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**City of Muncie Awarded $2 Million Grant to Continue Urban Reforestation Efforts**

Trees play a critical role in air quality, property value, soil erosion and runoff prevention, temperature regulation, quality of life, and more. In 2020, Mayor Dan Ridenour announced the Thousand Trees in a Thousand Days initiative, aimed to aggressively combat the declining urban canopy in Muncie. The initiative, which has received recognition in other states and won Muncie a Tree City USA Growth Award from the Arbor Day Foundation, will successfully plant it’s 1,000th native tree this fall. This, however, is just the first step towards expanding the “Cathedral of Green” in Muncie.

This morning, the US Forest Service announced the winners of a competitive $1.5 Billion grant designed for reforestation in disadvantaged urban areas. Muncie received $2 million, the third highest award granted in the state of Indiana. The project, entitled “Rooted in Community,” was spearheaded by Special Projects Manager Delaney Fritch, in collaboration with other municipal departments.

The award will support efforts to help neighborhoods get involved in tree plantings, especially on the south, central, and northeast regions of the city. Efforts will focus on native tree species and sustainability plans to ensure that the trees grow to maturity and flourish.

“It’s often said that the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago, and the second best time is today,” commented Mayor Ridenour. “Decades from now, Muncie will be enjoying the immense benefits of a full tree canopy.”