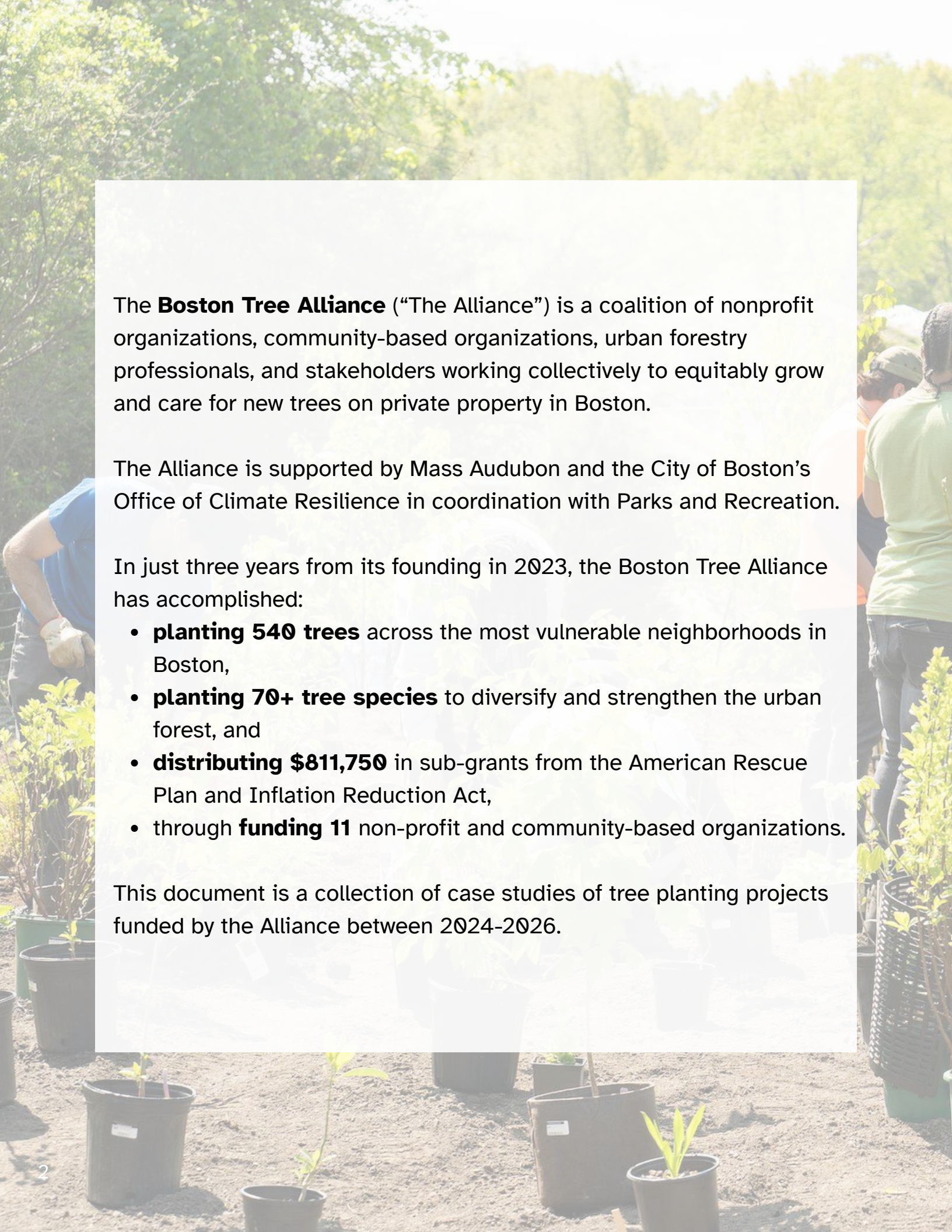


BOSTON TREE ALLIANCE

Tree Planting and Care Grant

Case Studies | 2026





The **Boston Tree Alliance** (“The Alliance”) is a coalition of nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, urban forestry professionals, and stakeholders working collectively to equitably grow and care for new trees on private property in Boston.

The Alliance is supported by Mass Audubon and the City of Boston’s Office of Climate Resilience in coordination with Parks and Recreation.

In just three years from its founding in 2023, the Boston Tree Alliance has accomplished:

- **planting 540 trees** across the most vulnerable neighborhoods in Boston,
- **planting 70+ tree species** to diversify and strengthen the urban forest, and
- **distributing \$811,750** in sub-grants from the American Rescue Plan and Inflation Reduction Act,
- through **funding 11** non-profit and community-based organizations.

This document is a collection of case studies of tree planting projects funded by the Alliance between 2024-2026.



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NeighborWoods Tree Planting



Between **2024 and 2025**, Tree Boston was awarded **\$50,000** to plant **83 trees** for *NeighborWoods Tree Planting*. Tree Boston worked with local community members across multiple neighborhoods to plant trees on residential and institutional properties, such as senior housing sites.

Organization Profile

Tree Boston is a non-profit based in Dorchester with the mission to increase Boston's urban tree canopy on privately-owned land. Their team of staff plants and maintains yard trees in Dorchester, Roxbury, Hyde Park and Mattapan.

Neighborhood Context: Dorchester, Hyde Park, Mattapan, and Roxbury

The majority of Boston Tree Alliance funded projects are located in Environmental Justice communities, which are federally identified communities that face disproportionate environmental and economic challenges.⁶ Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury were three of five neighborhoods highlighted in Boston's first Heat Plan (2022), because parts of their community face greater extreme heat exposure and risk than the rest of the City.³ Between 2019 and 2024, every neighborhood both gained and lost parts of its tree canopy. However, only Mattapan and Hyde Park had a net loss of 3 and 9 acres, respectively, amounting to an absolute percent loss of less than 1%. Important to note that Dorchester, Roxbury, Hyde Park, and Mattapan lead the City in tree canopy coverage.⁷

Budget Spotlight

The bulk of the grant went to purchasing trees and maintenance cost. Tree Boston employs a full-time community tree specialist and multiple staff for tree care.

Site Preparation

- Removed turf wherever needed.
- Dug appropriately sized holes and added soil amendments.

Maintenance

- Homeowners were given detailed instructions for watering and caring for their trees.
- Staff inspected trees to ensure proper care.

TIP FOR SUCCESSFUL TREE PLANTING

By working across multiple neighborhoods, Tree Boston had established trusted connections with several communities across the city. They were able to use their experience to advocate for Boston's urban forest.

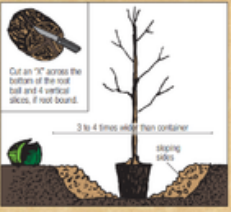
How to Plant Containerized Trees

Trees from nurseries are often potted in a container. These instructions are for planting containerized trees.

- 1 Dig a hole the same depth of the container and 3 to 4 times wider than the container. The hole should have sloping sides like a saucer to allow for proper root growth.
- 2 Lay the tree on its side and carefully remove the tree from the container, keeping the soil around the roots intact. It helps to tap the outside of the container to loosen the edge. Carefully slide the tree out of the container as this can separate the roots from the tree.
- 3 Sometimes containerized trees become root-bound or the roots look like they're about to circle the root ball. If your tree is like this, cut an X across the bottom of the root ball and four vertical slices along the sides of the root ball with a sharp knife.
- 4 Set the tree in the middle of the hole. Avoid planting the tree too deep. If the root collar sits below the top of the hole, compact some soil under the tree so that the root flare at the base of the trunk is slightly above ground level. Using some soil, secure the tree in a straight position, then fill and firmly pack the hole with the original soil, making sure there aren't any air pockets. Keep backfilling until the soil is just below the root collar.
- 5 Create a water-holding basin around the hole and give the tree a good watering. After the water has soaked in, spread protective mulch 2-4 inches deep in a 3-foot diameter area around the base of the tree, but not touching the trunk.
- 6 The soil and mulch around your trees should be kept moist but not soggy. During dry weather, generously water the tree every 7 to 10 days during the first year. Water slowly at the dripline.
- 7 Remove any tags and labels from the tree as these will affect the tree as it grows. You may need to prune any broken or dead branches. (Please refer to the arborday.org pruning guide.)

Fertilizer? DO NOT use fertilizer, potting soil, or chemicals on your newly planted trees. Such products will kill your young trees.

Watering: Keeping your trees watered is important during their first year. Keep the soil and mulch moist but not soggy. In dry weather, you should water generously every 7 to 10 days. The water should soak into the soil and mulch. Avoid watering so much that you see standing water.



Arbor Day Foundation
100 Arbor Avenue • Nebraska City, NE • 68410 • 800-440-7237
arborday.org

For step by step videos and more planting info go to arborday.org/HowToPlant

9074201

Congratulations on your new yard tree!

You received a **bare-root tree**, which requires different care than other types of trees you may have planted before. This guide will help make sure you give your tree the best care you can to help it grow and flourish!

Tree Guard
We've provided you with a tree guard, which protects the bark of your tree. As soon as you can, wrap this around the base of your tree's trunk. This will stop hungry animals like rabbits from gnawing on and damaging your tree and will provide the tree protection from the elements.

Watering Your Tree
We've provided your tree with a gator bag for easy watering! Using this bag is the best way to water your tree. Simply wrap the bag loosely around your tree, and then fill it up every time you need to water it. For a step-by-step guide on setting up your gator bag, visit treeboston.org/barerootguide.

Fall and Winter
Your tree was planted in the fall, during its dormant season. The tree isn't growing right now, so it does not need to be watered yet.

Learn more and follow:
treeboston.org // @Trees_Boston



Sample flyers handed to homeowners.
Learn more at treeboston.org.



CROSTOWN CENTER

FRIENDS OF MELNEA CASS BOULEVARD



In **2026**, Friends of Melnea Cass Boulevard (FMCB) was awarded **\$194,000** to plant **24 trees** for *Crosstown Center*. Located on a commercial lot adjacent to a major public roadway, the project aimed to turn the median that divides the sidewalk and bicycle lane into a more fruitful greenway. FMCB worked with a local, employee-owned tree care company for the planting and maintenance of the trees.

Organization Profile

Friends of Melnea Cass Boulevard (FMCB) is a grassroots group of neighbors dedicated to transforming Melnea Cass Boulevard into a greenway where all are invited to participate in furthering the goals of a greener and better world.

Neighborhood Context: Roxbury

Shaped by a history of redlining, which is the illegal discriminatory practice of denying loans or services to certain communities based on race or ethnicity, Roxbury's experiences reflect development patterns and neighborhood history.¹ Due to historical inequalities that have led to high rates of air pollution - which increase an individual's sensitivity to heat - Roxbury residents are disproportionately affected by extreme heat. Parts of Roxbury experience hotter and longer heat events, with daytime (101°F) and nighttime (82.8°F) median temperatures above the city's median (99.5°F and 81.9°F, respectively).³

Budget Spotlight

By selecting larger trees for immediate impact, *Crosstown Center* had to consider increased costs for planting and maintenance, such as more mulch and stronger installation machinery. This project also budgeted for a tree contractor rather than planting the trees themselves.

Site Preparation

- Removed existing grass after calling DigSafe to finalize planting locations.
- De-compacted and remediated the existing soils.
- Added a protective perimeter fencing to protect large trees.

Maintenance

- Trees were watered weekly.
- Tri-annual bio-stimulant application, staking, pest control, pruning, and re-mulching.
- Inspections at the time of planting, and at 6 months, 1 year, and 2 years after time-of planting.

TIP FOR SUCCESSFUL TREE PLANTING

Larger caliper trees were planted along the major roadway to ensure long-term resilience and to make a strong visual statement.

“The recent planting will help mitigate the area's significant heat island effect and will provide a more comfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists passing through the area.”

Elena Saporta, Member, FMCB

Fall 2025 Pre-Planting



Spring 2026 Post-Planting



For more information, contact bostontreealliance@massaudubon.org.



MAPLE STREET FOOD FOREST

BOSTON FOOD FOREST COALITION



In **2024**, the Boston Food Forest Coalition (BFFC) was awarded **\$25,000** to plant **13 trees** for the *Maple Street Food Forest*. The BFFC procured and transformed a vacant lot into a productive food forest, which is open to the surrounding community to access fresh food. The food forest was designed, implemented, and continues to be maintained by BFFC staff to provide free produce.

Organization Profile

The Boston Food Forest Coalition (BFFC) is a non-profit that focuses on reducing Boston's food deserts by creating productive garden spaces that grow a variety of fruiting and edible trees and shrubs.

Neighborhood Context: Roxbury

Roxbury has the 7th largest neighborhood tree canopy coverage in Boston - in terms of percent coverage of land area (26%, almost 500 acres) - and has seen about 5 acres of tree canopy added between 2019 and 2024.⁷ Franklin Park accounts for 80% of Roxbury's park space acreage, with the rest of the neighborhood outside of the park only containing 6% park space, which is far below the city average of 23%. Although Franklin Park's impervious surfaces, open spaces, and large tree canopy provide a cooling effect, the concentration of green space in Roxbury means that many areas of the neighborhood further away from the park are disproportionately hot.³

TIP FOR SUCCESSFUL TREE PLANTING

Through integrating the organization's mission with community needs and desires, the Boston Food Forest Coalition gains volunteer help from local community members, which lead to the success of this green space.

Budget Spotlight

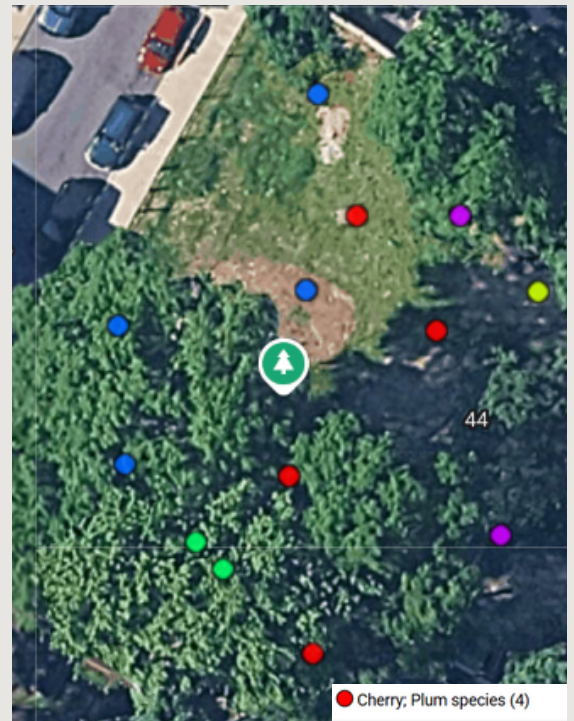
The BFFC spent half of its budget preparing the planting beds and the other half hiring a professional landscape crew to plant the trees. Preparing the planting beds included adding compost, removing big roots and stones, and adding soil. In addition to the BTA grant, this project tapped funding from multiple sources.

Site Preparation

- Transformed a whole parcel from a vacant lot to a fully immersive food forest with the help of a contractor.
- Kept existing trees on the site to provide shade for tree species that prefer part- to full-shade.

Maintenance

- Staff maintained trees through watering, pruning, mulching, composting, and weeding.
- Community volunteer events were held regularly at the food forest site to aid in harvesting food as well as general garden maintenance.



Learn more about food forests at bostonfoodforest.org.



LET'S ADD MORE TREES IN EASTIE!



Between **2024 and 2026**, Tree Eastie was awarded **\$75,000** to plant **180 trees** for *Let's Add More Trees in Eastie!*. Having received multiple BTA grants, Tree Eastie was able to expand its tree planting efforts to more residents, churches, and businesses in East Boston. Due to limited staff capacity, Tree Eastie relied on trained volunteers to plant and care for these trees to help increase their chance of survival.

Organization Profile

Tree Eastie is a community-based and volunteer-run organization dedicated to increasing East Boston's tree canopy. By working on a local-level and training property owners to care for their own trees, Tree Eastie has been able to bolster community support and expand their reach to different property types.

Neighborhood Context: East Boston

While the waterfront areas of East Boston are cooled through coastal breezes, inland communities face temperatures above the neighborhood median.³ However, between 2019 and 2024, East Boston had one of the largest gains in percent tree canopy: from 7% to 15%, nearly 250 acres.⁷

“We will reach 1,000 trees planted this fall, nearly 200 of which utilized BTA funds, and with each tree we plant, East Boston becomes a healthier, climate-resilient community.”

Liam Dunne, Yard Tree Coordinator, Tree Eastie

Budget Spotlight

The majority of *Let's Add More Trees in Eastie!*'s budget was spent on tree stock and supplies. Tree planting materials included stakes, waterbags, arbor ties, mulch, tools, and soil amendments.

Site Preparation

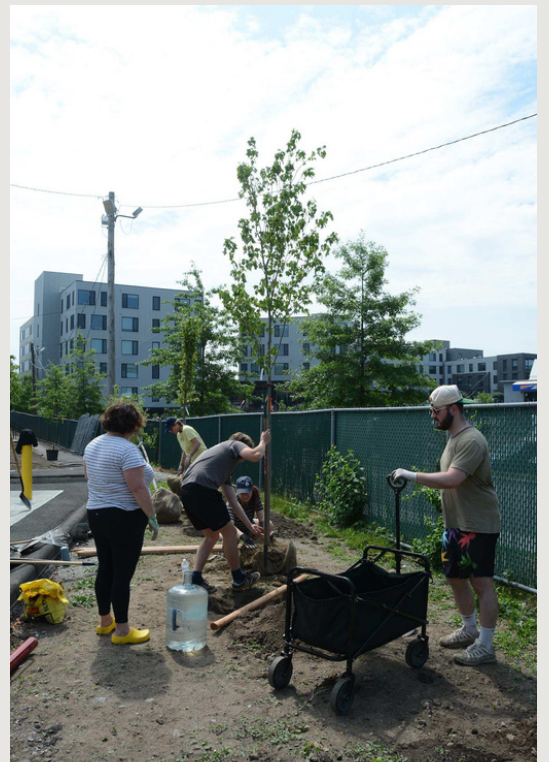
- Removed existing turf.
- De-compacted soil and added compost to improve its conditions.
- Called DigSafe and dug appropriately sized holes.

Maintenance

- Trees were given watering bags.
- Landowners were given detailed instructions on keeping their trees watered and mulched.
- Trees were inspected by Tree Eastie staff and volunteers.



Learn more at treeeastie.org.



Volunteers worked together to prepare the site and plant trees.



THOREAU PATH TREE PLANTING

WE TREE BOSTON

Between **2024 and 2025**, WE Tree Boston was awarded **\$41,000** to plant **22 trees** for the *Thoreau Path Tree Planting*. Located in the heart of the West End, WE Tree Boston has been working to replant trees along the century-old Thoreau Path. WE Tree Boston partnered with community volunteers and property owners to identify gaps in the canopy and plant diverse species that were maintained by volunteers.

Organization Profile

WE Tree Boston is a community organization created to protect the trees of the West End's Thoreau Path and plant new trees where old ones were “lost.”

Neighborhood Context: West End

In the early 19th century, land from Beacon Hill was used to fill-in parts of the Shawmut Peninsula to build the West End, in a process known as land reclamation.⁸ The Thoreau Path is a collection of over 200 sixty-year-old trees created in the late 20th century as a green space among the newly built mixed-use development high-rise buildings. However, parts of the path are undercanopied due to mismanagement and development.

“ We have received a wonderful response from neighbors, commuters, and health care workers thanking us for increasing the tree canopy and making this space so much greener! ”

Cathy and Tom Griffen, Co-Founders, WE Tree Boston

Budget Highlight

As volunteers donate their time to plant the trees, WE Tree Boston focused on dispersing their grant towards site preparation and planting materials. Because the Thoreau Path has Level 1 arboretum status - a title that can only be granted once at least 25 different species are present and labeled - WE Tree Boston focused on purchasing a diverse array of different tree species with the funding.

Site Preparation

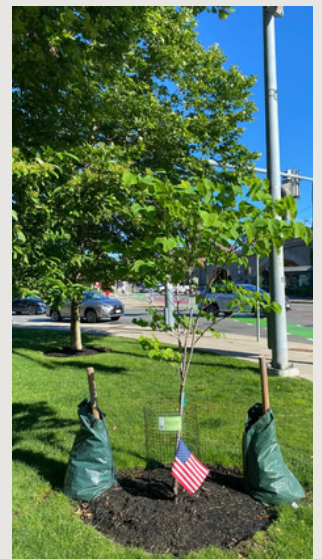
- Removed existing turf where present.
- De-compacted soil.
- Called DigSafe before appropriately sized holes were dug to accommodate root ball size.

Maintenance

- Volunteers could sign up to be trained on tree watering.
- Watering sheds were placed with land-owner permission near new tree sites to ease watering demands on volunteers

TIP FOR SUCCESSFUL TREE PLANTING

With the permission of surrounding landowners, WE Tree Boston was able to place storage sheds in areas where trees were planted to hold watering carts supplies. This helped volunteers with watering tasks to help the trees establish.



Learn more at wetreeboston.org.



NESSSEL WAY TREE PROJECT

LONGWOOD COLLECTIVE  Longwood
collective

In **2025**, the Longwood Collective was awarded **\$25,000** to plant **2 trees** for the *Nessel Way Tree Project*. To further district-scale climate resilience goals in Longwood, the Longwood Collective conducted extensive site preparation in efforts to increase tree canopy in a highly paved area. Local contractors were hired to add two new tree pits and plant shade trees.

Organization Profile

The Longwood Collective is a non-profit organization that aims to improve all conditions around the Longwood district for the benefits of hospital staff, researchers, and patients.

Neighborhood Context: Longwood

Longwood is one of the city's busiest and most densely populated districts, seeing more than 100,000 people moving daily within its boundaries to access its hospitals, universities, businesses, and cultural institutions.⁵ With a particular community focus on public health, increasing and protecting the tree canopy in this area is a vital public health strategy, because it helps improve air quality and reduces the felt impacts of heat to pedestrians. The Fenway/Longwood area contains 20% tree canopy, a little over 125 acres, and has seen modest growth in its tree canopy of 8 acres in the last five years.⁷

TIP FOR SUCCESSFUL TREE PLANTING

By de-paving an area that was previously impervious surface, the Longwood Collective was able to increase tree canopy in a space that was not previously plantable.

Budget Highlight

Since the *Nessel Way Tree Project* required de-paving the concrete sidewalk to make tree wells, removing sub soil, and backfilling the holes with fresh soil and fertilizer, more than half of the budget was spent on site preparation and tree planting. An additional big budget item is weekly watering from a water truck.

Site Preparation

- Called DigSafe to ensure no utilities would be impacted by the digging of new tree wells.
- Contractors removed sections of concrete sidewalks.
- Dug out two new wells and filled them with structural soil.

Maintenance

- Local contractor team filled watering bags weekly, due to the trees' larger size when planted.
- Stakes and arbor ties were installed to help keep the trees upright against heavy winds.



Learn more at longwoodcollective.org.

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