

# Executive Summary

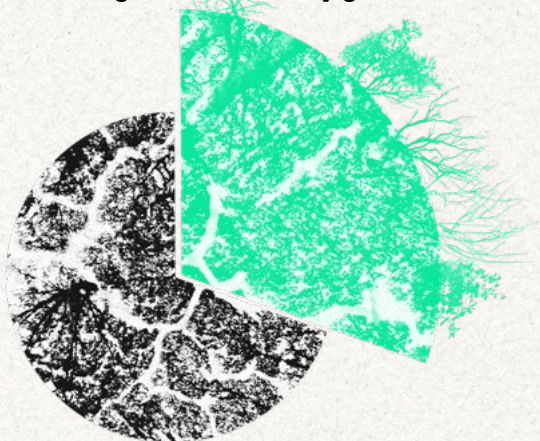
## What is the PVD Tree Plan?

The PVD Tree Plan lays out a vision and strategic pathway to a healthy, just, and resilient **urban forest** in Providence. It is a community-led initiative and the product of multi-year collaboration among many individual, community, nonprofit, and City stakeholders, guided by a Steering Committee of **climate justice frontline community** representatives and urban forestry practitioners.

**This plan is a blueprint and an invitation: join us, and together we will make our city healthier, greener, more resilient, and more just!**

## Our urban forest today

***More than 27% of Providence is covered by tree canopy.***



**That's over 3,221 acres of land and more than 415,000 trees.**

And there's good news...our urban forest is growing! Thanks to a strong foundation of tree planting and maintenance programs, we've seen sustained increases in Providence's tree canopy in recent years. But this progress has done little to change the reality that our city's tree canopy is not evenly distributed. Trees are heavily concentrated in our city's wealthiest and whitest neighborhoods, excluding many low-income communities of color from experiencing the many benefits that our urban forest provides.

We need to make large-scale investments in our urban forest to protect our city's trees from the threats of increasing **development** and **climate disruption** and expand our tree canopy so that it serves everyone in our community.



## Why trees? Why now?

As we face the worsening impacts of the climate crisis, and deep inequities in how those impacts are felt across our city, an equitable and resilient tree canopy is an increasingly vital piece of community infrastructure.

**When we take care of the trees around us, they take care of us, providing a range of benefits that include:**



**Better air quality.**



**Cooler summer temperatures.**



**Improved health.**



**Reduced flooding.**



**Lower utility bills.**



**Spaces to relax and gather in community.**



**Improved mental health.**

## Key Terms:

### **Urban forest:**

the collection of all the trees in the city and all the living things that rely on them.

### **Tree canopy:**

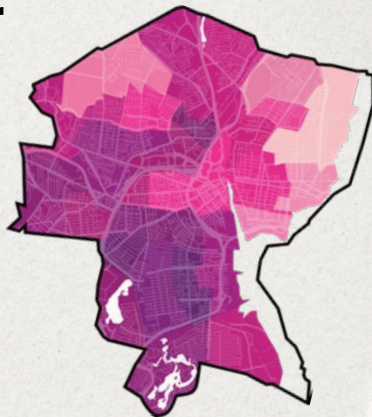
the layer of leaves, branches, and stems that cover the ground when viewed from above.



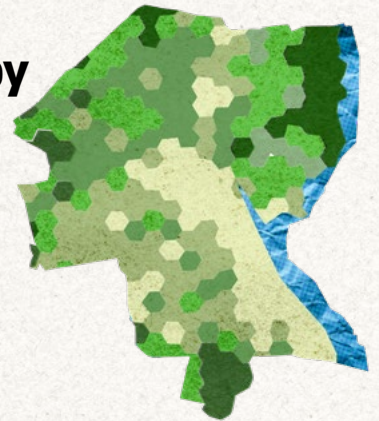
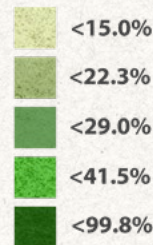
## Our urban forest is not equitable.

Tree canopy is unevenly distributed across Providence neighborhoods—and strongly correlated with both race and income.

### Communities of Color



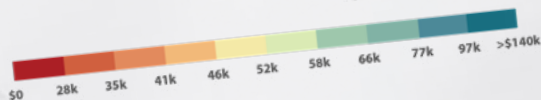
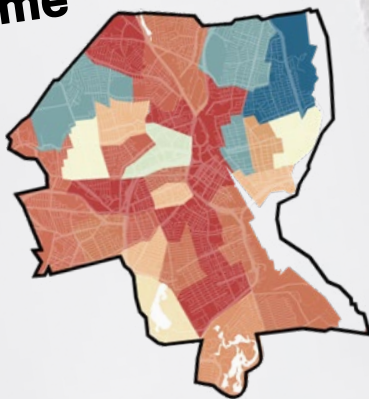
### Tree Canopy Cover



This pattern is the result of decades of racist urban policy and systemic disinvestment in low-income neighborhoods home to people of color. It is evidence of how racism is built into our city's landscape, causing ongoing harm for Black, brown, and working-class people.

This is why Providence community members and organizations came together to create the PVD Tree Plan. And it's why the plan specifically centers the voices, needs, and priorities of climate justice frontline communities.

### Median Household Income



### Creating the PVD Tree Plan

**Over the past three years, community members have engaged with the planning process and shaped our recommendations through:**

- A community survey (which received 848 responses!)
- Presentations to community groups
- Sector-specific focus groups
- Citywide events, tabling, and canvassing
- One-on-one interviews and informal conversations

### Key Terms:

#### Tree equity:

The fair, equitable distribution of trees and the resources required to sustain them across all neighborhoods in a city, so that everyone has equal access to the health, climate, and economic benefits of the urban forest.

#### Climate justice frontline communities:

The people—especially people of color—who are most impacted by overlapping crises of ecological, economic, and political injustice, experiencing the “first and worst” effects of the climate crisis.



## Towards Tree Equity in Providence

We envision a city where a thriving, healthy, and resilient urban forest supports thriving, healthy, and resilient people—and where those people support the urban forest in turn. By achieving tree equity, we can create a future where everyone in Providence experiences the health, climate, and economic benefits of our shared urban forest.

### Three overarching needs cut across the recommendations we developed to help us achieve this vision:

- **Coordination** - We need structures for city-wide collaboration and communication to more effectively work together towards a shared urban forest vision.
- **Capacity building** - We need stronger investment in the many people and organizations who care for our trees.
- **Community leadership** - We need pathways for frontline communities to directly participate in both stewardship activities and management decisions at all levels.

**To guide our progress towards city-wide tree equity, we also developed an initial 25-year canopy target.**

Meeting this target would require us to plant and maintain around 30,377 trees. Every year, these trees would:<sup>3</sup>

- Support 220.9 jobs
- Remove 38,228.1 pounds of pollution from the air we breathe
- Prevent 10.4 million gallons of polluted **stormwater runoff** from entering our waterways
- Provide \$437,336.43 in combined environmental benefits

**We want to increase tree canopy in tree equity focus areas by 50% over the next 25 years, while maintaining existing canopy levels across the city.**

Planting these trees—the only public infrastructure that increases in value over time—would require an investment of at least \$2.5 million per year over ten years, paired with sustained investment in city-wide capacity-building and workforce training. We'll need all hands on deck...so join us!

<sup>3</sup> Benefits calculated using the [Tree Equity Score Analyzer](#) from American Forests.



# Summary of Goals

The PVD Tree Plan outlines an action plan to achieve tree equity—and transformative change in our communities’ public health and quality of life. Our recommendations are broken down into goals and strategies for **six action areas**:

## Community Leadership and Engagement

- Foster leadership by and accountability to climate justice frontline communities
- Build community power across local movements
- Expand access to information and educational and training opportunities
- Celebrate residents’ existing relationships with trees

## Planting

- Prioritize planting trees on private property
- Plant trees, orchards, and “mini-forests” in community spaces
- Increase street tree plantings in tree equity focus areas
- Adopt coordinated city-wide approaches to plant for equity and **resilience**

## Maintenance and Management

- Nurture our young and newly planted trees
- Ease the burdens that trees create for our communities
- Protect existing canopy from short- and long-term threats
- Monitor the health of our urban forest and the activities that sustain it

## Workforce Development

- Introduce employment-seekers to tree industry career options
- Dismantle barriers to entry into the tree industry
- Support tree workers’ professional growth and changing needs from training to retirement

## Funding and Financing

- Secure reliable funding streams for long-term investment
- Link urban forestry funding streams with funding streams for intersecting social and environmental equity initiatives
- Distribute resources according to the needs and priorities of climate justice frontline communities

## Policy and Planning

- Strengthen City policies to protect and equitably distribute the benefits of urban trees
- Coordinate urban forestry activities, policy, planning, and enforcement across municipal and state departments
- Develop state-level policies that eliminate barriers facing municipal urban forestry departments



## Calls to Action

Ready to help our urban forest thrive?  
***Here's what you can do:***



### If you represent an organization or institution:

- ***Think about ways your group might connect to this work:***
  - Do you own a property that needs more trees?
  - Could you help raise funds to increase tree equity in our neighborhoods?
  - Is your group able to volunteer on tree planting or stewardship projects?
  - Are there opportunities for shared advocacy?
- Look at the Implementation Dashboard and note which strategies are relevant to your organization.

[Implementation Dashboard](#)  
is located [here!](#)

### If you are a decision-maker or public official:

- Champion the PVD Tree Plan as whole, and promote specific recommendations and actions that are relevant to your role.

### If you are an individual community member:

- Talk to people about the importance of trees and tree equity! Tell them about the PVD Tree Plan.
- Consider joining with your neighbors, faith center, workplace, or community group to help plant, maintain, or advocate for trees!
- Visit [www.PVDTreePlan.org](http://www.PVDTreePlan.org) and follow us on Instagram @PVDTreePlan to learn about unfolding opportunities to get involved.
- Take space to be mindful of the trees around you...notice where we have them and where we don't, what role they play in our neighborhoods, and how they make you feel. Share some appreciation and gratitude for our urban forest!

**Want to talk?** Reach out to us at [hello@pvdtreeplan.org](mailto:hello@pvdtreeplan.org)!

