



NEBRASKA

Nebraska Forest Service

Community forests provide a multitude of economic, ecological, and health benefits for all Nebraskans. When blighted areas in the state can be transitioned to areas with healthy & resilient forests, the public reaps the overall benefits. Over the years, the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS), along with the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum (a state non-profit), have supported many people and projects helping transform these blighted areas into a wealth of health.

Scottsbluff, Nebraska is a community of 14,700 people in the far western part of the state, with annual rainfall averages around 15 inches. Approximately eight years ago, the city planner wanted to solve several problems including stormwater pollution, heat islands, blighted parking lots, and overall downtown aesthetics. With the use of grant dollars, and in partnership with the public works department, the first bioswale was installed. For example, pavement was removed from a parking lot with the goals of reducing runoff from the paved surfaces, capturing the rainfall, and utilizing the captured rainfall to help water trees and associated planting material.

Over the years, this community has continued to revitalize parking lots—over eight in total—along with blighted roadsides. What was once a very gray

downtown is now green and full of life, hosting pollinators like bees and butterflies. Trees have served an integral part of each of these projects. More recently, the city removed pavement along the main street to allow for tree planting and improve the overall aesthetics of their downtown community.

Schuyler, Nebraska is a small community of 6,330 people in northeastern Nebraska. Thirty years ago, the original site of what is now the Jim Kluck Memorial Arboretum, was a polluted and abandoned railroad line that was turned into a beautiful green space. At that time, the community created a green space featuring trees appropriate for the area. This Nebraska community has continued their effort by recently completing a huge project,

that will improve the connectivity and accessibility of this green space. While trees were helping improve the environmental health of the area, many residents could not access the site. Now a wide, paved walking trail provides a space for all to enjoy. People from the adjacent local senior center spend time walking and gathering. These efforts will continue to live on as there is a renewed group of tree stewards committed to pruning, watering, planting, and fostering this site.



1. Jim Kluck Memorial Arboretum. 2. Scottsbluff Downtown Planting. Photo Credit: NFS.