

Chapter Six: Overcoming Barriers to Urban Greening





Introduction to Urban Forestry Barriers

Cities across the country are rapidly losing their canopy cover when we need it the most. Many social, political, and physical barriers increase the difficulty of actually getting trees into the ground and ensuring they survive. As we learned, many utility and spacing guidelines influence tree species and location selection. Here we are going to highlight a variety of other barriers which may complicate urban greening in your neighborhood. These hurdles can boil down to issues of accessibility:

- 1 Financial Accessibility:**
Who has the funding care for trees? Who has the time to care for trees?
- 2 Physical Accessibility:**
Who has the physical ability to plant, water, and maintain a healthy tree in their street or yard?
- 3 Social Accessibility:**
How have historic and systemic disinvestment or lack of equitable access to city resources created barriers to increasing tree canopy? What demographics are urban greening organizations targeting, and in which languages are outreach materials available?

While these barriers can pose real life challenges, many stem from community perceptions and can be addressed through holding conversations and listening to and advocating for your community.



FINANCIAL ACCESSIBILITY

Some Angelenos are reluctant to plant trees because of the perception that watering and establishment costs of tree planting and tree care are high. While trees do require some investment, we often find that the perceived dollar amount keeps people from adopting a tree who might actually want one. However, the actual cost of watering a tree is much lower than what most folks think, especially when compared to other landscaping being replaced such as turfgrass, and a tree that shades a home or business can actually help community members save on utility costs and medical bills¹. Long-term maintenance costs can be reduced by choosing the right tree for the right place, and can be offset by increases in property value and along with the other benefits.

1. Many non-profits receive state grants to fund tree care - reach out to KYCC and City Plants to learn more about how to receive these funds.



Financial Benefits

Fortunately, it's easy to calculate the specific benefits of planting the right tree in the right place for the right reason. Check out the free tool MyTree at itreetools.org for estimations based on USDA Forest Service research.

MyTree Benefits	
Imaginary Tree: Coastal live oak, (<i>Quercus agrifolia</i>)	
Serving Size: 32.00 in. diameter	
Condition: Excellent	
Total benefits for this year: \$55.44	
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Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) Sequestered	\$21.76
Annual CO ₂ equivalent of carbon ¹	935.68 lbs
Storm Water Runoff Avoided	\$2.77
Runoff Avoided	309.63 gal
Rainfall Intercepted	2,102.29 gal
Air Pollution Removed Each Year	\$16.66
Carbon Monoxide	1.44 oz
Ozone	40.9 oz
Nitrogen Dioxide	10.24 oz
Sulfur Dioxide	0.72 oz
PM _{2.5}	0.46 oz
Energy Usage Per Year²	\$13.46
Electricity Savings (A/C)	71.15 kWh
Fuel Savings (natural gas, oil)	-0.09 MMBtu
Avoided Energy Emissions	\$0.78
Carbon Dioxide	33.68 lbs
Carbon Monoxide	0.62 oz

Annual Benefits Calculated Include...

- Electricity savings (kilowatt hours by air conditioning)
- Sequestered carbon dioxide
- Avoided storm water runoff
- Air pollution removed

This is a tool you can use to help others calculate the monetary benefits of their piece of the urban forest. Small investments in tree care today can help cut the cost of utility bills and create a more climate resilient Los Angeles for generations to come.

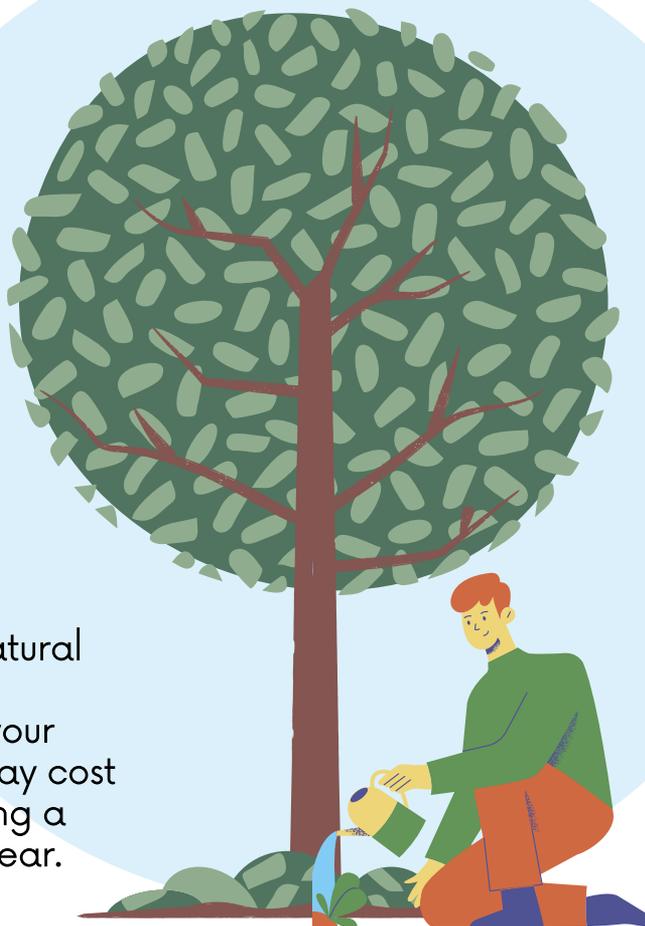
Precieved Costs of Trees

Planting the Tree.

Some people may be unaware we provide free tree adoption, planting, events and delivery services.

Watering.

Water is a precious natural resource in Southern California. Watering your tree takes time and may cost money. Luckily, watering a tree only costs \$10 a year.



Tree Care

In addition to watering your tree, caretakers must prune and mulch their trees. This takes time and energy. Hiring professionals must be costly. There are grants to help with this! Ask your program lead to elaborate if interested.

Renters and Green Gentrification

With more than half of all Angelenos renting their home, urban greening efforts face an interesting hurdle: protecting communities from green gentrification. Research has shown that the threat of green gentrification is real in many cities, and it can lead to the displacement of longtime residents - the very folks that you may be engaging in your planting efforts.

2. **Green Gentrification:** a process in which cleaning up pollution or providing green amenities increases local property values and attracts wealthier residents to a previously polluted or disenfranchised neighborhood.

Strategies to Combat Displacement

The risks of green gentrification are serious, and we should keep this in mind when engaging communities around trees. Some anti-displacement policies and program recommendations include:

1 Tenant Protections

such as rent stabilization, just cause eviction policies, tenant buyout regulation, code enforcement, tenant education and outreach, and right to counsel in eviction proceedings.

2 Land Use and Housing Policies

such as zoning for affordable housing development and affordable housing incentives.

3 Aligning Funding with Equitable Outcomes

such as funding eligibility and project selection, value capture reports and application of civil rights laws

4 Enhancing Economic Opportunities

such as preserving existing small businesses, targeting local hires and paying a living wage.

5 Community Engagement and Ownership

such as language accessibility, strengthening community knowledge and skills, and partnership with community based organizations

Luckily, smaller greening projects such as linear tree plantings can democratize access to green space by creating less grandiose but still important opportunities to connect with green spaces, especially in neighborhoods that lack green space.



PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

It is important to take into consideration the diversity of physical abilities within your community. Remember to keep in mind your elderly and differently abled neighbors who may find watering and caring for trees to be difficult.

One's physical ability to water or prune a tree should not prevent them from receiving the financial and health benefits of a healthy urban forest.

Here are some examples for how to lend a helping hand to those who need and **want** it:

Assist.

Ask your neighbor if they need physical assistance planting or caring for the tree.

Advocate.

Advocate to local governments to increase accessibility throughout the City.

Navigate.

Assist neighbors navigate online registration for tree adoptions and city permitting for tree care.

Make Space.

Use your position as a community leader to make space for and to amplify the voices and experiences of those in your community.

Encourage.

Encourage social inclusion and ensure your community outreach is accessible to all members of your community.



Community support systems give us a sense of belonging and a space to take care of one another. Please be mindful and respectful of each individual's ability to advocate for themselves.



SOCIAL ACCESSIBILITY LANGUAGE

Los Angeles is a large metropolitan city full of diverse communities just like your own! There are almost four million Angelenos with at least 30 percent of our population being Spanish speakers (US Census 2020). Unfortunately many municipal amenities across the City are only available in English. Limited language capacities target certain demographics while neglecting others. More often than not, this messaging is designed for affluent, white neighborhoods, continuing the disinvestment legacy of Redlining.

We know that to gather representative community feedback and create equal access to a healthy urban forest, we need to meet people where they are - and that means communicating with people in their preferred language. Multilingual outreach materials and representation of our diverse communities are the first steps in increasing the accessibility of urban greening efforts within our City. Integrating a multitude of languages can create cross-cultural connections for a climate resilient Los Angeles.

Established Culture

Sometimes people may be hesitant to participate in new activities without a push or an incentive. If there isn't already an urban greening culture within your neighborhood, you may find that not too many people will grab the nearest shovel to join your planting event. Don't let this deter you! You are leading the change, and that can take patience and persistence. Your presence and willingness to hold dialogue and create space to talk about the needs of your community are the first steps towards creating change.

To address this stagnation, determine the cultural value of trees in your community. How do the needs and concerns of your community connect to local green spaces? Oftentimes, people use parks and local green spaces to come together and hold community events. Whether you are celebrating a quinceañera in a local park, hosting a summer barbeque in your backyard, or going for a jog down the street, green spaces make our neighborhoods more liveable. Next time you meet with your friends or neighbors in an outdoor space, ask them what trees mean to them.



Perceptions of Trees

Sometimes it takes just one bad experience to ruin a person’s perception of the urban forest. While we have previously talked about the net positive experiences with trees, it is also important to recognize that the wrong tree in the wrong place for the wrong reason can leave community members feeling frustrated. Here are some examples of connotations and the negative experiences which created them:

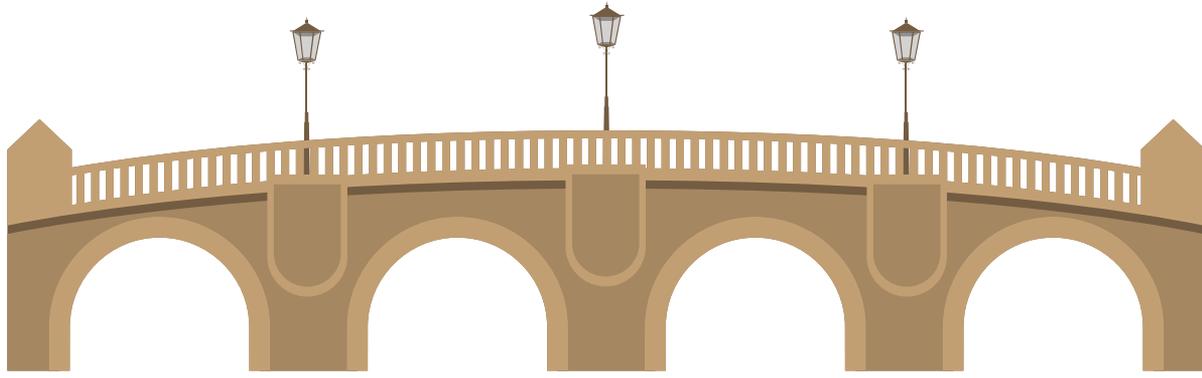
Preception	Negative Experience	Communal Value
Dangerous	Trees can provide cover for felons to hide.	Safety
Expensive	Large tree species with extensive root systems led to busted pipes inside of their home and lifted sidewalks in front of their house.	Fiscal Responsibility
Allergies	Spring is beautiful, but it's also a key time of year for seasonal allergies. As plants release pollen, people with allergies sniffle and sneeze.	Public Health
Messy	Dropped leaves, flowers and fruit may create a mess in your yard. Birds resting in branches above your car may cover your parked car in bird poop.	Neighborhood Aesthetics

Remember these perceptions are based upon real, lived experiences and offer insight into community values. For example, someone who does not want to plant a tree due to leaf litter clearly cares about the aesthetic of their home and may benefit from adopting an evergreen rather than deciduous tree.

When speaking with people with negative experiences with trees, listen to their concerns and validate their experiences. Everyone in your neighborhood deserves to be heard.



BUILDING BRIDGES



Urban forestry patterns across California reveal that underserved cities and neighborhoods correlate with socioeconomic status. In many communities, the historic trauma imposed by redlining and other racist policies has led to a mistrust of government. In some cases, the perceived correlation between canopy cover and crime has led to the removal of trees to facilitate an increased presence of police surveillance in neighborhoods of color, when in actual fact, research shows that more trees can improve neighborhood safety by eliminating precursors to violence. These misperceptions can influence members of your community to be hesitant to join urban forestry movements or agree to plant and care for a tree.

Overcoming centuries of discriminatory urban planning and investment decisions cannot be done overnight. Rectifying the current socio-political landscape of Los Angeles requires deliberate and concerted actions. As a Tree Ambassador, your goal is to foster connections between your community and the urban forest.

Rather than leading with what we—or you—may believe to be the most important reason to support urban greening, we suggest creating the space for a collective and co-managed approach that meets communities' needs first and allows for a discovery process for the role that greening the neighborhood might offer.

Organizing Conversations

Developing Your Pitch

One of the most important parts of outreach is developing your pitch. Your pitch is how you draw people in and have them engage with your work. First, think of a central issue that trees are a solution to. Is it extreme heat? Clean air? Climate change? By starting with the problem, we can emphasize the importance of trees and make clear their benefits. Here's an example of a pitch. Using this sample script as a guide, start developing your own pitch.

Central Issue: Extreme Heat



Introduce yourself and your role

"Hi my name is [your name] and I'm a Tree Ambassador with [organization name] trying to get free trees in our community"



Ask a "yes" question that helps set up a problem

"Have you noticed how it's been getting hotter during the summers over the last few years?"



Expand on the problem and make clear its consequences

"I've definitely noticed this as well and it's something that really concerns me and my family because of all the studies that have come out recently about how extreme heat impacts our health.



Connect the solution

"We can protect our communities by planting and caring for trees — The good news is that we are working to bring more shade to our community"



Present your ask and question

"That's why I'm here looking for thoughtful and incredible community members like you to adopt and care for a tree so that we can address this problem together. Would you or someone you know be interested in adopting a tree?"

A GREENER FUTURE FOR LA

The Griffith Park
Composting Facility

TREE ADOPTION

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FREE
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Roleplaying is a great way to practice.

Grab a friend, family member, or fellow Tree Ambassador and practice how you might talk with your neighbors about the Tree Ambassador program.

Affirm, Answer, Redirect

Sometimes when people will bring up a lot of tough questions and perspectives that might take the conversation off track and distract from your goals. Affirm - Answer - Redirect is a good way to make sure the person you're talking to feels like you have heard and addressed their concerns while getting back to why you're talking in the first place.

- Affirm: Let them know you're listening, you understand, and their feelings are valid.
- Answer: Address questions to the best of your ability.
- Redirect: But once you've answered the question, don't get bogged down in too much back-and-forth about it. Instead, be ready with a question that brings the conversation back to your message and points

Not everyone will say "yes"

But even the "nos" will tell you something about the person you're talking to. What underlying value does each refusal communicate? How could you use "Affirm-Answer-Redirect" to guide conversations using the scenarios presented below?

- "Trees create litter in the community" (e.g. leaves)
- "Watering trees is too expensive"
- "Trees lift sidewalks or disrupt water lines"
- "Trees create cover for crime"
- "Taking care of a tree takes too much time"
- "I'm scared of falling branches and falling trees"
- "Trees obstruct views and block sunlight"

What are some other scenarios that you've encountered or that you think you may encounter? Feel free to reach out to your program leads, your fellow Tree Ambassadors to brainstorm scenarios and potential solutions together.

If you ever encounter any problems in the field that make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, be sure to let your program leads know immediately.



Building relationships within your community includes holding conversations and making sure to **listen** to your neighbors. Engaging with your community is a two way street which requires respect, honesty, and trust.

Try volunteering at non-urban greening events within your neighborhood such as local food drives and non-profit fundraisers. Here you'll meet passionate individuals who are already dialed into the social network of your community. Speak with them to learn about the success of their volunteer efforts and gauge opportunities to grow in your capacity to be a Tree Ambassador.

Through dialogue, you can begin to learn common communal values and begin to highlight tree benefits which most align with these values. Your outreach should build long lasting connections which extend beyond the physical tree and tap into existing neighborhood assets.





**Your city. Your voice. Your urban forest.
Tu voz. Tu ciudad. Tu bosque urbano.**