



PHILLY TREE PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Read the full
Philly Tree Plan at:
tinyurl.com/PhillyTreePlanPDF



The livability of our city depends on a healthy and well cared-for urban forest. It provides protection from the heat, improves mental and physical health, and it is a key tool in combating climate change. **But between 2008 and 2018, Philadelphia's urban forest shrunk by 6%.** That's equal to 1,000 football fields worth of tree canopy. And the tree canopy we do have is not fairly distributed across the city. Some neighborhoods have under 5% tree canopy, and others have 45% or more.

The Philly Tree Plan is a response to these challenges. It is a 10-year strategic plan for the growth and care of our urban forest. **Three key values guide the Plan: environmental justice, community engagement, and sustainability.** The Philly Tree Plan aims to bring the benefits of trees to communities that need them the most, in the ways that support them the best.

Philadelphia Parks and Recreation led the creation of the Philly Tree Plan on behalf of the City of Philadelphia.

Community-led approach

Over 9,000 residents helped to guide the goals of the Philly Tree Plan. They generously shared their concerns, ideas, and stories. There were many ways for residents to get involved.



7,000+ survey responses in **8** languages



847 residents participated in **32** community meetings



22 ambassadors from **5** neighborhoods



28 Community Voices Committee members gave **300+** hours of time



7 topic-based workshops with **122** different organizations



500+ virtual open house presentation views

Plan goals and select recommendations

- 1 COORDINATE support for trees**
 - » Prioritize working with communities that will benefit the most
 - » Create a new City Forester position
 - » Improve coordination among public agencies

- 2 PROTECT the existing and future urban forest**
 - » Protect trees during development
 - » Protect public forests and natural lands
 - » Help residents care for mature trees on their property

- 3 GROW the urban forest equitably across the city**
 - » Increase tree planting during development
 - » Care for newly planted trees
 - » Prioritize large, impactful street tree plantings
 - » Plan for a resilient future forest

- 4 REDUCE the burden of trees on residents**
 - » Improve maintenance of public trees
 - » Hire a sidewalk coordinator
 - » Support hazardous tree removal on private property

- 5 INVEST in people and communities**
 - » Improve pathways to careers in urban forestry
 - » Expand career discovery opportunities

- 6 COMMUNICATE with residents and improve customer service**
 - » Improve communication with residents about public tree work
 - » Provide a public interactive tree map
 - » Hire more customer service staff

- 7 ADVOCATE for communities to benefit from the urban forest**
 - » Establish an Urban Forestry Advisory Committee
 - » Hire urban forestry community organizers
 - » Connect nearby neighbors to natural lands

- 8 CELEBRATE and support the ways communities are engaging with trees**
 - » Engage cultural, spiritual, and arts institutions
 - » Support access to food-producing trees
 - » Uplift stories from Philadelphia's many diverse communities

Key terms

Urban forest

All of the trees in an urban area, including trees in yards, along streets, in parks, and in alleys.

Environmental justice

Protection from environmental and health hazards regardless of race or income. Equal access to the decision-making process and a healthy environment for life, work, and play.

Tree canopy cover

The part of the land that is covered by tree leaves and branches from a bird's-eye view.



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PARKS & RECREATION

Creation of the Philly Tree Plan was led by Philadelphia Parks & Recreation on behalf of the City of Philadelphia

The urban forest is public infrastructure

Trees are the only investment cities can make that increase in value over time. They are an effective tool to address many urban challenges, from public health to economic development.



Our protection from heat

There is a 22-degree difference between the hottest and the coolest places in Philly. Heat causes severe illness and death in communities with extreme summer temperatures.



A tool to improve mental health and wellness

Seeing green leaves reduces heart rates and can improve concentration and focus for children.



The air filter for the city

Neighborhoods with fewer trees have higher rates of asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).



Part of spiritual & cultural practices

Trees are part of our folklore and our understanding of ourselves and our community.



Key to combating climate change

Philadelphia's urban forest stores an estimated 2.6 million tons of carbon dioxide (a primary greenhouse gas) and removes and stores an additional 99,000 tons of carbon dioxide per year.



Integral to the health of our watersheds

Trees in our neighborhoods and forests manage stormwater by slowing it down, soaking it up, filtering it, and evaporating it into the air.

An investment in our future

The Philly Tree Plan outlines a life-changing investment in public health and quality of life for Philadelphia neighborhoods. If we start now, the trees we plant today will take 30 years to provide the maximum environmental benefits to our communities. The average cost of reaching this tree canopy in 30 years is \$25.5 million per year. For comparison, this is less than 0.5% of the fiscal year 2022 City budget.

This 30-year investment in trees could have the following benefits:

400
premature
deaths avoided
per year



1,000
full time jobs



\$20 million
per year in
combined
environmental
benefits

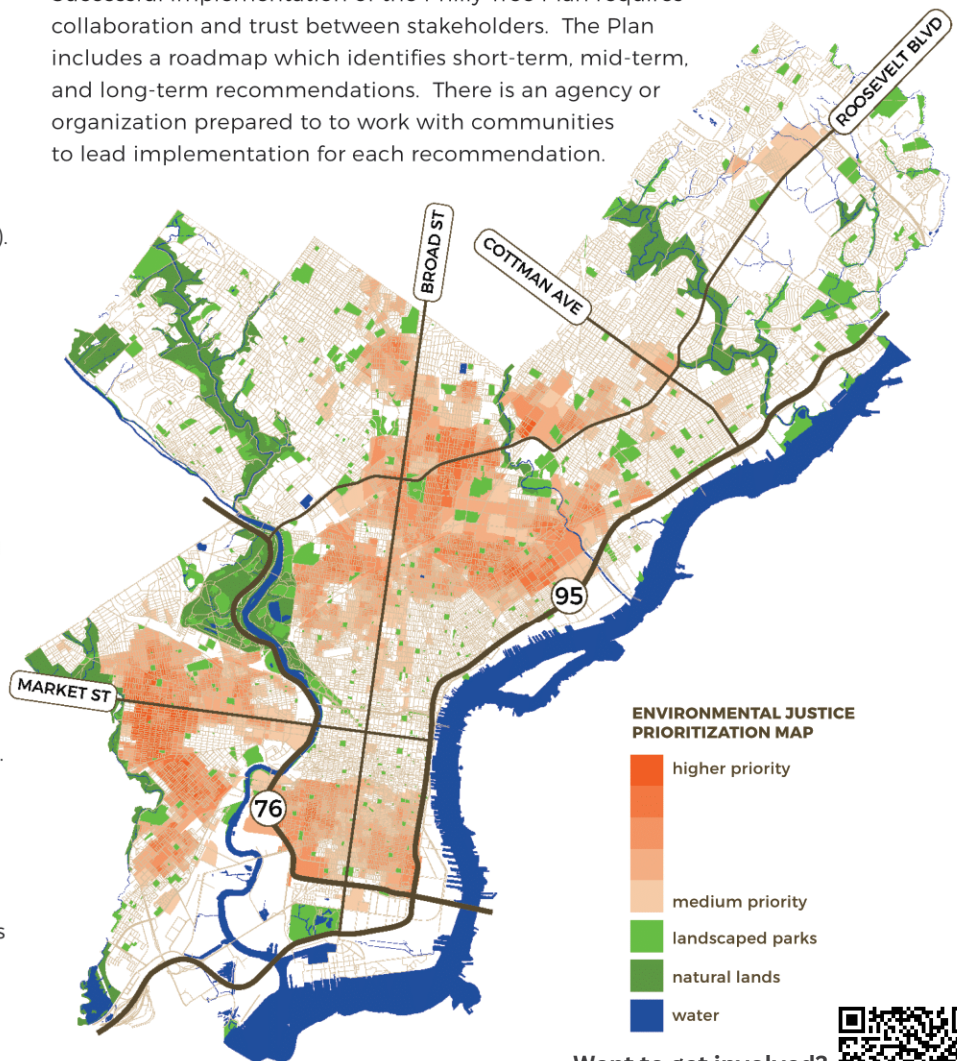


12%
reduction
in crime

Our Future Forest

The Philly Tree Plan has recommendations to grow and care for the urban forest across the entire city. But there are areas of the city where extra support can make a big difference. The City and non-profit partners will focus on working with these priority communities. These residents stand to gain the most benefits from increased tree canopy.

Successful implementation of the Philly Tree Plan requires collaboration and trust between stakeholders. The Plan includes a roadmap which identifies short-term, mid-term, and long-term recommendations. There is an agency or organization prepared to work with communities to lead implementation for each recommendation.



Want to get involved?

Join the Philly Tree Plan mailing list:
mailchi.mp/phila.gov/urbanforest



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