



NEW YORK CITY URBAN FOREST PLAN

FACTSHEET BY NYC-EJA

After NYC-EJA and our Forest For All NYC Coalition partners helped pass 2023's Local Law 148 which mandated the creation of an **Urban Forest Plan (UFP) for NYC**, we worked with the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice and other relevant partners to determine what would make an equitable and effective Urban Forest Plan.

Why do we need an Urban Forest Plan?

The urban forest, defined as every tree that lives in the five NYC boroughs, is an essential element of our City's infrastructure. A dense tree canopy provides a range of benefits to the city and its residents such as decreasing urban heat, improving a variety of physical and mental health outcomes, decreasing flooding, increasing biodiversity, and improving air quality. Right now, the urban forest is not equally spread across the city, with most environmental justice (EJ) communities living with significantly fewer trees than wealthier parts of the city. The intention of creating the UFP was to address how to equitably spread the Urban Canopy and prioritize trees, their maintenance, planting, and stewardship (community tree care) in a way that would invest in areas that have been historically deprioritized.



What does the Urban Forest Plan say?

- The UFP acts as a roadmap to preserve tree canopy, plant more trees, and cultivate community stewardship, with the goal of achieving 30% tree canopy in NYC by 2040 (a timeline that was established in this plan for the first time).
- Some EJ areas have experienced recent canopy loss primarily due to environmental impacts from events like Superstorm Sandy.
- Tree canopy in some historically disadvantaged neighborhoods is below 10%.
- The City will review existing processes and advance new programs to achieve canopy goals with specific consideration toward equity and community engagement.
- The City is committed to addressing historical imbalances and sustaining a resilient urban forest as a vital resource for the health and well-being of every New Yorker.

What are the key Environmental Justice-related UFP findings and goals?

- NYC's current tree canopy covers ~23.4% of the city's land area (about the size of Brooklyn).
- EJ areas in NYC have 19% tree canopy overall, compared with 26% in non-EJ areas.
- From 2017–2021, the city's net tree canopy grew by ~1.2%, some of which is in EJ areas.
- At the borough level, canopy cover ranges from 19.5–33.2%. Within each borough, there are disparities across neighborhoods, with canopy cover ranging from <10% to >40%.
- EJ and high heat vulnerability areas tend to have a relatively small amount of viable space for easy planting to expand canopy. These areas require extra attention and creative solutions.
- To reach 30% canopy coverage equitably by 2040, the City wants to focus on three main pathways: 1. Preserve Tree Canopy, 2. Plant More Trees, and 3. Cultivate Stewards of the Urban Forest.
- The plan is organized into 12 strategies and 43 actions that identify opportunities to protect and expand the urban forest. Many have an “eye towards equity,” but we feel this doesn't go far enough without clearer strategies to prioritize EJ in the plan's implementation. As the plan is implemented and engagement continues, we hope to see tangible projects and financial investments in EJ neighborhoods with the greatest need for greater tree cover.

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