



NEW YORK CITY

***Embracing Opportunities for Tree
Huggers and Sawmillers***



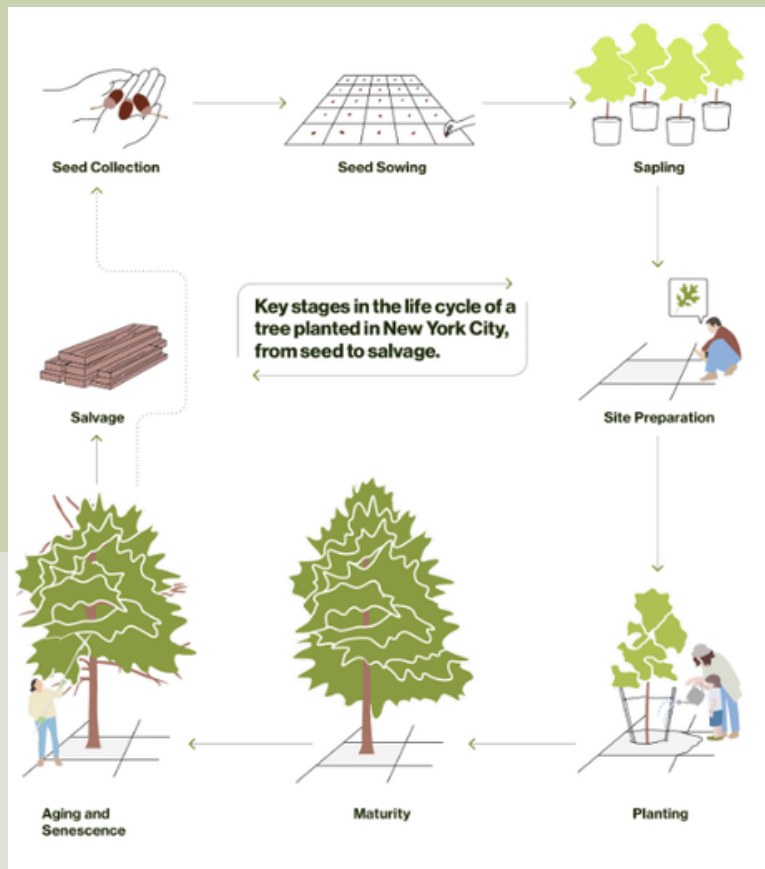
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Something amazing happened earlier this year. On April 21st, the [first ever Urban Forest Plan](#) was released for New York City. The [plan](#) is described as “ a comprehensive roadmap to preserve tree canopy, plant more trees, and cultivate an ecosystem of stewardship”. A roadmap with guideposts for goals from “seed to salvage” (Figure 1).

The NYC Urban Forest Plan represents a historic shift in how one of the world’s most complex megacities understands, manages, and invests in trees - providing a unified, long-term strategy to steward the urban forest as critical [green infrastructure](#), [public health infrastructure](#), and [community infrastructure](#). The plan was announced by the Mayor and positions the urban forest as an essential system.

Figure 1. Life Cycle of a New York City Tree from Seed to Salvage



Source: [NYC UFP 2026](#).

The Urban Forest Plan defines the urban forest as the network of trees, soils, vegetation, and ecological relationships that span public and private land. This definition recognizes that the urban forest includes street trees and parks, as well as backyards, campuses, cemeteries, natural areas, wetlands, waterways, and woodlands.

An additional significance of the NYC plan is the embrace of wood salvage and wood reuse related industries. This element completes the life cycle of the forest and creates new opportunities for communities to honor the gifts of neighborhood trees. The concept of products from urban trees includes programs for [food forests](#) and [fruit gleaning](#), and many communities have [urban wood programs](#) and local [urban wood producing companies](#). These efforts strengthen the connections between people and nature, expand stewardship responsibilities to all stages of natural cycles, and create opportunities for entrepreneurship, job creation, and cultural growth.

By acknowledging the economic, environmental, and cultural potential of salvaged urban wood, New York City is in the middle of the growing national movement that sees urban wood utilization as an ecological solution, a workforce opportunity, and a circular-economy strategy (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Wood Reuse and Related Industries Goal in the NYC UFP

Lead(s) DSNY	3.7 Explore expanding wood reuse citywide and foster new related industries.
Collaborator(s) NYC Parks, DDC, EDC, community composters, nonprofit organizations, community groups, and circular economy industries	The City will explore expanding the existing NYC Parks and DSNY wood recovery and salvage partnership to efficiently serve the entire city through strategic colocation of milling, chipping, composting, and biochar production operations. Resources reclaimed from the urban forest can be transformed and sold as timber, woodchips, mulch, compost, and biochar. Through this action, the City will explore ways to generate a consistent revenue stream from City wood waste recycling that can be used for tree care and maintenance and increase the distribution of mulch to those who steward trees. As reuse and salvage operations expand, there are opportunities to invest in economic development and workforce opportunities for wood reuse industries, and explore circular construction guidelines as an opportunity to incentivize the use of locally salvaged wood products in City projects.
Timeline Short term (< 5 years)	



Trees in autumn
NAC

NYC Urban Forest Plan **58**

Source: [NYC UFP 2026.](#)

Recognition of wood salvage, urban wood utilization, and related circular-economy industries in the NYC UFP is a major milestone for the urban wood movement, which has long demonstrated the sustainability benefits when cities [stop treating wood as just another waste product](#).

Anyone who lives in a city knows that urban trees eventually come down due to age, storms, pests, or development (spoiler alert, the same things eventually happen with suburban and rural trees too :). Historically, trees in our communities have been chipped, landfilled, or burned without energy recovery. Yet wood from community trees (just like wood from across the landscape) offers additional opportunities for residents, economies, and environments. Where the conditions are right, the concept of “trees first; wood next” is a space to embrace, as advocated for by the [Urban Wood Network](#).

By naming wood salvage in their Urban Forest Plan, New York City signals that the lifecycle of urban trees extends beyond their standing years - a logical next chapter in the city's long history of urban forestry (Figure 3).

The plan's recognition of wood salvage creates opportunities for:

- Local sawmills and fabrication shops
- Artisans and makers
- Architects and designers
- Mass timber and engineered wood innovators
- Workforce training programs
- Deconstruction and material recovery businesses

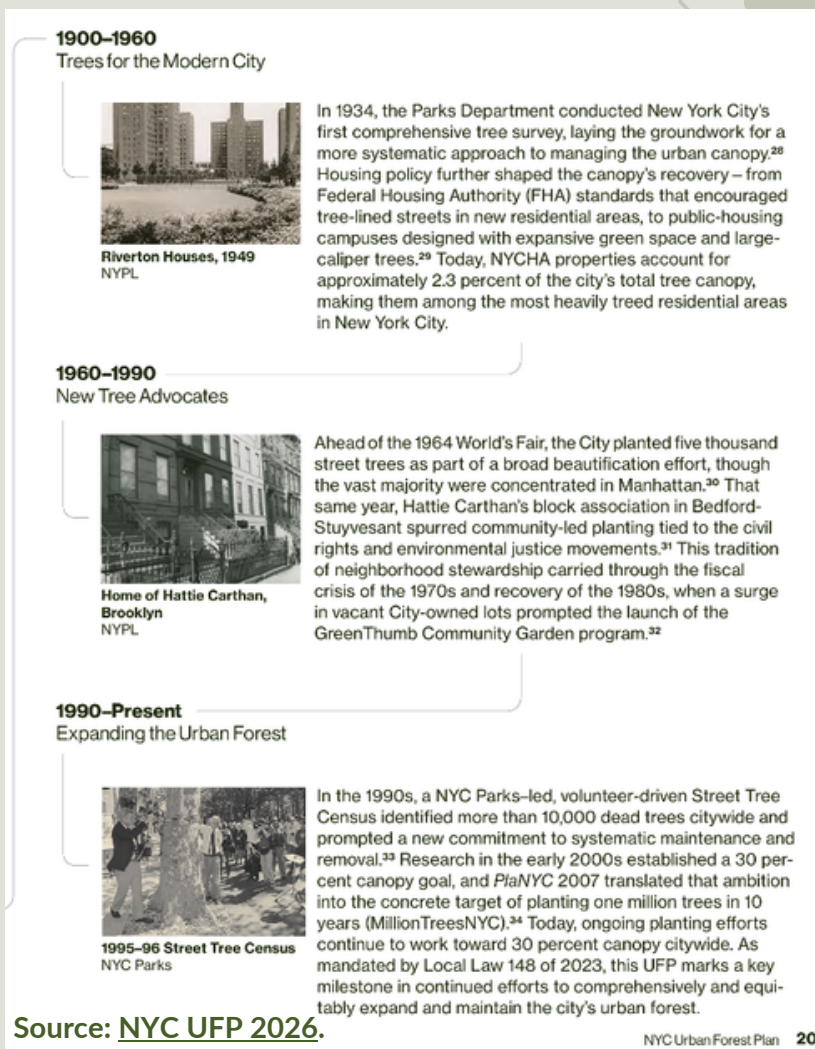
In cities like [Baltimore](#), [Denver](#), [Minneapolis](#), and [Milwaukee](#) partners have demonstrated that urban wood industries create jobs, support small businesses, and keep materials local - sometimes in the form of [fine furniture](#) and [exquisite guitars](#). New York City's scale of impact and vibrant design community make it uniquely positioned to lead by example and contribute to the growth of the urban wood trend.

To fully realize benefits of salvaged wood in urban forest plans, cities can integrate salvage into:

- Tree removal contracts
- Procurement policies
- Public building projects
- Community economic development strategies
- Climate and circular-economy initiatives

An Urban Forest Plan lays the groundwork for these innovations by including the value of urban wood and the industries that support it.

Figure 3. New York City Urban Forest History





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