



Tree Equity Handbook

A Practical Guide to Closing the Canopy Gap Between Neighborhoods

**→ Toolkit 3:
Coalition Action
Planning**

Issued September 2024





We envision a world in which the significant environmental, societal and economic benefits of forests are fully realized and equitably available to all people.

Above: Alamo Colleges Communications



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Welcome to the Tree Equity Handbook!

Join the movement to shape a future where cities and towns have the resources to sustain a thriving urban forest with transformative benefits, particularly for people in under-resourced communities.

Advancing Tree Equity takes far more than planting trees. It demands a comprehensive approach grounded in deep community engagement, coalition building, policy change and skilled workforce development. It requires scaling up climate-resilient tree supply and implementing arboricultural best practices to manage urban forest health. It calls for innovative financing strategies and new systems for wood reuse, carbon capture and carbon storage.

City staff and officials, urban forestry practitioners, community leaders and advocacy champions — this handbook is your step-by-step guide to activate, focus and lead a community-wide Tree Equity movement. This resource is for you if you are starting from scratch, or if you need tools to re-inspire and refocus your process. You will join a community of practice across the country taking parallel action in their own cities, towns and neighborhoods.

Thank you for joining us on this important journey. Let's make this vision for Tree Equity a reality!



We Need Tree Equity in Cities

Trees are more than scenery. Much like schools, streets and sewer lines, they are crucial elements of our community infrastructure. Trees play a vital role in supporting public health, well-being and climate resilience.

Trees in cities and towns across the U.S. absorb 17.4 million tons of air pollutants annually, preventing 670,000 cases of asthma and other acute respiratory symptoms every year.¹ Trees help prevent hundreds of heat-related deaths and more than 50,000 doctor's visits annually² by lowering surface and air temperatures. On average, trees in the U.S. reduce energy demand for heating and cooling by 7.2%.³

However, Americans do not enjoy the same access to the benefits of urban trees and green spaces.

Nationwide, American Forests' Tree Equity Score shows areas with the lowest poverty rates have double the tree cover per person and are 6 degrees cooler than areas with the highest. Areas with the fewest residents of color have four times more tree cover per person and are 13 degrees cooler than areas with the most.

This is a direct result of decades of systemic and inequitable governance and planning. These disparities have the most impact on communities of color, economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and other people facing institutional barriers, all of whom are disproportionately affected by environmental hazards such as extreme heat waves, air pollution and degraded water supply. It's time to change that and reinvest in our communities.



Trulove Studios

¹ Nowak, D.J., S. Hirabayashi, A. Bodine, E. Greenfield. 2014. Tree and forest effects on air quality and human health in the United States. *Environmental Pollution*. 193: 119-129.

² McDonald, R.I., T. Kroeger, P. Zhang, P. Hamel. 2020. The value of US urban tree cover for reducing heat-related health impacts and electricity consumption. *Ecosystems*. 23:137-150.

³ Nowak, D.J., N. Appleton, E. Ellis, E. Greenfield. 2017. Residential building energy conservation and avoided power plant emissions by urban and community trees in the United States. *Urban Forestry and Urban Greening*. 21: 158-165.

A Tree Equity Approach

The Tree Equity Handbook employs a strategic, community-led approach to building an equity-forward urban forestry program:

- **Data-Driven Planning:** Use data combined with local knowledge to prioritize investment in historically under-resourced areas.
- **Community Engagement:** Create strong decision-making roles for community leaders and representatives to ensure that actions respond to local needs and priorities.
- **Forestry for People:** Develop coordinated strategies for managing urban forests to maximize benefits to people and ensure long-term health and community resilience.
- **Capacity Building:** Collaboratively develop strategies that support program growth, sustainable funding, scaled up systems and workforce development to build a stable support system for urban forests in the long term.



Liz Putnam / Liz Putnam Photography

Toolkit 3

Coalition Action Planning

Achieving Tree Equity is a crucial — and enormous — undertaking. By diligently engaging community voices to build a unified strategy, your coalition can move confidently toward its goals, one step at a time.

Begin with community engagement planning to ensure all perspectives are thoughtfully included from the start. Next, conduct a comprehensive Tree Equity Needs Assessment to evaluate the state of the urban forest, assess

current approaches to equity and community engagement, and review existing activities and policies. With that groundwork laid, you can formulate a Coalition Action Plan that operationalizes your goals and reflects the community's needs, priorities and contributions.

Big Deliverables:

Community Engagement Plan, Tree Equity Needs Assessment, Coalition Action Plan



Activity 1: Community Engagement Plan

Toolkit 3

Coalition Action
Planning

Activity Map

Community
Engagement Plan

→ Community Insights

→ Tree Equity Needs
Assessment

→ Coalition Action Plan

Community Engagement Plan



Overview & Basic Steps

Develop a community engagement plan to mobilize stakeholders, foster collaboration and ensure meaningful participation. This exercise will help you and your collaborators tailor community engagement activities to their intended audiences, understand logistics and define desired outcomes.

Before starting this activity, you might need:

- A Stakeholder Inventory and Map → [Toolkit 2.1](#)
- A Coalition Roadmap → [Toolkit 2.5](#)

Suggested Time: 2–3 weeks

Level of Difficulty: Challenging

Participants: 2–4 individuals passionate about outreach and relationship building; review and approval by core coalition team

Instructions

- 1 Complete the “Plan Overview” section of your **Community Engagement Plan Worksheet** ([page 11](#)) to set a clear directive for your plan.
- 2 Continuing in the Community Engagement Plan Worksheet, use the “Activity Timeline” section to draw up a schedule of activities. Based on your understanding of the current landscape of stakeholders and collaborators, decide an appropriate level of engagement for each key group.
- 3 Use the “Activity Template” — the final section of the worksheet — to plan individual activities in more detail. Complete one plan per activity, making sure each one aligns with the values and strategies you outlined in the “Plan Overview” section.
- 4 Share these worksheets with the coalition core team for review. The finalized Community Engagement Plan can serve as a guiding document that helps your audiences understand how to participate in your initiative and how their voices and feedback will be integrated.

After you complete this activity:

- Use engagement activities to collect community insights. → [page 20](#)
- Conduct a Tree Equity needs assessment. → [page 30](#)

TOOLKIT 3: Community Engagement Plan | Activity 1 – WORKSHEET

Assess Readiness for Collaboration



As you begin community engagement planning in earnest, you will need to gain an understanding of existing dynamics. You may have to do some intentional relationship building as key steps in your engagement planning.

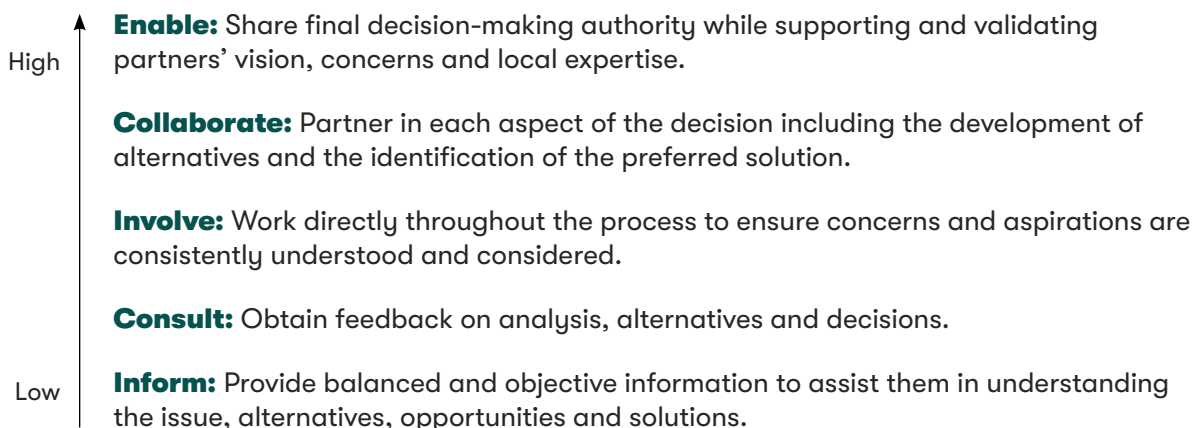
- **Who are the groups already doing Tree Equity work or related work in your community?** What are their values and how do they align with your own? How will you integrate those values into the work?
- **Who is missing?** Look at existing relationships and spaces where the work is already happening to see if any communities or groups are not included. If so, why? How will you accommodate these groups to address the gap?
- **What is the power dynamic?** Consider the balance of power and influence between individuals and groups. Who has the most influence over decision making?
- **Are there barriers to partnership?** Past experiences or collaborations may affect people’s ability to trust your initiative or to work with other stakeholders. What can you learn from existing dynamics, and how can you address people’s reservations and concerns to encourage understanding?
- **Are there barriers to participation?** Will you need to provide support services such as child care, transportation, meals or stipends to ensure a diverse group of people can participate? Are there language or cultural barriers that you will need to plan for? What is the best venue? At what time of day should events be scheduled?

Tips for Strategic Engagement

- Plan with people, not for people.
- Respect residents’ autonomy, local knowledge and authority.
- Adapt to residents’ schedules, language and culture.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to set the agenda and assess progress.
- Communicate early and often.
- Be transparent and accountable.
- Acknowledge benefits and costs.

Consider Levels of Engagement

Consult your **Stakeholder Map Worksheet** ([Toolkit 2](#)) to set the appropriate level of engagement with different stakeholders based on their levels of influence and interest. Typically, the higher the interest and influence, the deeper your level of engagement should be.



Community Engagement Plan Worksheet

Use the next three pages to craft your community engagement plan. Start with an overview that defines your guiding values, sets long-term goals and outlines key strategies. Then brainstorm potential activities that address coalition priorities and respond to the needs of your target audiences. Finally, you can begin to plan individual activities that bring stakeholders together in pursuit of a common Tree Equity goal.

Plan Overview

Set a clear directive for your plan.



Initiative Name

Initiative Description

Guiding Principles or Values

These are broad ideas such as transparency, adaptability, equity, inclusivity, authenticity, honesty, respect, accessibility, continuous improvement, collaborative problem-solving, and proactive communication. These might be drawn from a mission statement or other existing document.

Long-Term Goals

What do you intend to achieve in the long run? How will community engagement and outreach help you succeed?

Key Strategies

What are the key elements your strategy will target? Examples: expanding access, addressing barriers, building partnerships, relationship building, active listening, collaborative planning, capacity building, inclusive processes and events, feedback and evaluation mechanisms, celebration and recognition.

Activity Timeline

As you draw up your activity timeline, consider the preferences and accessibility needs of each target audience. Use your **Stakeholder Map Worksheet** and **Coalition Roadmap Worksheet** (see [Toolkit 2](#)) as guides to address top priorities and design activities that maximize meaningful engagement with your target audiences.

See “Engagement and Outreach Strategies” on [page 17](#) for activity ideas

Target Audience	Activity Description	Roadmap Priority Addressed?	Timeline



Activity Timeline (Continued)

Target Audience	Activity Description	Roadmap Priority Addressed?	Timeline



Activity Template

Plan proactively! Define goals, understand logistics and consider how to tailor each activity to the target audience based on their needs and preferences. *Fill out one per activity.*



Activity	Responsible Parties	Timeline
Description		
Target Audience	Engagement Outcomes <i>What will the engagement result in? How will this activity contribute to the broader objectives of this plan?</i>	
Outputs <i>Your measurable products, activities and deliverables, e.g., meetings held, number of participants engaged, materials distributed, events organized, partnerships formed.</i>		
Level of Engagement <i>At what level do you hope to engage with this group?</i>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Enable (high) <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate <input type="checkbox"/> Involve <input type="checkbox"/> Consult <input type="checkbox"/> Inform (low)		
Roadmap Priority Addressed		

Activity Template (Continued)



Key Messages Out

What information or ideas do you want to communicate? How can you frame these messages to resonate with your target audience? Consider their priorities and interests, as well as common ground you both share.

Strategies for Incorporating Input

What methods and plans will be used to gather input? How will the input be considered and integrated into decision making?

Logistics and Resources

What logistical considerations, equipment and materials do you need to get this done effectively? Consider the needs and preferences of your target audience and what will make it easier for them to participate.

Outreach

Identify communication channels and tactics for maximizing participation.

Sample Activity Template

Activity

Community Tree Inventory and Mapping

Responsible Parties

Urban Sustainability Division
Green Guardians Coalition

Timeline

2028

Description

Engage Arborvale residents in collecting valuable data on urban trees, raise awareness of tree-related issues, and inform strategic planning and decision making for future tree planting and maintenance initiatives. Mapping efforts will target the Woodlawn, Oakley and Oldesville neighborhoods.

Target Audience

Residents with an interest in environmental science, data collection and community mapping, as well as local schools, youth groups and civic organizations.

Engagement Outcomes

- Increased community involvement in urban forestry data collection
- Community capacity building – building skills and knowledge in the community
- Creation of a street tree inventory and map
- Community identification of areas in need of additional tree planting and maintenance efforts

Outputs

- An online platform created for data input and visualization
- 3 in-person training sessions, 20 participants each
- Public data collection schedule
- 10 community-led data collection days

Level of Engagement

At what level do you hope to engage with this group?

Enable (high)
 Collaborate
 Involve
 Consult
 Inform (low)



Key Messages Out

- Healthy trees, healthy community.
- It takes a village to improve and maintain our green spaces.
- Your participation helps our community plan for the future.

Strategies for Incorporating Input

- Participants' direct observations will inform planning
- Volunteer coordinators will serve as point people to make note of general observations and concerns from participants that come up over the course of the process

Logistics and Resources

- Training materials on tree identification and data collection
- Mapping software or apps, GIS staff person
- Volunteer coordinators to oversee data collection efforts
- Outreach materials to promote participation

Outreach

- Create Facebook group, regular postings on upcoming events, volunteer videos
- Partner with local high school science teachers and faith groups to volunteer and learn
- Post on neighborhood association forums and attend meetings to recruit residents

Roadmap Priority Addressed

Establish baseline tree canopy and track change over time.

TOOLKIT 3: Community Engagement Plan | SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCE

Engagement and Outreach Strategies

Now the hard work begins!

Start implementing your engagement plan with confidence that each planned activity is advancing your goals. We've provided a list of potential activities below to help you generate ideas. Don't forget to publish your engagement plan and share outcomes from each activity to maintain transparency with your stakeholders.

Use *Tree Equity Score* to plan activities in neighborhoods with the greatest need. →

www.TreeEquityScore.org

→ Plan

Planning Workshop: Provide a structured environment for key stakeholders to collaborate on planning for Tree Equity initiatives. Workshops typically involve activities such as brainstorming, goal setting and action planning.

Community Advisory Board: Establish a formal community advisory board made of community members, local organizations, various government agencies and other stakeholders to provide input, guidance and oversight for Tree Equity initiatives.

Local Task Force: Convene a small task force of community members, stakeholders and experts to address specific challenges or opportunities identified by the coalition. Task force members collaborate closely with local entities and other stakeholders to find solutions and activate resources.

→ Collect Data

Tree Inventory and Mapping Workshops: Conduct workshops to train community members in tree inventory and mapping techniques. Use Tree Equity Score to introduce the concepts of inequitable tree canopy distribution and identify priority neighborhoods in need of inventory.

Community-Based Research Projects: Engage community members in participatory research projects focused on urban forestry and Tree Equity. Collaborate with academic institutions or research organizations to conduct studies that address community-identified needs and priorities.

Community Interviews, Community Meetings, Surveys and Focus Groups: Local knowledge is data. Gather input from community members on their perceptions, priorities and needs related to urban forestry and Tree Equity.

→ Educate and Inform

Door-to-Door Canvassing: Knock on doors to invite residents to upcoming events, gather input and garner support for local initiatives. If no one answers the door, leave a printed flier with a QR code to scan for more information or to submit inquiries.

Neighborhood Tree Walks: Organize guided tree walks or tours led by local experts that highlight the value of urban trees and allow participants to observe firsthand the disparities in tree cover captured by Tree Equity Score.

School Outreach Programs: Partner with local schools to incorporate urban forestry and Tree Equity education into the curriculum. Offer interactive workshops, field trips, and hands-on activities to engage students in environmental stewardship and introduce them to a diverse range of career opportunities.

Event Tabling: Host booths or tables at community events such as fairs, festivals or markets to boost your visibility and interact directly with community members. Use the booth space to distribute informational materials, engage in conversations, provide interaction with Tree Equity Score through a tablet or touchscreen and invite attendees to sign up for newsletters or volunteer opportunities.



➔ Amplify

Grassroots Advocacy Training: Equip community members with tools to advocate for Tree Equity in their neighborhoods. This will help build grassroots support and equip residents to participate in Tree Equity efforts.

Media and Digital Campaigns: Use local publications, local radio and television channels and social media platforms to share educational content, success stories and upcoming events related to Tree Equity. Develop multilingual outreach materials and campaigns to reach all segments of the community, including non-English-speaking residents.

Public Art Installations: Develop public art installations that reflect local voices and focus on Tree Equity themes to raise awareness and spark conversations about the importance of trees in urban environments.

➔ Plant and Protect Trees

Tree Planting Events: Coordinate community tree planting events to actively involve residents in greening initiatives. Encourage participation from diverse community groups and provide training on proper tree planting techniques.

Tree Adoption Programs: Establish tree adoption programs where community members can adopt and care for trees in public spaces or their neighborhoods. Provide training and resources to ensure proper tree maintenance, and consider using “tree tags” with QR codes that direct people to learn more.

Tree Care and Pruning Workshops: Provide training sessions on tree care and pruning. Equip participants with the skills to become active stewards of smaller trees on their property and connect them with arborists for larger tree maintenance.

Tree Giveaway Events: Organize tree giveaway events for priority neighborhoods where residents can receive free saplings or seedlings to plant on their properties. Provide information on tree care and maintenance to ensure successful establishment.

Community Engagement Resources

If you're interested in learning more about strategies and tools that can inform how you approach community engagement, we've provided some helpful resources below.

Community Action Guide (Vibrant Cities Lab)

A grassroots guide to building a community-driven process to advance Tree Equity.

The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership (Movement Strategy Center)

A toolkit to help leaders assess and strengthen their community engagement efforts, particularly for historically marginalized groups, to advance community-driven solutions.

Spectrum of Processes for Collaboration and Consensus-Building in Public Decisions

A quick reference to selecting collaborative process tools that are targeted to the level of engagement appropriate for your target audiences. Developed by Suzanne G. Orenstein, Susan Sherry and Lucy Moore (2008).

Public Engagement Reference Guide for Forest Service Employees (USDA)

A community engagement guide developed for public service foresters.

100 Great Community Engagement Ideas (MetroQuest)

Tips and tricks to help planners create transparent, welcoming, and effective public participation programs.

Tree Equity Curriculum (American Forests)

The Tree Equity Curriculum: Exploring Green STEAM Careers is a modular curriculum intended to engage high school students (9th-12th grade).

Philadelphia, PA, Lexington, KY, Arlington, VA, Los Angeles, CA and Oakland, CA (Case Studies)

See how community engagement has worked in several cities.



Planting at Sampson-Webber Leadership Academy with Greening of Detroit and Detroit Tree Equity Partnership in Detroit, Michigan.



Activity 2: Community Insights

Toolkit 3
Coalition Action
Planning

Activity Map

→ Community
Engagement Plan

Community Insights

→ Tree Equity Needs
Assessment

→ Coalition Action Plan

Community Insights



Overview & Basic Steps

Local knowledge is data. Engage with community members to uncover perspectives that can only be observed by people who live in or have a deep understanding of the community. This information is crucial for refining priorities. It provides powerful evidence to deepen the rationale for the work.

Before starting this activity, you might need:

- Priority neighborhoods identified using Tree Equity Score → [Toolkit 1.1](#)

Instructions

- 1** Use your community's Tree Equity Score data to identify priority neighborhoods (see [Toolkit 1](#)).
- 2** Hold “semi-structured” conversations to gather insights from community members in priority neighborhoods. Complete one **Community Insights Worksheet** ([page 24](#)) for each interview, survey, focus group, etc.
- 3** Summarize your findings from conversations in step 2 using the **Neighborhood Profile Worksheet**. This worksheet will help you identify key insights and common themes from all the community members you've spoken to. (*Note: If you are gathering insights from multiple neighborhoods, fill out one Neighborhood Profile Worksheet for each neighborhood.*)
- 4** Share your findings with the coalition core team and back to participants, and use the data you've acquired to either maintain or adjust the priority rankings of each neighborhood.

Suggested Time: 4–6 weeks

Level of Difficulty: Challenging

Participants: 2–4 individuals with community engagement expertise; review by coalition core team

After you complete this activity:

- Use the information to inform your Tree Equity Needs Assessment. → [page 30](#)
- Develop a community-informed Coalition Action Plan. → [page 43](#)

TOOLKIT 3: Community Insights | Activity 2 – WORKSHEET 1



Collect Community Insights

Respect community members' time and expertise.

- Be clear about the purpose and intentions of your engagement.
- Do your best to meet each person where they are so they can participate more easily.
- Be clear that each person has the option to decline to participate.
- Ask what each person would like to see as an outcome of sharing their expertise.
- Prioritize the relationship over the information.
- Get written permission to share personal quotes and anecdotes.
- Follow up with a thank you as soon as possible.
- Allow your interviewees the chance to amend the information they provided.
- Share the Neighborhood Profiles with the people who have provided input when the project is completed. When you do, be clear about how the Neighborhood Profiles will be used and what you hope to achieve.

Pick the right format.

You will get the best results from one-on-one conversations — whether an in-person meeting, a phone or video call, a canvassing visit or an informal conversation that develops naturally when out in the field. Adjust the setting and structure of your discussions to suit community members' needs and preferences. You can also solicit feedback in group settings, such as smaller focus groups or community workshops.

Talk to enough people.

Once you have interviewed several people, you will begin to hear recurring themes. Your goal is to interview enough people to reach saturation on those themes. This might be achieved in just a few conversations, or it might take more than a dozen. Research shows this process will usually not exceed more than 20–30 conversations.

“Semi-structure” the conversation.

Use the main conversation prompts in the **Community Insights Worksheet** ([page 24](#)) to get an overview, then revisit topics where you want to dig deeper. You can use the additional discussion prompts on page 26 to guide your more detailed discussion points. Ask follow-up questions like:

- “What’s your perspective on...?”
- “What else?”
- “Any other reasons for...?”
- “Tell me more about...”
- “Can you elaborate on...?”

Remember this is a human conversation, not an interrogation! Make sure your interviewees feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, ideas, questions and concerns. Develop a rapport and focus on building a relationship rather than simply gaining information.

Practice active listening.

Arrive prepared to listen and learn. Be curious and respond outwardly with genuine and open-minded interest. Resist the urge to educate! You are here to learn. Encourage your interviewee to talk for the majority of the time.

Check your assumptions.

Consider how your lived experience, privileges and knowledge base influence how you make decisions and how you approach new information. Practicing self-awareness will help you keep an open mind to differences and be more empathetic to other perspectives. Don't be too attached to certain expectations or try to steer the conversation toward specific results. You may learn surprising and unexpected insights that inspire new questions, creative solutions and stronger outcomes.



When you hear a position, dig deeper for underlying interests.

People tend to express their needs through positions — suggestions or demands that are presented as the best (or only) way to solve a problem. These often come as statements like, “I want [X] to happen” or “For this to be successful we have to do [X].” When you hear a position, try to understand the underlying interests — needs, desires, concerns or fears — behind it. This will open the door to creative problem solving when multiple stakeholders have different initial positions but shared interests, and can lead to more durable solutions.

The best way to understand the interests that drive positions is to ask “Why?” For example:

- “Can you share why that’s important to you?”
- “Can you help me understand why...?”
- “I’m hearing your concerns about [X]. Can you break that down for me?”

Be empathetic and signal your curiosity. Find out how people feel about an issue and why their position is important to them.

Community Insights Worksheet

Fill out one worksheet per conversation. See discussion prompts on the next page for more specific questions and follow-ups that can help guide your discussions.



Block Group ID	Neighborhood Name
Conversation Format <i>(One-on-one interview, community meeting, focus group, etc.)</i>	
Name(s) of Conversation Participant(s)	
How does the tree canopy in this neighborhood compare to other areas in town?	
What do you think influences the amount and health of trees in this neighborhood?	

Continued on next page.

Community Insights Worksheet (Continued)



What personal experiences or observations do you have about how trees (or absence of trees) impact your quality of life?

Do you believe your neighborhood needs more trees? Why or why not?

Any concerns about adding, caring for or protecting trees in this neighborhood?



Volunteers at American Forests' tree planting event with GreenBiz 2020 attendees with Microsoft employees in Phoenix, AZ

Discussion Prompts

Use these suggested questions and clarifications to guide your conversations. Greater specificity from community members will give you more useful data.

How does the tree canopy in this neighborhood compare to other areas in town?

- Does your area have enough trees? Why or why not?
- How healthy and cared for are trees in your area?
- How do trees affect your everyday life or your kids' everyday life?
- How do you like the parks near your home? Do they have enough trees and greenery?

What do you think influences the amount and health of trees in this neighborhood?

- Historically, have you noticed any changes in the trees in your area? Why do you think those changes have occurred? (Economic reasons, environmental reasons, etc.)
- What kind of tree care have you observed in your area?
- What is your experience with organizations or programs wanting to plant or remove trees?

What personal experiences or observations do you have about how trees (or absence of trees) impact your quality of life?

- How do you feel about the trees in your community?
- How do the trees in your community affect your well-being? Your mood?
- Do trees in your community have cultural significance?
- What do trees mean to you? What role have they played in your life?
- Can you share any favorite personal memories about trees in your area?
- Can you recall if trees have ever helped you or your family stay cool on hot summer days?
- How well are you able to keep your home cool in the summer?

Do you believe your neighborhood needs more trees? Why or why not?

- Are there places in your community that need more trees? Where?
- Are there places in your community where tree care is needed? Where?
- In your opinion, do you think the area you live in would benefit from more trees? Why or why not?
- What existing challenges or conditions could trees help address for residents of this area?
- Do you believe tree planting in this neighborhood aligns with broader community goals or values? How so?

Any concerns about adding, caring for or protecting trees in this neighborhood?

- Are there any specific issues or considerations you think should be kept in mind when discussing tree preservation or planting?
- Have you had any concerns about who is caring for the trees in your area and how they are being cared for?
- Do you have any other concerns about the lived environment in your neighborhood? This could include heat, safety, noise, air quality, water cleanliness, extreme weather or something else.

How To Use the Information

The insights you collect through this exercise will be valuable tools to your coalition going forward. Review each **Community Insights Worksheet** ([page 24](#)) to highlight key insights and common themes, then summarize your findings using the **Neighborhood Profile Worksheet** ([page 28](#)).

Any themes you identify will be critical for refining coalition priorities and meeting stakeholders' needs. Themes can also inform backbone messaging for your outreach and engagement strategy.

These insights can also provide powerful, data-driven evidence to help communicate community support and the rationale for the work. Insights and figures from these profiles can strengthen funding requests or project reports. Individual interviewees' statements can become powerful testimonials to use in presentations, marketing materials, media pitches and grant reports. (Be sure to obtain written permission to use community members' words in your communications.)

With your newly gained tools and insights, you can make a strong data-driven plan for Tree Equity in your community.

See next page for the fillable neighborhood profile

Groundwork Rhode Island Capstone Planting
Pawtucket and Central Falls, Rhode Island



TOOLKIT 3: Community Insights | Activity 2 – WORKSHEET 2

Neighborhood Profile Worksheet

Synthesize the information gathered in all Community Profile Worksheets in a given neighborhood and summarize key insights, quotes, themes and concerns here. Complete one Neighborhood Profile Worksheet per neighborhood.



Block Group ID	Neighborhood Name								
<p>Tree Equity Score</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Tree canopy cover</td> <td>Children and seniors</td> </tr> <tr> <td>People of color</td> <td>Health burden</td> </tr> <tr> <td>People in poverty</td> <td>Linguistic isolation</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unemployment rate</td> <td>Heat disparity</td> </tr> </table>		Tree canopy cover	Children and seniors	People of color	Health burden	People in poverty	Linguistic isolation	Unemployment rate	Heat disparity
Tree canopy cover	Children and seniors								
People of color	Health burden								
People in poverty	Linguistic isolation								
Unemployment rate	Heat disparity								
<p>How does the tree canopy in this neighborhood compare to other areas in town?</p>									
<p>What do you think influences the amount and health of trees in this neighborhood?</p>									

Continued on next page.

Neighborhood Profile Worksheet (Continued)



What personal experiences or observations do you have about how trees (or absence of trees) impact your quality of life?

Do you believe your neighborhood needs more trees? Why or why not?

Any concerns about adding, caring for or protecting trees in this neighborhood?

Recommended priority ranking of this neighborhood based on local knowledge

Highest

High

Moderate

Low

None

Activity 3: Tree Equity Needs Assessment

Toolkit 3
Coalition Action
Planning

Activity Map



Tree Equity Needs Assessment



Overview & Basic Steps

Follow a set of simple guiding questions to conduct a Tree Equity Needs Assessment for your city or region. This exercise will give you a more detailed understanding of existing urban forestry activities, local policies, avenues of community engagement and the state of the urban forest in your community. It will also help lay the groundwork for more informed planning in the future.

Any entity or sector focused on advancing Tree Equity can lead this holistic assessment, but we recommend that they work with a diverse team of stakeholders who can contribute a wide range of knowledge and community connections.

Suggested Time: 2–3 weeks

Level of Difficulty: Moderate

Participants: 2–4 individuals with diverse networks and expertise; review and approval by core coalition team

Before starting this activity, you might need:

- Baseline data from Tree Equity Score → [Toolkit 1.1](#)

Instructions

- 1** Use the **Tree Equity Needs Assessment Worksheet** ([page 34](#)) to evaluate the status of existing programs and conditions in your community.
- 2** Based on your findings, use the same worksheet to identify actionable needs that your coalition can address.
- 3** Share findings and suggestions with your coalition core team to refine and update as needed.

After you complete this activity:

- Use the results of the Tree Equity Needs Assessment to inform the development of your Coalition Action Plan. → [page 43](#)

TOOLKIT 3: Tree Equity Needs Assessment | Activity 3 – WORKSHEET

Tips for Articulating Gaps and Needs



This **Tree Equity Needs Assessment Worksheet** ([page 34](#)) is designed to help you document actionable recommendations that will inform future planning and strategy. For this reason, you should strive to be as precise and targeted as possible when identifying gaps or needs.

Here are some examples of precise needs — and an imprecise need — that could be cited in response to the question, “How well developed is coordination of urban forestry management across sectors?”

Precise needs:

- “Increase cross-departmental coordination of city urban forestry activities.”
- “Create centralized reporting for tree care, planting and removal.”
- “Improvement needed in maintenance scheduling, resource allocation and tree health tracking.”

Imprecise need:

- “Improve collaboration.”

When considering gaps and needs, ask yourself:

- What’s the missing link?
- What processes, systems or information is lacking?
- What obstacles are preventing progress?
- Where are the discrepancies between our goals and our current state?
- If we had \$100,000, what would we do with it?

While budget and staffing limitations shouldn’t stop you from making recommendations, consider what can realistically be addressed within the timeline of your initiative.

Sample Needs Assessment

Indicator Question	Status	Describe Gaps/Needs
How much street tree data (e.g., on location, care, species, and health) are available to support management of the urban forest?	Partially Complete. The urban forest inventory is up-to-date for major parks and green spaces only.	Need comprehensive data for street trees and smaller community areas.
How strong is community support for tree protection and planting?	Underdeveloped. Limited awareness of both the benefits of trees and opportunities for involvement.	Increase public education initiatives. Develop community engagement strategy.
How equitably distributed is tree cover in your community?	Not equitable. Low-income areas have fewer green spaces and less tree canopy cover.	Need strategic approach to planting and resource allocation to ensure equitable distribution of urban forest benefits.

Tree Equity Needs Assessment Worksheet

You will work through a series of guiding questions to evaluate (1) Urban Forestry Activities, (2) Plans and Policies, (3) Tree Equity Initiatives, (4) Community Engagement and (5) the State of the Urban Forest.

Begin by assessing the **status** of existing programs and conditions, noting whether an indicator is well established, is in progress, needs development, is inequitable, or another status relevant to the indicator question. Then **describe gaps or needs** that your coalition can address; be precise and targeted in your recommendations.

Turn to your partners to fill gaps in knowledge as you conduct this assessment — ideally people who have different information, networks or viewpoints.

Once you've completed the worksheet, share the results with your coalition core team and with the broader community for continued transparency. You can use the Tree Equity Needs Assessment as a foundational document to establish a shared understanding of current needs and provide a set of recommendations that will inform planning efforts.

Sample on previous page

See next page for the fillable worksheet



A brainstorming activity at the 2022 1t.org US Chapter Summit in Washington, D.C.

URBAN FORESTRY ACTIVITIES		
Indicator Question	Status	Describe Gaps/Needs
How well developed is coordination of urban forestry management across sectors?	Underdeveloped. Most management activities are occurring with little to no coordination between entities.	Create centralized reporting for tree care, planting and removal.
How well developed is coordination of urban forestry management across sectors?		
How clearly defined are the responsibilities of entities involved in managing urban forests?		
How well are current urban forestry staff roles able to meet urban forestry needs?		
At current levels of city staffing and funding dedicated to urban forestry, how reactive or proactive is planting and tree care?		
How sustainable is the funding model for urban forestry work?		
Under current budgets, how much of the necessary urban forestry work can be accomplished?		



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URBAN FORESTRY ACTIVITIES



Indicator Question	Status	Describe Gaps/Needs
How effective are monitoring and maintenance activities for public trees?		
How effective are urban forestry efforts on public lands?		
How effective are urban forestry efforts on private lands?		
How much street tree data (e.g., location, care, species, health) is available to support management of the urban forest?		
How complete or up to date is data on the whole urban forest?		
How active are facilities to process wood waste and convert it to higher-value products, if any?		
What level of political appetite is there for supporting and expanding urban forestry activities?		

PLANS AND POLICIES		
Indicator Question	Status	Describe Gaps/Needs
To what degree are trees considered critical urban infrastructure by local leaders and policymakers?	Increasingly. The level of acknowledgment varies but this framing has gained momentum in the past few years.	Develop policies that explicitly recognize trees as essential urban infrastructure, and integrate policies into city planning, budgeting, and maintenance strategies.
To what degree are trees considered critical urban infrastructure by local leaders and policymakers?		
Does your community have existing tree-related goals and, if so, how effective have those goals been in achieving desired outcomes?		
Does your community have a written urban forest management plan and, if so, how effective is it?		
How effective are other local plans, policies and programs for supporting tree retention, planting or replacement?		
How effective are systems, policies or ordinances for protecting trees from removal?		



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PLANS AND POLICIES		
Indicator Question	Status	Describe Gaps/Needs
How specific are ordinances or policies about the number of trees or level of tree canopy that must be retained or planted on individual parcels?		
How effectively are these systems, policies or ordinances enforced?		
How rigorous is guidance for tree selection, such as preference for natives, lists of suitable trees, etc.		
How rigorous is guidance on tree removal, such as bans or requirements related to noxious trees or invasives?		
How coordinated are local tree-related activities with municipal activities?		
To what extent are utilities required to follow arboricultural best practices when managing vegetation around powerlines?		

TREE EQUITY INITIATIVES		
Indicator Question	Status	Describe Gaps/Needs
How strong is trust in city or regional processes among different groups within the community?	Variable—Needs Work. Pockets of both strong confidence among vocal residents as well as deep mistrust—especially underserved communities.	Need more equitable representation in decision making and greater transparency and inclusivity in these processes.
How strong is trust in city or regional processes among different groups within the community?		
How inclusive is the decision-making and planning process for tree-related initiatives?		
How well are the benefits of current urban forestry programs distributed across all residents?		
What level of awareness about Tree Equity is there among entities responsible for managing the urban forest?		
What active strategies are being considered or are already in place to improve Tree Equity and how well supported are these strategies?		



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TREE EQUITY INITIATIVES



Indicator Question	Status	Describe Gaps/Needs
How much is the concept of Tree Equity integrated into formalized plans, frameworks or policies?		
Are there any barriers to success for advancing a Tree Equity approach and, if so, how significant are these obstacles?		
What level of political or institutional appetite is there for advancing Tree Equity?		

A teen Urban Tree Corps member shows Boston City Councilor Anissa Essaibi George the process for recording tree inventory data.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT		
Indicator Question	Status	Describe Gaps/Needs
What engagement policies are in place for tree-related decision making, and how effective are they for ensuring broad participation?	Moderately Effective. Policies require involvement of a wide range of stakeholders; however, the effectiveness is mixed. Some groups are actively engaged, and others have limited to no involvement.	Need greater oversight of policy implementation to enhance outreach to underrepresented groups.
What engagement policies are in place for tree-related decision making, and how effective are they for ensuring broad participation?		
How involved are residents and community groups in planning and implementing urban forest activities?		
How actively are residents and community groups engaged in seeking opportunities to support the urban forest?		
How strong is community support for tree protection and planting?		
How strong is the level of stakeholder concern that could hinder tree-related efforts?		
What urban forestry career education and workforce development opportunities are available?		



STATE OF THE URBAN FOREST



Indicator Question	Status	Describe Gaps/Needs
What is the canopy cover (%) overall?	Moderate Declines. There have been some localized increases in tree planting and conservation efforts; however, these gains have not fully offset the broader trends of development and urban expansion.	Stronger policies and regulations to protect tree cover and manage land use, including stricter zoning laws, conservation incentives, and integration into planning and development processes.
What is the canopy cover (%) overall? (See Tree Equity Score and Toolkit 1.)		
How equitably distributed is tree cover in your community? (See Tree Equity Score and Toolkit 1.)		
Has tree cover declined, increased or remained steady overall?		
Are losses and gains occurring in specific areas or neighborhoods?		
Is the majority of tree canopy located on public or private lands?		

Continued on next page.



STATE OF THE URBAN FOREST		
Indicator Question	Status	Describe Gaps/Needs
To what extent is there potential to expand tree cover and maintenance on public land?		
To what extent is there potential to expand tree cover and maintenance on private land?		
How does local sentiment view the impact of the urban forest on quality of life and well-being — positively or negatively?		
How does local sentiment view the impact of the urban forest on public health — positively or negatively?		
How does local sentiment view the impact of the urban forest on climate resilience and environmental health — positively or negatively?		
What are the most significant threats to urban forest health and resilience?		

Activity 4: Coalition Action Plan

Toolkit 3

Coalition Action Planning

Activity Map

→ Community
Engagement Plan

→ Community Insights

→ Tree Equity Needs
Assessment

Coalition Action Plan

Coalition Action Plan



Overview & Basic Steps

Create an action plan outlining steps, responsibilities and timelines for implementing the coalition’s initiatives. This four-part exercise will help you set a clear directive for your plan and then break larger priorities down into actionable steps that move the coalition’s Tree Equity goals forward.

Before starting this activity, you might need:

- Coalition Mission, Vision and Goals → [Toolkit 2.6](#)
- A Coalition Roadmap → [Toolkit 2.5](#)
- A Tree Equity Needs Assessment → [page 30](#)

Suggested Time: 3–4 months

Level of Difficulty: Challenging

Participants: Led by a subcommittee of the coalition core team, with actions detailed by responsible parties

Instructions

- 1** Fill out the “Plan Overview” section of the **Coalition Action Plan Worksheet** to set a clear directive for your plan.
- 2** Complete the “Action Playbook” section of the worksheet, identifying all concrete steps the coalition can take to advance its priorities. At this stage you will also identify people or groups who might lead each action.
- 3** Once leads and supporting partners are assigned to specific actions, they will fill out one “Action Template” for each action. The provided template guides SMART planning and encourages thinking ahead about resource needs, timelines and steps.
- 4** Finally, use the “Action Plan Checklist” to draft your Coalition Action Plan in full, making sure to seek review by the coalition core team and responsible parties.

TOOLKIT 3: Coalition Action Plan | Activity 4 – WORKSHEET

Defining and Refining Actions



The Coalition Action Plan outlines a detailed strategy for the coalition and comprises a set of discrete steps, or actions. For the purposes of this worksheet, an **action** is defined as a specific task or activity that needs to be completed to achieve a coalition priority. Most of the time, one priority will require multiple actions.

Each proposed action should define clear tasks, responsibilities, resource needs and the specific steps needed to accomplish the action. Use SMART (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-bound) criteria as a guide to establish effective actions.

Criteria to test for SMART actions:

Specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What needs to be accomplished? • Who’s responsible for achieving it?
Measurable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many? How much?
Achievable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we reasonably accomplish it? • Can budgets and staffing be reasonably expanded to accomplish it? • Can current capabilities be expanded or developed within the given timeframe?
Relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are you proposing this action? • What will achieving this action do?
Time-bound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What’s your time horizon? • When will the team start creating and implementing the tasks they’ve identified? • When will they finish?



Trulove Studios

Bulleit sponsored urban planting and mural reveal with Trees For Houston and Streetart for Mankind in Houston, TX

Coalition Action Plan Worksheet

Use the next four exercises to develop a Coalition Action Plan, starting with broad goals and gradually working toward specific actions that help achieve those goals.

Plan Overview

Start by drafting an overview for your Coalition Action Plan. You'll use your mission and vision statements and coalition goals (see [Toolkit 2](#)) to set a clear directive for your plan. All priorities and actions that you define in the next worksheets should fit under the umbrella of this overview.



Project name

The name of your initiative.

Coalition Description

Provide a brief description of how the coalition formed and the shaping forces of the initiative.

Coalition Mission Statement

Coalition Vision Statement

Coalition Goals

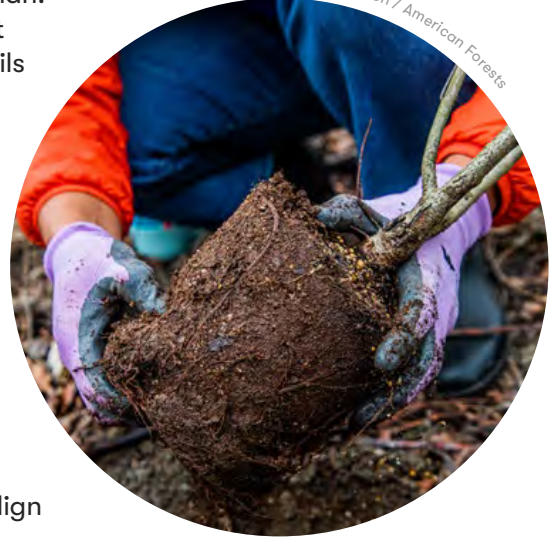
Why Tree Equity? Why now?

Why is tree canopy important to the coalition? Why now? What are the critical local challenges, and how does advancing Tree Equity address those?

Action Playbook

Developing a complete Action Playbook will likely take the most time and collaborative effort out of all four sections in your Coalition Action Plan. We recommend approaching it in phases, starting with the broadest concept (overarching goals) and working toward more specific details (assigning leaders to actions). You'll need to make refinements at every step, ensuring buy-in and shared understanding among stakeholders and partners. The final product will serve as the structure of your Coalition Action Plan.

Aleksandr Watson / American Forests



How to complete the worksheet:

- 1 Each goal you identified in the Plan Overview will get its own Playbook — there are four blank sheets provided below, but feel free to add more.
- 2 Start by writing the goal at the top of the sheet, then **identify priorities** (see your Coalition Roadmap Worksheet, [Toolkit 2](#)) that align with this goal.
 - a. Review these selections with your collaborators. Is anything missing or mismatched? Make sure you're aligned before proceeding.
- 3 Then **identify concrete actions** for each priority. Use your **Tree Equity Needs Assessment Worksheet** ([page 34](#)) as a reference, compiling a draft list of actions that both address existing needs and advance the chosen coalition priority.
 - a. Use SMART criteria to ensure actions are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.
- 4 Finally, **assign leaders to each action**.
 - a. Circulate the draft Action Playbook to partners and stakeholders, inviting them to assume leadership of certain actions based on their expertise and availability.
 - b. These partners can also help you refine each Playbook, filling in gaps and identifying opportunities for collaboration.
 - c. Each action needs an assigned leader before it can move to the next step: completing a detailed Action Template.
- 5 After all partners have had a chance to volunteer for leadership roles and provide feedback (this may involve multiple rounds of review), compile all suggestions into a near-final Action Playbook and share it with the core team or other key stakeholders for review.

Goal 1:



Priority	Actions Needed	Potential Leads/Partners

Goal 2:



Priority	Actions Needed	Potential Leads/Partners

Goal 3:



Priority	Actions Needed	Potential Leads/Partners

Goal 4:



Priority	Actions Needed	Potential Leads/Partners

Action Template

Now that you have a complete Action Playbook, you and your collaborators can start creating specific plans for each action. Set measurable objectives, identify the resources you will need and break the action down into smaller, more digestible steps.

Complete one worksheet per action — the person or group who volunteered as the lead for an action should fill out this worksheet and maintain an active role in action planning.



Action	Deadline
Lead(s)	Supporting Partner(s)
Purpose	
Objectives	
Steps	

Continued on
next page.

Action Template (Continued)



Resources Needed

Notes

Status

Coalition Goal ([Toolkit 2](#))

Coalition Priority ([Toolkit 2](#))

Sample on [page 59](#)

Action Plan Checklist

You have established an overview for your Coalition Action Plan, compiled a list of discrete actions and created detailed plans for each one. Now it's time to put everything together!

Using the checklist below, combine all the pieces of your Coalition Action Plan into a document that you can share with coalition members, stakeholders and the broader community to increase transparency and accountability.

Your Coalition Action Plan will serve as a guiding document that helps the public understand how your coalition will concretely advance its Tree Equity goals.



Your Coalition Action Plan should include:

- A completed Plan Overview
- Tree Equity Commitment or letter of support (see [Toolkit 2](#))
- List of Tree Equity Coalition Core Team members
- List of all organizations involved with the Tree Equity Coalition
- Summary of priority neighborhoods identified in Tree Equity Score (see [Toolkit 1](#))
- Neighborhood Profiles summarizing community insights
- Summary of findings on current conditions and activities evaluated in the Tree Equity Needs Assessment
 - Urban Forestry Activities
 - Plans and Policies
 - Tree Equity Initiatives
 - Community Engagement
 - State of the Urban Forest
- A completed Action Playbook
- All complete Action Templates
- A summary or link to your Community Engagement Plan

Sample Action Playbook

Goal 1: Center community needs and preferences in the decisions and management of the urban forest.

Priority	Actions Needed	Potential Leads/Partners
Establish an independent organization as an anchor institution whose role is to drive and mobilize urban forestry initiatives.	Formalize the role through a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or a legally binding Cooperative Agreement.	
	Secure funding to establish a new role at the anchor organization to project manage and mobilize the initiative.	
Develop an urban forest management plan with a Tree Equity framework that explicitly focuses resources on neighborhoods with fewer trees and greater vulnerability to climate change.	Develop a formal process to conduct community engagement and gather input to inform the urban forest management plan.	
	Develop a 30-year funding strategy.	
	Create Urban Forest Management Plan.	
Monitor and evaluate program progress toward achieving Tree Equity objectives.	Develop a review protocol with clear monitoring metrics that can be implemented biannually.	
	Establish feedback mechanisms to gather input from stakeholders, including residents, community groups, and partners.	

Sample Action Playbook

Goal 2: Community organizations and leaders take an active role in decision-making processes, task forces and stewardship programs related to advancing Tree Equity.

Priority	Actions Needed	Potential Leads/Partners
<p>Develop engagement policies that require more inclusive engagement around tree planting, maintenance and removal (such as establishing an advisory committee of tree stewards).</p>	Form a Community Engagement Policy Advisory Committee.	
	Publish a “Guide to Inclusive Engagement Policies.”	
	Implement training and outreach programs for coalition members using the guide.	
<p>Build long-lasting tree stewardship programs that engage residents in tree care, maintenance and advocacy.</p>	Facilitate community-led workshops and trainings on tree care and advocacy.	
	Establish and manage an active Tree Steward Network that provides access to events, tools, supplies, resources, and technical assistance	
<p>Bolster youth education and introduce young people to careers in urban forestry and Tree Equity.</p>	Develop an urban forestry curriculum for grades 4–6 in public schools.	
	Create youth apprenticeship and internship programs for juniors and seniors in public high school.	
	Support a youth-led campaign about the benefits of urban trees and the importance of equitable access to green spaces.	

Sample Action Playbook

Goal 3: Maximize climate resilience in trees and green space.

Priority	Actions Needed	Potential Leads/Partners
<p>Integrate tree species climate vulnerability and climate projections into tree planting initiatives and decision making.</p>	Develop localized tree planting guidance on climate-adapted tree species that can support public health, climate mitigation and stormwater management in future climates.	
	Integrate research on local projected temperature changes, precipitation patterns and other factors into decision making.	
	Hold community workshops and publish guidance on selecting climate-resilient tree species.	
<p>Establish cyclical, programmatic maintenance that includes low Tree Equity Score neighborhoods so trees remain healthy as long as possible.</p>	Conduct a comprehensive assessment of tree health and maintenance needs in neighborhoods with low Tree Equity Scores.	
	Allocate resources and coordinate ongoing efforts to ensure consistent and equitable maintenance.	
	Coordinate a 10-year plan for cyclical maintenance.	
<p>Establish dedicated Tree Equity staff in urban forest-related departments, community organizations and anchor organizations.</p>	Conduct a needs assessment to determine the specific responsibilities and scope of the dedicated Tree Equity staff positions.	
	Secure sustainable funding to support needed position(s).	
	Integrate the dedicated Tree Equity staff into urban forest-related departments or anchor organizations.	
<p>Adopt ordinances, policies and regulations to protect existing trees, particularly in areas with limited canopy or undergoing development or urbanization.</p>	Conduct a comprehensive review of existing ordinances, policies and regulations related to tree protection. Identify gaps and opportunities.	
	Engage residents, community groups, developers and other stakeholders in the process of developing and adopting new ordinances or policies. Seek input on proposed measures.	
	Provide training and resources to municipal staff, developers and residents to ensure compliance with tree protection measures.	
<p>Expand tree nursery capacity and local supply of native and climate-resilient species available at tree nurseries.</p>	Conduct an assessment to determine current tree nursery capacity and the availability of native and climate-resilient species. Identify gaps in production and distribution.	
	Partner with local nurseries, suppliers and growers to expand the production and availability of native and climate-resilient tree species.	
	Conduct outreach and education campaigns to promote the benefits of planting native and climate-resilient trees. Provide guidance to homeowners, businesses and municipalities on selecting appropriate species.	

Sample Action Playbook

Goal 4: Attain a citywide tree canopy coverage of 28% by 2050, prioritizing implementation in neighborhoods with a Tree Equity Score below 80.

Priority	Actions Needed	Potential Leads/Partners
Establish baseline tree canopy and track change over time.	Establish a monitoring and evaluation protocol to track progress toward achieving the 28% tree canopy coverage goal.	
	Create a staff- and volunteer-led program to conduct a baseline street tree inventory and tracking program for high-priority neighborhoods.	
Prioritize neighborhoods with low tree canopy cover and limited access to green spaces in targeted tree planting initiatives.	Conduct a needs assessment to determine priority neighborhoods using Tree Equity Score in combination with deep community input.	
	Implement targeted tree planting initiatives in neighborhoods with Tree Equity Scores below 80 to rapidly increase canopy coverage. Prioritize the selection of native and climate-resilient species	
	Allocate resources and funding proportionately to support tree planting and maintenance efforts in underserved neighborhoods.	
Establish a sustainable finance mechanism to support urban forestry.	Conduct a thorough needs assessment and financial analysis to determine the funding requirements for urban forestry initiatives. Identify potential funding sources.	
	Develop tailored funding strategies such as creating dedicated funding streams through local ordinances or taxes, establishing an endowment fund, or leveraging philanthropic contributions and corporate sponsorships.	
	Engage stakeholders, including local government officials, community leaders, businesses and residents, to ensure buy-in and approval.	

Sample Action Template

Action

Form a Community Engagement Policy Advisory Committee

Deadline

2026

Lead(s)

Lakeview County Urban Tree Commission

Supporting Partner(s)

City of Arborvale Urban Forestry Department
 Urban Sustainability Division
 Environmental Justice Network
 Green Community Alliance

Purpose

Establish a Community Engagement Policy Advisory Committee (CEPAC) that will serve as a bridge between the community and decision makers. The committee will review existing policies and initiatives and provide a set of published recommendations to improve community engagement in urban forestry and Tree Equity decision making and planning.

Objectives

- Increase public participation and ensure community voices are centered in decision making and planning for urban forestry and Tree Equity.
- Recommend policy changes and new initiatives to increase community engagement.
- Foster transparency and build trust.

Steps

- Identify the goals of the CEPAC and the scope of the committee’s advisory role.
- Recruit members using selection criteria to ensure a diverse and representative committee.
- Set a regular meeting schedule (e.g., monthly, quarterly) and communicate it to all members.
- Review existing community engagement policies and identify areas for improvement.
- Host a town hall to gather input from the broader community.
- Work with community representatives and stakeholders to draft new policy recommendations.
- Gather feedback from committee members and the broader community.

Resources Needed

- CEPAC Project Manager responsible for operations and logistics
- CEPAC Policy Writer responsible for drafting, editing and finalizing all published recommendations and reports
- Budget for town hall meeting — meeting space, materials, equipment

Notes

- Monitoring Progress: Implement a system for tracking the committee’s progress and impact.
- Community Feedback: Continuously seek and incorporate community feedback to ensure the committee remains aligned with public needs and concerns.
- Documentation: Keep thorough records of all meetings and decisions.

Status

Not started. Scheduled for kickoff in September.

Coalition Goal

Community organizations and leaders take an active role in decision-making processes, task forces, stewardship programs related to advancing Tree Equity.

Coalition Priority

Develop engagement policies that require more inclusive engagement around tree planting, maintenance and removal (such as establishing an advisory committee of tree stewards).



Toolkit 3

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