

Community Forestry Grants Sep2024

General Information

Project Title*

Provide a uniquely descriptive and brief title for this project. Use this full title consistently on all submission communications and documents.

El Paso County Parks Tree Canopy Project

Applicant Information ▾

Provide information for the Organization or Entity Applying.

Name of Organization*

El Paso County

Street Address*

500 E. San Antonio

237

City*

El Paso

State*

TX

Zip Code*

79901

Mailing Address (if different)

Organization's Federal Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)*

GJJHZSZVQWR6

Organization's Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN)*

74-6000762

Type of Applicant*

Municipality



Utility District



Non-Profit



State Agency



Non-Governmental Organization



Tribal Entity



School District



Higher Education Institution



Community-Based Organization

Partnering Organization*

None.

Contact Person Information ▾

Provide information for a Contact Person for this project.

Name*

Tim Fulton

Title*

Parks Recreation Director

Email*

t.fulton@epcounty.com

Phone*

(915) 273-3501

Project Information ▼

Please refer to the Application Worksheet on our webpage for further instructions and clarification.

Project Overview*

Provide a succinct and relevant summary that can be easily understood and clearly communicate the importance of the project. This summary should include project background, location, community need for the project, high level goals, and partnerships.

El Paso County has a 5% tree canopy this falls far below the national average of 24%. The air quality in El Paso County is ranked 14th worst out of 227 cities. Studies show that spending time around trees reduces stress and anxiety, lowers blood pressure, and improves mood and that urban green spaces provide community social cohesion. El Paso County will be planting 350 trees in three neighborhood parks. Gallegos Park, located at 7361 Bosque Rd 79835, Canutillo, is a 62.6-acre park that suffers from runoff. Agua Dulce Park, located at 15371 Kentwood 79928, is a 9.1-acre park that needs shade coverage. Ascarate Park, located at 6900 Delta Drive 79905, is 407.8 acres. The locations identified for this proposal notably lack tree coverage, the surrounding neighborhoods suffer from severe flooding due to runoff from heavy rains and two are in unincorporated areas. Increasing tree canopy in these areas will lower air pollutants, improve physical and mental health and engage the community.



Goals and Objectives*

Describe what you plan to accomplish. Context should clearly identify priority landscapes and issues that are the focus of the project. Goals and objectives should be explicitly explained and linked to the specific grant category. Objectives should be realistic, measurable and attainable within the contract period.

El Paso County ranks 134 out of 254 Texas counties in terms of community-wide health factors. This grant will provide assistance to create equitable access to trees and green spaces in urban areas. A goal is to expand the tree canopy in El Paso County by 201,011 sq. ft. Trees remove tons of air pollution from the surrounding areas, being mindful to plant trees for low allergy impact. They improve shade coverage, and lower the heat index. El Paso County Parks and Rec department aims to engage with the community on the importance of trees, their impact and benefit to their well-being.

The Parks and Rec. department determined the parks based on their proximity to the surrounding neighborhood, the anticipated residential growth rate, optimal success in maintaining healthy trees, and, how barren the parks are. The strategy to ensure the success of healthy trees is to install a water drip irrigation system in each of the parks; this system will ensure that the trees get adequate water. Plant trees during the optimal tree planting time for El Paso County that is between November and March. Conduct seven tree-planting events during this time; each event will teach volunteers how to plant and the importance of trees. The El Paso County Volunteer Coordinator will coordinate these events. Only trees native to El Paso County and on the approved tree list will be planted. The objectives are to plant trees native to the El Paso County region, including Chinquapin Oak, Mexican White Oak, Arizona Ash, Raywood Ash, Chinese Pistache, Texas Red Oak, Live Oak, Lacebark Elm, and Western Soapberry.

The success of the El Paso County Tree Canopy project will start at the onset of the grant, with the coordination of the volunteers to help plant the trees. The success of each tree growth success rate will then be measured. The El Paso sun and heat can reach 110 degrees and negatively impact any new planting. The health of each tree will be determined after the first summer.

Proposed Activities*

Clearly describe with specificity, activities to be completed with grant funds and leveraged resources. Link specific project activities to funding amounts in the Project Budget and to stated project goals and objectives. Clearly describe the match fund sources and what their uses will be.

El Paso Parks with assistance from the El Paso Volunteer Coordinator will plan for seven events throughout the life of the grant from November 2025 to March 2026. Each event will be promoted in the communities in which the trees will be planted. The events will be advertised via media blast and through flyers. In the past when Parks and Rec had events they would average between 50 to 100 volunteers depending on size of project. Time and labor will be used as In-Kind the amount will be determined based each events needs. Typically the event will run about 4 hours, using 50 volunteers for the smaller projects that would equal \$ 6,698.00. For larger events upward towards 100 volunteers may be used that amount would equal \$13,396.00 per event. The volunteer hours are tracked through sign in sheets. The Parks and Rec department will use their equipment as In-Kind. Using the equipment to pre-dig the planting holes and install the drip irrigation lines for all locations and provide the maintenance of the 350 trees there after. Two of the three parks are in unincorporated areas, and the El Paso County government has the role of parks and recreation provider for the residents of unincorporated portions of the county.

- 175 trees will be planted in Ascarate Park - by planting 175 medium-sized trees at the designated 20 feet apart, these trees would cover 3,500 sq ft. There are over 1,145 dwelling units are located within ¼ miles. Trees will provide shade to covered picnic tables without shaded trees.
- 125 will be planted in Gallegos Park. By planting 125 medium-sized trees at the designated 20 feet apart, these trees will cover 2,500 sq ft. Trees will provide shade along walk trails and benches. It serves as the immediate neighborhood park for residents living in over 122 dwelling units within ¼ miles of the park. There is an overall lack of trees and landscaping around the park.
- 50 trees Aqua Dulce Park - In 2016, Agua Dulce improvements included playground updates, perimeter sidewalks, and benches. By planting 50 medium-sized trees at the designated 20 feet apart, these trees will cover 1000 sq ft. The existing skate park is lighted but unshaded

Deliverables, Timeline, Outputs, Outcomes*

Describe the timeline for this project in detail. Clearly lay out deliverables and outcomes and describe how the selected objectives will lead to measurable outcomes and how the

applicant will measure progress towards those outcomes.

- What is the benefit to the community and/or state?
- What need or issue will it solve?
- How visible will it be to the community?
- What is the public relations impact and how will it increase public awareness?
- Will the program or project continue after the grant expires?
- Outline the proposed Timeline for this project. **All funds must be encumbered by December 2027.**

In 2018, the El Paso County Parks and Recreation Department created a Master Park plan to keep following the National Recreation and Parks Association ideology that parks are essential in enhancing the three pillars of a community's well-being. Those pillars are health and wellness, connecting children to nature and engaging communities, and the third pillar is social equity, ensuring all people have access to the benefits of local parks and recreation. Globally, trees mitigate climate change, decrease the urban heat effect in densely populated areas, and supply us with life-sustaining oxygen. Environmental health scientists have found epidemiological evidence of a link between trees and human health. Research has shown that cities with higher percentages of tree canopy cover are healthier and have more active community members. Trees in urban areas help reduce harms such as ultraviolet rays, air-pollution-related respiratory conditions, and heat-stress-related incidents. Vegetation provides positive benefits; El Paso would see a dramatic impact with the implementation of the tree canopies due to the dry and hot climate of the Chihuahuan desert and southwest region. El Paso County is the westernmost county in the state of Texas. It straddles the Rio Grande Valley and shares a border with Mexico and New Mexico. El Paso County is one of the fastest-warming metro areas in the United States; however, it has a 5% tree canopy coverage. El Paso falls far below the national average of 24% and has less canopy coverage than other neighboring Southwest communities such as Albuquerque, NM, Phoenix, AZ, and Tucson, AZ.

Ascarate Park will increase its tree canopy to cover 3,500 square feet, once these trees mature, they will provide a noise barrier to Loop 375, they will improve the air quality, and increase the usage of park, the golf course and the lake. The communities of Gallegos and Agua Dulce will be able to see the difference and feel it, as the tree canopies will continue to improve the air quality: trees absorb carbon dioxide, a gas that contributes to climate change. In addition, they help reduce the amount of ozone in the air. The shade areas will increase public access for social activities, thereby boosting a sense of community in underserved areas of El Paso County. The trees will lower surface and air temperatures, which will improve mental health, and physical well-being by reducing heat related illnesses. This will engage the community giving them more time to spend outdoors. Improve the targeted areas' public spaces, improving their social connections and mental health.

The timeline for this project is as follows: From award to the first three months, follow the El Paso County procurement process to purchase the 350 trees. Start working with the Volunteer Coordinator to create a calendar of events for each park spread out through the life of the grant to ensure there is enough County staff available to prepare the park areas.

Describe how the project results in outcomes that extend beyond the life of the project itself. Outline a plan for management that will ensure the success of the project long-term. Provide rationale for why dollars invested will sustain project outcomes into the future beyond project end date.

Environmental studies show that excess air pollution can lead to airway inflammation and reduced lung function. Trees in parks can help reduce air pollutants and reducing air temperature. Heat also directly affects human health; studies have shown a consistent association between increased temperatures and heat-related deaths and illnesses. Trees provide micro-cooling through evapotranspiration and shade. Trees can significantly impact the heat index, thereby reducing the stress and other physical and mental stresses caused by increased temperatures. Trees provide micro-cooling through evapotranspiration and shade. A poll was administered that asked residents of El Paso County what they deemed most important for quality of life. They asked for covered picnic areas and recreational areas. The outcomes from this will provide tree planting training to community members and create engagement with their parks and recreation department. The El Paso County Parks & Recreation Department will be the principal responsible for irrigation and maintenance, and this will be done by the El Paso County Parks department staff. These trees will provide shade, aid runoff, and improve the quality of life for the residents of those communities.

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Community Need*

Project supports Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, the Forest Service's Equity Action Plan, and the Texas Forest Action Plan. The project should include the following elements: A description of the benefiting community or recipient. For example, a description could include demographics, such as race or socioeconomic status; or vulnerabilities such as health, economic, environmental, and climate impacts faced by the community. Data or evidence should support the proposal. Applicants may consider utilizing the national tools and datasets listed below or provide more localized knowledge such as tribal, local, or state data, to describe the populations and conditions that the project proposes to benefit. A description of how the project benefits or engages underserved communities or people. Benefits may be social, ecological, or economic and should include:

- An overview of the targeted community and partners engaged in the project; and how they will be impacted by the project.
- Quantitative and qualitative description of how communities will be engaged to participate in/benefit from the project.

These trees will aid in heat reduction and allow the residents of this area to benefit physically and mentally from the park and its amenities. The population growth in the unincorporated portions of the County has increased fueling a greater reliance on El Paso County to provide access to parks and recreation. Two of the three Park locations are in unincorporated areas of the County. In the Gallegos Park area, the population is 12,690, and there are many single adults and single-parent households. The median home value is \$61,400, and the median household income is \$29,799.00. Residents in zip code 79835 earn less than in other parts of town. There are three elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school in the surrounding neighborhoods. The 12,690 residents of this zip code will benefit mentally, physically, and emotionally from the newly planted tree canopy. In the Aqua Dulce Park area, the population is 49,544. Medium home value is \$111,800.00, while median household income is \$48,251.00. The park is adjacent to the Agua Dulce Colonia but is surrounded on three sides by undeveloped land. There are 81 dwelling units within a ¼ mile of the park. There are two school districts are in the 79928- zip code. The area has eight elementary schools, two middle schools, and five high schools. Primary amenities at Agua Dulce Park include covered picnic tables and playscapes, a sports court, a multipurpose field, and a skate park. The third park chosen is in the County, however it runs along Loop 375 a major highway in El Paso, the noise and carbon monoxide are harmful to human health. Ascarate Park area is in the south-central El Paso. The population is 26,036. The 79905-area code is made up of primarily senior citizens and small families. The homes are older; the area was built in the 1940s. The median home value is \$78,700. The median household income is \$19,455.00. The area has eight elementary schools, two middle schools, and four high schools.

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Collaboration*

Proposals should demonstrate use of coordination and partnerships with local or state entities to improve outcomes.

- Describes how the project is collaborative and clearly identifies partners that are actively engaged and add value towards project planning and implementation.
- Cultivates organization of partners around common goals/objectives.

Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service - they assist with training volunteers on proper planting techniques. They also assist with tree selection and tree locations. We also use UTEP, EPCC, Ft. Bliss and surrounding school districts to provide volunteers for tree planting events. These groups have been committed to work with the El Paso County Parks and Recreation department in any and all tree planting events.

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