



# ALIGNING URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAMS WITH COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

AN ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TRAINING RESOURCE

## ALIGNING URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAMS WITH COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Environmental justice involves the *fair treatment* and *meaningful involvement* of all people and communities in environmental programs and policies. A history of marginalizing people based on their race and income has led to uneven tree canopy and urban forests across the U.S.

The grassroots environmental justice movement arose in the mid-late 20th century to fight against damage to the environment in mostly lower income communities and communities of color. It is important for urban and community forestry organizations to recognize that they are one part of a larger landscape of efforts to improve conditions in communities that have long been oppressed through practices like redlining, employment discrimination, and inadequate city services.

A first step in reversing this trend of race and income-based environmental injustice is to align your organization's goals and resources with the goals and needs of the communities you seek to serve. To facilitate this process, you can look for neighborhood-based organizations that serve low-canopy communities and learn about their existing goals. Then, you can identify how these goals connect to urban and community forestry. Complete the steps below:

### STEP 1: LOOK FOR NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED ORGANIZATIONS OR GROUPS THAT SERVE THE COMMUNITIES WITH WHOM YOU AIM TO ENGAGE TO ADVANCE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE.

In some cities, online directories of community-based organizations exist. Otherwise, you can use web-based search engines and maps to look for such organizations in communities that you may have already identified as having low tree canopy coverage.

WRITE THE NAMES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED GROUPS IN YOUR AREA BELOW, BY TYPE:

GROUP TYPE	NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

**STEP 2:****IDENTIFY ANY GOALS OR PRIORITIES THAT THESE NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED ORGANIZATIONS HAVE, EVEN IF THEY'RE NOT DIRECTLY RELATED TO URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY.**

- These goals may include: improving economic opportunities for residents, housing affordability, food security, community health, and environment quality.
  - A. Review the websites and/or social media pages for neighborhood-based organizations, as well as other published studies or plans that have documented perspectives of residents in these neighborhoods.
  - B. If you are having a hard time locating goals or priority issues in these resources, contact someone within those organizations to ask about their goals and priorities.

**STEP 3:****BRAINSTORM HOW YOUR ORGANIZATION COULD ALIGN WITH, AND SUPPORT, THESE NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED GOALS THROUGH URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY.**

- Write these neighborhood-based goals in the first column of the table below.
- Write your ideas for how urban and community forestry programs could support these goals in the second column of the table below.
- You can add or delete rows, as needed. Examples are provided in the first three rows:

NEIGHBORHOOD AND/OR COMMUNITY-BASED GOAL:	HOW CAN URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAMS HELP ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?
1. <i>Reduce food insecurity.</i> Residents need greater access to nutritious and sustainable food sources.	Provide free fruit trees to food insecure neighborhoods. (See example of <a href="#">Atlanta's Community Urban Food Forest</a> ).
2. <i>Improve city services.</i> This can include tree care and maintenance.	Secure funding to contract professional tree care for hazardous and/or neglected trees and stump removal on public and private property. (See the example from the <a href="#">Treesilience</a> program).
3. <i>Build social cohesion and networks.</i> Find ways to connect residents in low canopy neighborhoods with people and groups that can support them.	Facilitate dialogue among residents as well as with organizations that can support those residents, like local government and philanthropic foundations. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Urban Resources Initiative in Connecticut serves to facilitate connections between residents, and with outside entities who can support residents' visions: <https://uri.yale.edu/programs/greenspace>





## **THE ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION AND FAIR FORESTS CONSULTING**

At the Arbor Day Foundation, we believe everyone should have access to the powerful benefits of trees. To help strengthen our focus on communities that need trees most, we partner with experts like Dr. Christine Carmichael from Fair Forests Consulting. This resource, crafted by Dr. Carmichael, is part of our ongoing commitment to empowering our partners to grow their environmental justice work in urban forestry.

Alliance for Community Tree members have access to our full environmental justice training series in the ACT Member Resource Center. Learn about this network and how to join at [arborday.org/ACT](https://arborday.org/ACT).