



## City Forest Credits Planting Project Application

*Note to applicants: within six months of approval of your application, you must submit the following documents to City Forest Credits (the "Registry"):*

- *One or more high-resolution photo to include on project page on Registry website*
- *Project Design Document*
- *Declaration of Ownership of Land – applicable when the Project Operator owns the land where project trees are planted*
- *Or, Agreement to Transfer Potential Credits – agreement signed by property owner, applicable when the Project Operator does not own the land upon which the trees are planted*
- *Project Implementation Agreement – contract with City Forest Credits*

### **1. Project Name**

*Name of City, Town, or County, and whether this is a planting or preservation project. For example, Shoreline, WA - Ballinger Open Space Planting Project)*

Travis County Floodplain Reforestation Program

### **2. Project Type**

Riparian Planting

### **3. Project Location**

*Name of City, Town, or County where project is located*

Travis County, TX

### **4. Project Operator**

*Name of organization/entity, and contact information. May have multiple project operators or contacts.*

*Organization:* TreeFolks

*Address:* P.O. Box 1395

*City:* Del Valle

*State:* TX

*Zip:* 78617-1395

*Contact(s):* Ina Alexatos

## **5. Project Description**

*This will be visible to the public on your project page on the Registry website.*

TreeFolks, Austin Office of Sustainability, Austin Watershed Protection Department, and Travis County are launching the Travis County Floodplain Reforestation Program to restore healthy forest buffers of local rivers and streams in eastern Travis County. Carbon+ credits generated from this project will be sold to the City of Austin to help meet the city's 2020 carbon neutrality goal. Using funds allocated for carbon offsets to purchase local credits from these riparian plantings keeps the City of Austin's investments localized while addressing global climate change.

The pilot and program, both operated by TreeFolks, will reforest floodplain on public and private lands. TreeFolks will work with volunteers and youth service organizations to plant native saplings and provide the reforestation services to private owners free of charge. These services include, for those applicants who choose to participate and are selected, free trees, free planting services, and free consultations.

The project will encompass 92 acres total, of which 73 are privately owned and the rest owned by the City of Austin or Travis County. We will be planting over 50,000 saplings at 8' x 10' spacing, in order to provide canopy style coverage in these riparian zones.

## **6. Project Benefits**

*Examples include equity for underserved or disadvantaged communities, flood control, open space preservation, watershed protection, human health, bird or wildlife habitat, etc. This will be visible to the public on your project page on the Registry website.*

The tree planting projects will increase canopy cover and diversity in an ecosystem that needs help. The City of Austin Watershed Protection Department recently concluded that diverse wooded corridors along creeks and riparian zones here are rare.

The reforestation project also serves to engage local community members with the environment, complementing Austin's participation in the Biophilic Cities Network and the Children and Nature collaborative, and aligning with citywide green infrastructure efforts. Reforesting Austin's local stream corridors will create lasting change, both within the city limits and across eastern Travis County floodplains.

## **7. Total trees planted and planting-approach**

*Single-tree, canopy, or riparian*

Riparian; 50,000 seedlings

Planting occurs during the winter months (Nov-Feb) through volunteer events or contracted labor. Planting is done on an 8' x 10' grid-like system with only 25% of the seedlings expected to reach maturity. The dense planting accounts for such a high mortality rate due to the fact that the seedlings are not cared for once planted. This method is called the Rapid Riparian Revegetation method (Guillozet et al., 2014) and it is intended to speed up the rate of natural recruitment by mimicking nature and

adding native woody competition. Over time, the grasses and shrubs that initially take over the riparian area begin to lend way to other (more permanent) species that make up the future riparian forest. Sites will be chosen for reforestation if the planting area is within a floodplain, not already forested, and not be a highly-incised bank (due to lack of connection to the water table).

**8. Does your project fall within an Urban Area mapped by the U.S. Census Bureau, or within the boundaries of a city or town?** (Click here for Census Bureau mapping information).

<https://www.census.gov/geographies/reference-maps/2010/geo/2010-census-urban-areas.html>

Within an Urban Area

Within a city or town

**9. Additional Information**

*Examples include project goals, work with other stakeholders, etc. This will be visible to the public on your project page on the Registry website.*

*Partnerships.* Strong partnerships with Travis County and City of Austin has meant regular and substantive support as we go about implementing the program. We have had the support of County and City administrations as we begin talks for program funding sustainability. The City of Austin’s Watershed Protection Department has been regularly available for technical assistance in addition to providing a \$55,000 match. This initiative is funded in part by the Nature Conservancy in partnership with the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

*Outreach.* Initial outreach on behalf of the program was smooth. Data from Travis County Appraisal District was used to identify eligible parcels, with an initial batch of 119 parcels identified by our City of Austin partners as most desirable due to the lack of canopy cover along the riparian/floodplain area. From the Travis County 100-year floodplain database, 954 additional parcels were selected for their Farm and Ranch Improvement designation (as to avoid sending mailers to highly urban residential or commercial lots). Direct mailers were prepared for all 1,073 parcels and sent on 12/15/18.

Other outreach methods included active outreach to community groups including Wilbarger Creek Conservation Alliance, Pines and Prairies Land Trust, Austin-Bastrop River Corridor Partnership, Gilleland Creek Neighborhood Association, and the Colorado River Land Trust. “Campaign-style” highway signs were developed and deployed in areas near rural street intersections, and some were also given to program participants to advertise their participation and encourage neighbors to do the same. Finally, the program received press in the form of articles published in Texas Living Waters, Biophilic Cities, City Lab, and Pacific Standard.