




SPEAK FOR THE TREES  
Boston

**2021 Annual Report**







**2021 was a roller-coaster of a year — with vaccine roll-outs providing a sense of respite followed by new variants and continued COVID spread. Much like a young sapling, at Speak for the Trees, Boston, we have adapted and grown, reaching for the rays of sunlight through partnerships and programs while also grounding our work in the nurturing soil of community.**

In our 2021 report we share with you some of the highlights of our work to grow tree equity — the notion that everyone deserves the economic, health, environmental, and social benefits of trees — in Boston. From tree plantings to teen learning, from story sharing to map making, we have continued to educate, advocate, and engage residents, youth, leaders, and neighborhoods in seeing and valuing their community forests.

Perhaps most importantly, however, our work continues to focus on bringing people together to see not only the trees in our neighborhoods, but each other and our shared humanity. And for that, we thank you all for joining us in our mission to build a more equitable Boston.



**David Meshoulam, PhD**  
Executive Director & Co-Founder



# Growing Tree Equity in 2021

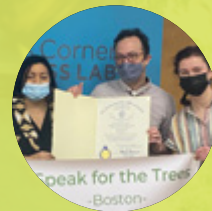
## 2021 Highlights



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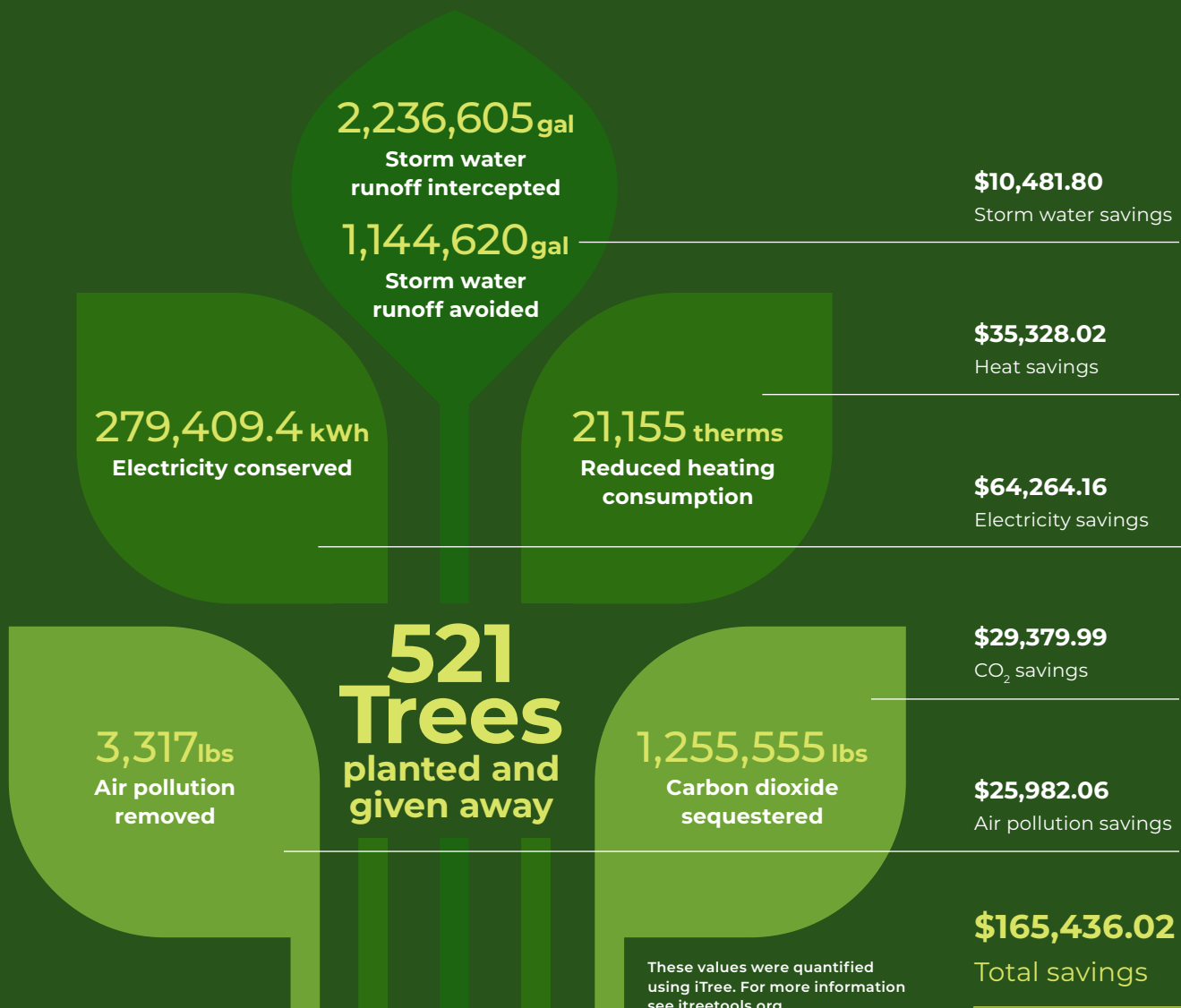
## Looking Ahead



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**Rooting**  
Tree Equity into  
Boston's Future

# Committing to Tree Equity with Residents

At the core of our work is a commitment to improve residents' lives through trees. In 2021, we planted dozens of trees and gave away hundreds more. Over the next 20 years these trees will provide these benefits:





# Plantings

The simple act of planting a tree brings people together to build stronger and more resilient communities. In 2021, dozens of residents joined together to plant trees in Roxbury, Mattapan, Dorchester, and Hyde Park. As these trees mature, they will provide environmental, social, economic, and health benefits for decades to come.



## Giveaways

Private yards are some of the best places for trees to grow. In 2021 we gave away hundreds of trees, among them black tupelos, eastern redbuds, and trident maples. Our giveaway events not only teach residents how to plant and care for their trees, but just as importantly bring people together to learn, build stronger communities, and celebrate Boston's neighborhoods.

# Teaching Tree Equity to Youth

Since 2019, our Teen Urban Tree Corps (TUTC) program has provided Boston youth with opportunities to learn about trees and become environmental leaders. This year 15 teens joined our summer program and we rolled out a school year program.

## Teen Urban Tree Corps



### Summer Program

In the third year of our TUTC program, 15 Boston teens learned about and explored the importance of Boston's urban forest in building an equitable and resilient city. They climbed trees, learned how to prune, and developed planting plans for their community.

### School Year Program

In November we kicked off our inaugural TUTC school year program. A group of six teens continued to learn more about the field of urban forestry as they aimed to actualize their planting plans in the spring.







### Sammi Huang

“When I first joined the Teen Urban Tree Corps three years ago I did not think I’d learn so much about urban forestry and arboriculture... The program has allowed me to learn more about the City’s trees and also share what I’ve learned with the community. I’ve had the opportunity to meet Mayor Michelle Wu, U.S. Representative Ayanna Pressley, and City Councilor at-large Annissa Essaibi George, to name just a few. The TUTC program has been a great place for me to learn more about the issues of today and how I can help, and is a great program overall in uplifting youth voices.”



### Skylar Stadhard

“Over this past year I’ve felt that the Teen Urban Tree Corps has really opened my eyes to many aspects of the environment in Boston. I feel that I have always subconsciously noticed how some neighborhoods have more trees than others but I had never realized that I could work to change that. Being able to learn about environmental justice, climate change, tree species, and more has allowed me to be more aware of my surroundings and has allowed me to think of ways that we can make a change. TUTC will help Boston as a whole in the future when it comes to actions against climate change and the addition of trees to our city.”

“I learned about the heat island effect, climate justice, red-lining, tree ID, and soil compaction from the TUTC program. The program changed my perception of climate change as something that will affect certain people more than others and changed my perception of how to stop it.”

—TUTC youth participant

# Bringing Tree Equity to Neighborhoods

Neighborhood trees not only provide immense environmental and health benefits, but they are also the backbone of strong and resilient communities. In 2021 we partnered with local community groups and residents to advocate for the preservation of their community forests and developed programs to help them care for their neighborhood trees.

We have worked across the city, developing programs and partnerships with local groups and organizations. This map highlights our projects and work city-wide.

## Key

-  Tree planting
-  Tree giveaway
-  Tree adoption
-  Tree advocacy
-  Teen participant







## Advocacy

Mature trees are irreplaceable. Over the past year, we have partnered with community groups to raise awareness about the threats facing local trees. We have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with residents in Lower Roxbury and Hyde Park calling for the preservation of mature trees.

We also provided testimony regarding tree planting and care and workforce development. At the State level, we spoke about the need to update Chapter 87, the Public Shade Tree Law, and advocated for the passage of The Municipal Reforestation Program to increase funding for tree plantings across Massachusetts. In Boston, we testified in support of the City's Youth Conservation Corps and provided feedback on a proposed tree ordinance.

## Adopt-A-Tree

Newly planted street trees require care and stewardship to survive and thrive. Working in partnership with undergraduate students at Northeastern University and residents affiliated with Tree Eastie and The Ellis Neighborhood Association, we have created Boston's first Adopt-A-Tree map. This interactive online tool allows residents to care for a neighborhood tree throughout the year, building a healthier and more resilient forest.



### Adopt Me! ¡Adóptame!

The Adopt-a-Tree program allows you to care for a newly planted tree near you. By adopting a tree, you help it survive and grow big and healthy.

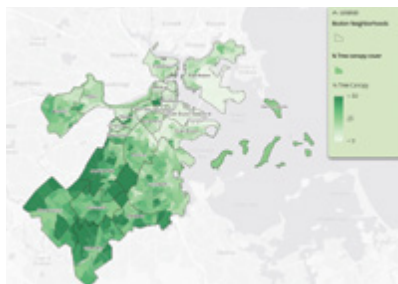
El programa Adopta-un-Árbol te deja cuidar un árbol recién plantado cerca de ti. Al adoptar un árbol, lo ayuda a sobrevivir y crecer grande y saludable.

#AdoptATreeBoston  
[treeboston.org/adopt](https://treeboston.org/adopt)



# Exploring Tree Equity Through Maps & Stories

The distribution of tree canopy in Boston is uneven. Our Tree Equity storymap, created by Boston University graduate student and URBAN trainee Raquel Jimenez, clearly show these inequities by mapping data about tree canopy, environment, and demographics. These maps provide us with information that allow us to target our plantings to maximize the benefits of trees for residents and neighborhoods.

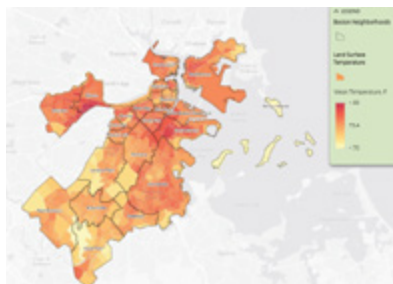


## Tree Canopy Maps

The distribution of trees in Boston ranges from 5% in some neighborhoods to over 50% in others. These maps provide details from the census block level down to the individual tree level, highlighting the ways in which Boston's canopy is uneven.



View  
canopy  
maps

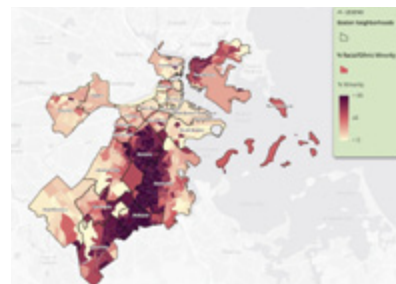


## Environment Maps

Areas with fewer trees tend to have hotter summer temperatures and dirtier air. Our temperature map provides detail on the average land surface temperature during the summer and our air pollution map shows the concentration of particulate matter in the air.



View  
environment  
maps



## Demographic Maps

Boston is a diverse and segregated city. Our demographic maps show the distribution of people according to race, language isolation, income, age, and density. Many of these factors are used by the Commonwealth to define environmental justice neighborhoods.



View  
demographic  
maps



Trees connect us to our neighborhoods, to each other, and to ourselves. Through a series of videos, we have begun to explore and share stories about the importance of trees in Boston.



Watch  
Paula's  
story

"The neighbors love the fact that we have this urban forest because it provides a coolness to our area."

"Our alley, which was like a jungle back in the day... had its own microclimate. You would come in the summer and turn into the alleyway and the air would change. It would be cooler and smell differently. It was really just always a pleasure to go into the alley."



Watch  
Parker's  
story

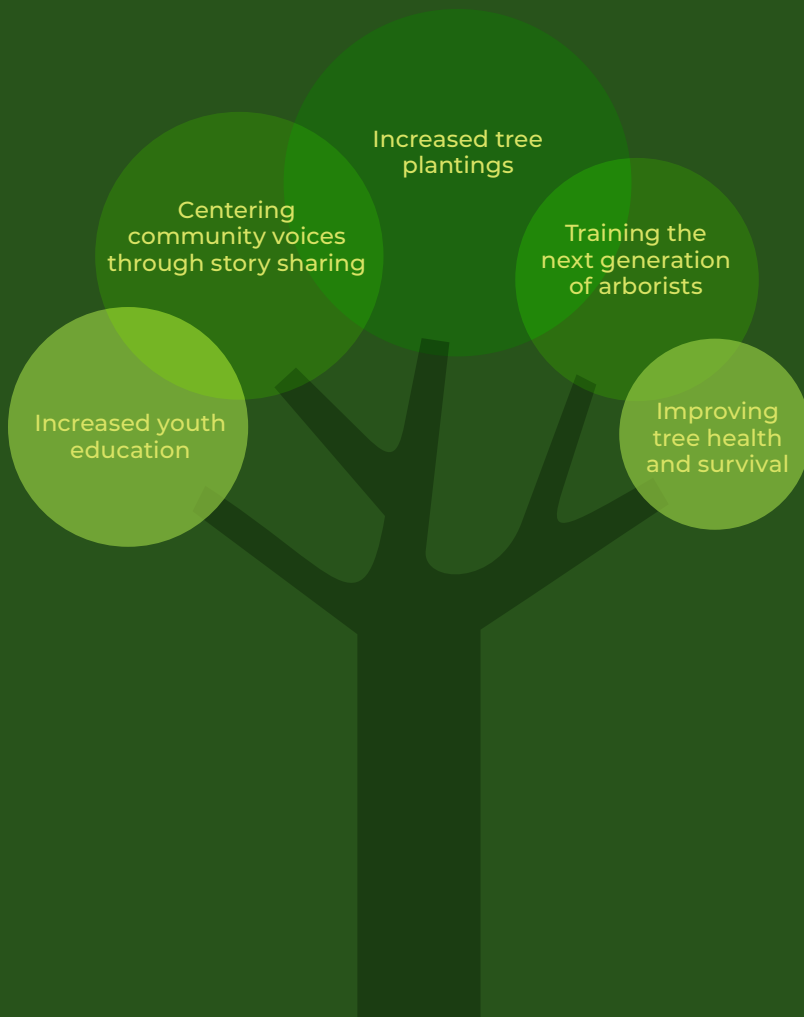


Watch  
Robin's  
story

"You can depend on [the tree], it's reassuring. When I get close to home, I see my tree from down the street. He's there. It's all good."

# Rooting Tree Equity Into Boston's Future

In four short years we've accomplished so much. But our work has just begun. Boston's forest is an asset that requires continued care, advocacy, and plantings so that it can provide more environmental, health, and economic benefits. We face a monumental challenge, but look forward to digging deeper together to build a stronger, healthier, and more resilient city.



## **Increased tree plantings**

We will continue to grow our tree planting and distribution programs through increased partnerships with residents and municipal officials.

## **Centering community voices through story sharing**

We plan to create spaces and opportunities for residents throughout the city to come together to share and hear each others' stories and hopes.

## **Training the next generation of arborists**

We aim to provide more teens and young adults with opportunities to learn about and gain skills in the tree care industry. This home-grown talent will ensure the sustainability of our forest and provide well-paying green industry jobs.

## **Increased youth education**

We will provide educational opportunities for young people across Boston to learn about the power and importance of trees, increasing awareness and empowering them to take action to support our climate.

## **Improving tree health and survival**

We will partner with residents, municipal workers, and civic leaders to create short-term actions and long-term plans that will ensure that Boston's forest not merely survives, but flourishes.



# Partnerships

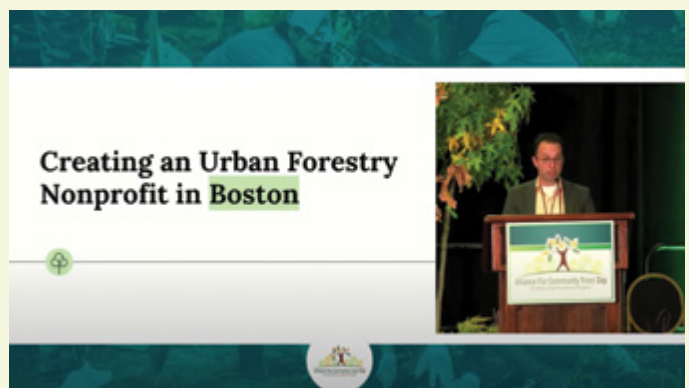
We are grateful for the partnerships we've established over the years, from community groups to national organizations. Together, we are strengthening our shared commitment to growing and sustaining Boston's urban forest.



Since 2018, American Forests has provided deep support for our work locally even as they advocate for Tree Equity nationally. In fact, we were the first urban forestry nonprofit in the U.S. to sign an Memorandum of Understanding with American Forests! We have worked closely with them on several planting projects, on tree equity tools, and on workforce development programs and continue to grow our work together as we deepen our joint commitment to bringing tree equity to Boston.

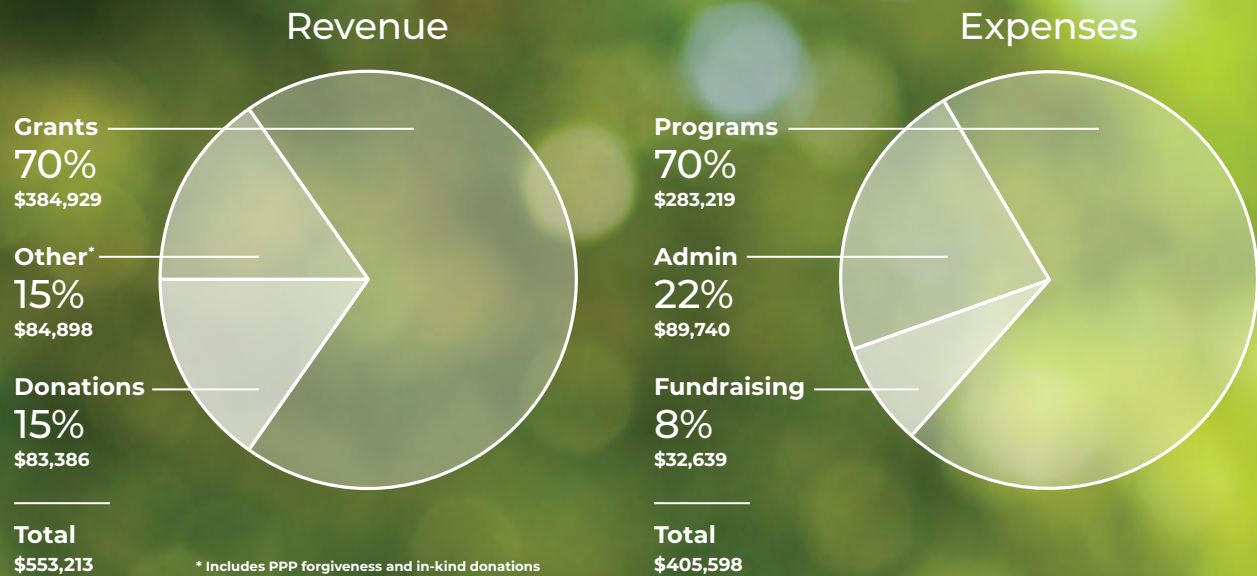


The Arbor Day Foundation and its Alliance for Community Trees network have provided Speak for the Trees with tools, resources, partnerships, and learning and networking opportunities. We have partnered with them on several giveaway and planting events and, equally importantly, have shared our work with and learned from fellow community forestry nonprofits at their annual Partners in Community Forestry annual meeting.



Watch video of David Meshoulam, PhD, Executive Director & Co-Founder, speaking at ACT day at [treeboston.org/actday](https://treeboston.org/actday).

# 2021 Financials



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**[treeboston.org/volunteer](https://treeboston.org/volunteer)**



Donate and help our organization grow

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