

# Community Forests: A path to prosperity and connection

## URBAN FOOD FOREST AT BROWNS MILL

### NOTABLE BENEFITS



FOREST-BASED PRODUCTS



EDUCATION

ACRES: 7.1

YEAR ESTABLISHED: 2019

OWNERSHIP: City of Atlanta

MANAGEMENT: City of Atlanta,  
Department of Parks and Recreation

COMMUNITY SERVED: City of Atlanta

POPULATION: 506,811

TOTAL ACQUISITION COST:  
\$172,300

FUNDING BREAKDOWN:



Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

Cost Share

For a comprehensive review of the community and economic benefits provided by this forest and others, go to the full report at [www.tpl.org/economic-benefits-community-forests](http://www.tpl.org/economic-benefits-community-forests)

SHANNON LEE



Once a thriving family farm flanked by stately pecan trees in the '70s and '80s, the **Browns Mill** property was almost cleared of trees and converted to townhomes in the mid-2000s. The development fell through and once again the property sat abandoned and neglected for more than a decade. But, signs of its agrarian past still peeked through, as the property continued to produce blackberries, muscadines, mulberries, walnuts, and pecans. While wildlife may have enjoyed the abundance, the local community saw it as overgrown, vacant, and blighted. Meanwhile, residents of the surrounding area, who are mostly African American with 36 percent living below the poverty line, lacked access to healthy food.

Working together, the City of Atlanta and The Conservation Fund, partnered with the U.S. Forest Service Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (CFP) to protect this urban forest as part of the City of Atlanta's efforts to bring healthy food within a half mile of 85 percent of Atlanta residents by 2022.

THE CONSERVATION FUND







**Generating opportunities for agroforestry:**

Through a collaborative and community-centered approach, more than 15 public agencies, nonprofit partners, private funders, and most importantly, community-based organizations and neighborhood

residents, came together to create a vision for this space. Plans included fresh nuts, fruits, vegetables, and herbs, as well as space for recreation and educational activities. Partners at Trees Atlanta and Greening Youth Foundation supported

implementation of the Community Vision Plan through multiple workforce opportunities, which have employed residents in the planning, construction, maintenance, and activation of this community forest.

To date, more than 2,500 new edible plants have been installed and 30 raised beds have been built and are stewarded by lifelong residents who lead the Browns Mill Community Garden. Two orchard areas have been cleared and planted with hundreds of fruit trees. A hoop house has been constructed, rain gardens and green infrastructure now retain and repurpose stormwater, trails have been cleared and established across the site, and a new permeable parking area has been added.



STACY FUNDENBURKE

**Enhancing education:** While it will take some time before the new fruit trees and shrubs reach maturity and begin producing in abundance, there has already been significant production from the community garden beds, and even fresh honey from onsite beehives. None of this would be possible without the support from the community and more than 1,000 residents, students, and corporate partners that have committed time to the project—valued at more than **\$25,860**. One such partner is the Friends of the Food Forest, a community-based organization supporting programming focused on gardening, cooking, nature, and healthy habits. Partnerships with local schools have also connected hundreds of students to the Food Forest for STEM-based, outdoor learning and environmental education.



STACY FUNDENBURKE

This project was completed in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and would not have been possible without generous support from the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities and the U.S. Forest Service.

The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

[www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org)

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