

How Can Urban Tree Planting Advance Social Equity?

Genevieve Myers, Lauren Mullenbach, Julianna Duran Jolley, Bethany Cutts, Lincoln Larson



NC STATE UNIVERSITY

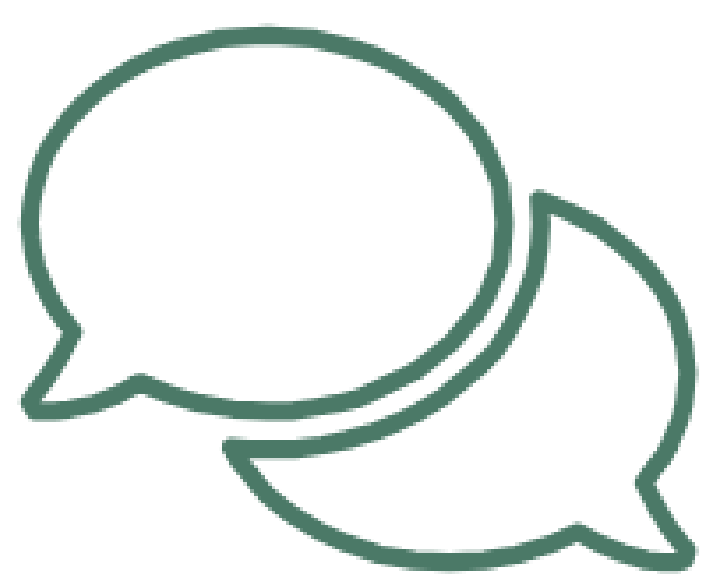
Objective: Review prior work to identify success stories, struggles, and lessons learned with the goal of advancing all dimensions of equity and social sustainability in urban tree planting

Tree Planting and Climate Justice

- Trees provide many benefits, which are inequitably distributed in urban areas
- Trees play critical role in climate change mitigation
- Initiatives can inadvertently harm communities if environmental justice principles aren't incorporated
- People living in affluent and primarily white urban neighborhoods receive disproportionately more benefits from green amenities

Environmental Justice Principles in Urban Tree Planting

1. **Distributive Justice:** promote equal access and proximity to trees



2. **Procedural Justice:** ensure that all relevant voices heard in urban tree planting process



3. **Recognition Justice:** acknowledge that historically marginalized communities may view and experience trees differently



Scan with phone camera to view draft of full paper

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MAXIMIZE SOCIAL EQUITY IN TREE PLANTING INITIATIVES

1. Prioritize equitable tree planting over efficient tree planting
2. Actively engage communities in tree planting efforts
3. Be transparent with communication and ask for community input
4. Form partnerships with local community orgs, non-profits, and businesses
5. Acknowledge possible negative perceptions of trees when engaging with communities
6. Recognize barriers and provide resources to help communities overcome them
7. Continue community involvement and monitor progress after tree planting

Methods: Literature Review

- Identified academic papers discussing social equity in urban tree planting
- Analyzed 15 relevant papers for theories applied, program strategies, positive outcomes, challenges faces, and successful strategies for equitable urban tree planting
- Summarized best practices for tree planting initiatives

Results: Themes and Codes Examined

Theme	Codes
Theories applied (3)	Environmental justice, Urban political ecology, Governance theory
Program strategies (6)	Resident interviews/surveys, Passive engagement, Planting on public land, Deadlines, Tree giveaways, Company/government partnerships
Positive outcomes (6)	Ecosystem services, Tree aesthetics, Increased interest and awareness, Met deadline, Reduced inequities, Increased community participation
Challenges faced (14)	Lack of interest, Lack of communication/awareness, Cultural differences, Insufficient data collection, Many renters, Negative perceptions of trees, Maintenance, Access/availability barriers, Existing inequities, Lack of funding, Stakeholder and organization conflict, Lack of viable space to plant, Persisting inequities, Efficiency vs. equity
Successful strategies (8)	Community-driven design, Prioritize economic equality and demographic equity, Free trees, Active engagement, Well-funded, Community partnerships, Increased awareness of tree benefits, Prolonged engagement

Implications for Research and Practice

- **Research:** integrate environmental justice, urban political ecology and governance theories to fill gaps in understanding of urban greening inequities
- **Practice:** improve strategies for achieving equitable tree planting, helping communities mitigate and adapt to climate change