292

## Interested in learning more?

Call Our City Forest

Phone: (408) 998-7337 • Fax: (408) 998-1078

[E-mail: tberry@ourcityforest.org](mailto:tberry@ourcityforest.org)



The research for this Our City Forest project was conducted by a graduate research team from the San Jose State University Geography Department under the leadership of Dr. Richard Ellefsen.

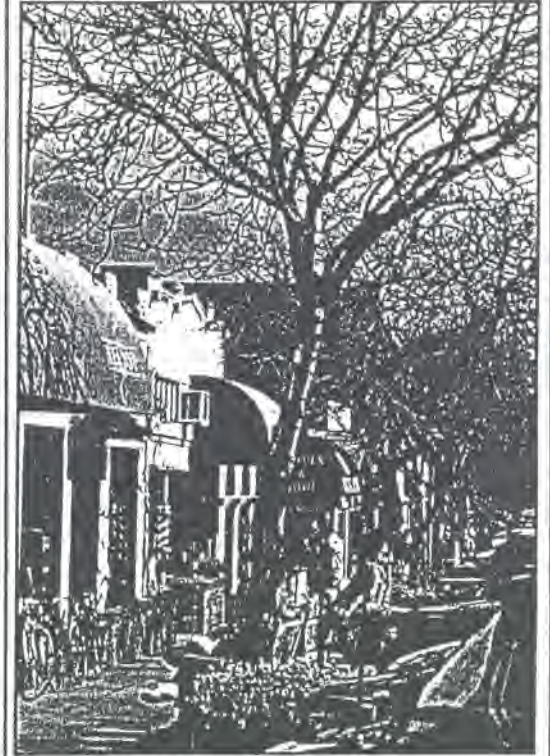
The study was made possible through a grant from the ~~National Urban & Community Forestry Council.~~

USDA Forest Service  
on the recommendation of the  
National Urban and Community  
Forestry Advisory Council

Our City Forest  
595 Park Ave., Ste. 100  
San Jose, CA 95110



TREES...  
they do your  
business good.



Main Street, Los Altos, 1997.



Our City Forest  
San Jose, California

## Limited Use and Copyright Release

As and Advisory Council to the United States Secretary of Agriculture on urban and community forestry, The National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC) strives to bring awareness concerning urban and community forestry activities, products, and materials to interested audiences.

Through the recommendation process for project funding, and through facilitating the dissemination of project information, NUCFAC is helping to fulfill a significant communication need with urban forestry and community forestry audiences, as well as among other interested public and private groups.

To assist NUCFAC in disseminating important information about the products, materials, and activities your project generated, we ask that you sign this release. The intent of the release is to allow NUCFAC and its designated agents to discuss, review, and show project descriptions, results, and impacts with various audiences, organizations, and individuals who could benefit from this knowledge.

The project grantee, (as represented by an official representative and signed below), permits NUCFAC and its designated agents to use, edit, and reproduce findings, research, publications, materials, descriptions, text, electronic representations, graphics, and other similar goods in order to advertise, market, build awareness, and educate the citizens of the United States.

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Signing this release is voluntary and at the complete discretion of the grantee.

Signing, or failure to sign, this form will not be seen, held, or recorded as a negative event.


Signing, or failure to sign, this release will not affect any future decision or recommendation of NUCFAC in a positive or negative way.


NUCFAC is proud of the projects that have been funded and would like to seek permission to show the nation the fruits of cost-share grants partially generated with Federal dollars. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Project Name: The Impact of Trees on the Sale and Leasing of Business Property in San Jose

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Official Project Chief

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed/typed name of signature above

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Forest Service Control Number