NYC Urban Forest Plan

2026

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Cover photo: Trees lining Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn
NYC Parks, Daniel Avila

Cherry blossoms at Mill Brook Houses, the Bronx
New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)

Letter from the NYC Mayor

Dear Neighbors,

All the trees that line our streets and grow in our parks and yards clean our air, protect us from the hot summer sun, and lower energy costs by shading our homes. They help us manage stormwater, increase habitat for wildlife, and collectively make up what we call an urban forest.

Our urban forest makes our city livable, and we must take care of the nature that cares for us.

The Urban Forest Plan is a deep dive into the tree canopy we have and the tree canopy we need to support New York City's future, especially in the face of rising temperatures. Right now, tree canopy covers just under a quarter of the city. To reach 30% tree canopy citywide by 2040 – as this Plan outlines – will require us to move with greater focus than ever before.

We will need to protect the trees we have, add more trees where we lack them, and bring all New Yorkers into a new era of tree stewardship. We must treat growing our urban forest as a shared civic project that reflects our commitment to a healthier, more resilient, and more equitable city for all.

Every New Yorker should benefit from cleaner air, cooler streets, and the everyday presence of trees, regardless of where they live. And every New Yorker has a part to play in directing resources to neighborhoods where investment has been limited and need is greatest.

City agencies, local institutions, community organizations, and all 8.5 million of our neighbors are partners in this work. I look forward to working hand in hand as we cover our city we love in the trees that keep it healthy, beautiful, and ever-improving.

Zohran Kwame Mamdani
Mayor

Letter from the Chief Climate Officer

No matter where you live, work, or spend time outside, all New Yorkers know the immediate relief that comes from standing under the shade of a tree on a hot day. What may be less obvious is that trees are one of the most affordable and accessible ways to help adapt to a changing climate.

New York City's climate future depends on a healthy, diverse urban forest. Trees cool neighborhoods during heat waves, prevent flooding by absorbing stormwater when it rains, clean our air, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve mental health and quality of life, and create vital habitats for plants, birds, and other animals.

Yet for too long, New Yorkers of color in environmental justice communities have been left behind, lacking critical access to trees and all the benefits they provide. Expanding and caring for our urban forest is a matter of racial and environmental justice.

For the first time, this *Urban Forest Plan* (UFP) sets a strategic approach for how the City can equitably expand tree canopy. The actions outlined in the UFP will guide the City in making government work to provide the benefits of tree canopy now, and well into the future. The UFP sets us on a new and collaborative path to achieve our goals.

This Plan analyzes the current state of New York City's urban forest, and outlines clear strategies to protect, expand, and care for our trees over the next decade and beyond. The success of our implementation relies on cultivating a robust community of tree stewards across the five boroughs, from City agency partners and institutional partners to homeowners and neighbors.

The Mayor's Office of Climate & Environmental Justice is committed to making sure that equity and environmental justice are core values that define our solutions to address the climate crisis. We are thankful to 8,000 New Yorkers who shaped the Urban Forest Plan by attending our workshops and events, responding to our questionnaire, and providing invaluable input on how to care for our urban forest. We are also grateful to the core partners and supporters who made the UFP possible: NYC Parks, the City Parks Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, and Natural Areas Conservancy, The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, and the 200 organizations that make up the Forest for All NYC Coalition.

We are excited to strengthen and build new partnerships to achieve all the goals we set forth in the Urban Forest Plan so that our city can be healthier, greener, and cooler for decades to come.

Louise Yeung
Chief Climate Officer, New York City

Letter from the NYC Parks Commissioner

Trees play a critical role in our urban environment. As New York City evolves and grows, we are learning that trees can be the answer to many of our most pressing urban challenges. Trees provide shade, absorb excess stormwater, improve air quality and are especially important in keeping our city safe from the dangers of extreme heat. As a crucial step in the fight against climate change, NYC Parks is committed to growing our urban tree canopy and establishing trees as essential living infrastructure for the long-term resiliency plan of our city.

Today, NYC Parks is the proud steward of over half of the tree canopy in New York City. We have made significant progress in expanding our city's tree canopy not only through tree planting efforts that have long included a focus on equity but also through the management and preservation of existing trees. Research has shown that the care, maintenance and preservation of existing trees is the fastest and most critical part of achieving consistent canopy growth, as 90% of new canopy in the city has come from the growth of existing trees. We are proud of the work we do at NYC Parks and the actions in the Urban Forest Plan will help us do even more. Achieving 30% tree canopy coverage across the city will require preservation and planting of trees across many jurisdictions and commitment and collaboration with many stakeholders. NYC Parks is excited to work closely with and lend our expertise to our colleagues from mayoral agencies, non-profits, and private organizations to achieve this citywide goal.

Thank you to all of the partners and collaborators who contributed to this exciting new plan. We look forward to working alongside New Yorkers to strengthen and expand this important public resource.

Tricia Shimamura
Commissioner, New York City Department of Parks & Recreation

Executive Summary

1

Executive Summary

In New York City, the urban forest is essential living infrastructure. It is made up of nearly seven million trees that grow across a wide range of public and private spaces, including streets, parks, forested natural areas, schoolyards, public housing campuses, cemeteries, university campuses, and the yards of houses and apartment buildings. These trees are as crucial to our everyday lives as utility lines, roadways, and sewer systems. More than 100 different tree species call New York City home, and are supported by soil, fungi, and insects. It also includes communities of plants, birds, and other animals that live alongside trees, as well as the New Yorkers who care for and interact with the urban forest every day.

This, New York City's first *Urban Forest Plan*, acts as a roadmap to preserve tree canopy, plant more trees, and cultivate an ecosystem of stewardship, with the goal of achieving 30 percent tree canopy by 2040.

Over 8,000 New Yorkers shared thoughts in multiple languages online and via in-person gatherings throughout the spring and summer of 2025 to help shape the UFP.

The UFP relies on historical information – such as past land use and investment patterns that have shaped current canopy disparities, and the most recent canopy and other relevant data.

As of 2021, tree canopy covers 23.4 percent of the city, an increase of 1.2 percent from 2017.[1] Yet this citywide growth masks uneven trends. Some areas, including neighborhoods in eastern Queens, have experienced canopy loss. The data also reveals that tree canopy in historically disadvantaged neighborhoods can be below 10 percent.

Taken together, these figures point to both areas of concern and opportunities to advance equity. The UFP will enable all neighborhoods to experience the health, climate, and quality-of-life benefits of expansive tree canopy. The UFP outlines actions to ensure that urban forest preservation and expansion strategies reflect the unique cultural identities of NYC's vibrant communities.

An equitably distributed and ecologically diverse urban forest in New York City will cool neighborhoods, help manage storm-water, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase habitat for pollinators and migrating birds, and enhance the health of, and quality of life for, all New Yorkers.

Using the UFP as a roadmap, the City will review existing processes and advance new programs to achieve canopy goals, with an eye toward opportunities to engage with community members as active partners in enduring urban forest care and expansion. By embedding structural and restorative considerations into long-term planning, the City commits to addressing historical imbalances and sustaining a resilient urban forest as a vital resource for the health and well-being of every New Yorker.

Successful implementation of the UFP requires deep collaboration and partnership across government agencies; nonprofit, institutional, and private-sector partners; advocates; and all New Yorkers.

Young trees in Sunset Park, Brooklyn
NYC Parks

Key Findings

- New York City's current tree canopy covers approximately 45,000 acres, equivalent to 23.4 percent of the city's land area (roughly the size of Brooklyn).
- Environmental Justice (EJ) Areas in New York City have 19 percent tree canopy overall, compared with 26 percent across non-EJ Areas.
- Between 2017 and 2021, the city's tree canopy grew by 8,000 acres overall, but still lost approximately 5,700 acres. As a result, net canopy gains were 2,300 acres.
- At the borough level, canopy cover ranges from 19.5 percent to 33.2 percent. Within each borough, there are pronounced disparities across neighborhoods, with canopy cover ranging from less than 10 percent to more than 40 percent.
- The property types with the largest share of the urban canopy are NYC Parks (along sidewalks and in City parks), private one- and two-unit houses, and federal and NY State–owned campuses (NYCHA, college campuses).
- While the majority of today's canopy is located on public property, most opportunities to plant new trees (where planting would not require changes to existing land use) are on privately owned land.
- Private-property owners are essential collaborators, but they need more support and training.
- High-need neighborhoods (including EJ Areas and those with increased vulnerability to extreme heat) tend to have a disproportionately small share of readily available planting opportunities; with less space for easy planting, these areas require additional attention and creative solutions.
- Many New Yorkers understand the benefits of trees and are eager for opportunities to get involved, but others may not understand the benefits of trees or value them, and in some cases see them as hazards. The UFP seeks to engage all New Yorkers to elevate the benefits of trees and expand opportunities for stewardship.

Getting to 30 Percent

Reaching 30 percent canopy coverage equitably by 2040 will require protecting and preserving existing trees and planting many more across the city. The UFP makes it clear that trees and the urban forest are essential living infrastructure and are as crucial to our everyday lives as utility lines, roadways, and sewer systems.

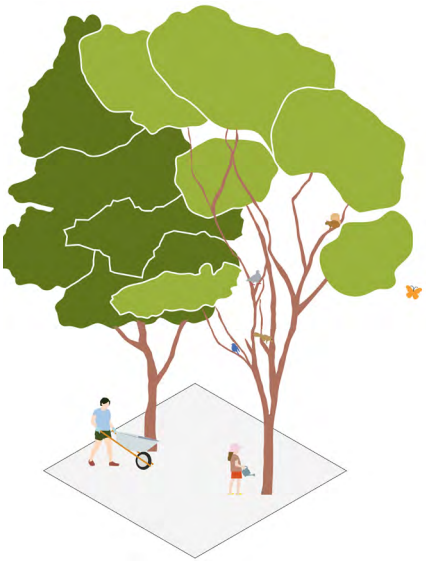
The UFP outlines three pathways toward achieving 30 percent canopy while involving more people and groups in caring for the urban forest.

1. **Preserve Tree Canopy**
2. **Plant More Trees**
3. **Cultivate Stewards of the Urban Forest**

Under the pathways are 12 strategies for public and private actors and community members, supported by 43 actions that identify specific opportunities to protect and expand the urban forest. These actions, including the lead entity responsible for implementation, as well as collaborating agencies and organizations, are outlined on the following pages and are detailed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 summarizes the metrics that will be used to track progress.

Urban forest plan structure

Preserve Tree Canopy



1. Establish clear leadership for tree maintenance citywide.

1.1 Designate a centralized leadership position responsible for overseeing UFP implementation across agencies.

1.2 Designate urban canopy officers within agencies to implement the UFP.

2. Support the full care and maintenance of New York City's public urban forest.

2.1 Proactively care for City park and street trees.

2.2 Support agencies to enforce existing tree protection regulations.

3. Improve regulations and practices of care for the existing urban forest.

3.1 Explore transitioning tree maintenance and management on NYCHA properties to NYC Parks.

3.2 Streamline and improve tree work specifications and management for City agency use in line with national best practices.

3.3 Streamline contracts for tree planting and maintenance.

3.4 Expand the forest ecological assessment, including tree health assessments, to all publicly owned forested natural areas to enable the adoption of the *Forest Management Framework* citywide.

3.5 Identify opportunities for NYC Parks land acquisition to preserve and expand canopy in areas of highest need.

3.6 Clarify jurisdiction of trees on non-City streets to enable NYC Parks maintenance.

3.7 Explore expanding wood reuse citywide and foster new related industries.

4. Preserve tree canopy on private land.

4.1 Develop educational and technical assistance programs for homeowners, tenants, and property managers responsible for trees on private property.

4.2 Explore policy tools and incentives to encourage tree preservation and planting on private property, including in collaboration with New York State partners.

4.3 Explore modifications to existing permitting processes to ensure that tree canopy preservation is considered alongside development.

Plant More Trees

5. Guide UFP implementation through coordinated expertise.

5.1 Institute an advisory committee to guide implementation of the UFP.

5.2 Advance urban forest monitoring and research to inform canopy protection, maintenance, and expansion.

6. Expand tree planting and replacement on private property.

6.1 Encourage tree planting and maintenance on private property through an "NYC Tree Canopy Challenge."

6.2 Encourage tree planting to help mitigate extreme heat in affordable housing projects.

6.3 Examine tree-planting requirements for off-street parking spaces in commercial districts.

6.4 Research mechanisms and strategies to implement changes to tree-planting requirements in zoning for industrial areas.

7. Expand planting areas within public streets and sidewalks.

7.1 Expand planting area in the right-of-way through bump-outs and greenways as part of Department of Transportation (DOT) work requiring curb changes.

7.2 Plant more trees to provide shade and cooling at bus stops.

7.3 Revisit design and construction standards for tree beds, infiltration elements, curbs, and related infrastructure at and below the street level.

7.4 Maximize tree-planting opportunities in the public realm by convening a task force on subsurface conflicts and opportunities.

8. Prioritize high-impact planting on public property.

8.1 Prioritize planting of new trees on NYCHA campuses with high need and available planting areas.

8.2 Ensure that all City capital projects consider trees by incorporating urban forestry into the *Climate Resiliency Design Guidelines* and prioritizing tree preservation, planting, and maintenance as a design strategy for addressing extreme heat and stormwater flood risk.

8.3 Identify new areas for tree planting in low-canopy EJ communities.

8.4 Identify and secure planting and preservation opportunities on public property.

Cultivate Stewards of the Urban Forest

9. Recruit and support tree stewards.

9.1 Promote urban forest expansion, especially in low-canopy neighborhoods, by providing community tree stewards with training and technical assistance.

9.2 Leverage community boards to raise awareness and increase community involvement in urban forestry efforts, both public and private.

9.3 Build on NYC Parks' Neighborhood Tree Planting Program to maximize tree survival and community engagement by aligning resources and outreach with relevant local stakeholders.

10. Educate and empower New Yorkers to promote the co-benefits of trees.

10.1 Expand climate education and action within NYC Public Schools (NYCPS).

10.2 Expand urban forest–related youth programs and opportunities.

10.3 Recruit more Super Stewards from areas that are higher-need and/or EJ Areas.

10.4 Connect New Yorkers with information, opportunities, and organizations to promote care for the urban forest and create positive connections and experiences with the urban forest.

10.5 Obtain a better understanding of the benefits of tree canopy on human health in NYC.

11. Connect economically disadvantaged communities with urban forestry career pathways.

11.1 Recruit more urban forestry industry employers as worksites for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP).

11.2 Explore developing an urban forestry track within CUNY community colleges.

11.3 Improve NYC Parks staffing retention and expand recruitment of diverse local talent for forestry jobs.

11.4 Integrate urban forestry and nature-based jobs training into the workforce ecosystem.

12. Improve connections to New York City's urban forest.

12.1 Expand access to forested natural areas through methods such as improved signage and maps, and enhanced public transit, bike connectivity, and pedestrian connections.

12.2 Increase transparency around urban forest maintenance and restoration work.

12.3 Transform underutilized land into thriving food forests for healthier communities.

Introduction

2

An equitably distributed and ecologically diverse urban forest in New York City will cool neighborhoods, help manage stormwater, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase habitat for pollinators and migrating birds, and enhance the health of, and quality of life for, all New Yorkers.

Nearly 7 million trees comprise New York City's urban forest – almost one for every New Yorker.[2] These trees grow in sidewalk beds; in landscaped parks and forested natural areas; on campuses, plazas, and squares; and on private property, including within front yards, backyards, courtyards, and side alleys.

American Elm street tree, Brooklyn
NYC Parks, Zihao Wang

What Is the Urban Forest?

New York City's trees, representing more than one hundred different tree species, together with the soil and understory plants that support and grow alongside them, make up the city's urban forest. Crucially, the urban forest also includes the communities of birds, mammals, and insects that live within and alongside trees, as well as the New Yorkers who care for and interact with the urban forest every day.

Tree canopy is defined as the parts of a tree or group of trees, including the leaves, branches, and stems, that shade the ground when viewed from above. It is a key metric to understanding the extent of the urban forest citywide.

Indigo bunting, Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn
Emily Nobel Maxwell

The latest available citywide canopy data, from 2021, shows that **tree canopy covers 23.4 percent of the city**, but it is not equitably distributed.[3] Some neighborhoods experience more of the health, climate, and quality-of-life benefits of an expansive tree canopy, while others barely have any canopy cover.

NYC's canopy has grown by 1.2 percent since 2017; however, these citywide trends mask uneven growth. Some neighborhoods have experienced canopy loss, including areas of eastern Queens, while others have seen faster rates of growth, including parts of the Bronx and central Brooklyn.

The canopy must be cared for and equitably expanded to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to the benefits a livable, tree-filled city provides.

Trees in winter around Oakland Lake, Queens
NYC Parks

The UFP will foster more partnerships to involve New Yorkers in caring for the urban forest, and equip City agencies, civic and community partners, and property owners to protect and equitably expand the tree canopy to cover 30 percent of the city by 2040.

Magnolia in bloom at Latimer Gardens, Queens
NYCHA

Trees surrounding a pond in Blue Heron Park, Staten Island
NYC Parks

Forested natural areas trail in Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx
NAC

Why Now?

Summers in NYC are getting hotter and trees are natural air conditioners. According to the NYC Panel on Climate Change, by the 2050s we could see 35 days a year above 95 degrees compared to just four days in recent history. This is why, in April 2023, New York City's climate action plan *PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done* adopted a citywide goal to achieve 30 percent tree canopy cover as a strategy to address extreme heat. Later that year, City Council passed Local Law 148, requiring the City to "develop and report on an urban forest plan that identifies strategies and sets goals to protect, care for, and expand the urban forest canopy."[4] The law, which was broadly supported across elected and appointed officials and advocates, codifies a 30 percent urban canopy goal and calls for an urban forest plan informed by public input every 10 years.

These two milestones built directly on the Forest for All NYC coalition's advocacy for the city to achieve at least 30 percent canopy cover, as outlined in their *NYC Urban Forest Agenda* (2021).[5] Advocacy for planting and protecting urban trees has been part of New York City's history since the nineteenth century, and long before that through Indigenous Lenape stewardship. Key moments in this history are outlined in the "Brief History of NYC's Urban Forest" timeline later in this introduction.

30 Percent by 2040

This UFP sets out an ambitious goal to achieve **30 percent canopy equitably by 2040**. In comparison, if current growth trends continue, estimates show that New York would reach 30 percent by 2055 or later.[6] Reaching this expanded canopy faster will better achieve broader City goals, including advancing environmental justice, mitigating the effects of heat, and improving quality of life.

What would 30 percent canopy mean for New York City?

Thirty percent canopy means more than one tree for every New Yorker. It means shadier streets and sidewalks, and more affordable utility bills as trees cool the air and provide shade for buildings. Thirty percent means greener streets, yards, and parks. It also means an essential living infrastructure that reduces stress, promotes well-being, and saves lives.[7] Thirty percent means less flooding, cleaner air for New Yorkers to breathe, and more habitat for other species.[8]

New York City's tree canopy is growing but is not evenly distributed.

- Between 2010 and 2017, the canopy increased by an average of 507 acres per year.
- Between 2017 and 2021, this average increased to 579 acres per year.

Despite this growth, canopy coverage and its corresponding benefits remain unevenly distributed.

EJ Areas in New York City have 19 percent tree canopy compared with 26 percent in non-EJ Areas.*

Thirty percent by 2040 is an ambitious but attainable target.

- Reaching 30 percent canopy by 2040 will require increasing canopy by 6.6 percent in the next 14 years.
- By comparison, New York City increased its canopy by three percent in 11 years, between 2010 and 2021, even as its population increased by 7 percent and the city saw significant new development.
- The total additional tree canopy required to reach 30 percent is equivalent to roughly half the land area of the Bronx.
- This means adding an average of 700 acres per year for the next 14 years.

Through the actions outlined in the UFP, the City aims to accelerate canopy expansion to reach 30 percent by 2040 through reducing tree loss; preserving and expanding existing canopy; promoting new growth through strategic, equitable planting; and cultivating the ecosystem of tree stewardship where it is needed the most.

* EJ Areas are defined according to New York State's Disadvantaged Communities Criteria (DAC). Released in 2023 by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Climate Justice Working Group, DACs have been used by NYC to define environmental justice areas since the release of the *EJNYC Report* in 2024.

The Case for Urban Trees

Cultivating and sustaining a healthy urban forest is an essential function of government, and essential to a vibrant, equitable city. Trees provide a range of benefits to our cities, neighborhoods, and residents,[9] including:

- **Improved air quality:** Trees remove harmful particles from the air, contributing to cleaner, healthier air for us to breathe. Trees in New York City remove nearly 1,100 tons of pollution from the air each year.[10]
- **Heat reduction:** Trees help keep our homes and neighborhoods cool. Areas with at least 32 percent vegetation, including tree canopy, experience decreases in summertime temperatures.[11] New York City's trees reduce residential energy costs by providing shade and evaporative cooling in the summer.[12] Community districts that experience lower temperatures and levels of ultraviolet (UV) radiation also tend to have the highest levels of canopy coverage and closer proximity to large parks.[13]
- **Stormwater management:** Trees reduce stormwater runoff by absorbing rainfall. They also act as filters for stormwater runoff, reducing the amount of harmful substances and pollutants that end up in our waterways.[14]
- **Carbon storage:** As trees grow, they absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it – a process called carbon sequestration. New York City's trees sequester an estimated 51,000 tons of carbon per year, helping to slow the pace of climate change.[15]

Nature trail in Marine Park, Brooklyn
NAC

Young trees in a meadow in Red Hook, Brooklyn
WXY Studio

- **Improved public health:** By cleaning our air, trees reduce the number of cases of acute respiratory illness for residents; by reducing urban heat, they are also associated with lowering the instances of heat-related illnesses and deaths.[16] Studies have also shown the presence of trees to have a positive impact on mental health, blood pressure, and stress.[17] The air quality benefits of NYC trees correspond to approximately $78 million annually in avoided health-related costs attributable to pollution, such as hospitalizations for cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses.[18]
- **Biodiversity and habitat:** Trees provide habitat for birds, pollinators, and other animals and contribute to biodiversity.
- **Enhanced livability:** Trees make our streets, parks, and public spaces more comfortable, beautiful, and safe by reducing air, light, and noise pollution, providing shade, and encouraging walking, rolling, and outdoor recreation. Research from NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) shows that New Yorkers are more likely to choose a walking route that has trees along the way.[19]

The annual cost to care for New York City's urban forest is much lower than the total benefits the urban forest provides. The urban forest is estimated to generate at least $110 million in annual benefits through carbon sequestration, reduced runoff, air pollution removal, avoided health costs, and more. Adjusting for inflation, NYC's urban forest provides a total of $360 million in annual and ongoing benefits. The estimated total value of New York City's entire urban forest – expressed as the cost that would be required to replace the city's entire urban forest – is $5.7 billion.[20]

When asked which benefits of the urban forest they value most, questionnaire respondents most frequently identified shade and cooling, beauty, and improved air quality.

The graphic below summarizes key benefits as estimated by the U.S. Forest Service.[21] Beyond these environmental and economic benefits, participation in community stewardship and time in nature have been linked to stronger social connections and improved mental health.[22]

NYC trees by the numbers [35]

Trees

~7,000,000

Total cost to replace the urban forest

$5.7 billion

Reduced energy costs

$17.1 million/year

Total value of carbon storage

$153 million **1.2** million tons

Pollution removed from our air

$77.9 million/year **1,100** tons/year

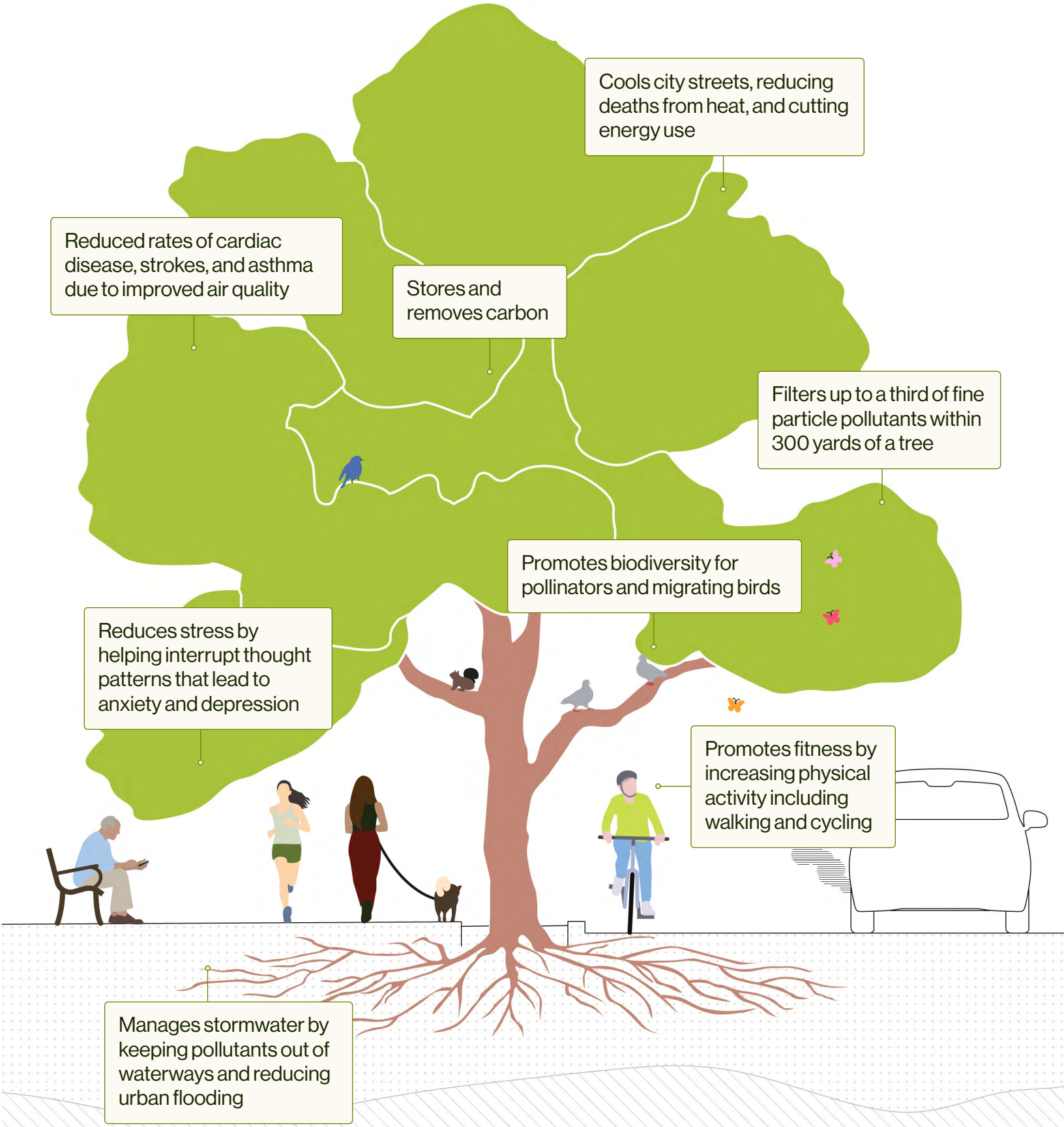
Avoided runoff

$4.6 million/year **69** million feet^3/year

In carbon sequestered

$6.8 million/year **51,000** tons/year

Health and environmental benefits of the urban forest



A brief history of New York City's trees

Before 1600
The Precolonial Forest

Rendering of New York City's early history
Eric Mehl for Eric W. Sanderson's *Before New York: The Natural Geography of the City* (Abrams, 2026)

Before European colonization, approximately 85 percent of what is now New York City was forested – part of a landscape known as Lenapehoking, stewarded by the Lenape for thousands of years. This land supported an extraordinary biodiversity of around 70 tree species, 650–1,100 plant species, and up to 350 bird species, long predating the city we know today.[23]

1600–1811
Agriculture and Deforestation

View of attack against Fort Washington, 1776
NYPL

Dutch and English colonizers steadily cleared New York City's forests for timber, fuel, and farmland, rapid deforestation that carried serious ecological consequences, including heightened flood risk and severe erosion.[24] New York was part of a broader continental pattern: Between 1700 and 1920, North America lost nearly 30 percent of its forestland, a trend New York State outpaced by clearing more acres than any other state in the nation.[25]

1811–1900
Urbanization and Green Reform Movements

Block planting by Tenement Shade Tree Committee
NYPL

As New York City's street grid took shape and farmland gave way to dense city blocks, trees nearly vanished from streets and neighborhoods.[26] Growing concern among public health advocates about overcrowding and pollution spurred a wave of reform, from the creation of major parks like Central, Prospect, Van Cortlandt, and Pelham Bay, to organized campaigns for street tree planting. This culminated in legislation that extended the Parks Department's jurisdiction over the preservation and planting of street trees.[27]

1900–1960
Trees for the Modern City

Riverton Houses, 1949
NYPL

In 1934, the Parks Department conducted New York City's first comprehensive tree survey, laying the groundwork for a more systematic approach to managing the urban canopy.[28] Housing policy further shaped the canopy's recovery – from Federal Housing Authority (FHA) standards that encouraged tree-lined streets in new residential areas, to public-housing campuses designed with expansive green space and large-caliper trees.[29] Today, NYCHA properties account for approximately 2.3 percent of the city's total tree canopy, making them among the most heavily treed residential areas in New York City.

1960–1990
New Tree Advocates

Home of Hattie Carthan, Brooklyn
NYPL

Ahead of the 1964 World's Fair, the City planted five thousand street trees as part of a broad beautification effort, though the vast majority were concentrated in Manhattan.[30] That same year, Hattie Carthan's block association in Bedford-Stuyvesant spurred community-led planting tied to the civil rights and environmental justice movements.[31] This tradition of neighborhood stewardship carried through the fiscal crisis of the 1970s and recovery of the 1980s, when a surge in vacant City-owned lots prompted the launch of the GreenThumb Community Garden program.[32]

1990–Present
Expanding the Urban Forest

1995–96 Street Tree Census
NYC Parks

In the 1990s, a NYC Parks–led, volunteer-driven Street Tree Census identified more than 10,000 dead trees citywide and prompted a new commitment to systematic maintenance and removal.[33] Research in the early 2000s established a 30 per-cent canopy goal, and *PlaNYC* 2007 translated that ambition into the concrete target of planting one million trees in 10 years (MillionTreesNYC).[34] Today, ongoing planting efforts continue to work toward 30 percent canopy citywide. As mandated by Local Law 148 of 2023, this UFP marks a key milestone in continued efforts to comprehensively and equi-tably expand and maintain the city's urban forest.

Developing the UFP

The voices of the more than 8,000 New Yorkers who participated in engagement were critical to the development of this UFP. Many of those who participated are engaged in stewardship or represent communities interested in the urban forest.

These participants took part in public workshops and tours in all five boroughs, virtual focus groups, an online questionnaire, Stakeholder and Technical Advisory committees, and interagency meetings. Engagement took place between winter 2024 and fall 2025 and was led by the Mayor's Office of Climate & Environmental Justice (MOCEJ), NYC Parks, City Parks Foundation (CPF), Partnerships for Parks (PfP), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Natural Areas Conservancy (NAC), WXY architecture + urban design, and Urban Canopy Works.

50+
engagement events, public workshops, and focus group meetings

8,000+
participants across engagement events

7,024
responses to the community questionnaire

20,000+
unique comments reflecting community feedback

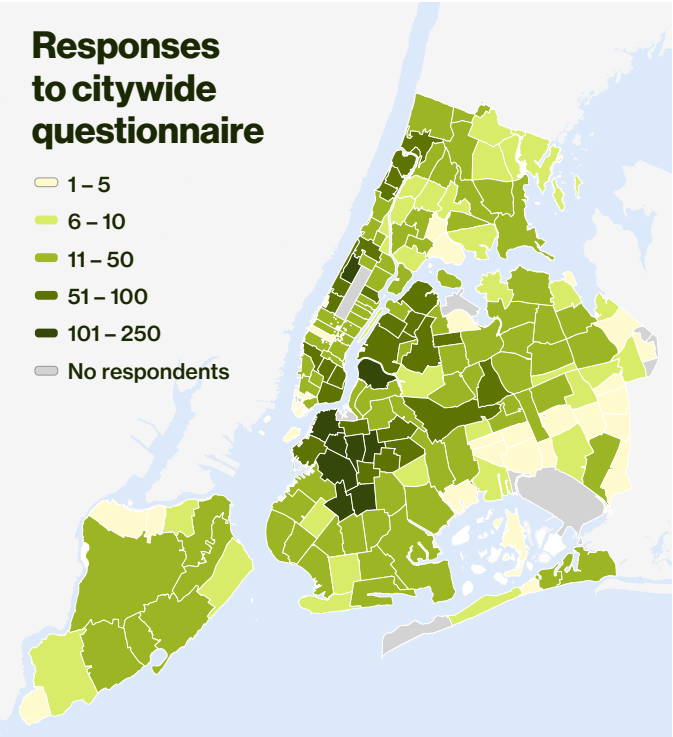
Feedback from all engagement activities informed the development of more than 150 potential recommendations for the UFP. The City evaluated based on feasibility, impact, redundancy, and efficiency, which resulted in the 43 implementable actions presented here. Across engagement, five core themes emerged: stewardship, resources, advocacy, maintenance, and planting. Input from community engagement helped to inform the findings in Chapter 3 that are summarized further there.

UFP workshop participants
NAC

Who answered the citywide questionnaire?

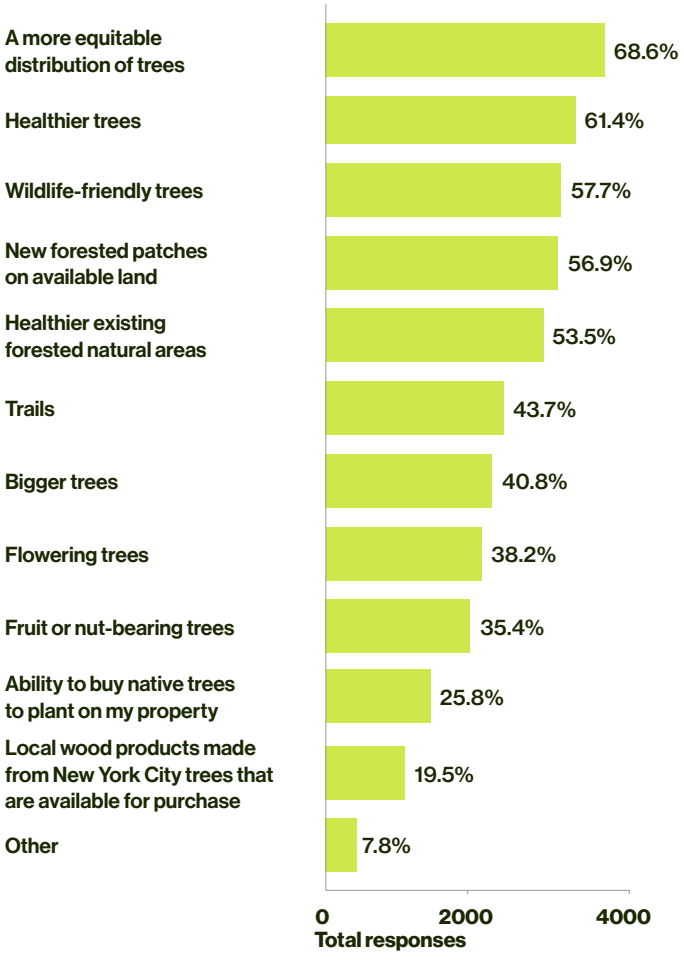
To solicit input for the UFP, the City and its partners distributed an online questionnaire that ran from April 21 through July 14, 2025, in the 10 most common languages spoken in New York City, including Arabic, Bangla, English, Haitian Creole, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and simplified and traditional Chinese.

The questionnaire received 7,024 unique responses, including 96 multilingual responses. Nearly half of respondents were between the ages of 25 and 44. The majority of respondents identified as White (64 percent), more than twice the proportion of White residents citywide (31 percent), followed by 10 percent who identified as Hispanic or Latino (compared to 28 percent citywide). The majority of respondents identified as female (64 percent), and 33 percent indicated they own private property. Nearly every zip code in NYC was represented by the 4,500 respondents who shared this information.



The questionnaire was advertised through a number of channels, including the *Urban Forest Plan* website; newsletters and social media posts from agencies, elected officials, and community boards; and community and partner organizations across all boroughs. Media campaigns led by TNC and CPF had more than 180,000 interactions across various social media platforms and multilingual ads.

What do you hope the New York City urban forest includes more of in the future?



Centering Equity

As required by Local Law 148, this UFP aims to equitably expand New York City's canopy. Without a focus on equity, efforts to expand New York City's total tree canopy could still leave significant disparities in canopy coverage across communities. Tree equity in New York City serves as a core environmental justice strategy, establishing the urban forest as essential public infrastructure to be managed to advance environmental justice citywide.

The City prioritizes expanding canopy and green space in EJ communities and neighborhoods that are highly vulnerable to heat-related health impacts to ensure that environmental and social benefits are accessible to all residents. This UFP recognizes the historical factors – such as past land use and investment patterns – that have shaped current canopy disparities, and strives to ensure that greening strategies reflect the unique cultural identities of communities. The City and this UFP will structure programs and processes so that community members are active partners in the decision-making process, integrating local expertise for all urban forest activities, from planning to care. By embedding these structural and restorative considerations into long-term planning, the City commits to addressing historical imbalances and sustaining a resilient urban forest as a vital resource for the health and well-being of every New Yorker.

How We Get to 30 Percent

This UFP outlines three pathways to achieving 30 percent canopy that will guide its implementation:

1. **Preserve Tree Canopy**
2. **Plant More Trees**
3. **Cultivate Stewards of the Urban Forest**

Under each pathway, a total of 12 strategies describe key issues and challenges to be addressed by this UFP. Finally, within each strategy, a total of 43 individual actions outline specific programs, policies, and projects that will be pursued over the next 10 years. These actions are detailed in Chapter 4.

Green City Force Service Corps members survey trees at Brownsville Houses, Brooklyn
NYCHA

Urban forest plan structure

Preserve Tree Canopy

1. Establish clear leadership for tree maintenance citywide.
2. Support the full care and maintenance of New York City's public urban forest.
3. Improve regulations and practices of care for the existing urban forest.
4. Preserve canopy on private land.

Plant More Trees

5. Guide UFP implementation through coordinated expertise.
6. Expand tree planting and replacement on private property.
7. Expand planting areas within streets and sidewalks.
8. Prioritize high-impact planting on public property.

Cultivate Stewards of the Urban Forest

9. Recruit and support tree stewards.
10. Educate and empower New Yorkers to promote the co-benefits of trees.
11. Connect economically disadvantaged communities with urban forestry career pathways.
12. Improve connections to New York City's urban forest.

Key Findings About NYC's Urban Forest

3

This chapter summarizes findings about New York City's urban forest based on analysis from three key sources:

1. Citywide tree canopy data from 2021, 2017, and 2010
2. The extents of possible future canopy based on existing infrastructure, landscape cover, and land uses, aka "practical canopy"
3. Input from community engagement conducted to develop this UFP

The findings address the current distribution of canopy citywide; recent changes in canopy, including locations of loss; opportunities for canopy expansion through new planting; and practices surrounding tree maintenance and stewardship. These findings inform the strategies and actions found in Chapter 4.

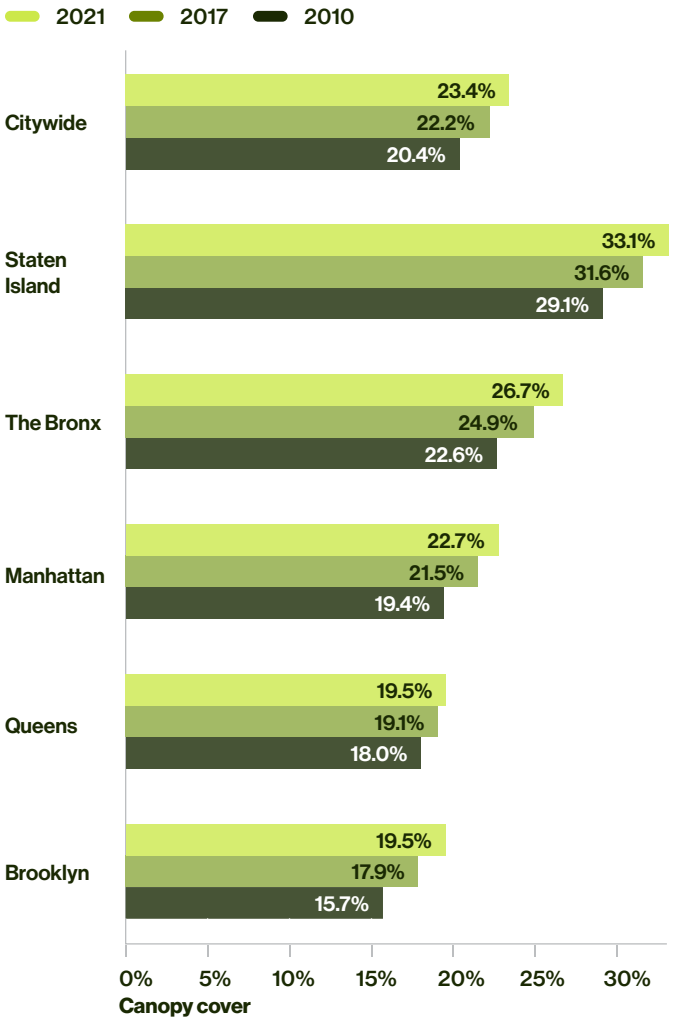
Tree Canopy Distribution

New York City's tree canopy spans approximately 45,000 acres, equivalent to 23.4 percent of the city's land area, or roughly the size of Brooklyn. However, this tree canopy is not evenly distributed citywide.

As a result, the benefits that tree canopy provides, such as cooling, improved air quality, stormwater management, physical and mental health and well-being improvements, and biodiversity, are also unequally distributed. Neighborhoods with less canopy receive less of these benefits, compounding existing environmental and health burdens.

Cherry blossoms at Todt Hill Houses, Staten Island
NYCHA

Canopy cover citywide and by borough 2010–2021

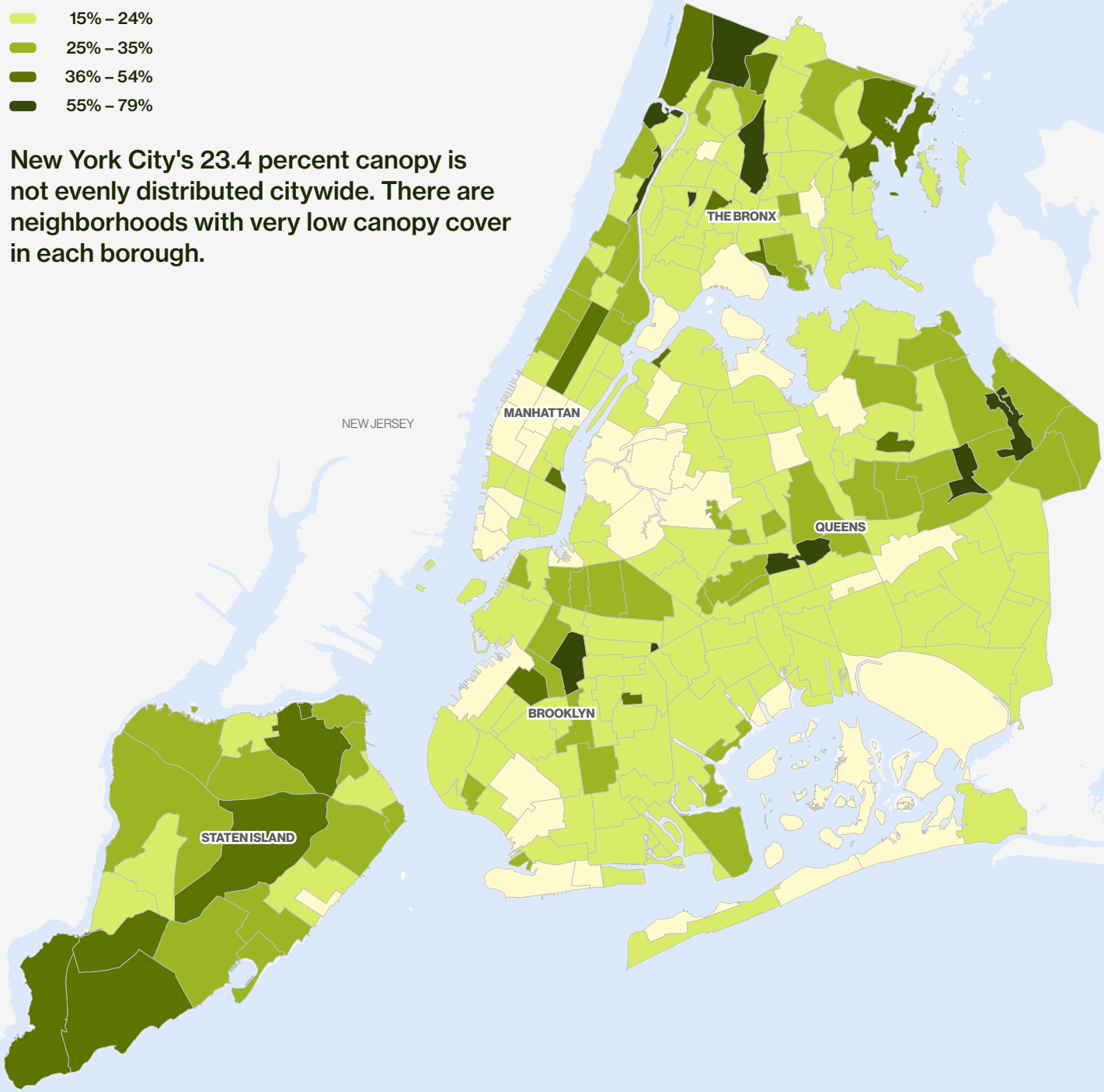


Where is canopy located today in NYC?

Canopy cover by Neighborhood Tabulation Area (NTA) 2021

- 1% – 14%
- 15% – 24%
- 25% – 35%
- 36% – 54%
- 55% – 79%

New York City's 23.4 percent canopy is not evenly distributed citywide. There are neighborhoods with very low canopy cover in each borough.



EJ Areas have less tree canopy

New York City's Environmental Justice (EJ) Areas have 19 percent tree canopy, compared with 26 percent across non-EJ Areas.

- The distribution of trees across the city reflects historical patterns of development and structural disinvestment. As reported in *The State of the Urban Forest*, the legacy effects of the discriminatory lending practices known as "redlining" are most apparent "in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island, [where] areas with lower canopy cover as of 2017 were significantly associated with lower ratings from the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC)."[36] Understanding these underlying causes is essential to designing the equitable strategies this UFP puts forward.
- Recent trends in canopy growth, driven in part by policy decisions to prioritize planting where the public health need is greatest, are beginning to reverse some of these inequities.
- Addressing the unequal distribution of canopy is a core objective of this UFP.

Nearly 70 percent of the New Yorkers who responded to the citywide questionnaire said their primary hope for the urban forest's future was a more equitable distribution of trees.

19% tree canopy — EJ Areas

26% tree canopy — Non-EJ Areas

23.4% tree canopy — Citywide

"A hope is lush tree coverage all around the city, especially low-income/immigrant BIPOC communities."

– Workshop participant

There are canopy disparities in each borough

In all five boroughs there are neighborhoods with canopy levels far below borough or city-wide canopy levels. For example:

- In the Bronx, neighborhoods like Hunts Point have just 6 percent canopy, among the lowest in the entire city and a fraction of the borough-wide canopy level of 27 percent. A resident of Pelham Bay lives under a dense, connected tree canopy that cools the air, filters pollution, and absorbs stormwater. A resident of Hunts Point, just miles away, lives in one of the city's hottest, most pollution-burdened neighborhoods with almost no canopy to speak of.
- In Queens, Rockaway Beach-Arverne-Edgemere has only 7 percent canopy, compared with 20 percent canopy for Queens as a whole.
- In Brooklyn, Sunset Park (West) has 10 percent canopy, and Gravesend and Bensonhurst have 13 percent. All three are below the 19 percent canopy for Brooklyn as a whole.
- These disparities within boroughs matter because they are often invisible in borough-wide or citywide statistics. A borough may appear to meet or exceed the citywide canopy level while individual neighborhoods within it remain severely underserved. Reaching 30 percent canopy citywide will not be sufficient if it leaves these neighborhood-level gaps.

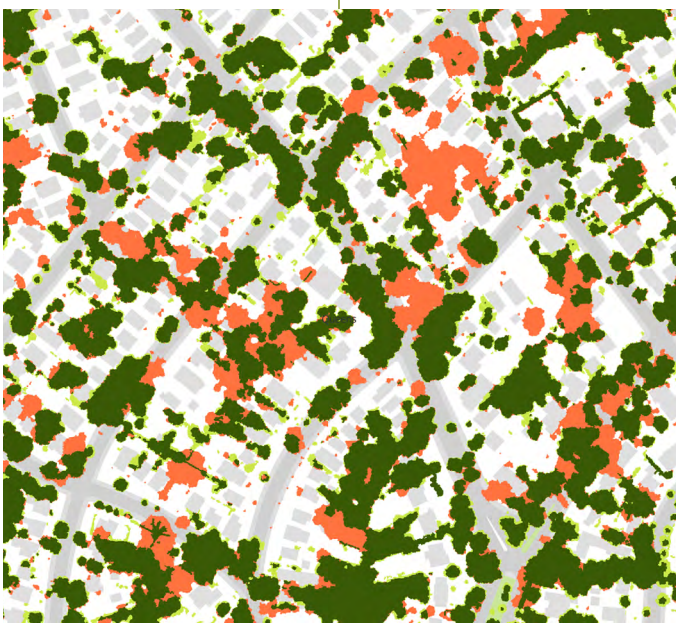
Research Spotlight

Measuring NYC's Tree Canopy

Tree canopy in New York City is measured using a remote sensing technique known as LiDAR (light detection and ranging), which uses sensors mounted on aircraft to capture detailed information about height and shape. This data is combined with aerial or satellite imagery to classify land cover in a highly detailed way, distinguishing buildings, roads, railways, impervious surfaces, bare ground, open water, vegetation, and tree canopy across the city.

There have been three complete LiDAR scans of NYC, allowing for comparisons of tree canopy from 2010, 2017, and 2021. These comparisons form the basis for the analysis of canopy presented in this chapter and UFP. Under Local Law 148 of 2023, City Council mandated that the City is required to continue collecting comprehensive LiDAR data on tree canopy from scans every five years to monitor changes in canopy over time.

By comparing data derived from each scan, it is possible to identify areas where canopy is growing (light green), where there has been loss (orange), and where the canopy has stayed the same (dark green). Understanding these patterns can help us determine effective strategies to protect existing trees and expand canopy citywide.



Tree canopy change 2017-2021 visualized from processed LiDAR data[51]

The most common park and street trees in NYC[52]

London Plane Tree
Platanus x acerifolia

97,900
trees on streets and in NYC Parks

Thornless Honeylocust
Gleditsia triacanthos var. inermis

71,700
trees on streets and in NYC Parks

Pin Oak
Quercus palustris

66,800
trees on streets and in NYC Parks

Callery Pear
Pyrus calleryana

53,100
trees on streets and in NYC Parks

*species no longer planted or permitted for planting by NYC Parks

Japanese Zelkova
Zelkova serrata

33,100
trees on streets and in NYC Parks

Littleleaf Linden
Tilia cordata

28,000
trees on streets and in NYC Parks

Norway Maple
Acer platanoides

25,200
trees on streets and in NYC Parks

*species no longer planted or permitted for planting by NYC Parks

Japanese Flowering Cherry
Prunus serrulata

23,900
trees on streets and in NYC Parks

Ginkgo; Maidenhair tree
Ginkgo biloba

22,800
trees on streets and in NYC Parks

Red Maple
Acer rubrum

21,200
trees on streets and in NYC Parks

The majority of tree canopy is on public land

Although the city is roughly evenly divided between public and private land, two-thirds of the total canopy is located on public land. Building on prior analyses by TNC, the City analyzed canopy distribution and change across detailed property types during the development of this UFP to better understand drivers of canopy change and opportunities for growth. Property types define both where a tree is located and who is responsible for its care (e.g., park and street trees managed by NYC Parks, or trees on the property of one- or two-unit houses managed by homeowners, or trees within campuses like universities managed by institutions).[37] This analysis has informed the strategies and actions outlined in this UFP.

Trees under the care of NYC Parks make up the largest share of the urban forest, totaling approximately 24,500 acres of canopy. These include trees along streets and sidewalks and within City parks.

Canopy of one- and two-unit houses is the next largest contributor to canopy, accounting for approximately 7,600 acres citywide. Federal- and New York State–owned properties, including NYCHA and City University of New York (CUNY) campuses, are the property types with the next largest contribution to canopy citywide.

Canopy as percent of NYC land area by property type

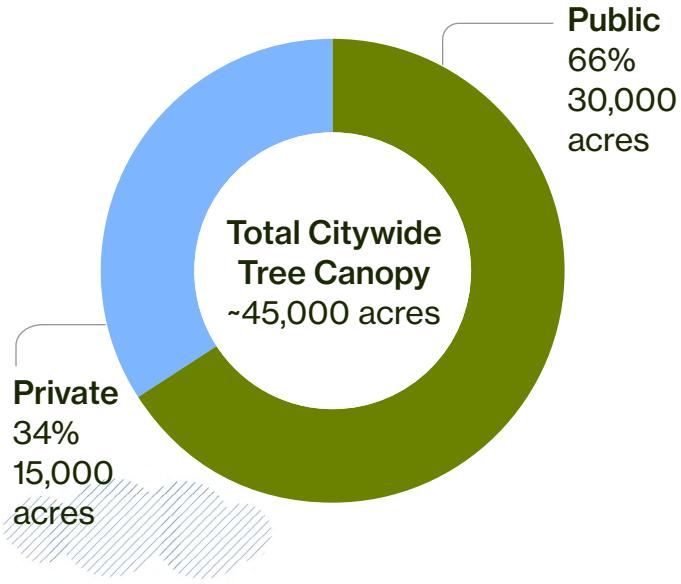


Illustration of trees and property types across New York City

Canopy by property type

Public **~30,000** acres of tree canopy

- **12,600** acres NYC Parks properties
- **11,930** acres Streets and sidewalks (NYC Parks managed)
- **3,820** acres Federal or State
- **1,650** acres Other City-owned

Private **~15,000** acres of tree canopy

- **7,640** acres 1–2-unit houses
- **3,230** acres 3+ unit houses
- **2,590** acres Private campuses and cemeteries
- **1,770** acres Other private

Change in Tree Canopy

The tree canopy of NYC is growing

Since 2010, the first year that data on the extents and locations of tree canopy was collected for the whole city via remote sensing, New York City has seen an increase in tree canopy citywide and within each borough. The city's tree canopy grew from 20.4 percent in 2010 to 23.4 percent in 2021, representing an increase of more than 2,300 acres, or approximately 15 percent of the total area of Manhattan.

Net canopy growth has accelerated in recent years. Between 2017 and 2021, overall canopy increased by an average of 580 acres per year, compared with approximately 510 acres per year between 2010 and 2017. This canopy increase reflects net change, which is inclusive of both losses and gains. Between 2010 and 2021, growth outpaced losses, resulting in canopy increase citywide.

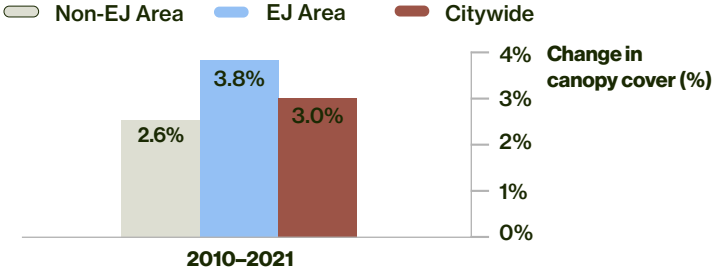
Canopy gains are not equal across NYC

- Brooklyn experienced the greatest absolute increase in canopy between 2010 and 2021, adding approximately 1,700 acres.
- Staten Island and the Bronx experienced the highest rate of change, with canopy expanding by approximately 4 percent in each borough between 2010 and 2021. This is equivalent to about 1,100 additional acres of tree canopy in the Bronx and 1,500 acres on Staten Island.
- While all five boroughs have experienced net canopy growth, some neighborhoods have seen greater rates of increase, while others have seen canopy loss.
- Between 2017 and 2021, neighborhoods in eastern Queens saw the most canopy loss citywide, primarily on private property and driven in part by tree removal associated with changes made by property owners.
- Between 2010 and 2017, coastal neighborhoods saw the most canopy loss, largely a result of the impacts of Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

Canopy is expanding faster in EJ Areas

- Between 2010 and 2021, EJ Areas have seen a total increase in canopy of 3.8 percent compared with 2.6 percent for non-EJ Areas and 3 percent citywide.
- The rate of change in EJ Areas has accelerated over this time period, with greater canopy gains in EJ Areas between 2017 and 2021 than between 2010 and 2017. NYC Parks' targeted planting strategies in heat-vulnerable neighborhoods and neighborhoods with low canopy have likely contributed to these trends. Maintaining and accelerating growth rates in EJ Areas is essential for achieving equitable canopy distribution.

Canopy change by EJ status

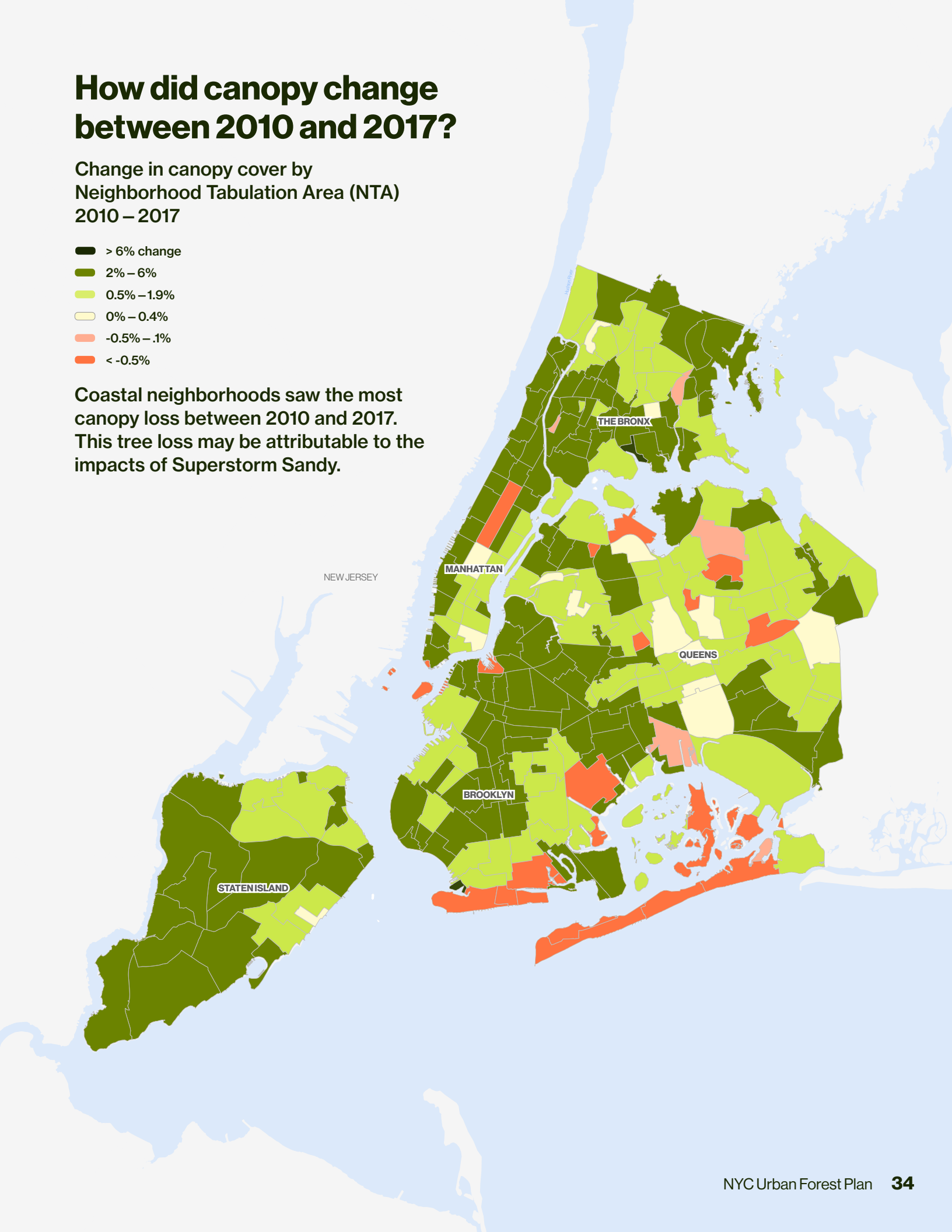


How did canopy change between 2010 and 2017?

Change in canopy cover by Neighborhood Tabulation Area (NTA) 2010 – 2017

- > 6% change
- 2% – 6%
- 0.5% – 1.9%
- 0% – 0.4%
- -0.5% – .1%
- < -0.5%

Coastal neighborhoods saw the most canopy loss between 2010 and 2017. This tree loss may be attributable to the impacts of Superstorm Sandy.

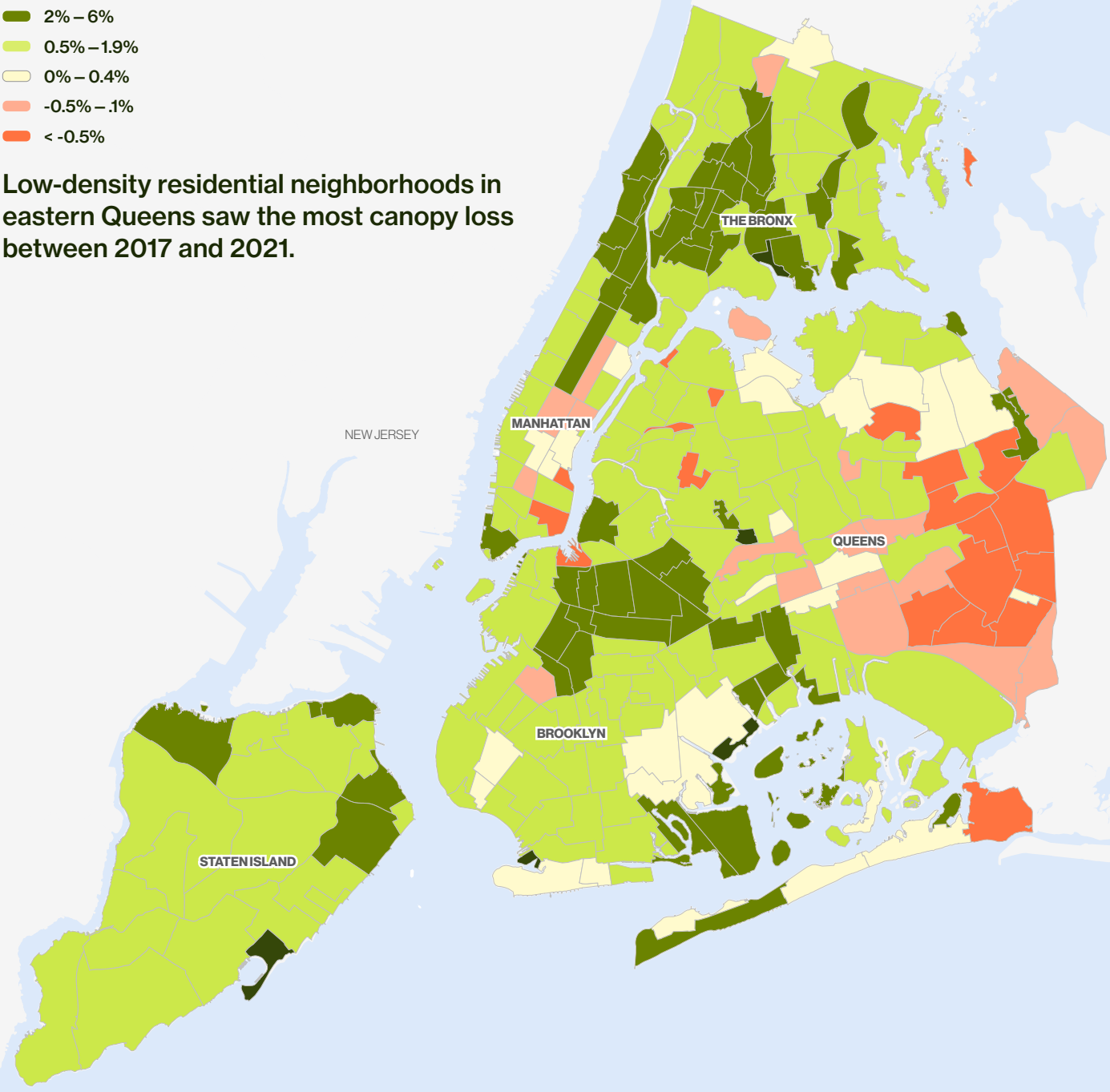


How did canopy change between 2017 and 2021?

Change in canopy cover by Neighborhood Tabulation Area (NTA) 2017 – 2021

- > 6% change
- 2% – 6%
- 0.5% – 1.9%
- 0% – 0.4%
- -0.5% – .1%
- < -0.5%

Low-density residential neighborhoods in eastern Queens saw the most canopy loss between 2017 and 2021.



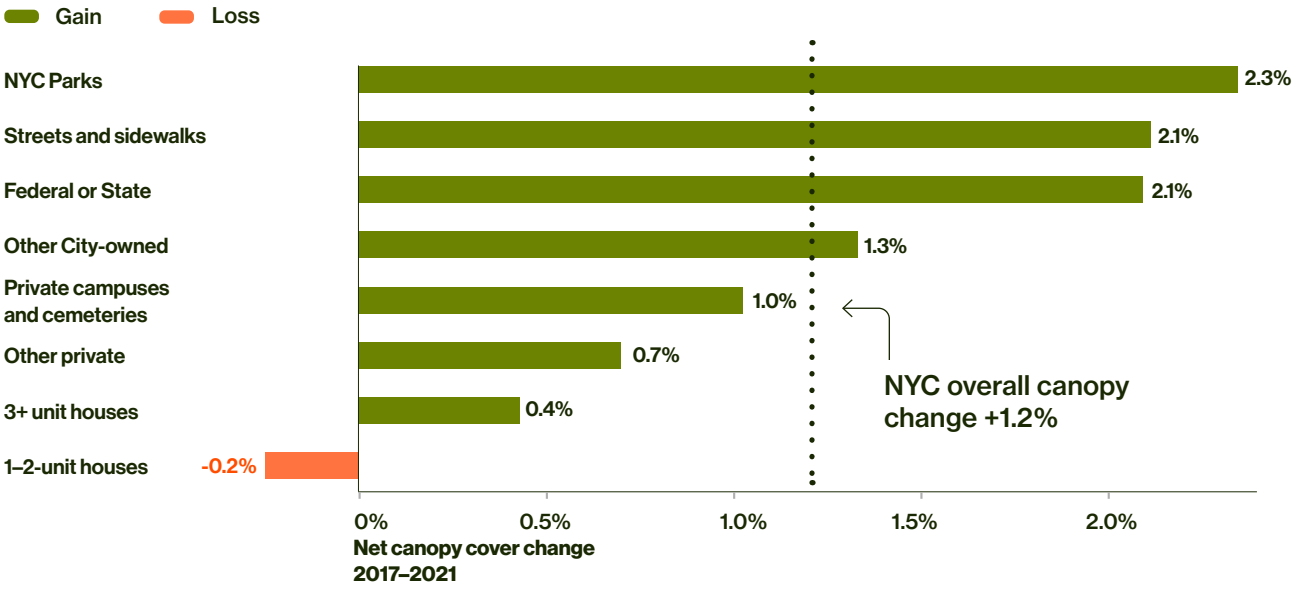
Citywide, total canopy loss has increased, even though total canopy gains have outpaced losses

- From 2017 to 2021, total annual growth reached roughly 2,000 acres per year, compared with 1,400 acres per year between 2010 and 2017.
- At the same time, annual canopy loss also increased, rising to approximately 1,400 acres per year from 2017 to 2021, compared with 950 acres per year between 2010 and 2017.
- During both periods, canopy gains exceeded losses, resulting in net gains of 5,800 acres of canopy since 2010. Even with these net gains, canopy loss slows the pace at which the city can achieve its urban forest goals and risks reversing decades of progress.

One- and two-unit houses are the only property type with net canopy loss

An analysis of recent canopy loss by property type across NYC highlights key areas of concern. Across the city, one- and two-unit houses were the only property type to experience net canopy loss. Citywide, this property type lost 26 acres of canopy per year between 2017 and 2021. Losses on one- and two-unit houses occurred in low-density neighborhoods within Staten Island, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. There are many theories about the factors that contribute to these losses, including individual household decisions to remove trees, either out of concern for storm damage, to make way for new construction or building renovations, or other reasons. Participants in the public-engagement process cited fears of storm-related property damage and the cost of tree maintenance as barriers to stewardship, and as reasons trees are sometimes removed before the end of their natural lifespans on private property.

Net change in tree canopy by property type, 2017–2021



All property types experienced some canopy loss

All property types saw both gains and losses in canopy between 2017 and 2021. Actions outlined in this UFP aim to reduce avoidable canopy loss by supporting preservation on private property, improving management practices, and increasing canopy care on public land across agency jurisdictions.

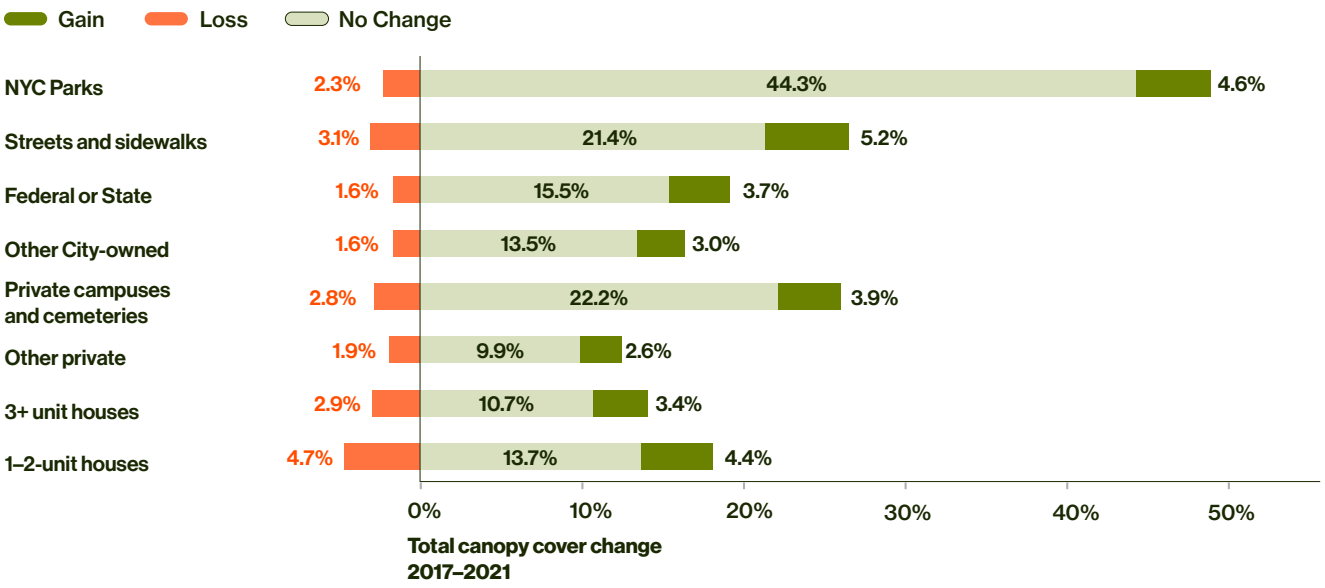
Specific causes of canopy loss need further study

Canopy loss in urban environments stems from a range of factors, including poor or disturbed soils that restrict root growth; construction impacts; removal for development; pests and diseases; vandalism; and impacts exacerbated by climate change, including severe storms, extreme heat, drought, and wildfire. Infrastructure needs including utility installation and repairs, extensive hardscaping, and landscaping choices on individual properties further constrain canopy growth and undermine the overall health of the urban forest.[38] While the City knows the range of drivers of loss, understanding the magnitude of impact of each driver presents an important opportunity for further study.

Preserving existing canopy is essential for expanding tree cover

The majority of recent canopy expansion comes from existing trees. Researchers at NYC Parks and TNC have estimated that 90 percent of new growth is attributable to the growth of existing trees.[39] Preserving existing canopy ensures that New Yorkers can experience all the myriad benefits to health and well-being trees provide, such as reductions in stress and improved mood from looking at and being around trees.[40]

Total change in tree canopy by property type



Mature trees provide far greater environmental, social, and health benefits than younger counterparts. As trees mature, the benefits they provide appreciate over time, growing in value more than proportionally with age and size.The bigger the tree, the more benefits it provides. More mature trees offer greater carbon storage, better heat reduction, improved stormwater management, and increased air quality improvement.[41]

Care in the first years after planting is essential to long-term survival. A 2010 survey of 14,000 New York City street trees planted between 1999 and 2003 presented the following findings:

- Mortality rates were relatively low, but the highest mortality rates occurred within the first few years of planting.
- Surrounding context strongly influenced survival, with trees near one- and two-unit houses surviving at greater rates than those in industrial or vacant land areas."[42]

Highbridge Park, Manhattan
NYC Parks

Opportunities to Expand the Urban Forest

Successful canopy expansion requires the care, maintenance, and protection of existing trees to ensure that their canopies are sustained and continue to grow. But equitably reaching 30 percent canopy by 2040 will also require planting and caring for new trees, especially in areas currently underserved by tree canopy. This, in turn, will require planting where it's easiest to do so, and also creating more areas where trees can be planted.

Where is it possible for the urban forest to expand? Researchers have identified "plantable areas" including sidewalks, roadways, and open spaces without existing trees on both public and privately owned land where there is opportunity to more readily plant new trees. The results of this analysis are estimates of the total "practical canopy," or the total canopy that could be possible through new plantings without accounting for additional opportunities that could emerge through changes to current land use or development patterns.[43]

New York City could reach 40 percent canopy

Practical canopy estimates as of 2017 show that New York City could add up to 39,000 acres of additional canopy.[44] This is an area slightly larger than Staten Island, and it is equivalent to roughly 20 percent additional canopy – nearly double the current canopy. These findings indicate that, even without major changes to existing infrastructure, New York City has significant capacity for canopy expansion.

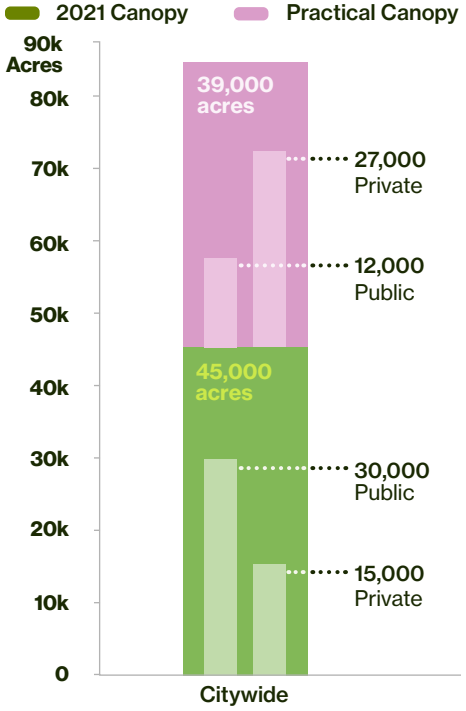
Equitably reaching 30 percent canopy by 2040 will require planting in these areas and identifying new places to plant.

The map on the previous page illustrates, at a neighborhood level, where canopy expansion through new plantings is most feasible based on this modeling. In some neighborhoods of New York City, including portions of Staten Island and eastern Queens, neighborhoods could gain an additional 40 percent tree canopy through new plantings.

Private land has the most readily available space to plant new trees

While the majority of today's canopy is located on public property, most new planting opportunities that don't require infrastructure or landscape change are on private land.

Existing and practical canopy

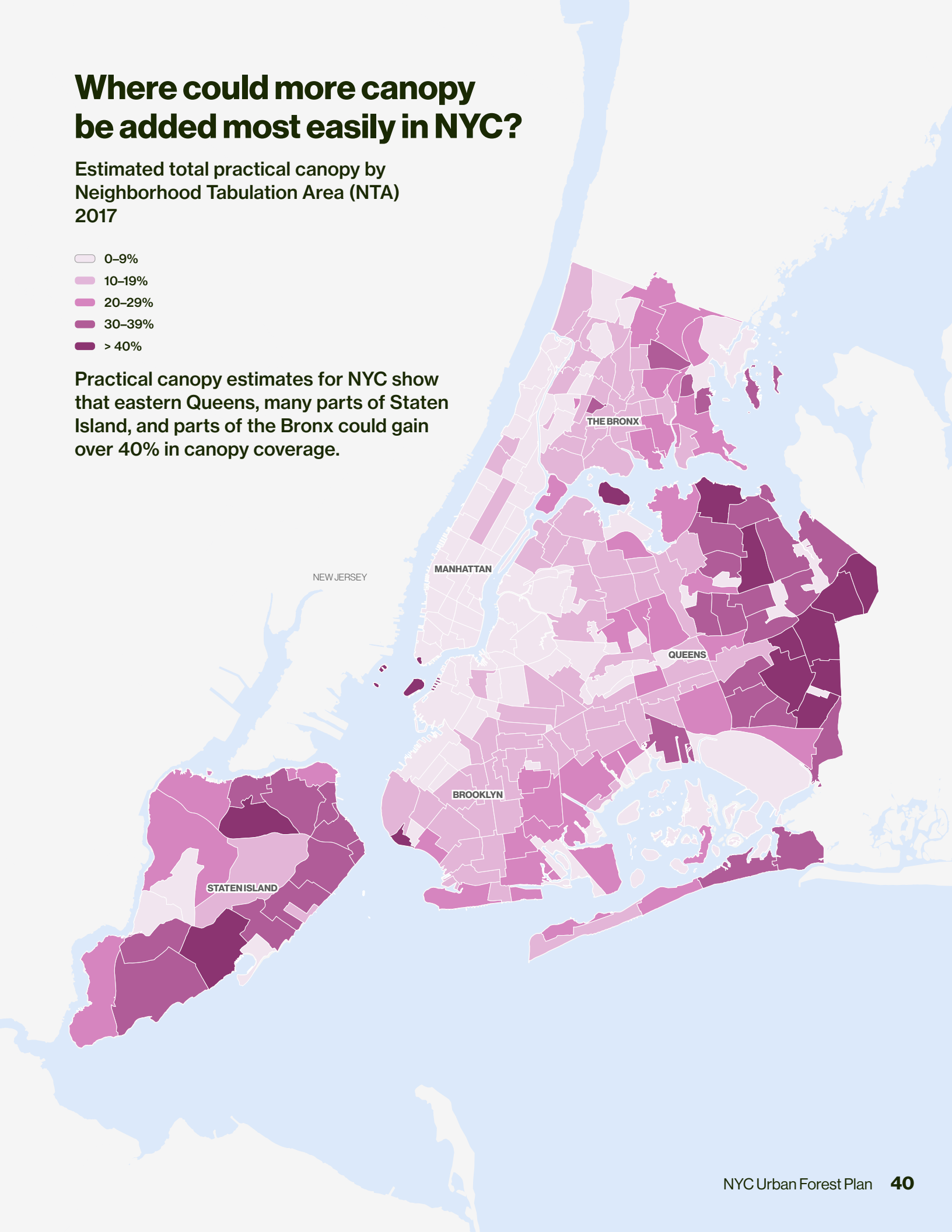


Where could more canopy be added most easily in NYC?

Estimated total practical canopy by Neighborhood Tabulation Area (NTA) 2017

- 0–9%
- 10–19%
- 20–29%
- 30–39%
- > 40%

Practical canopy estimates for NYC show that eastern Queens, many parts of Staten Island, and parts of the Bronx could gain over 40% in canopy coverage.



One- and two-unit properties can add the most trees

One- and two-unit properties have the greatest potential for additional canopy from new plantings.

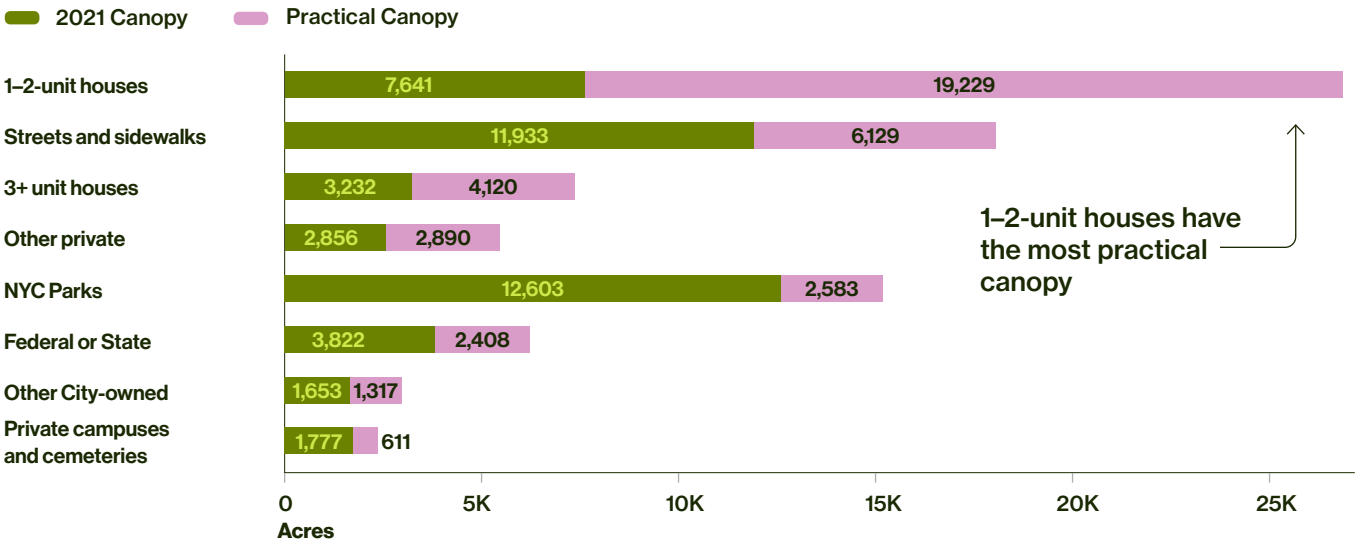
- Up to 19,200 acres of canopy could be added in the yards of these low-density houses citywide. This would nearly triple the amount of canopy across this property type today.
- Three-unit and larger courtyard buildings could add an additional 2,400 acres of canopy from new plantings, more than doubling current canopy on those sites.
- Private-property owners are essential collaborators and participants in reaching the 30 percent canopy goal.

On public land, streets and sidewalks provide the largest opportunities for new planting

- Approximately 6,100 additional acres of canopy could be added through planting new trees along streets and sidewalks.
- Within existing parks, 2,600 acres could be added, and 1,300 acres could be added on other City-owned properties.
- An additional 2,300 acres of canopy could potentially be added on federal- or NY State–owned lands, including NYCHA and CUNY campuses, and NY State and federal parks within the city.
- These are estimates and do not account for all potential factors that limit planting, but also may underestimate potential areas for planting that are possible with changes in urban design.

These estimates help guide where planting strategies could be focused and inform actions in this UFP. On-the-ground assessment will be essential to inform local planting plans.

Existing and practical canopy by property type



Adding more trees equitably may require finding and creating new available spaces to plant

Neighborhoods with lots of trees often have many opportunities for additional tree planting. Focusing new planting efforts only in these neighborhoods, such as Bayside, Fresh Meadows, Kew Gardens, and Forest Hills in Queens, and Annadale-Huguenot and Arden Heights in Staten Island, could help New York City reach 30 percent canopy more quickly. However, focusing only on areas where planting appears easiest risks reinforcing inequities in canopy distribution.

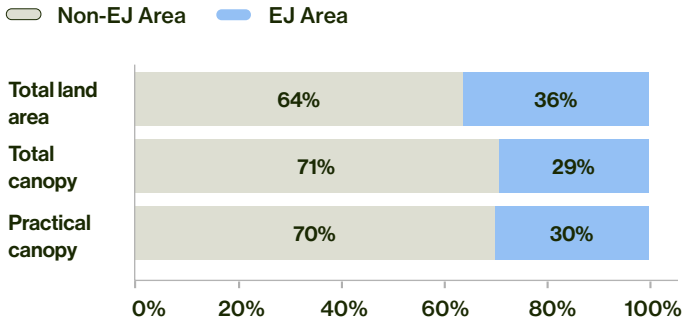
Areas of greatest need often have the least readily available space for planting and might require land use changes to enable new planting.

- For example, EJ Areas have a disproportionately small share of practical canopy, alongside a disproportionately small share of NYC's total tree canopy.
- Neighborhoods with high heat vulnerability account for slightly more than their share of practical canopy relative to their share of New York City's land area, which presents important opportunities for expanding canopy. Taking advantage of that area alone is not enough to offset the inequitable distribution of canopy that exists today.

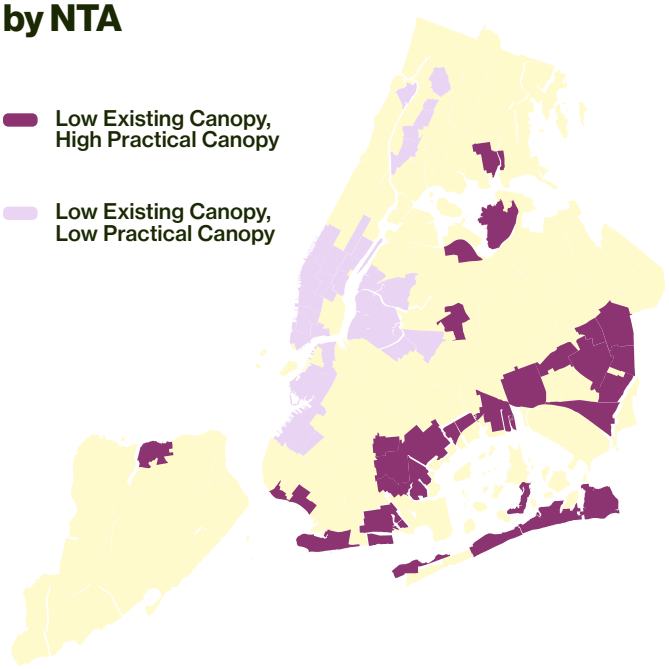
The map on the this page highlights in light purple neighborhoods that currently have low levels of canopy and have limited opportunities for new tree planting due to current land uses.

Finding new places to plant trees in these neighborhoods will require maximizing planting in standard locations while also identifying new opportunities, with options including expanded planting within public streets and increased planting on private property, as well as creative solutions to remove pavement and increase permeable, plantable surfaces.

Existing and practical canopy by EJ Area status



Low existing canopy vs practical canopy by NTA



Low Existing Canopy, High Practical Canopy areas are defined as neighborhoods (Neighborhood Tabulation Areas) with less than 20 percent existing canopy where new plantings could add up to 20 percent additional canopy. Low Existing Canopy, Low Practical Canopy areas are defined as neighborhoods with less than 20 percent canopy where new plantings could only add up to 10 percent additional canopy.

High-need neighborhoods with room for planting present opportunities for equitable canopy expansion.

- Some heat-vulnerable neighborhoods with low existing canopy today also have a high potential for canopy expansion through new plantings.
- Examples are highlighted in dark purple in the map on the preceding and include neighborhoods on the Rockaway Peninsula (such as Rockaway Beach, Arverne, Edgemere, and Far Rockaway) and in southeastern Queens (including Hollis, Queens Village, Laurelton, Cambria Heights, South Jamaica, and St. Albans), neighborhoods surrounding Jamaica Bay and in southern Brooklyn (such as Canarsie and Spring Creek), and East Elmhurst in northern Queens.
- These are generally lower-density neighborhoods with more undeveloped space between buildings that do not currently contain trees. In many cases, a significant portion of the easiest planting opportunities are on private property. As a result, canopy expansion in these neighborhoods will require targeted outreach and significant participation by private-property owners.

There are a range of challenges to planting more trees

In an environment as dense as New York City, key challenges to expanding tree planting include:

- finding available areas on public land that are suitable for trees
- encouraging property owners to plant and care for trees on private property

Research Spotlight

Practical Canopy Analysis

A model of locations suitable to new planting opportunities and resulting canopy estimates was developed by researchers at TNC and is a tool to understand where it may be more feasible to plant new trees and for their canopy to grow within New York City. The estimates rely on available data about land use and land covers and make assumptions about the conditions required for an area to be suitable for tree planting, as well as the subsequent area of total canopy that can result. This analysis excludes forested natural areas, ballfields, cemeteries, airports, and other spaces where planting can be nuanced and challenging. Based on the locations identified that are suitable for planting, researchers estimated the total area of canopy that can result based on typical canopy sizes and constraints posed by buildings, existing tree canopy, and other obstacles. As with all models, the practical canopy analysis is only able to make estimates based on available data. The analysis is a powerful indication of how much canopy can be added from new plantings without significant changes to the built environment, and it is not a blueprint for equitable canopy expansion. Additional planting locations can and will need to be identified beyond these estimates to achieve equitable canopy distribution citywide. TNC will publish an updated analysis using the latest available data in 2026.

GCF Service Corps members survey trees
NYCHA

- addressing conflicts with underground infrastructure that can prevent tree planting in areas otherwise well suited for additional planting
- ensuring that newly planted trees receive sufficient care during their earliest and most vulnerable years and that the right resources are available for care through their full life cycle

Climate change is reshaping growing conditions. Although many regions are experiencing longer growing seasons, this doesn't necessarily result in more tree growth. Warmer temperatures and more frequent droughts can inhibit tree growth and reduce trees' capacity to sequester carbon.[45] NYC Parks has been a national leader in accounting for changing conditions by adapting their tree-planting practice. Actions in this UFP aim to expand these leading climate-adaptive practices across all NYC agencies and to share information so that private-property owners can follow suit.

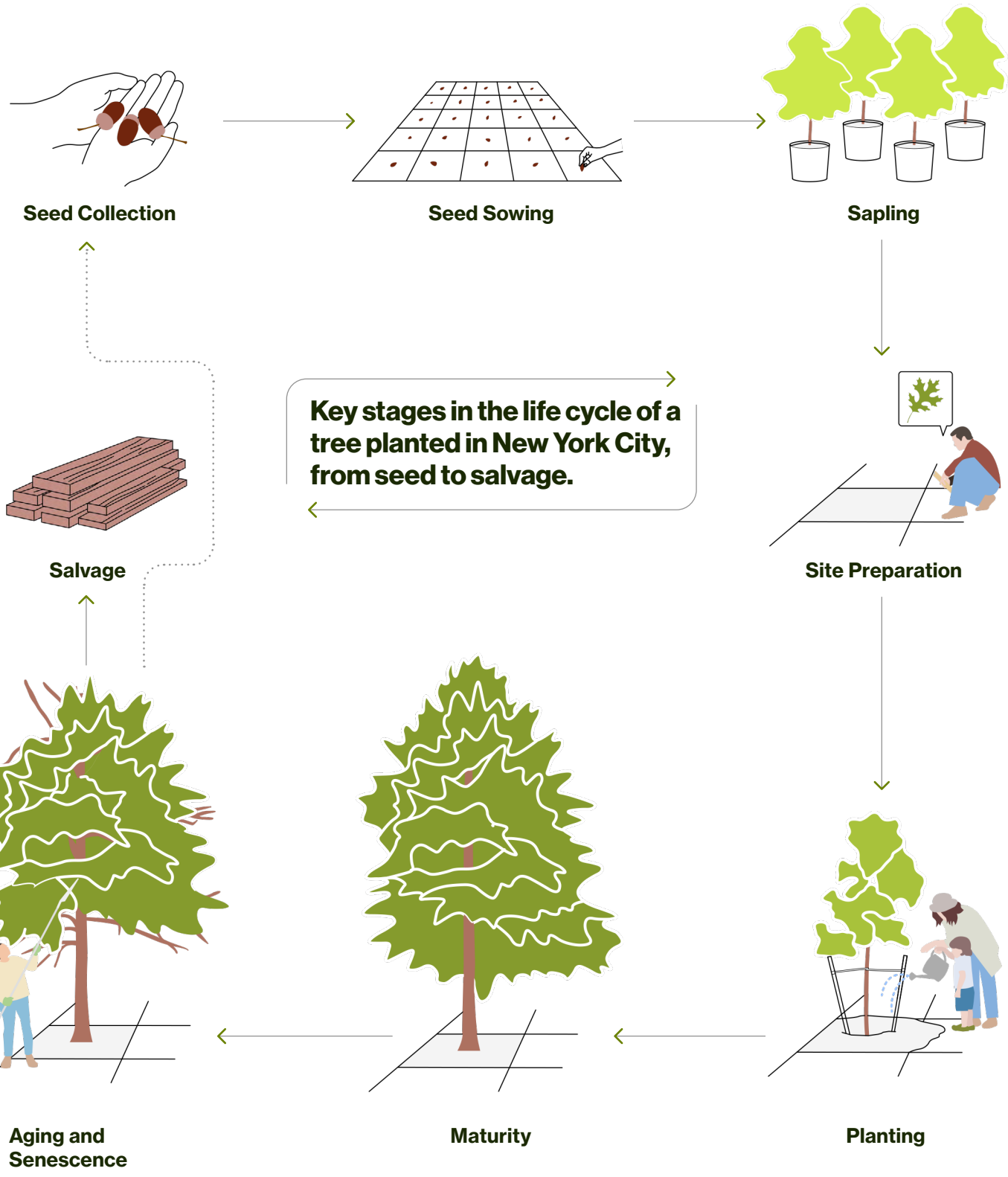
Expanding planting will require ensuring that nurseries have sufficient capacity to grow and that they supply climate-adaptive species to keep up with demand.

Climate and biodiversity are top community concerns. Workshop and focus group participants expressed a desire to ensure that biodiversity is prioritized within the urban forest. Citywide questionnaire respondents prioritized healthier trees (61 percent), wildlife-friendly species (58 percent), and new forested patches (57 percent).

Actions in this UFP aim to increase the number of trees planted citywide, and their rates of survival, through potential strategies such as incentivizing tree planting on private property with a NYC Tree Canopy Challenge, increasing planting on land under City jurisdiction through actions such as finding new opportunities for planting along public streets and sidewalks.

Street trees in Long Island City, Queens
TNC, Jonathan Grassi

Life cycle of a New York City tree from seed to salvage



Maintaining New York City's Trees

A diverse range of New Yorkers engage in urban forest stewardship, including but not limited to care, conservation, and advocacy. Their involvement generally falls into two broad categories: professionals whose work involves the day-to-day management of and advocacy for the urban forest; and volunteers whose efforts support urban forest stewardship, whether individual or collective.

Achieving the goals of this UFP requires cultivating current and new stewards of the urban forest, from strengthening volunteer stewardship practices and opportunities to expanding urban forestry–related jobs.

Care of the public urban forest involves many agencies and coordination

NYC Parks is currently responsible for the care and maintenance of the largest portion of the urban forest. A total of 24,500 acres (54 percent) of existing tree canopy is under NYC Parks' jurisdiction. The urban forest under NYC Parks' care and management will increase under the goals of this UFP.

Ensuring adequate resources for proactive care is a community and agency concern. In focus groups with members of NYC Parks staff conducted for this UFP, many comments focused on the need to expand resources and staff levels so that the agency is adequately resourced to effectively manage urban forest care, not just respond to the most pressing issues.

Likewise, citywide questionnaire respondents and workshop participants expressed concerns about City budget cuts impacting NYC Parks' ability to maintain the urban forest. This UFP seeks to outline how NYC Parks can practice proactive maintenance and care of the existing and expanded urban forest.

Agencies that have trees within their jurisdictions must consider tree care. Seventeen hundred acres of existing tree canopy is on City-owned sites not managed by NYC Parks. Agencies that manage trees need access to contracts for ongoing tree maintenance by external contractors, and they need expertise to manage ongoing care. Actions from this UFP address these needs by exploring how the NYC Parks forestry team can support in the care of trees on NYCHA campuses, and developing a procurement tool for tree care.

Joyce Kilmer Park, the Bronx
Paul Lozito

There is a need for continued coordination on tree care and planting.

In interagency meetings and workshops, participants expressed that there is a continued need to expand coordination on topics such as:

- designs and tree-planting standards used for planting trees on sidewalks and in public spaces
- how trees are protected and planted alongside other infrastructure
- incorporating tree planting and protection into capital projects across the city

Participants in focus groups emphasized a need to continue to increase collaboration and communication with utility providers to address conflicts when they arise and improve tree placement.

Perceptions of tree maintenance vary by borough

- Citywide questionnaire respondents from Manhattan and Brooklyn reported the highest satisfaction levels with tree maintenance in their neighborhoods, with 65 percent of Manhattan residents and 61 percent of Brooklyn residents indicating they were either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with maintenance.
- Respondents from the Bronx and Queens reported lower satisfaction levels, at 41 and 54 percent, respectively.
- In Queens, respondents were also twice as likely to describe most trees in their community as poor or dead—7 percent compared with 4 percent in Staten Island and the Bronx, and 3 percent in Manhattan and Brooklyn.

Caring for trees benefits trees and their stewards

Just as trees benefit from regular watering and healthy, cultivated soil, tree stewards also benefit from providing that care. Beyond environmental benefits, people who participate in stewardship activities have been shown to feel a greater sense of community.[46] In turn, strong social cohesion is a key form of climate resilience.[47] Education about, communion with, and time spent in nature have also been shown to support improved mental health.[48] Even the mere perception of having access to green space has been associated with positive effects on mental and physical health and community well-being, while benefits such as cooling and improved air quality accrue even without direct engagement within green spaces.[49]

Research on the impact of the MillionTreesNYC initiative showed that participants had increased civic engagement after participating in a MillionTreesNYC activity.[50]

Tree-planting volunteers
NYC Parks

There are roadblocks to participating in tree stewardship in NYC

Many New Yorkers do not have equitable access to the city's tree canopy, forested natural areas, and parks, which limits their interest in and exposure to stewardship activities. Across New York City, EJ Areas have a total 19 percent tree canopy cover, compared with 26 percent in non-EJ Areas. Respondents to the citywide questionnaire most frequently cited lack of public transportation access as a reason they did not visit forested natural areas. To recruit and motivate more New Yorkers to participate in caring for the urban forest, the canopy must be more equitably distributed across neighborhoods, and access to forested natural areas must be improved.

Pipelines to urban forestry careers need to be expanded. Participants in focus group conversations held as part of the development of this UFP emphasized the need to strengthen educational and workforce development opportunities for careers in urban forestry, such as climber and pruners, and foresters, and expand available well-paying jobs in the field.

For homeowners and property owners, there are often contradictory incentives around tree care. There are instances where it may be cheaper or easier to remove a tree rather than maintain it, and the cost of maintenance can be a disincentive to planting new trees. Increasing access to low- or no-cost tree care and training on the basics of tree stewardship for homeowners was a common theme in focus group conversations as well as in responses to the citywide questionnaire.

There is strong interest in stewardship, but limited opportunities. Participants in workshops and focus groups recommended prioritizing youth in stewardship opportunities, amplifying community voices through existing organizations, and launching public education campaigns to improve general knowledge of tree care and local canopy issues. Among citywide questionnaire respondents, half expressed interest in working with existing local stewardship organizations to continue or increase their participation in urban forest care. Nearly half also wanted greater access to tools and materials.

Trees Count 2025 volunteers
NYC Parks

Pathways, Strategies, and Actions

4

Getting to 30 Percent

Informed by the findings from research and community and agency engagement, the following chapter outlines what the City and partners will seek to accomplish over the next 10 years.

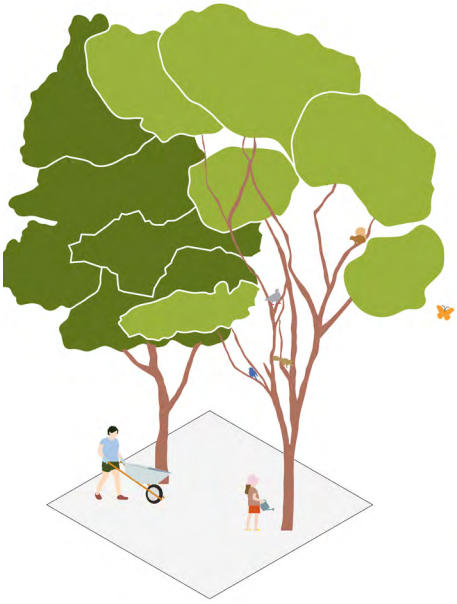
The pathways, strategies, and actions that follow represent a comprehensive approach to equitably expanding tree canopy citywide to 30 percent by 2040. They outline actions for the City, as well as outreach strategies to engage a broader set of New Yorkers in the shared civic project of caring for and expanding the urban forest.

Under each pathway, there are three to five strategies that describe key issues and challenges to be addressed by this UFP. Finally, within each strategy, individual actions outline specific programs, policies, and projects. Like the organisms in the urban forest ecosystem, many actions or strategies outlined are interconnected and may relate to multiple pathways.

This is a 10-year plan to guide the City and its partners in collaborating on preserving and expanding our urban forest. It does not indicate a commitment of funding in any specific budget, and it is not an exhaustive list of the collaborators or resources that will be required to achieve the goals.

Three pathways guide the implementation of the UFP:

Preserve Tree Canopy



Plant More Trees

Cultivate Stewards of the Urban Forest

Quotations from UFP engagement events and online questionnaire

Preserve Tree Canopy

Caring for the existing canopy is an essential component of expanding canopy citywide. The vast majority of recent canopy expansion in New York City comes from existing trees, and the environmental benefits of mature trees far outweigh those of younger ones.

Significant loss of existing canopy undermines any gains from new plantings. The strategies and actions outlined in this pathway will improve interagency coordination and practices of care for trees, provide guidance necessary for proactive care of public trees, and support canopy preservation on private property.

1. Establish clear leadership for tree maintenance citywide.

The urban forest spans a complex web of jurisdictions. On public land, trees are managed across streets, parks, NYCHA campuses, public schoolyards, and firehouses, and through capital projects, each managed by unique agencies. Actions in this section help establish designated leadership roles within agencies and across jurisdictions to coordinate care, foster collaboration with private-sector partners, and support successful implementation of this UFP.

Lead(s)
MOCEJ

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

1.1 Designate a centralized leadership position responsible for overseeing UFP implementation across agencies.

Reaching 30 percent canopy by 2040 requires sustained coordination across City agencies and new partnerships with private landowners. MOCEJ will lead this citywide coordination effort, monitoring plan progress, supporting research and data analysis, and advancing the UFP's goals. This work will be conducted in close partnership with NYC Parks, the City's largest public-land steward. MOCEJ will engage advocates, community stakeholders, private landowners, and the Sustainability Advisory Board to build collaborations and sustain momentum on tree canopy expansion. MOCEJ will also work closely with City agency partners to analyze canopy growth and loss data and ensure those findings inform the City's broader climate research. The City's long-term sustainability plan will consider this analysis and account for tree canopy as it establishes climate goals.

Lead(s)
MOCEJ

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks, DOT, DEP, DCAS, SCA, NYCHA, EDC, DSNY, DDC

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

1.2 Designate urban canopy officers within agencies to implement the UFP.

In order to improve coordination within and between agencies whose activities or properties impact the urban forest, relevant agencies will designate staff responsible for internal oversight and interagency coordination to advance the goals of this UFP. Agencies will designate individuals within existing roles (and with the appropriate expertise) to oversee the implementation of the UFP and coordinate with MOCEJ to track and monitor progress.

Tree maintenance in Canarsie, Brooklyn
NYC Parks

Program Spotlight

Integrating the UFP into Climate Budgeting

As part of the development of this UFP, the UFP team has collaborated with the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Environmental Sustainability & Resiliency Task Force to integrate UFP assumptions and methods into the ongoing work of climate budgeting. Climate budgeting is a process to identify and advance cost-effective strategies to achieve net-zero emissions and strengthen New York City's resilience to climate hazards. Climate budgeting uses the annual budget cycle to regularly assess progress toward climate goals and proactively advance strategic policies, investments, and opportunities to align spending with emission-reduction and resiliency objectives. Since 2024, the City has released an annual climate budgeting publication alongside its executive budget to report on progress toward climate goals, outline resources allocated toward continued mitigation, and model potential impacts of planned future investments. As part of this Plan, OMB has incorporated into their outdoor heat modeling an analysis of how tree canopy may change across different property types. This helps the City estimate how planned tree planting and preservation efforts could help mitigate increasing outdoor temperatures over time.

2. Support the full care and maintenance of New York City's public urban forest.

As with other public infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and utilities, trees require proactive and routine maintenance.

New York City will strengthen its ability to proactively care for the urban forest under our jurisdiction by enforcing existing tree protection measures and deploying industry standards in pruning and maintenance. Proactive care means that trees receive regular planned maintenance, not only reactive care. With proactive care, young trees have higher survival rates, storm damage is less frequent and less severe, and safety and liability are better managed. Trees that are cared for are more likely to reach maturity and therefore provide the greatest benefit to the community. Tree care can expand available green jobs for New Yorkers and provide pipelines for workforce development programs further described in the Grow Stewardship Communities pathway. Over time, proactive care can lower management costs and reduce barriers to community stewardship.

Lead(s)
NYC Parks

Timeline
Medium term
(5 – 10 years)

2.1 Proactively care for City park and street trees.

Currently 24,500 acres of tree canopy, just over half the citywide total, are under the care and management of NYC Parks. Reaching 30 percent canopy will require the preservation of these existing trees and will expand the number of trees under NYC Parks' care. To support this effort, NYC Parks will assess and quantify the resources (staffing, equipment, facilities) required to properly and proactively manage the proposed expansion of tree canopy under its jurisdiction, including all associated supporting resources (e.g., enforcement, stewardship, outreach, and education).

Lead(s)
MOCEJ, NYC Parks

Collaborator(s)
DOT, DEP,
DDC, SCA

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

2.2 Support agencies to enforce existing tree protection regulations.

Existing trees are responsible for the majority of canopy growth. Therefore, ensuring that existing regulations are adequately enforced is essential to preserving and expanding canopy on City-owned lands. The City will explore developing staff capacity, resources, training, and education across capital agencies to better protect and expand the tree canopy by preserving existing trees and minimizing impacts to them.

3. Improve regulations and practices of care for the existing urban forest.

Because of the significant value that trees provide, the City needs clear standards and practices to support the proactive long-term management of healthy trees and woodlands. Management practices aligned with national standards increase efficiency and ensure coordinated professional care rather than fragmented attention. Together, these practices protect New York City's substantial investment in trees and forests, maximize long-term health and community benefits, and recognize the urban forest as a unified piece of public infrastructure.

Lead(s)
NYC Parks

Collaborator(s)
NYCHA,
DSNY

Timeline
Long term
(10+ years/recurring)

3.1 Explore transitioning tree maintenance and management on NYCHA properties to NYC Parks.

Despite having over 1,000 acres of canopy on its properties, NYCHA has no full-time staff devoted to tree care, and requires support to manage its tree care. This action focuses on collaboration between NYC Parks and NYCHA to explore transferring tree care across all NYCHA campuses including DSNY support for recovering leaves and tree debris. This includes NYCHA campus–based tree steward networks (e.g., Friends of Ravenswood Trees) and a tool-lending and delivery program for NYCHA stewards.

Canopy at Johnson Houses, Manhattan
NYCHA

Lead(s)
NYC Parks,
MOCEJ

Collaborator(s)
Land-owning agencies

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

3.2 Streamline and improve tree work specifications and management for City agency use in line with national best practices.

NYC Parks and MOCEJ will support agencies in developing and maintaining a coordinated tree inventory and management approach to the trees on their properties, looking to NYC Parks' Forestry Management System (ForMS) as a model. The City will explore NYS Department of Environmental Conservation resources and funding opportunities to conduct inventories or related activities. NYC Parks will provide best practices to ensure standardized data collection and data sharing across agencies.

Lead(s)
NYC Parks, MOCEJ

Collaborator(s)
DCAS, SCA,
NYCPS, DDC,
libraries,
small businesses

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

3.3 Streamline contracts for tree planting and maintenance.

Many City agencies beyond NYC Parks play a role in protecting and expanding tree canopy. However, there is not a standardized approach to procuring the services required to care for trees on public land. The City will explore a standard on-call contract that reflects the best practices from NYC Parks to ensure that all agencies have access to experienced and qualified vendors and that their work is performed to the highest standard. This will create efficiencies and reduce costs associated with the current approach of individual agencies' procuring tree maintenance and planting.

A newly planted street tree
NYC Parks

A mature street tree
NYC Parks

Lead(s)
NYC Parks

Collaborator(s)
NAC,
NY State and federal agencies

Timeline
Medium term
(5–10 years)

3.4 Expand the forest ecological assessment, including tree health assessments, to all publicly owned forested natural areas to enable the adoption of the *Forest Management Framework* citywide.

Improve the implementation of the *Forest Management Framework* across all 15,400 acres of forested and grass/shrubland citywide. The Framework, a joint project by NAC and NYC Parks, is a 25-year comprehensive plan that outlines best practices, detailed processes, and costs for forest management. The forest ecological assessment and associated monitoring will be expanded to all publicly owned forested natural areas across jurisdictions, leveraging the existing forest assessment protocol and data infrastructure. Findings will support data-driven prioritization of management actions and inform citywide planning and investment decisions related to the *Forest Management Framework*. A comprehensive approach will reduce invasive species, support canopy regeneration, improve adaptation to climate change, support biodiversity, and ensure consistent stewardship by leveraging the *Framework's* tracking metrics and assessment methods for forest health.

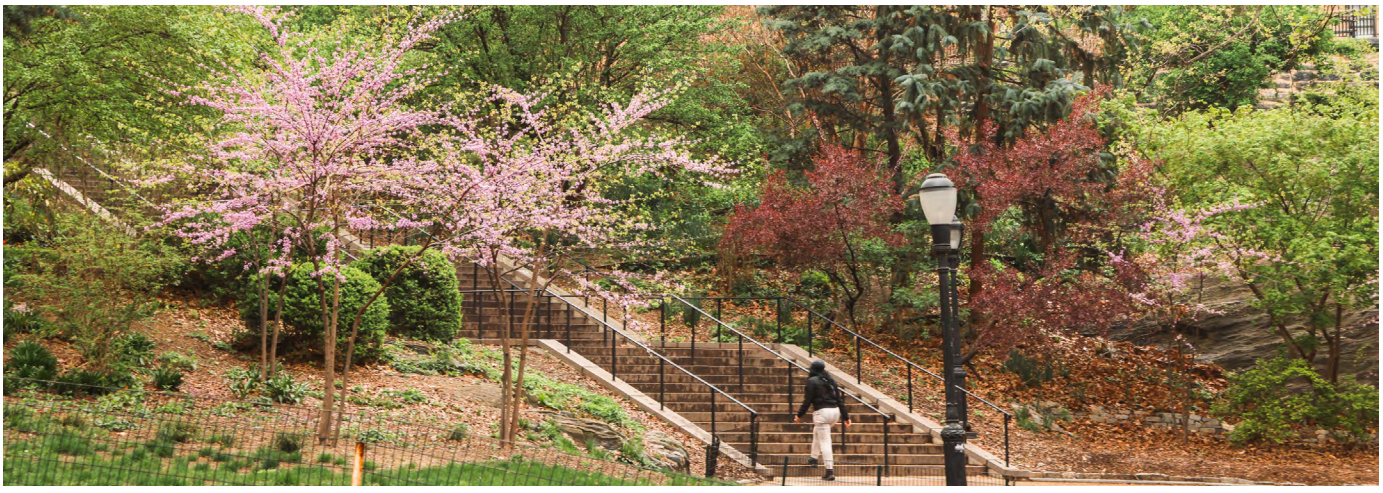
Lead(s)
NYC Parks

Collaborator(s)
DEP, DOT,
NYCHA, HPD, DCAS

Timeline
Medium term
(5–10 years)

3.5 Identify opportunities for NYC Parks land acquisition to preserve and expand canopy in areas of highest need.

Establish a Canopy Transfer Task Force to identify sites that could be transferred to or acquired by NYC Parks or another public agency to expand canopy in heat-vulnerable and flood-prone neighborhoods. The task force will consider privately owned land adjacent to City-owned property, and a site evaluation will consider resources for maintenance along with acquisition.



Spring foliage in Hamilton Heights, Manhattan
TNC, Jonathan Grassi

Lead(s)
NYC Parks

Collaborator(s)
DCP, DOT

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

3.6 Clarify jurisdiction of trees on non-City streets to enable NYC Parks maintenance.

A street under a Corporation Counsel Opinion is a public right-of-way where the City does not hold title to the underlying land but may make improvements to the street. The City will work to clarify jurisdiction of streets subject to Corporate Counsel Opinions to make clear NYC Parks' authority to maintain trees and other plantings along those streets, consistent with the division of jurisdiction applicable on similar mapped and title-vested streets. This action is linked to digitizing maps from borough president offices into one consolidated City map to understand target areas for NYC Parks maintenance, which passed via a ballot measure in November 2025.

Lead(s)
DSNY

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks,
DDC, EDC,
community composters,
nonprofit organizations,
community groups, and
circular economy industries

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

3.7 Explore expanding wood reuse citywide and foster new related industries.

The City will explore expanding the existing NYC Parks and DSNY wood recovery and salvage partnership to efficiently serve the entire city through strategic colocation of milling, chipping, composting, and biochar production operations. Resources reclaimed from the urban forest can be transformed and sold as timber, woodchips, mulch, compost, and biochar. Through this action, the City will explore ways to generate a consistent revenue stream from City wood waste recycling that can be used for tree care and maintenance and increase the distribution of mulch to those who steward trees. As reuse and salvage operations expand, there are opportunities to invest in economic development and workforce opportunities for wood reuse industries, and explore circular construction guidelines as an opportunity to incentivize the use of locally salvaged wood products in City projects.

Trees in autumn
NAC

Spotlight on Select NYC Parks Practices

NYC Parks is home to a world-class Forestry team that manages the planting and care of park and street trees in the public right-of-way across New York City. Through strategic citywide maintenance plans, accessible digital tools, and a knowledgeable and dedicated team, NYC Parks and other agency partners aim to deploy the best available resources to ensure that NYC's Urban Forest is well cared for and serving the needs of all New Yorkers, as illustrated in the examples below.

NYC Parks' Tree Census

Every 10 years since 1995, NYC Parks has conducted a street tree census to document the city's urban forest, including tree location, condition, size, and species, and how these conditions have changed over time. The first census of trees within parks was conducted between 2017 and 2018. The most recent census (2025) has set out to include an updated count of trees within parks, and for the first time will be utilizing ground-based light detection and ranging (LiDAR) scans, captured on devices mounted on cars, to create three-dimensional "digital twins" for each street tree. With the help of thousands of volunteers, the census has been a vital tool for New Yorkers to get involved in building the next generation of tree stewards. The census also allows the City to identify patterns and trends that influence management practices and identify areas where the canopy can be equitably expanded.

NYC Parks Climber & Pruner Training Program

This 15-month intensive program provides current NYC Parks employees in qualifying titles with the opportunity to gain the experience needed to apply for and succeed in the title of Climber & Pruner. This title is the backbone of NYC Parks' forestry workforce and has been historically difficult to recruit and retain due in part to the lack of opportunities to gain the required experience within NYC.

NYC Parks' Trees & Sidewalks Program

This program helps repair sidewalk damage caused by a city tree adjacent to one-, two-, or three-unit houses that are owner occupied and used exclusively for residential purposes (NYC Tax Class 1). Repairs are made based on a rating system that includes the severity of damage, the amount of pedestrian traffic, and the size and condition of the tree.

NYC Parks Tree Map

The NYC Parks Tree Map is a comprehensive and up-to-date living tree map. With this map, you can access information about all the trees individually managed by NYC Parks, from those lining streets to those growing in landscaped areas of parks and GreenThumb community gardens. Through this map, you can learn about New York City's trees, share your favorite trees with your friends, track recent inspections and tree work, and record and share your street tree stewardship activities.

Forest Management Framework for NYC

A joint project of the NAC and NYC Parks, the 2018 *Forest Management Framework for New York City* is a strategic and comprehensive plan to bolster and protect NYC's vital forested natural areas. It was the first citywide vision for this critical piece of infrastructure and is in the process of being fully updated for a new release in 2026. The *Forest Management Framework* details the process, costs, steps, recommendations, best practices, and goals for restoration, management, and community engagement for 7,300 acres of NYC's forested natural area parkland.

NYC Parks' Block Pruning Program

This program takes a neighborhood-based approach to routine, proactive tree maintenance by addressing a portion of the street trees in each community board every year. NYC Parks inspects, then prunes, established street trees growing in the public right-of-way on a routine seven-year cycle (as funding allows), an industry standard for maintaining an urban tree population the size of NYC's. The goal of block pruning is to promote public safety and tree health and to reduce tree conflicts with the built environment.

4. Preserve tree canopy on private land.

Nearly half of the land in New York City is privately owned, and one-third of the current tree canopy is on private land. The protection and the preservation of these existing trees are essential to achieving 30 percent canopy cover, ensuring that New Yorkers receive the full benefits trees provide, and improving the overall health and sustainability of the entire urban forest. Private homeowners must be empowered with the resources and expertise needed to maintain and expand high-quality canopy in their communities.

Lead(s)
MOCEJ

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks

Timeline
Medium term
(5–10 years)

4.1 Develop educational and technical assistance programs for homeowners, tenants, and property managers responsible for trees on private property.

The City will establish a program for proactive and culturally relevant outreach, training, education, and technical assistance related to tree care for private-property owners. The program will focus on smaller private properties such as one- to two-unit houses and smaller apartment buildings with less access to resources. Trainings will focus on critical early-life-stage tree maintenance; decision-making for pruning versus removal (and direct assistance with pruning needs); invasive species management; ideal soil composition; fertilization; and watering practices; and native planting best practices, among other topics.

Backyard trees, Brooklyn
WXY Studio

Magnolia tree in bloom in a side yard
WXY Studio

Lead(s)
MOCEJ

Collaborator(s)
OMB

Timeline
Medium term
(5–10 years)

4.2 Explore policy tools and incentives to encourage tree preservation and planting on private property, including in collaboration with New York State partners.

In 1974, the State of New York enacted the 480a Forest Tax Law to encourage the long-term management of woodlands to produce forest crops and thereby increase the likelihood of a more stable forest economy for qualifying landowners. While this policy does not apply in urban areas like NYC, taking this example into account, and leveraging research on the climate benefits of trees in urban areas, the City will explore pathways to expand and incentivize tree planting and long-term maintenance on private property.

Lead(s)
NYC Parks, DOB

Timeline
Short term
(<5 years)

4.3 Explore modifications to existing permitting processes to ensure that tree canopy preservation is considered alongside development.

The City will explore opportunities to update existing permitting processes for new development and major alterations to assess and account for impacts on large trees, ensuring canopy preservation is aligned with a streamlined development process and doesn't impair housing production.

Mature street trees
NYC Parks

5. Guide UFP implementation through coordinated expertise.

Successful UFP implementation will require ongoing evaluation and will benefit from continued research to inform best practices in urban forest management. Actions in this strategy include an advisory committee to guide and advise on the implementation of the UFP, and ongoing support for City- and partner-led research to inform science-based care for the urban forest amid a changing climate. These efforts will enable the City to respond nimbly to emerging issues during implementation.

Lead(s)
MOCEJ

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

5.1 Institute an advisory committee to guide implementation of the UFP.

The City will establish a standing advisory committee, under the structure of the Sustainability Advisory Board, to support the long-term success of the UFP. This committee will be tasked with providing expert guidance on ongoing implementation, monitoring, research, data collection, and analysis necessary to inform adaptive urban forest management. The advisory committee will consist of a diverse mix of experts drawn from public agencies, academic institutions, nonprofits, community-based organizations, and private-sector partners to ensure a comprehensive and interdisciplinary perspective.

Lead(s)
Advisory Committee,
MOCEJ

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks,
TNC, NAC,
Forest for All NYC

Timeline
Long term
(10+ years/recurring)

5.2 Advance urban forest monitoring and research to inform canopy protection, maintenance, and expansion.

The City will collaborate to advance research related to the urban forest that can inform preservation, stewardship, management, and expansion across all segments and types of the urban forest, including forested natural areas, landscaped trees on streets and in parks, and trees across public and private ownership. This action prioritizes collaborating on partner-led research conducted by universities, conservancies, nonprofits, state and federal agencies, and other institutions that explores topics related to the climate and to the ecological, environmental, and social dimensions of the urban forest not yet adequately understood. These partnerships are essential for advancing scientific understanding of urban forest dynamics, and long-term citywide monitoring research will be encouraged.

Quotations from UFP engagement events and online questionnaire

Plant More Trees

The goal of expanding New York City's tree canopy to 30 percent by 2040 is ambitious, but as shown in earlier findings in this UFP, enough planting opportunities exist to meet the target, and there is the potential for the City to nearly double its tree canopy through new plantings. Doing so will require the efforts of a range of stakeholders, including the City and private-property owners, who must plant more trees, especially in areas currently underserved by canopy. Pursuing only the easiest tree-planting opportunities would fall short of addressing the stark gaps in coverage across the city and its neighborhoods. The City and other property owners will work together to plant new trees where opportunities exist, and create new opportunities for tree planting while prioritizing EJ communities and other underserved areas. The strategies and actions outlined in this pathway will lead to expanded tree-planting efforts on City-owned land and will support and encourage tree planting on private property.

6. Expand tree planting and replacement on private property.

Most of the straightforward opportunities to plant trees are on private property. Private-property owner participation in tree planting will be essential to meet the goal of 30 percent canopy by 2040. Actions in this section outline ways that the City can encourage, incentivize, and require tree planting and replacement for trees that are removed on private properties of all types across the five boroughs.

Lead(s)
MOCEJ

Collaborator(s)
Educational institutions, hospitals, cemeteries, tenant/co-op associations, utility companies, faith-based organizations

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

6.1 Encourage tree planting and maintenance on private property through an "NYC Tree Canopy Challenge."

The City will support tree planting and maintenance on institutional private property through a voluntary leadership and partnership program. The NYC Tree Canopy Challenge will support sector-focused cohorts, such as healthcare institutions (hospitals, clinics, etc.), private universities, private institutions, cemeteries, and faith- and community-based organizations, with technical assistance, pledge campaigns, or target-based challenges for expanding and preserving canopy on their properties. Program design and outreach will focus on the needs of organizations in EJ Areas. The program could partner participating groups with stewardship organizations to train volunteers on stewardship best practices, and with landscapers and ground management companies as certified canopy partners.

Lead(s)
HPD

Collaborator(s)
Private developers

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

6.2 Encourage tree planting to help mitigate extreme heat in affordable housing projects.

Through an update to the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development's (HPD) *Design Guidelines for New Construction and Preservation*, the City will develop a comprehensive strategy for heat mitigation that encourages planting new trees where possible. The updated heat-mitigation criteria will also inform HPD's public site review process, particularly in areas of high heat vulnerability.

Lead(s)
DCP

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

6.3 Examine tree-planting requirements for off-street parking spaces in commercial districts.

Current zoning requirements for off-street parking facilities vary in terms of how many trees must be planted at these facilities. For example, in commercial districts that contain 36 or more spaces or are at least 12,000 square feet in area, one tree must be provided for every eight parking spaces. The number of trees required is also calculated per parking space provided in certain special districts and the waterfront area. While these regulations offset the effects of new hardscape with new tree canopy, they also depend upon the addition of vehicular-serving hardscape to facilitate tree planting. To address this issue, DCP will explore strategies to increase the tree canopy across commercial developments where surface parking is being considered, while also better aligning off-street parking requirements with other planning priorities.

Lead(s)
DCP

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

6.4 Research mechanisms and strategies to implement changes to tree-planting requirements in zoning for industrial areas.

As documented in this UFP, a lack of tree cover contributes to the persistence of the urban heat island effect in industrial areas. The Zoning Resolution currently exempts industrial use groups from street tree–planting requirements and offers reduced requirements for "semi-industrial" uses such as automotive repair and storage. This policy decision was made as part of the 2008 zoning text amendment that established the citywide framework for street tree planting. While there are valid concerns about potential damage to trees that are planted in industrial areas via truck strikes and a lack of compatibility with curb cuts, updated requirements could consider and seek to mitigate these risks. DCP will revisit the list of industrial use groups that are exempt from street tree–planting requirements and explore other potential changes that seek to increase the number of industrial developments that provide trees.

7. Expand planting areas within public streets and sidewalks.

There is the potential for an additional 6,100 acres of canopy from new plantings along streets and sidewalks. Streets and sidewalks represent the largest share of the easiest planting opportunities that can be directly controlled by New York City, and as such are a key site for expanding canopy citywide. The actions here address ways to expand the available planting areas within streets, and work to address often hidden conflicts with other infrastructure that can prohibit or restrict planting opportunities.

Lead(s)
DOT

Collaborator(s)
DDC,
NYC Parks

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

7.1 Expand planting area in the right-of-way through bump-outs and greenways as part of DOT work requiring curb changes.

As part of street redesign and capital projects involving curb changes, DOT will expand ongoing collaborations with NYC Parks to identify creative locations to plant more trees on public streets and sidewalks. This will include consideration of opportunities to expand planting areas (1) by increasing pedestrian areas, (2) in plantings designed to provide shade for bus stops, (3) near schools, (4) in dense planting areas alongside greenways, and (5) through other design approaches.

Lead(s)
DOT,
NYC Parks

Collaborator(s)
MOCEJ

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

7.2 Plant more trees to provide shade and cooling at bus stops.

The experience of waiting for a bus on a hot sunny day is not only uncomfortable, but it can also be dangerous. NYC's bus shelters provide refuge from the elements, but expanding canopy along bus routes will improve the comfort and safety of millions of New Yorkers as they travel. DOT and NYC Parks will prioritize tree planting adjacent to stops in ways that do not interfere with passengers getting on or off the bus or compromise tree health.

Lead(s)
NYC Parks, DOT

Collaborator(s)
DOT, DEP, DDC

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

7.3 Revisit design and construction standards for tree beds, infiltration elements, curbs, and related infrastructure at and below the street level.

Ensuring newly planted trees can thrive begins with the design of the ground they are planted in. The City will continue to explore new tree-planting designs, techniques, and products including piloting and data sharing to optimize tree-planting standards that promote tree health and longevity while limiting impacts to surrounding infrastructure such as sidewalks. The City will revisit requirements or incentives for successful approaches on applicable construction projects in alignment with regulations and best practices.

Lead(s)
MOCEJ

Collaborator(s)
DEP, DOT, NYC Parks, private utilities

Timeline
Medium term
(5 – 10 years)

7.4 Maximize tree-planting opportunities in the public realm by convening a task force on subsurface conflicts and opportunities.

Public streets, sidewalks, and plazas are the publicly owned property type estimated to have the largest potential area available for new tree plantings, but actual opportunities are limited by conflicts with other essential infrastructure. The City will convene a task force to identify opportunities for future tree planting. The task force will investigate design, operational, and budgetary solutions to limit infrastructure conflicts that require the removal of existing trees and the elimination of future tree-planting opportunities.

Tree-lined residential street in Jackson Heights, Queens
TNC, Michael Ostuni

8. Prioritize high-impact planting on public property.

City-owned sites are key locations that can be used to expand canopy equitably. Actions to increase canopy through planting on public sites include increased coordination when land comes into public ownership, improvements to requirements for capital projects, and expanded planting efforts on NYCHA campuses.

Lead(s)
NYCHA, NYC Parks

Timeline
Long term
(10+ years/recurring)

8.1 Prioritize planting of new trees on NYCHA campuses with high need and available planting areas.

There are over 1,000 acres of canopy on NYCHA properties (2.3 percent of the citywide total canopy); however, many of these campuses were planted all at once when developments were built, and trees may be nearing the end of their lives. Additional planting is needed to preserve and expand canopy. NYCHA will work with NYC Parks to prioritize planting new trees on NYCHA campuses with low canopy, available planting areas, and lack of recent planting to improve the diversity of tree species and ages on these sites. NYCHA could explore supplementing these efforts through an expansion of the NYCHA Farms and Gardens Program, which focuses on expanding urban agriculture opportunities across campuses, to include a focus on trees.

Lead(s)
MOCEJ

Collaborator(s)
DDC, DOT

Timeline
Short term
(<5 years)

8.2 Ensure that all City capital projects consider trees by incorporating urban forestry into the *Climate Resiliency Design Guidelines* and prioritizing tree preservation, planting, and maintenance as a design strategy for addressing extreme heat and stormwater flood risk.

The *Climate Resiliency Design Guidelines* (CRDGs) provide step-by-step instructions to go beyond building code and standards, which are informed by historic climate data, by also looking at specific, forward-looking climate data for use in the design of City facilities. All new projects and substantial improvements will assess risks to climate hazards in the context of the project's purpose, asset type, site location, and funding, and then determine where trees are viable as a design strategy. The CRDGs apply to all City capital projects, ensuring that the City is considering canopy expansion across all capital investments.

Lead(s)
MOCEJ

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks, DOT, DEP, SCA, NYCPS, DCAS, DCP, CSC Neighborhood Support Teams, The Hort, Business Improvement Districts, major private landowners (universities, houses of worship, cemeteries, utilities, etc.)

Timeline
Short term (< 5 years)

8.3 Identify new areas for tree planting in low-canopy EJ communities.

Expanding canopy by planting new trees begins with identifying potential sites for planting. Plantable areas are a function of physical, social, and cultural factors, including existing and planned surface, subsurface, and overhead infrastructure and community priorities. In NYC, areas with existing canopy tend to also have more plantable area. As such, prioritizing lower-canopy, heat-vulnerable, and EJ communities for identifying and creating new plantable areas can help achieve the goal of equitable canopy expansion. In some cases, this might mean de-paving impermeable surfaces or resolving sub-surface conflicts to plant more trees. In other cases, trees in planters might be the best option for a given site. As part of the Climate Strong Communities (CSC) program, MOCEJ will lead multi-jurisdictional, neighborhood-scale evaluations of relevant data, coupled with in-person assessments of potential planting locations, resulting in a planting report with specific recommendations for planting and maintaining new trees.

Lead(s)
MOCEJ

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks, EDC, DCAS

Timeline
Long term (10+ years/recurring)

8.4 Identify and secure planting and preservation opportunities on public property.

Analysis estimates that nearly 4,000 acres of additional canopy could result from planting in unbuilt and permeable surfaces on City-, NY State-, and federal-owned sites across the city that are not parks or public streets. MOCEJ will leverage DCAS real estate data and work with agencies to pursue preservation and planting opportunities on City-owned sites (outside of NYC Parks properties and public streets), including in collaboration with New York State and federal agencies with property in New York City.

Shaded plaza at Johnson Houses, Manhattan
NYCHA

Newly planted mini forest, Brooklyn
NYC Parks

Spotlight on Tree-Planting Programs

A range of programs led by NYC Parks and partners like CPF and Trees New York currently facilitate tree planting across parks, streets, NYCHA campuses, private property, and more. The following examples highlight the types of innovations and partnership models that the UFP aims to replicate and sustain. These programs are advancing equitable canopy expansion, efficiency, and workforce development.

NYC Parks' Neighborhood Tree-Planting Program

In 2025, NYC Parks began a new approach to street tree planting and maintenance that prioritizes neighborhoods with high heat vulnerability for new plantings. This program takes a holistic tree-planting approach that addresses all new tree-planting opportunities block by block rather than focusing on ad hoc new tree requests received via 311 or the NYC Parks website. This approach has allowed NYC Parks to focus on neighborhood-scale improvements sequentially over a nine-year period, targeting communities with high heat vulnerability first.

Trees for NYCHA

For over two decades, the nonprofit Trees New York has been expanding NYCHA's tree canopy in partnership with residents and NYCHA staff. In 2023, Trees New York launched a two-year project to help restore canopy loss on NYCHA campuses from extreme weather events such as Superstorm Sandy. Trees New York planted 399 trees – from a variety of climate-adaptive and native species including redbuds, maples, and river birch – across seven NYCHA campuses. Just one of the dozens of red maples planted will intercept over 1,500 gallons of stormwater and absorb over 830 pounds of CO_2 from the air over the next 10 years. Maintenance, community engagement, and workforce development are central to the project's long-term success. To ensure the newly planted trees survive and thrive, residents, volunteers, and environmental career trainees help Trees New York inspect and steward the trees.

Mini Forests

NYC Parks installed its first mini forest in Williamsburg in 2025. Mini forests attempt to replicate the structure and ecological diversity typical of a forested natural area in a more densely populated area where neighboring land use and property size aren't conducive to actual reforestation. The new mini forest at the North 5th Pier and Park consists of 55 large trees planted above 2,000 individual ferns, grasses, wildflowers, and shrubs selected to withstand the harsh conditions of the waterfront site. The designers also incorporated stones and logs to provide additional forest aesthetics and essential habitat for insects and birds. This new site provides a template for future mini forests across the city. Other mini forests in the city include the Manhattan Healing Forest on Roosevelt Island and the Mount St. Michael Forest in the Bronx.

Tree Time

Tree Time, a program run by NYC Parks and CPF, was established in 1994 to foster public–private partnerships in urban forestry, raise public awareness of the importance of urban forestry conservation and stewardship, promote new technologies to enhance tree survival and advance innovative management tools, and revitalize historically and arboreally significant municipal trees. Tree Time has helped to run significant and ongoing projects such as the Stewarding Canopy and Community in Central Queens project. This effort, in partnership with Trees New York, provides workforce development skills through training and internship opportunities for green jobs in Jackson Heights, Corona, and Elmhurst in connection with expanded tree-planting efforts in these neighborhoods.

Quotations from UFP engagement events and online questionnaire

Cultivate Stewards of the Urban Forest

Caring for the urban forest requires collective action by New Yorkers from all walks of life so that its benefits are shared by all. In every context, trees thrive when they are given adequate resources and are protected from harm. The strategies and actions outlined here will cultivate stewards of the urban forest by directly involving more New Yorkers and local institutions in the appreciation, stewardship, and expansion of the urban forest, both uplifting the programs that already exist and supporting innovation for new programs.

9. Recruit and support tree stewards.

Planting, preserving, and caring for trees can be daunting for many property owners and residents who lack the resources and expertise to do so. During outreach and engagement for the UFP, many residents stated a desire to plant more trees or be more involved but didn't know where to start or whom to work with. For private citizens, this resource barrier often reinforces existing inequities in tree canopy, as those with greater resources are better positioned to plant and care for trees, while those living at lower income levels face barriers accessing quality tree care. Removing barriers and providing resources to residents to care for trees in their communities is essential to the holistic, long-term care and expansion of NYC's urban forest.

Lead(s)
PfP

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks, NAC, Trees New York

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

9.1 Promote urban forest expansion, especially in low-canopy neighborhoods, by providing community tree stewards with training and technical assistance.

PfP will offer no- or low-cost Partnerships Academy workshops on stewardship best practices to fill gaps in existing stewardship programs. The priority audiences for this training and stewardship programming are under-reached constituencies. Programs will be designed for specific learner groups, such as older adults, community gardeners, NYCHA residents, and multilingual New Yorkers. In collaboration with NYC Parks, PfP will expand community engagement opportunities to care for trees within public parks.

Lead(s)
NYC Parks

Collaborator(s)
MOCEJ,
community boards

Timeline
Long term
(10+ years/recurring)

9.2 Leverage community boards to raise awareness and increase community involvement in urban forestry efforts both public and private.

NYC Parks will leverage community boards, particularly relevant committees such as Parks, Land Use & Zoning, or Sanitation, for community outreach for urban forestry–related programs including recruitment for NYC Parks' Super Stewards program and further publicizing NYC Parks' Neighborhood Tree Planting Program.

Lead(s)
PfP

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks, DOT,
Trees New York,
community boards,
community-based
organizations,
private utilities

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

9.3 Build on NYC Parks' Neighborhood Tree Planting Program to maximize tree survival and community engagement by aligning resources and outreach with relevant local stakeholders.

Newly planted street trees are most vulnerable when they are young. The City and its partners will align existing resources and engage new partnerships to promote new-tree survival and meaningfully engage the community in tandem with NYC Parks' Neighborhood Tree Planting Program. Through relevant local stakeholders, PfP will conduct community education and outreach leading up to and after new tree plantings. Once new street trees are out of guarantee by contractors, NYC Parks Communications, NYC Parks Stewardship, PfP, community-based organizations, and community boards can help organize stewardship for the new trees planted throughout the city to help the trees reach maturity.

Community stewardship of a street tree, Brooklyn
NYC Parks

10. Educate and empower New Yorkers to promote the co-benefits of trees.

Improving our understanding of the urban forest and the many ways it benefits New Yorkers will be key to its continued preservation and expansion – from advancing scientific knowledge about the health benefits of trees to inspiring a new generation of tree stewards. Achieving this will require sustained support for research led by City agencies as well as academic and institutional partners. It also calls for expanded educational and vocational opportunities that will equip all New Yorkers to pursue studies, volunteerism, and careers in stewardship, climate work, and green jobs. These efforts will help ensure New York's urban forest is supported by a robust network of caretakers and advocates.

Lead(s)
NYCPS

Collaborator(s)
DYCD, NYC Parks, CUNY

Timeline
Medium term
(5 – 10 years)

10.1 Expand climate education and action within NYCPS.

The City will expand climate education and action to develop students' appreciation for trees broadly, as well as lead toward urban forestry–related pathways and professions. NYC Public Schools (NYCPS) will convene an interdisciplinary team of teachers, administrators, and experts to identify urban forestry–related climate education lessons and resources aligned to New York State Climate Education Standards across grade levels. Additional related efforts will include the City working with partners to explore new CUNY degree programs and career pathways in urban forestry and climate, and to promote career and technical education and other secondary pathway programs that highlight local urban forestry–related degree programs and careers.

Lead(s)
NYC Parks

Collaborator(s)
CUNY, NYCPS, DYCD, MOCEJ

Timeline
Medium term
(5 – 10 years)

10.2 Expand urban forest–related youth programs and opportunities.

The City will promote youth employment programs and volunteer opportunities around the urban forest. Youth-serving agencies will explore options such as presentations, field trips, and other experiential sessions in collaboration with community-based organizations, such as the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development's network of CBO afterschool providers. These sessions will also include tree planting, hands-on tree stewardship activities, and NYC Parks' ranger-led tours. NYC Parks will partner with local universities to integrate Super Stewards training into campus programming and curricula to further develop a volunteer pipeline.

Lead(s)
NYC Parks

Collaborator(s)
NAC

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

10.3 Recruit more Super Stewards from areas that are higher need and/or EJ Areas.

NYC Parks will prioritize the recruitment of Super Stewards from higher-need areas and EJ Areas by leveraging NYC Parks' Let's Green NYC campaign, existing relationships with community-based organizations, and other outreach strategies. Current Super Steward engagement is based on where volunteers want to work, with volunteer home locations heavily influencing their desired worksites. Super Steward engagement may be expanded with additional grant funding.

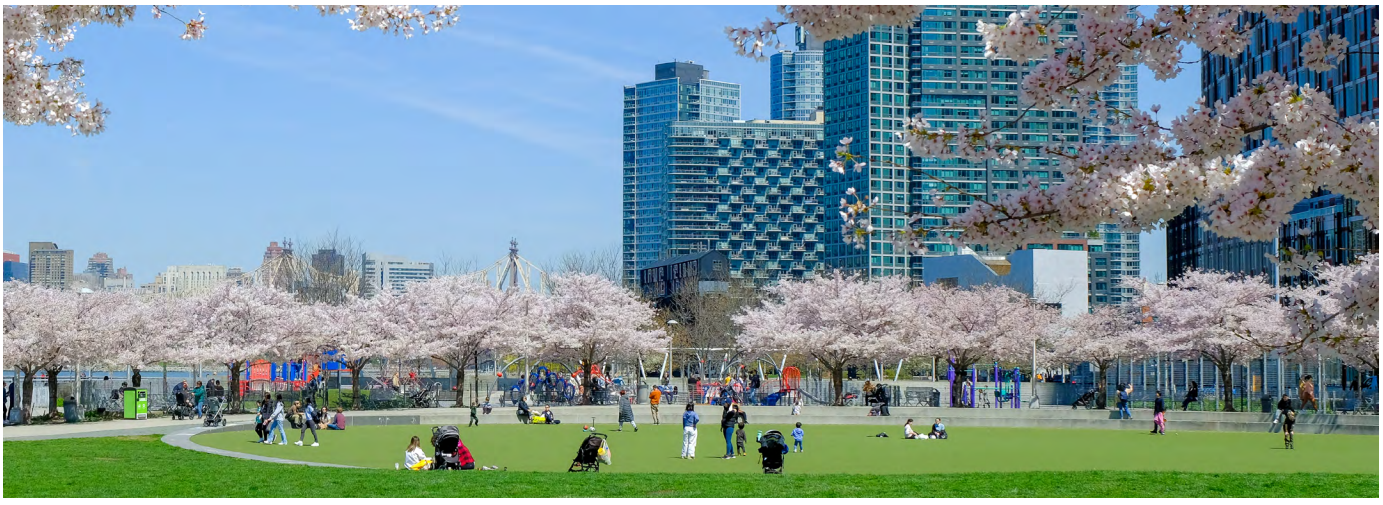
Lead(s)
PfP,
CPF

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks, Forest for All NYC, TNC, NAC, Trees New York

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

10.4 Connect New Yorkers with information, opportunities, and organizations to promote care for the urban forest and create positive connections and experiences with the urban forest.

PfP and CPF will provide information and education that remove barriers to public participation and increase access to the growing community of New Yorkers who care for all parts of the urban forest. PfP, CPF, and partners will educate New Yorkers via a train-the-trainer model on the essential resources that trees need to survive and the benefits trees provide to people and the urban ecosystem. These partners will produce materials and resources that will empower an array of organizations to conduct coordinated outreach and education across NYC, including a care manual for the urban forest available in multiple languages. These resources will include best practices in measurement, maintenance, care, and when to involve a professional, as well as information on existing relevant community groups and institutional partners. The priorities are to instill a solid understanding of tree needs and benefits and to foster meaningful connections with NYC's urban forest.



Cherry trees in Hunter's Point South Park, Queens
NYC Parks

Lead(s)
DOHMH

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks, research partners

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

10.5 Obtain a better understanding of the benefits of tree canopy on human health in NYC.

Trees provide myriad benefits to our city and to the health and well-being of New Yorkers. To further assess the health benefits, the NYC Health Department will (1) conduct a benefit-cost analysis to study the avoided human mortality benefits of adding tree canopy coverage, (2) assess relevant health literature, and (3) help support funding applications for tree canopy expansion. Exploratory analyses will include comparison across various population-level metrics to support equitable canopy expansion.

Freshkills Park, Staten Island
NYC Parks

Spotlight on Community Stewardship Programs

The stewardship of NYC's urban forest would not be possible without hundreds of dedicated New Yorkers across all five boroughs. From Super Stewards, to GreenThumb and Green City Force, volunteers and professionals of all ages have contributed to the growth and health of the urban forest for decades. The UFP aims to celebrate and sustain this culture of care as it cultivates new and existing stewards. Spotlighted here are a select handful of the many actors and programs who care for our urban forest.

NYC Parks' Super Stewards

This program enables New Yorkers around the city to lead and host volunteer stewardship activities to care for neighborhood green spaces. Super Stewards are trained by NYC Parks and are provided with tools like spades, cultivators, rakes, and mulch that they need to facilitate individual or group projects on worksites of their choosing, which can range from street trees to forests, meadows, wetlands, and nature trails.

City of Forest Day

Launched in 2021 by Forest for All NYC, in partnership with the Parks and Open Space Partners coalition and NYC Parks, City of Forest Day is an annual day of free activities across all five boroughs to raise awareness of the importance of the New York City urban forest, and the essential role New Yorkers play in caring for the "lungs" of our city. Hosted each year in the fall, events include nature walks, art projects, tree care, planting, educational sessions, and more. The fourth-annual City of Forest Day in 2025 featured 130 events hosted by nearly 100 different organizations, including nonprofit organizations, neighborhood-based stewardship groups, City Council offices, independent artists, and government agencies. As the scale of City of Forest Day continues to expand, organizers hope more New Yorkers are inspired to care for the NYC urban forest year-round.

Green City Force (GCF)

GCF's AmeriCorps program prepares young adults aged 18–24 who reside in NYCHA public housing and have a high school diploma or equivalency for green careers. Being part of the Service Corps is a full-time commitment encompassing service, training, and skills-building experiences related to healthier buildings and communities. Participants receive a stipend and access to wrap-around supportive services, and graduates receive ongoing support for career advancement.

NYC Strategic Trails Plan

New York City's parks contain more than 400 miles of nature trails, of which 275 miles have been formalized. As New Yorkers increasingly turn to City parks to enjoy the outdoors, NYC Parks and NAC are seeking to improve accessibility to trails and trail conditions. NAC's 2021 *New York City Strategic Trails Plan* details improvements to the City's system of trails across all five boroughs. The plan would unify the existing network of trails within the city's 12,000 acres of forested natural areas through trail markers, mapped and formalized paths, and routes designed to showcase unique natural assets. The plan would also increase access to parks and recreation, and give New Yorkers a high-quality experience in nature that many currently seek outside of the city.

NAC Urban NEST Fellowship

NAC's paid internship and workforce development programs provide mentorship, technical training, and community to a diverse group of STEM students and those aspiring toward careers in forested natural areas management and conservation science. By offering paid technical and professional development training to interns, NAC hopes to create new opportunities for young New Yorkers to pursue and succeed in green jobs.

NYC Parks' GreenThumb Pruning Brigade

NYC Parks GreenThumb is the nation's largest urban community gardening program, sustaining over 550 community gardens and supporting thousands of volunteer gardeners throughout NYC since 1978. In addition to working with partners to host workshops and trainings on street tree and fruit tree care, GreenThumb partners with Trees New York to host custom iterations of the Citizen Pruner Course. After completing the course, trained community gardeners join the GreenThumb Pruning Brigade, receive a full kit of tree-pruning tools, and assist other community gardens across the city.

11. Connect economically disadvantaged communities with urban forestry career pathways.

Careers related to the urban forest span every stage of a tree's life cycle, from seed to end of life. These jobs include propagation, planting, maintenance, tree care, and work involving wood and other tree-based products. Urban forestry careers range from more familiar positions, such as arborists, foresters, and gardeners, to specialized positions in horticulture, landscaping, nursery operations, urban planning, ecology, and waste management, among others. By connecting more New Yorkers to urban forest–related careers and ensuring people have access to the education, skills, and certifications to advance in those careers, NYC can grow the number of professionals who care for and expand its urban canopy. Actions in this strategy aim to expand opportunities through increased access to urban forestry work, stronger collaboration among partners, reduced barriers to job access, and closer alignment between training programs and employer requirements.

Lead(s)
MOCEJ

Collaborator(s)
DYCD

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

11.1 Recruit more urban forestry industry employers as worksites for the SYEP.

The City will increase paid work opportunities and awareness of urban forest–related careers among young New Yorkers by recruiting more urban forest industry employers as worksites for SYEP. Urban forest experiences for SYEP's 14-to-24-year-old participants can open the industry's career pathways to a new audience.

Trees Count 2025 volunteers training
NYC Parks

Lead(s)
CUNY

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks, DEP, and local nonprofits

Timeline
Medium term (5–10 years)

11.2 Explore developing an urban forestry track within CUNY community colleges.

Investigate building a skilled, equity-centered pipeline into green infrastructure and climate-resilience careers, beginning with CUNY campuses such as LaGuardia Community College. Colleges present the opportunity to provide students with a strong foundational background in environmental and forestry sciences, including competencies in data collection and analysis, field research, and applied environmental work across agroforestry, horticulture, soil science, botany, and ecology. In partnership with NYC Parks, DEP, and local nonprofits, the track could expand access to hands-on learning and workforce preparation while supporting the city's long-term goals for urban canopy expansion, heat mitigation, and ecosystem health. The track could also support transfer pathways into four-year and advanced-degree programs.

Lead(s)
NYC Parks

Collaborator(s)
OLR, DCAS, unions

Timeline
Short term (<5 years)

11.3 Improve NYC Parks' staffing retention and expand recruitment of diverse local talent for forestry jobs.

Ensuring that the trees under NYC Parks' jurisdiction receive proactive management requires a strong workforce of forestry professionals. NYC Parks will examine the pay scale and classification of titles, levels, salaries, and qualifications of urban forestry staff compared to similar positions in other municipalities and in the private sector. NYC Parks will work with DCAS and the NYC Office of Labor Relations (OLR) to explore how forestry jobs can be filled with diverse local talent by reviewing and updating civil service education requirements to allow more degree types or local alternative non-degree training pathways.

Lead(s)
NYC Talent

Collaborator(s)
NYC Parks, DYCD

Timeline
Long term (10+ years/recurring)

11.4 Integrate urban forestry and nature-based jobs training into the workforce ecosystem.

In partnership with employers and workforce organizations, the City will identify opportunities to scale training programs for a broad range of high-demand occupations, including urban forestry roles, to ensure workers are prepared for NYC's evolving decarbonization and sustainability needs. Through regular labor market analysis, the City can respond to increases in labor market demand by leveraging existing training and career exposure programs such as SYEP, as well as other partnerships.

12. Improve connections to New York City's urban forest.

New Yorkers walk past the trees that line our streets every day and may or may not recognize them or their benefits, though they may intuitively gravitate to shade on a hot day. Many parts of the city's urban forest are not immediately accessible or familiar, such as the more than 12,400 acres of forested natural areas across 135 parks, or the over 250 miles of forested trails within the city. Other pockets of the city, including backyards, schoolyards, vacant land, and parking lots, also offer opportunities for enhanced greening. Increasing access to these spaces can help inspire neighbors to become more involved in local stewardship efforts.

Lead(s)
NYC Parks

Collaborator(s)
DOT, NAC

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

12.1 Expand access to forested natural areas through methods such as improved signage and maps, and enhanced public transit, bike connectivity, and pedestrian connections.

There are currently limited signs and maps to connect New Yorkers to over 250 miles of trails, and communities have called for more and better wayfinding to help them navigate and access forested natural areas more safely. Including dynamic (geo-located) maps on the NYC Parks website (instead of static PDFs), updating trailhead signage, upgrading to more durable signage material, using interpretative signage, and adding trailheads at all pertinent access points, among other improvements, would ensure NYC's forested natural areas are more accessible to all. Key to this action is the enhancement of public transit and bike access to forested natural areas. Public transportation is a barrier for many New Yorkers seeking to access forested natural areas, particularly on weekends and in neighborhoods with limited transit connectivity. Additionally, prioritizing the implementation and upgrading of safe and accessible sidewalks and pedestrian crossings to align with entries to urban forest areas would help communities access these spaces.

Forested natural areas trail markers
NAC

Lead(s)
NYC Parks

Collaborator(s)
NAC, elected officials, community boards, borough commissioners

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

12.2 Increase transparency around urban forest maintenance and restoration work.

Community members expressed having little information when forest restoration work occurs, which is a missed opportunity for education and transparency around this work. NYC Parks will provide greater transparency, proactive communication to communities, and opportunities for interaction regarding the forested natural area restoration work occurring in public parks. This outreach will encompass the nature of the work underway, why repairs or restoration is needed, expected outcomes, and project timelines.

Lead(s)
MOUA

Collaborator(s)
Bronx River Foodway at Concrete Plant Park

Timeline
Short term
(< 5 years)

12.3 Transform underutilized land into thriving food forests for healthier communities.

Food forests are innovative spaces that increase biodiversity and food production, foster community engagement, and create educational opportunities. The Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture (MOUA) will explore the transformation of underutilized land into vibrant food forests that will mimic natural ecosystems while expanding the urban tree canopy. These spaces would feature native and microclimate-suitable fruit/nut trees, berry brambles, edible plants, vegetables, herbs, and fungi. MOUA will develop an urban agriculture assessment approach that will support site identification, feasibility assessments, landscape design, and relevant crop/forest planning. MOUA will also drive a community-informed approach that will consider community education, training, and maintenance opportunities, and it intends to collaborate with relevant interagency partners to assess City land inventory, develop land use/activity agreements, and evaluate cost and maintenance needs.

Community gardens at Bay View Houses, Brooklyn
WXY Studio

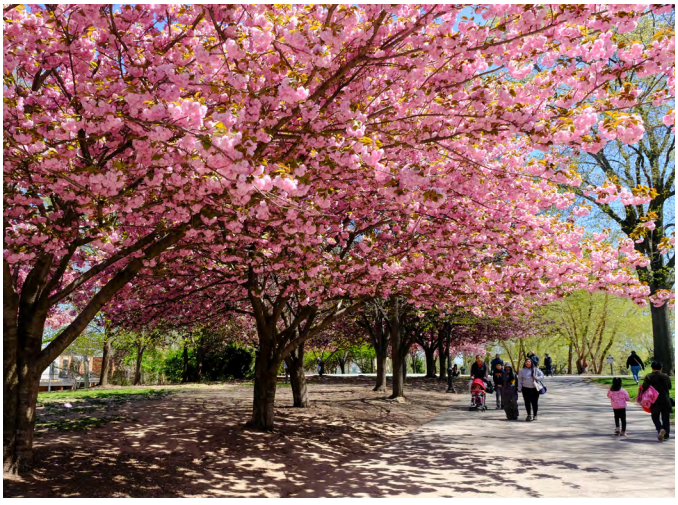
Marine Park Salt Marsh Nature Trail in Brooklyn
NAC

Conclusion

5

New York City's urban forest is vital living infrastructure that contributes to a healthier, more resilient, and more equitable city. Trees cool neighborhoods, clean our air, absorb stormwater, support mental and physical health, and connect communities to nature. Realizing these benefits, fully and fairly, requires a new type of commitment and coordination. That is what this UFP is designed to do. This document lays a foundation, a shared set of commitments, strategies, and accountability frameworks, to guide how we grow, protect, and care for our urban forest over the coming years. We will build on this foundation through collaborative processes and will be guided by evolving data and science. Through implementation, new approaches and more impactful commitments may emerge.

Oriole, Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn
Emily Nobel Maxwell



Spring blossoms in Sunset Park, Brooklyn
NYC Parks

Updated canopy assessments from LiDAR scans every five years will provide citywide data to monitor progress toward 30 percent canopy. We will integrate urban forest monitoring into ongoing climate frameworks and will provide an update on plan progress every five years concurrent with updated canopy assessments.

Potential specific metrics that may be used by lead agencies and MOCEJ to monitor evaluation on an action-by-action basis are summarized in the table that follows. Metrics used to track individual plan actions measure one or more of the following categories:

- **How Canopy Is Changing:** Measures of canopy growth or the number of trees planted, as well as assessments of tree and forest health
- **Number of New Yorkers Involved:** Tracking of the number of participants in programs or individuals impacted
- **Programs Launched or Changes Implemented**: Status and progress updates on new programs and rule or policy changes outlined in UFP actions

The work ahead will require the full breadth of New York City: city agencies, nonprofits, developers, property owners, community groups, and individual New Yorkers who believe that a greener city is a better one. It will take sustained investment, strong partnerships, and the willingness to keep innovating. This UFP provides a new vision for how to achieve that work.

Plan Action Summary

	Action	Lead Agency Property type	Potential Metrics for Evaluation
	Preserve Tree Canopy		
	1. Establish clear leadership for tree maintenance citywide.		
●	1.1 Designate a centralized leadership position responsible for overseeing UFP implementation across agencies.	**MOCEJ** All Property Types	• UFP overall progress report delivered
○	1.2 Designate urban canopy officers within agencies to implement the UFP.	**MOCEJ** All City-Owned	• Number of staff with responsibility for canopy expansion
	2. Support the full care and maintenance of New York City's public urban forest.		
●	2.1 Proactively care for City park and street trees.	**NYC Parks** NYC Parks properties, Streets and sidewalks	• Amount of identified need that has been funded (staffing, equipment, facilities) • Percent completion of urban forestry maintenance (annual pruning goal; percent of pruning-eligible trees that were pruned annually, trees planted on City streets, in landscaped areas of parks, in forested natural areas of parks, annual change in tree inspections, response time for priority tree work, response times for forestry-related 311 requests)
○	2.2 Support agencies to enforce existing tree protection regulations.	**MOCEJ, NYC Parks** All City-Owned	• Number of audits conducted • Number of violations issued • Number of trainings conducted • Number of trees preserved
	3. Improve regulations and practices of care for the existing urban forest.		
○	3.1 Explore transitioning tree maintenance and management on NYCHA properties to NYC Parks.	**NYC Parks** NYC Parks properties, Other City-Owned	• Staff dedicated to forestry maintenance • Number of trees planted • Canopy change on NYCHA properties
○	3.2 Streamline and improve tree work specifications and management for City agency use in line with national best practices.	**NYC Parks, MOCEJ** All City-Owned	• Number of agencies who have adopted • Work orders/maintenance tracked
○	3.3 Streamline contracts for tree planting and maintenance.	**NYC Parks** All City-Owned	• Number of contracts initiated through on-call • Volume of maintenance completed through contract
○	3.4 Expand the forest ecological assessment, including tree health assessments, to all publicly owned forested natural areas to enable the adoption of the *Forest Management Framework* citywide.	**NYC Parks** NYC Parks properties	• Level of completion of forest ecological assessment; acres assessed by jurisdiction • Change in forest health assessment over time • Percent of forested natural areas assessed and monitored • Indicators of forest health and threats reported, including quantity and proportion of native and invasive species in overstory, midstory, seedlings, and groundcover • Acres managed under the *Forest Management Framework* • Staff per acre devoted to forest management
○	3.5 Identify opportunities for NYC Parks land acquisition to preserve and expand canopy in areas of highest need.	**NYC Parks** Other City-Owned	• Number of properties identified • Canopy change or preservation on acquired sites

Outreach Related
● Yes ○ No

	Action	Lead Agency Property type	Potential Metrics for Evaluation
○	3.6 Clarify jurisdiction of trees on non-City streets to enable NYC Parks maintenance.	**NYC Parks** Streets and sidewalks	• Policy/rule change implemented
○	3.7 Explore expanding wood reuse citywide and foster new related industries.	**DSNY** NYC Parks properties	• Study conducted • Volume of wood salvaged • Additional facilities opened • Incoming revenue from salvaged products
	4. Preserve tree canopy on private land.		
●	4.1 Develop educational and technical assistance programs for homeowners, tenants, and property managers responsible for trees on private property.	**MOCEJ** Private Residential	• Number of participants enrolled • Number of properties reached through program and trainees
○	4.2 Explore policy tools and incentives to encourage tree preservation and planting on private property, including in collaboration with New York State partners.	**MOCEJ** All Private	• Status of incentives
○	4.3 Explore modifications to existing permitting processes to ensure that tree canopy preservation is considered alongside development.	**NYC Parks, DOB** All Property Types	• Adoption of heritage ordinance • Tree removals avoided • Restitution fees paid
	5. Guide UFP implementation through coordinated expertise.		
○	5.1 Institute an advisory committee to guide implementation of the UFP.	**MOCEJ** All Property Types	• Number of members (& topic areas/sectors represented)
○	5.2 Advance urban forest monitoring and research to inform canopy protection, maintenance, and expansion.	**Advisory Committee, MOCEJ** All Property Types	• Number of research partnerships
	Plant More Trees		
	6. Expand tree planting and replacement on private property.		
○	6.1 Encourage tree planting and maintenance on private property through an "NYC Tree Canopy Challenge."	**MOCEJ** All Private	• Number of organizations participating • Trees planted and stewarded by participants
○	6.2 Encourage tree planting to help mitigate extreme heat in affordable housing projects.	**HPD** Private Residential	• HPD Guidelines updated • Number of sites located in areas of high heat vulnerability subject to review
○	6.3 Examine tree-planting requirements for off-street parking spaces in commercial districts.	**DCP** Private Commercial/ Industrial	• Status of zoning text amendment
○	6.4 Research mechanisms and strategies to implement changes to tree-planting requirements in zoning for industrial areas.	**DCP** Streets and sidewalks, Private Commercial/ Industrial	• Status of zoning text amendment • Canopy change in industrial zones (M zones) and parking lots

Outreach Related
● Yes ○ No

Action	Lead Agency Property type	Potential Metrics for Evaluation
7. Expand planting areas within public streets and sidewalks.		
○ 7.1 Expand planting area in the right-of-way through bump-outs and greenways as part of DOT work requiring curb changes.	**DOT** Streets and sidewalks	• Projects implemented • Total additional planting area added
○ 7.2 Plant more trees to provide shade and cooling at bus stops.	**DOT, NYC Parks** Streets and sidewalks	• Number of trees planted at bus stops • Number of sites with plantings
○ 7.3 Revisit design and construction standards for tree beds, infiltration elements, curbs, and related infrastructure at and below the street level.	**NYC Parks, DOT** Streets and sidewalks	• Design changes piloted • Design changes implemented
○ 7.4 Maximize tree-planting opportunities in the public realm by convening a task force on subsurface conflicts and opportunities.	**MOCEJ** Streets and sidewalks	• Acres of new planting (or plantable area) in DEP-managed areas • Acres of new planting (or plantable area) within streets • Number of trees preserved • Number of trees planted Number of tree removal bank transactions • Percent canopy change
8. Prioritize high-impact planting on public property.		
○ 8.1 Prioritize planting of new trees on NYCHA campuses with high need and available planting areas.	**NYC Parks** Other City-owned	• Number of new trees planted
○ 8.2 Ensure that all City capital projects consider trees by incorporating urban forestry into the *Climate Resiliency Design Guidelines* and prioritizing tree preservation, planting, and maintenance as a design strategy for addressing extreme heat and stormwater flood risk.	**MOCEJ** All City-owned	• Number of new trees preserved in capital projects • Number of new trees planted in capital projects
○ 8.3 Identify new areas for tree planting in low-canopy EJ communities.	**MOCEJ** All Property Types	• Number of new sites identified • Canopy change in EJ Areas
○ 8.4 Identify and secure planting and preservation opportunities on public property.	**MOCEJ** All City-owned	• Number of City-Owned parcels identified for planting and preservation • Number of trees preserved • Number of trees planted
Cultivate Stewards of the Urban Forest		
9. Recruit and support tree stewards.		
● 9.1 Promote urban forest expansion, especially in low-canopy neighborhoods, by providing community tree stewards with training and technical assistance.	**Partnerships for Parks** All Property Types	• Number of participants • Number of local community groups that identify as tree care groups • Number of tree care It's My Park events • Number of trees stewarded • Rate of canopy change in target neighborhoods
● 9.2 Leverage community boards to raise awareness and increase community involvement in urban forestry efforts, both public and private.	**NYC Parks** All Private	• Number of CB presentations held • Number of people engaged
● 9.3 Build on NYC Parks' Neighborhood Tree Planting Program to maximize tree survival and community engagement by aligning resources and outreach with relevant local stakeholders.	**Partnerships for Parks** All City-owned	• New Yorkers reached through engagement • New tree survival/mortality rates

Outreach Related
● Yes ○ No

Action	Lead Agency Property type	Potential Metrics for Evaluation
10. Educate and empower New Yorkers to promote the co-benefits of trees.		
● 10.1 Expand climate education and action within NYCPS.	**NYCPS** All Property Types	• UFP lessons/units represented in climate education curricular resources • Program promotion and participation in activities and partnerships
● 10.2 Expand urban forest–related youth programs and opportunities.	**NYC Parks** All Property Types	• Number of urban forestry–related programs • Number of participants in each program
● 10.3 Recruit more Super Stewards from areas that are higher-need and/or EJ Areas.	**NYC Parks** NYC Parks properties	• Number of Super Stewards from EJ Areas • Number of Super Steward volunteer hours in EJ Areas
● 10.4 Connect New Yorkers with information, opportunities, and organizations to promote care for the urban forest and create positive connections and experiences with the urban forest.	**Partnerships for Parks, CPF** All Property Types	• Number of users • Number of trainers/organizations trained • Number of languages
○ 10.5 Obtain a better understanding of the benefits of tree canopy on human health in NYC.	**DOHMH** All Property Types	• Results for health benefits • Results presented to supporting agencies for feedback • Draft write-up of research findings
11. Connect economically disadvantaged communities with urban foresty career pathways.		
○ 11.1 Recruit more urban forestry industry employers as worksites for the SYEP.	**MOCEJ** All Property Types	• Number of worksites • Number of students placed
○ 11.2 Explore developing an urban forestry track within CUNY community colleges.	**CUNY** All Property Types	• Program and curriculum launched • Number of students enrolled • Number of students who transfer to further education
○ 11.3 Improve NYC Parks staffing retention and expand recruitment of diverse local talent for forestry jobs.	**NYC Parks** NYC Parks properties, Streets and sidewalks	
○ 11.4 Integrate urban forestry and nature-based jobs training into the workforce ecosystem.	**NYC Talent** All Property Types	• Number of urban forestry–related programs offered • Number of participants in programs
12. Improve connections to New York City's urban forest.		
● 12.1 Expand access to forested natural areas through methods such as improved signage and maps, and enhanced public transit, bike connectivity, and pedestrian connections.	**NYC Parks** NYC Parks properties	• Miles of trails with new signage
● 12.2 Increase transparency around urban forest maintenance and restoration work.	**NYC Parks** NYC Parks properties	• Proportion of forested natural areas restoration projects with public outreach
○ 12.3 Transform underutilized land into thriving food forests for healthier communities.	**MOUA** Other City Owned	• Sites identified for food forests • Potential additional canopy from sites identified

Outreach Related
● Yes ○ No

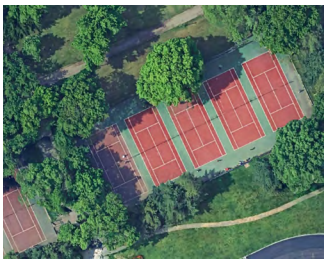
Forested natural area High Rock Park, Staten Island
NAC

Appendices

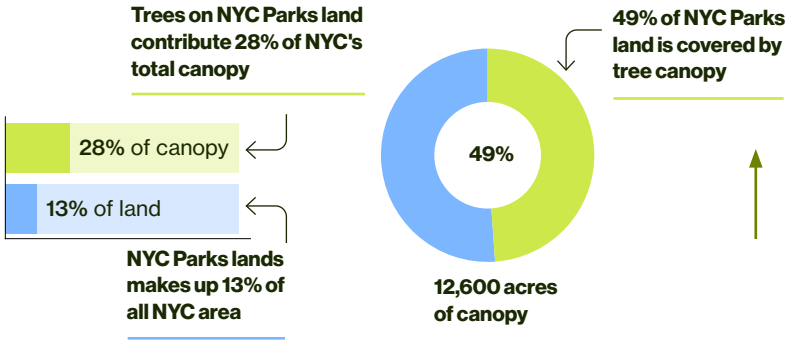
Property Type Profiles – Public

Property Type	Impact	Canopy Cover	Annual Growth 2017 – 2021
	Percent of NYC canopy (2021) Percent of NYC land area	Percent of property type land covered by trees (2021)	acres/year

NYC Parks



Pelham Bay Park, Bronx

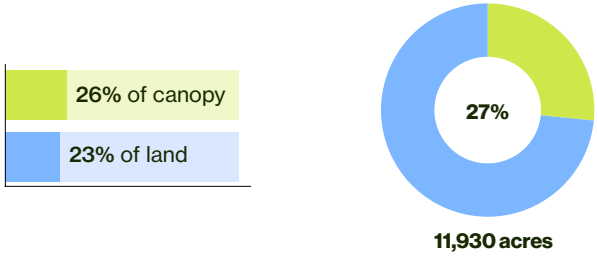


151 acres/year

Streets and Sidewalks

*under management of NYC Parks

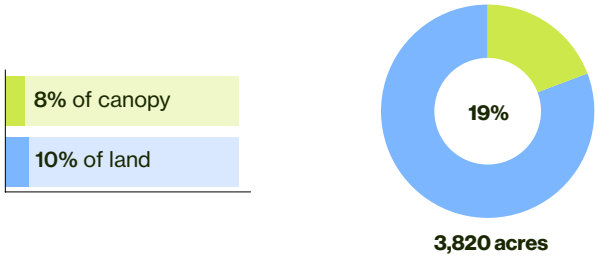
Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn



237 acres/year

State and Federal

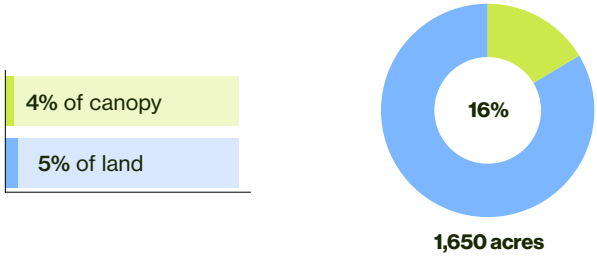
Queensbridge Houses, Queens



104 acres/year

Other City Agencies

New York Public Library, Manhattan



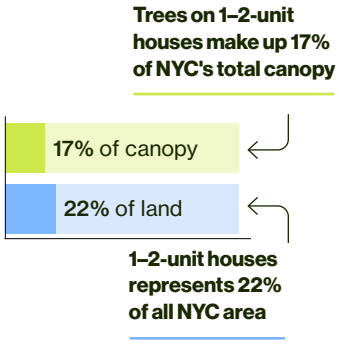
34 acres/year

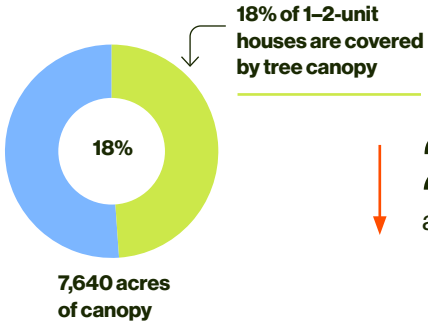
Property Type Profiles – Private

Property Type	Impact	Canopy Cover	Annual Growth 2017 – 2021
	Percent of NYC canopy (2021) Percent of NYC land area	Percent of property type land covered by trees (2021)	acres/year

1–2-Unit Houses

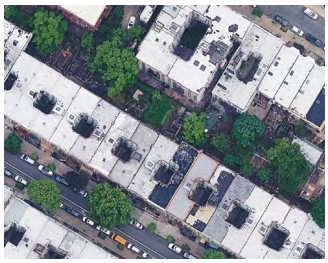
Flushing, Queens



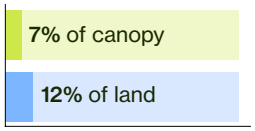


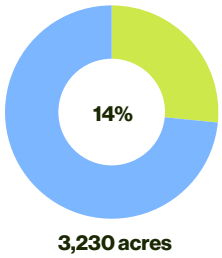
26 acres/year

3+ Unit Houses



Bay Ridge, Brooklyn

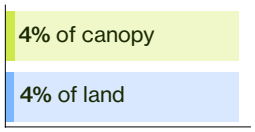


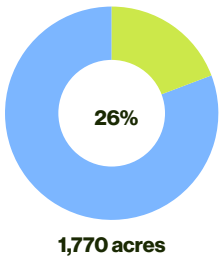


25 acres/year

Private Campuses and Cemeteries

Wagner College, Staten Island

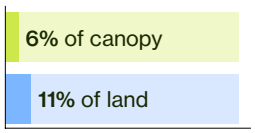


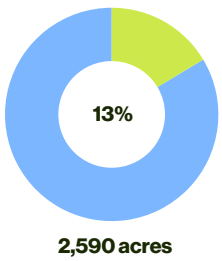


17 acres/year

Other Private

Gateway Center, Brooklyn





37 acres/year

Glossary

Abbreviations Glossary

CPF	City Parks Foundation
CBO	Community based organization
CB	NYC community board
DCP	New York City Department of City Planning
DDC	New York City Department of Design and Construction
DEP	New York City Department of Environmental Protection
DOT	New York City Department of Transportation
EDC	New York City Economic Development Corporation
ForMS	NYC Parks' Forestry Management System
MOCEJ	New York City Mayor's Office of Climate & Environmental Justice
NAC	Natural Areas Conservancy
NYC Parks	NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
PfP	Partnerships for Parks
SAC	NYC Urban Forest Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee
TAC	NYC Urban Forest Plan Technical Advisory Committee
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
UFP	Urban Forest Plan

Terms Glossary

Air Quality	Air quality is a measure of the quantity of particulates and gaseous pollutants in the air, among other substances. Air quality is closely linked to the earth's climate and ecosystems globally. Many of the drivers of air pollution are also sources of greenhouse gas emissions.[53]
Canopy	Parts of a tree that cover the ground when viewed from above, including leaves, branches, and stems.
Carbon Dioxide	Carbon dioxide is a gas produced when an organic carbon compound (such as wood) or fossilized organic matter (such as coal, oil, or natural gas) is burned in the presence of oxygen. Carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere by "sinks" such as photosynthesis by trees and other plants.[54]
Carbon Sequestration	The process of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide that is used as a method of reducing the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere with the goal of reducing global climate change.[55]
Citizen Pruner	A volunteer who is licensed through Trees New York's Citizen Pruner Tree Care Course to prune public trees.[56]
Environmental Justice	Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, policies, and activities and with respect to the distribution of environmental benefits.[57]
Environmental Justice Area	A geographic area that has experienced disproportionate negative impacts from environmental pollution due to historical and existing social inequities without equal protection and enforcement of environmental laws and regulations. In this report, EJ Areas are census tracts that meet the Disadvantaged Communities Criteria designation established by New York State DEC.[58]
Equity	The fair or just treatment of people. Promoting justice, impartiality, and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources.[59]
Forested Natural Areas	A subset of the urban forest that is distinct from street trees, park trees, and trees in more manicured landscapes in terms of biodiversity, size, composition, and management. Forested natural areas are complex ecosystems that include soil, microorganisms, and myriad species of flora and fauna throughout their various life stages, in addition to the humans who live near, visit, and manage these spaces.[60]

Green Job	Job that produces goods or provides services that benefit the environment or conserve natural resources.[61]
Greenhouse Gases	Gases that trap heat in the atmosphere.[62]
Hardiness Zone	The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has defined 13 hardiness zones across the United States to inform plant stewards and farmers where plants are most likely to thrive based on their location. Zones are defined by a combination of factors, including a region's average and most extreme temperatures.[63]
Heat Vulnerability Index	A statistical index of the risk of heat-related illness or death calculated using social and environmental factors. The Heat Vulnerability Index considered in this report was developed specifically for NYC by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to measure increased risk of death during and following extreme heat events.[64]
Invasive Species	A species that has been introduced to an ecosystem and causes ecological or economic harm, or harm to human health.[65]
Landscaped Park Trees	Trees that are purposely planted in areas with playgrounds, picnic areas, athletic fields, bike paths, lawns, and in other actively programmed areas of parkland.[66]
LiDAR	An acronym that stands for Light Detection and Ranging and is a form of remote sensing that can measure distance and generate high-resolution 3D representation. In the context of urban forestry, it provides a valuable type of data used to map tree canopy.[67]
Local Law 148	Codified in 2023, this bill requires the City to create an Urban Forest Plan to expand the tree canopy coverage to 30 percent, and to update the UFP every 10 years. The UFP is also required to evaluate the distribution, health, and stability of NYC's urban forest, identify causes of canopy gain or reduction, and recommend strategies to remediate any loss, in addition to developing an outreach plan for community members and property owners.
MillionTreesNYC	In 2007, NYC Parks launched the MillionTreesNYC initiative to plant and care for one million trees in New York City and to provide a new model for greening cities. In 2015, partnerships with New York Restoration Project (NYRP), volunteers, and other groups, helped to achieve this goal.
Neighborhood Tabulation Area	Medium-sized geographies for reporting population information developed by and for New York City. Though NTA boundaries and their associated names roughly correspond with many neighborhoods commonly recognized by New Yorkers, NTAs are not intended to definitively represent neighborhoods, nor are they intended to be exhaustive of all possible names and understandings of neighborhoods throughout New York City.[68]

Old-Growth Forest	Definitions for old-growth forests vary, particularly because these forests are often difficult to access and therefore identify. New York State defines old-growth forests as having minimal human disruption in the past two hundred to three hundred years.[69]
Parkway	A designation of certain roadways in NYC that generally have vegetated or heavily treed landscapes along them.
Pruning	Selectively removing unwanted branches from a tree to improve tree structure, promote tree health, and, at times, to resolve conflicts with other infrastructure.[70]
Redlining	In a process commonly known as redlining, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation – a temporary New Deal federal agency created in 1933 intended to support homeownership for Americans by refinancing home mortgages during an economic downturn – created "residential security maps" that charted the supposed riskiness of issuing mortgages. HOLC explicitly used race and ethnicity as central determinants of a neighborhood's property value, reinforcing existing patterns of residential segregation and creating cycles of disinvestment in communities of color and low-income communities that persist today.[71]
Senescence	The halting of regeneration of plant tissue, leading to deterioration of condition, halting of reproduction, and ultimately plant death.[72]
Species Diversity	The number of species in a given locality (species richness) generally weighted by some measure of relative abundance of species (species evenness).[73]
Stewardship	Doing any of the following: conserving, managing, monitoring, advocating for, or educating the public about local land, air, water, waste, energy, or toxics issues.[74]
Stormwater	Stormwater is water from rain or melting snow that doesn't soak into the ground but runs off into waterways, collecting and transporting pollutants to surface waters in the process.[75]
Street Tree	Trees planted along streets and sidewalks, generally under the management of NYC Parks.
Street Tree Census	An inventory of street trees in which location, size, species, and condition of each individual street tree within NYC is recorded. Since 1995, NYC has conducted a street tree census every 10 years, with the most recent running from 2025 to 2026. Censuses are led by NYC Parks and supported by volunteers across the city.[76]
Super Steward	Trained by NYC Parks, Super Stewards work independently by taking the lead on caring for their neighborhood parks and spreading the word about the benefits of nature in the city. Super Stewards can

	work on their own, lead other volunteers, host projects, apply for mini grants, network with other volunteers, and get a sneak peek at the inner workings of the agency.[77]
Tree	A woody perennial plant, typically large, with a single well-defined stem carrying a more or less definite section of foliage (a crown).[78]
Tree Bed	Area with soil for tree roots and surface treatment (e.g., mulch or plantings) created in parts of the landscape that are otherwise hard-scaped, such as sidewalks.[79]
Tree Equity	Working to ensure all communities, especially those historically over-burdened by pollution, extreme heat, and public disinvestment, have fair access to the benefits of a healthy, resilient urban forest. Advancing tree equity commits the City to prioritizing tree planting, care, and long-term stewardship in communities most impacted by climate risk, health disparities, and environmental harm while treating trees as essential living public infrastructure and ensuring their care and preservation across all communities.
Urban Heat Island	A phenomenon caused by the lack of trees, vegetation, and green open spaces in urban areas, combined with dense, hard surfaces of concrete and asphalt. Heat is generated by solar radiation and anthropogenic sources such as idling traffic and air conditioning of buildings and homes. Landscapes of cities tend to trap this heat, creating a feedback loop that further exacerbates high temperatures.[80]
Urban Forest	Socioecological system that includes all the trees in NYC and the physical and social infrastructure on which they depend.[81]

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Department of Transportation
Department of Sanitation
Department of Youth and Community Development
Economic Development Corporation
The Fire Department of the City of New York
Department of Housing Preservation and Development
The Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture
New York City Housing Authority
New York City Public Schools
The New York Public Library
School Construction Authority
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NYC Talent
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WXY Studio, NAC, PfP

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NYC Housing Authority

Endnotes

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