

Equitable Street Tree Investment Strategy

INTRODUCTION

The City of Pittsburgh has an uneven distribution of urban forest resources. As a result, many neighborhoods are deprived of the benefits provided by trees, including improvements in air quality, reduced stormwater runoff, reduced heat island effect, energy savings, increased sense of community, habitat for wildlife and the creation of economic opportunities provided by the urban forest. African American and low-income neighborhoods are disproportionately impacted.

GOAL

The Pittsburgh Shade Tree Commission's Equitable Street Tree Investment Strategy will identify low income/low canopy neighborhoods, support education and increased awareness on the value of the urban forest, develop tree care infrastructure, plant trees, and adopt and fund maintenance schedules for trees in these neighborhoods in order to improve the quality of life for current and future residents.

OBJECTIVES

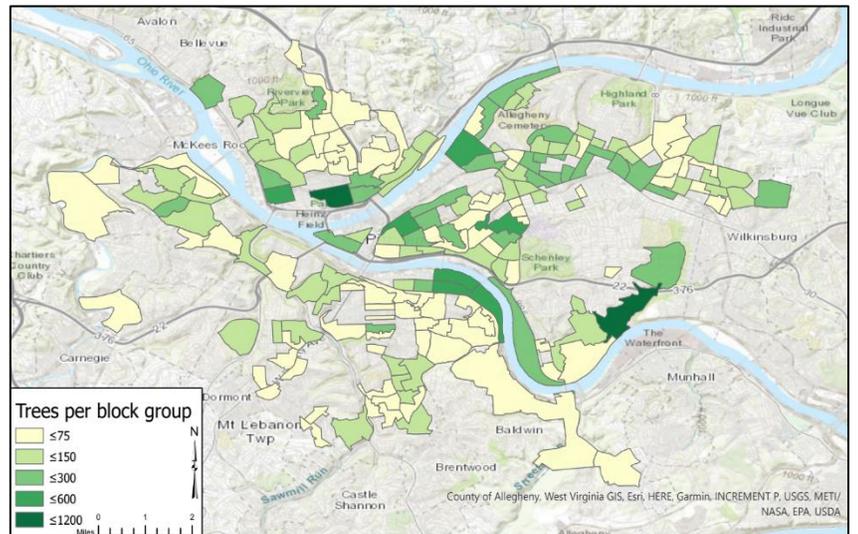
PHASE 1

2021

Identify neighborhoods needing investment

- The Shade Tree Commission will use available data to identify neighborhoods where a history of underinvestment has led to adverse health outcomes, systemic under and unemployment, and increased vulnerability to climate change.
- The Shade Tree Commission will, within the identified neighborhoods, prioritize investment efforts considering community capacity, environmental and resident assets, and recognizing differences in strengths and opportunities.

City Street Trees By Eligible Block Group



- Identify maintenance needs and resources in priority neighborhoods.
- Identify and sort partner organizations that can support Phase 1 Objectives.
 - Group 1- Ready partners who have the capacity, skills, and resources to support immediately.



- Group 2- Community partners including neighborhood organizations, small landscapers, and workforce development groups who have shared goals, access to neighborhood/resident networks, and can convene or organize at the neighborhood level.

PHASE 2

2021

Approve Shade Tree Commission Investments in 10 neighborhoods that define measures to incrementally abate the inequitable investment landscape related to capacity, tree planting visible maintenance, employment opportunities, and education

- Begin maintenance initiative in the 10 targeted neighborhoods.
- Develop campaign increase community support for tree planting.
- Coordinate tree planting plans with Forging PGH and neighborhood planning efforts.
- Increase tree plantings in five targeted neighborhoods by 20% in spring 2022.
- Increase tree plantings in five additional targeted neighborhoods by 20% in fall 2022.
- Coordinate with partner organizations to ensure that collective initiatives are compatible with the identified steps to achieve equitable distribution of resources and to avoid duplication of effort.
- Seek Council support for sidewalk reimbursement program increase to change public perception and support of planting efforts.
- Report to the Mayor and City Council annually as required by Ordinance and advocate for both the capital and budget needs of Forestry Department.
- Describe how investments support the 100,000 trees goal.
- Develop communication plan to coincide with neighborhood investments. (Attachment 2)

Pittsburgh Tree Canopy



PHASE 3

10/2022

Evaluate tree canopy increases in selected neighborhoods

- Review the expenditures of the Shade Tree Trust Fund (STTF) to ensure that spending reflect the values of equity and social justice put forward in this strategy.
- Report STTF expenditures in 10 targeted neighborhoods by investments in; education, increasing infrastructure, plantings, and maintenance. For each neighborhood





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investment, determine survival rate of trees planted, carbon capture, pollution reduction values, and quantifiable benefits to become part of future communications plan.

- Describe strategies proven to be successful for neighborhood engagement.
- Adopt long term strategies to encourage future sustainable increases in tree canopy in low canopy/low income neighborhoods.
- Based on lessons learned describe barriers to accomplishing objectives in Phase 1 and Phase 2. (Attachment 3)

PHASE 4

Identify the next 10 Neighborhoods for Investment

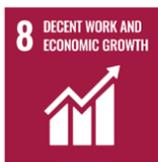
- Evaluate, incorporate lessons learned and best practices and expand the program.
- Repeat.

THE EQUITABLE STREET TREE INVESTMENT STRATEGY ALIGNS WITH

Existing plans and maps-->

- [Pittsburgh Urban Forest Master Plan](#)
- [City of Pittsburgh Equity Indicator Reports](#)
- [ForgingPGH](#)
- [Releaf Manchester/Chateau](#)
- [Pittsburgh CDBG Neighborhoods](#)
- [PADEP Environmental Justice](#)
- [Right Tree, Right Place](#)
- [Pittsburgh Sidewalk Replacement Program](#)
- [Trees and Crime Reduction](#)
- [Allegheny County Environmental Justice Index](#)
- [Benefits of Trees in Pittsburgh](#)

Sustainable Development Goals



Note: Attachment #1 includes all links to data from national, state, local and private sources.

Equitable Street Tree Investment Communications Plan – Attachment #2

1. Survey to determine key focal points to highlight how planting trees aligns with neighborhood desires and needs, and ask what factors promote community pride.
Useful: Chateau and Manchester neighborhood models:
<https://www.treepittsburgh.org/resource/releaf-manchesterchateau>
2. Produce marketing materials explaining roles and responsibilities of active tree groups/ organizations: City Forestry, Tree Pittsburgh, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy's TreeVitalize program, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, Duquesne Light, and more.
3. City forestry focuses on large tree pruning, removals, 311 and emergencies. Tree PGH handles young tree care.
Note: Tree care focused on neighborhood CDC's, the Landforce workforce development model and Operation Better Block's Junior Green Corps.
4. Identify and engage community leaders and other key stakeholders who can help to promote the values of trees.
5. Replicate TreeVitalize PGH work to potentially host public info meetings (that include dinner/ transport) to get new applicants from neighborhoods. Also, include TreeVitalize representatives at those CDC neighborhood meetings.
6. For neighborhood volunteers who are unable to attend public meetings - utilize other means of disseminating information on investment strategy, via circulars/ infographics, including specific contact info.
7. Seek outreach assistance for community education and engagement from: Bidwell Training Center's Horticulture Technology Program, Penn State Extension Master Gardeners & local Penn State University branches with Recreation, Park & Tourism Management degree programs, Community College of Allegheny County and other local colleges, Grounded, Grow Pittsburgh and the Black Urban Gardeners & Farmers (BUGS). At the high school level: Environmental Charter School, Magnet programs in Pittsburgh Public Schools, and schools that have existing park/ trees nearby.
8. Potentially use City's Office of Community Affairs community group list, Tree Tenders certified through Tree Pittsburgh, City's Civic Leadership Academy alumni, City Planning's Registered Community Organizations (RCO's).
9. Explain in detail the plan for tree maintenance and who will be performing work in each neighborhood.
10. Tag trees with interesting and informative facts about trees.



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12. Describe property values related to tree canopy for targeted neighborhoods and high canopy neighborhoods. (Caution: some feedback from numerous community meetings includes: people do not want their property values to increase, can't afford higher taxes and/or don't want their neighborhoods to change).
13. In business districts, communicate facts about positive impact on shoppers and spending when streets are tree lined.
14. Explain community sidewalk reimbursement program.
15. Establish plans for abandoned houses/ overgrown plants and trees.
16. Describe mulch availability from the city to neighborhood groups.

Barriers to Investment in Low Tree Resource/Low Income Neighborhoods – Attachment #3

1. Years of underinvestment and neglected maintenance have allowed for trees to be seen as problems (damaged sidewalks and sewer lines, and uncollected leaves).
2. Structural inequalities within the urban planning and development process, leaving under-served communities under-represented as well.
3. Difficulties in ensuring that all community groups are able to participate in coordinated tree planting goals and objectives.
4. Residents are responsible for and may be cited for damage (and are often surprised that adjacent sidewalks are their responsibility to maintain). City Law Department letter: https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/redtail/images/8743_Procedures_for_sidewalk_reimbursement_from_tree_roots_eff_Jan_2019_-_2020_rev.pdf
5. The city has no history of committing or raising funds for tree maintenance - at the scale necessary to maintain public trees.
6. Lack of cost-sharing resources for trees on private property in low-income areas.
7. Continued damage to existing canopy from utility upgrades and maintenance.
8. Pushback from residents who do not see trees as a neighborhood priority.
9. Existing tree/ overgrowth maintenance prioritized before new tree implementation.
10. Provide recourse for cost-sharing of work on trees that pose a threat to public safety in priority areas.

