

# Daily News

*Los Angeles*

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## **Los Angeles moves nearer to million trees**

BY ANTONIO VILLARAIGOSA

ONE year ago, when the people of Los Angeles joined together to green our communities and combat climate change by planting 1 million trees, there were some who said that this was too ambitious a goal.

That's missing the forest for the trees.

If I've learned one thing in a lifetime of public service, it's that you don't achieve big results by setting minor goals.

After just one year, we've made substantial progress, and we've busted some shovels. Most importantly, we're applying the lessons we've learned along the way.

The Million Trees LA initiative is rooted in the idea that a verdant, leafy canopy will make L.A. more sustainable, more energy-efficient and more beautiful.

As a cooperative effort between the city, the Department of Public Works, community groups, environmental organizations, businesses and individuals, Million Trees LA is part of our larger strategy to transform Los Angeles into the cleanest and greenest big city in America.

It's also an integral part of our comprehensive climate-change action plan, which will reduce greenhouse-gas emissions 35 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

Believe me, we can use the shade!

Our city has just 21 percent canopy cover, six points below the national average. Planting 1 million trees will have a tremendous economic and environmental impact.

Annually, 1 million trees can save \$10 million in energy costs, remove more than 2 million pounds of air pollutants, save \$23 million in air pollution cleanup costs and can capture almost 2 billion gallons of storm water, saving

an estimated \$5 million in storm-water runoff costs alone.

Before Million Trees LA, the city was planting 10,000 trees a year. Since the launch of our program one year ago, we have distributed or planted more than 110,000 trees, and we're forging ahead with thousands more this year and in the years to come.

We're doing more than distributing seedlings. This month, city crews, working with our planting partners, will begin a major planting effort along transit corridors. We are estimating that more than 6,000 trees will be planted on sidewalks by the end of this year.

And in December, we will host the first-ever citywide youth conference on climate change. By enlisting young people in this effort, we are helping to educate a new generation of environmentally aware Angelenos who, along with their future children and grandchildren, will enjoy the many fruits of an urban forest.

One of the things we've learned is that we need to do a better job counting and tracking our work. We are putting in place a comprehensive inventory system that will tell us where every tree in the city is located, from the newly planted to natives, even including dead trees and others in need of replacing. This new system will offer a database accessible to all of our partners so that we can all keep a reliable accounting of the city's trees.

These sustained efforts, along with continued involvement from Angelenos everywhere, should put us on track to reach our 1 million goal in less than 10 years' time.

We can't do it without engaging people in every community and every corner of Los Angeles. Already, Million Trees LA has received a tremendous outpouring of support, with more people signing on every day. Spurred by a sense of civic pride and a desire to take back our urban environment, residents from the harbor to the Valley are embracing Million Trees LA and they're enjoying the benefits.

A family that plants four trees near its home can save up to 30 percent on summer cooling costs once the trees mature. People are learning that by going green, we can grow the green in our wallets and bank accounts!

As public and private trees are counted along the way, we will continue to

engage the public, spread the word citywide and target low-canopy areas so that the entire city enjoys the shade. Above all, we are committed to making this program successful and sustainable.

All around the world, cities are recognizing our moral obligation to take action to fight global warming, and I am proud that Los Angeles is taking the lead.

Working together, we have an opportunity to sow the seeds for an extraordinary environmental legacy, one that will give back to Angelenos for generations to come.

Antonio Villaraigosa is the mayor of Los Angeles. For more information on Million Trees LA, see [www.milliontreesla.org](http://www.milliontreesla.org).

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