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## Press Release

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### **3,330 Trees Planted As Houston Celebrates Arbor Day and 30 Years as a Tree City USA**

**Tree City USA is an Arbor Day Foundation Program Recognizing Cities' Commitment to Public Trees**

Houston will celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Tree City USA this Arbor Day, January 30, 2016. Mayor Sylvester Turner, the Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.), and dozens of volunteers will meet at the entrance to Blackhawk Park, 9401 Fuqua, at 8:30 a.m. to celebrate this accomplishment by planting 300 trees in the esplanades in the 8500 – 9900 blocks of Fuqua, near Blackhawk Park. The event brings the total trees planted during this Arbor Day season to 3,330 trees planted in recognition of Houston's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Tree City USA.

"It is always an inspiration to see citizens get out and volunteer their time and energy," said Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner. "Planting trees is a true testament to our faith in the future, to our citizens and to our city as a great place for all Houstonians."

Houston's Parks and Recreation Department has been the steward for the city's trees since its creation one hundred years ago. This annual Arbor Day celebration marks the first event in the department's 100 year anniversary of Houston's parks.

"In 2016, the Houston Parks and Recreation Department will celebrate its hundredth anniversary in providing and stewarding Houston's parks and urban forest," said Joe Turner, Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department. "In the same spirit and foresight that early city leaders had in creating greenspaces and parks for the future, the volunteers who come together every year for Arbor Day do their part for the shade trees of tomorrow and the next hundred years."

Since 1986, the Arbor Day Foundation has awarded Houston the Tree City USA honor every year. The department's official Arbor Day Season, October 2015 through February 2016, coincides with the optimum tree planting time for the Houston area. During this time, volunteers have assisted the department in planting 3,330 trees in honor of Houston's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as an Arbor Day Foundation Tree City USA. H.P.A.R.D.'s Urban Forester, Victor Cordova, has been involved with Arbor Day throughout his Houston career.

“Urban forests are constantly evolving vital parts of a city’s ecosystem that benefit the health and quality of life for the city and its residents,” said Victor Cordova, Houston Parks and Recreation Department Urban Forester. “As a forester, I am thankful that Houstonians share a commitment to our city’s tree canopy by volunteering every year during the Arbor Day Season to get up early on a weekend and plant trees as a gift to future generations.”

The Arbor Day Foundation is a 501c3 non-profit organization that exists to inspire people to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees. Its starting point was an 1872 statewide tree-planting day in Nebraska, which resulted in an estimated 1,000,000 new trees. Tree City USA has been a program of the Arbor Day Foundation since 1976. Houston has consistently met the standards of the program by passing a tree care ordinance, maintaining a professional tree care staff, maintaining a budget of at least \$2.00 per capita for tree care, and holding an annual Arbor Day celebration.

*The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) stewards and manages over 37,859 acres of parkland and greenspace for the City of Houston and develops and implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities. For more information on the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (832) 395-7022 or visit [www.houstonparks.org](http://www.houstonparks.org).*