

# Growing Tree Equity

*Annual Report 2022*



**SPEAK FOR THE TREES**  
Boston

**In 2018, when Speak for the Trees was founded, the world was a very different place. In the past five years we witnessed a global pandemic, a reawakened national conversation around racial equity, and a deepened commitment to climate justice.**

Speak for the Trees has risen to the moment: what started off as a seed of an idea has grown into a powerful environmental nonprofit in Boston focused on racial, social, and environmental justice. As outlined in this 5-year anniversary report, since 2018 the organization has planted and distributed hundreds of trees, has learned from and collaborated with hundreds of residents, and has begun to transform how residents, developers, and elected officials think about Boston's urban forest. We are nourished by the stories we hear from residents of the power and meaning of trees in their lives and the importance of our work.

As outgoing board chair and incoming board chair, we're immensely proud of the growth of the organization. But we also recognize much work remains to ensure that Boston's urban forest grows and thrives, sustaining its residents' mental, physical, and economic well-being.

Thank you for being part of our journey,



Dr. Atyia Martin  
Outgoing Board Chair



Liz Luc Clowes  
Incoming Board Chair



## Achievements over the past **5** years:

Grown from **2** volunteer founders working in cafes to **5** employees **+3** interns **+18** teens and young adults working in an office in Dorchester



Worked across **3** mayoral administrations in the development of Boston's Urban Forest Plan, which centers equity



Created Boston's **first** Tree Equity map highlighting the relationship between people, environment, and trees



- Distributed **3,208** trees
- Planted **375** trees
- Educated **51** high schoolers and young adults
- Engaged with **thousands** of residents at giveaways, plantings, walks, and talks

*Planting a tree is an investment in the future; the impact of young trees increases each year as they grow.*



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**Partnerships and collaborations**



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**Looking to the future**



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**Building equitable, resilient communities through neighborhood trees**



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**2022 in review**





# *Growing an appreciation and love for trees and a healthy tree canopy*

**We see it at every planting and giveaway event: residents' and volunteers' eyes light up with love and appreciation for new trees. One of our core approaches to expanding Boston's tree canopy is through tree plantings and giveaways. As these trees mature, the benefits they provide will grow too.**

## **Plantings**

In partnership with the City of Boston, PowerCorpsBOS, local neighborhood groups, residents, and corporate volunteers, in 2022 we planted 112 trees in parks and streets in Dorchester, East Boston, Jamaica Plain, and Mission Hill.

## **Giveaways**

In 2022 we continued our free tree giveaway program where we gave away over 1,200 free trees for residents to plant in their yards. Among the species this year were paperbark maple, river birch, linden, tulip poplar, and Kwanzan cherry. Hundreds of people got to learn about different species, explore the benefits of trees, and gain knowledge about how to plant and care for their trees.



## In 2022

hundreds of residents  
of all ages were engaged,  
educated, and activated  
around the importance  
of urban trees.

**112** trees planted

**1,216** trees given away

**65** high school students educated

**20** community meetings hosted

## *New rings for 2023 and beyond:*

### **Tree Walks**

with residents  
to share their  
tree stories

### **Neighbor- Woods**

tree plantings  
in private  
yards

### **Tree Keepers**

to educate community  
members how to care  
for and advocate  
for their local trees





## **Harambee Park, Dorchester MA**

In partnership with the City of Boston and PowerCorpsBOS, and supported by Salesforce and American Forests, dozens of volunteers came together to plant 44 trees in Harambee Park. Ranging from eastern redbuds and black tupelos to sugar maples and dogwoods, these trees will provide spring flowers, fall foliage, and, most importantly, cooler and cleaner air, to this Dorchester park.



## **Tree Stewardship**

Perhaps you spotted a group of high-school students this summer with their watering carts and hydrant meters. As in years past, this year we welcomed 15 Boston young adults to our 6-week summer Teen Urban Tree Corps program. These participants took on a new role of caring for and watering over 200 street trees. Considering the heat and drought, the trees certainly appreciated the extra TLC!





## Branching Out into New Communities

Boston is a city of neighborhoods and we feel lucky when we are invited to work in a new one. Allston-Brighton, like many areas of the city, is a heat island. A group of residents recently banded together to form the Allston-Brighton Tree Alliance with the goal to improve their neighborhood's urban forest. In October we worked together to run a tree giveaway. We're excited to continue working with them... and every Boston neighborhood!

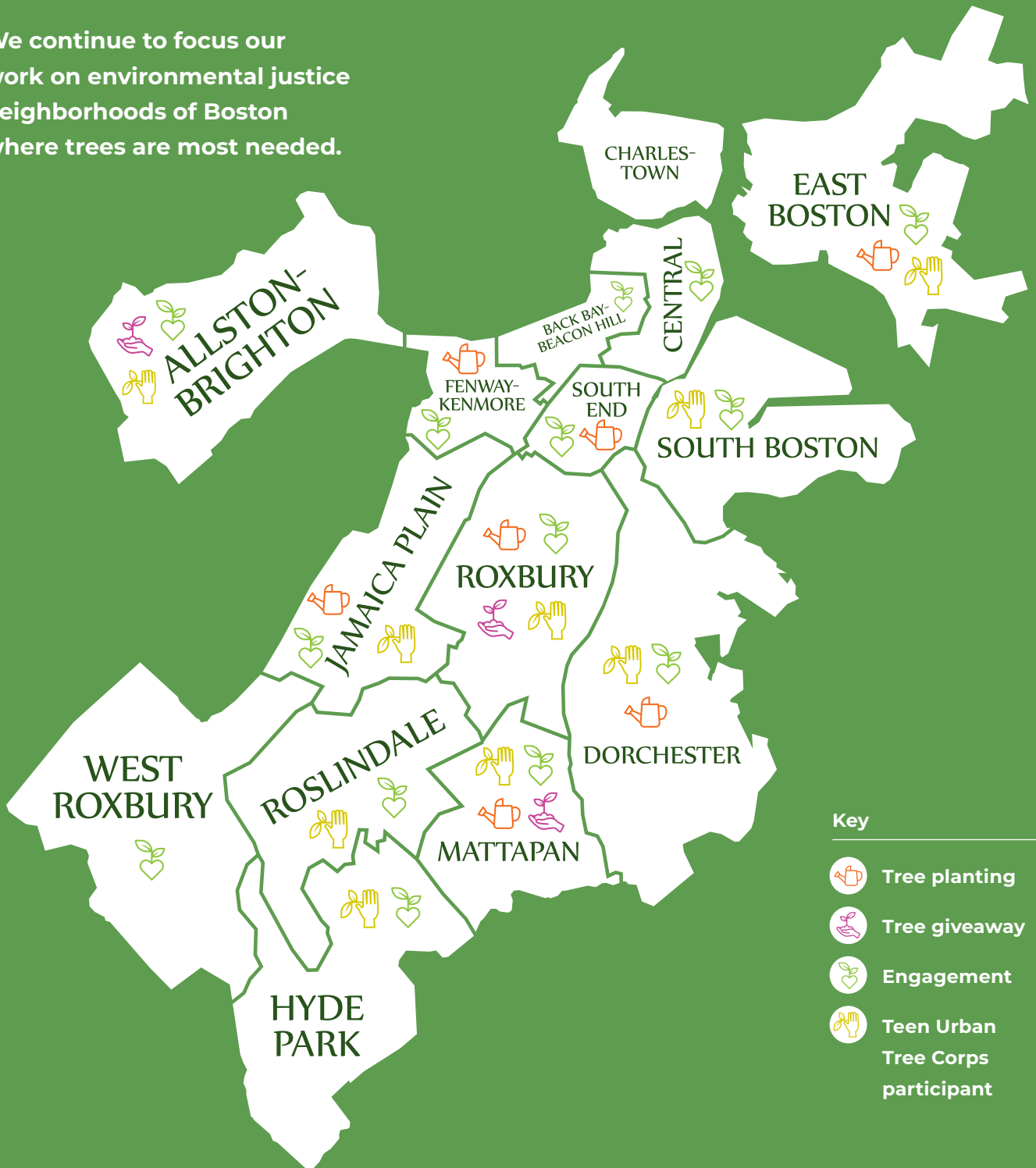


## Enrichment Programs for Children

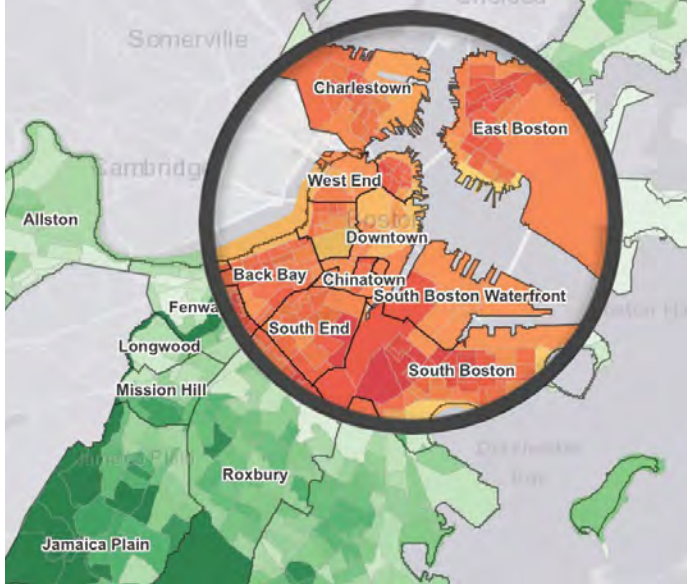
In our continued efforts to educate more Bostonians about trees, this year we piloted enrichment art and education programs for children and families. Through a series of workshops, over 150 Boston youth learned about trees through collages, mappings, and tree identification walks. We aim to continue to build out projects and activities for in-school and after-school programs so that more children can learn about and appreciate their local trees.

# Building equitable, resilient communities through neighborhood trees

We continue to focus our work on environmental justice neighborhoods of Boston where trees are most needed.







## Maps

It's not always easy to see the forest for the trees. Our tree equity maps provide a tool for residents, elected officials, and municipal workers to better understand a neighborhood's tree canopy and its relationship to people and the environment.

**View maps at [treeboston.org/tree-equity](https://treeboston.org/tree-equity)**



## Tree Outreach

We continue to hear stories about trees being removed or developers who neglect their promises for tree plantings and care. Our monthly Boston Urban Forest Friends network connects residents to resources and allies in joint efforts to preserve trees facing threats.



## Targeted Plantings

Our parcel-level tree canopy, environmental, and demographic data, along with the city's priority zones and American Forests' Tree Equity scores, allows us to target specific areas for tree planting and giveaways. These types of tools ensure that equity and justice are prioritized in all our work.

# Looking towards the future

## In an era of climate change, what does our shared future hold?

We believe in a future where every Boston resident lives in a neighborhood with a healthy and mature tree canopy—where every block has trees to keep hot summer streets shaded and cool, has leaves to capture air pollutants, and has roots to absorb rainwater and keep basements dry. We believe in a future where every Bostonian understands the importance of trees and connects to a tree in their yard or street.

Former board chair,  
Atyia Martin, giving  
remarks at the  
release of the UFP



## Boston's Urban Forest Plan

In September Boston released its first ever Urban Forest Plan, a blueprint for growing Boston's forest for decades to come. Ranging from staffing and care to planting and education, the plan calls for increased coordination, new education programs, and deepened collaboration among the government, nonprofits, the private sector, and residents.





## Community and Youth Education

Schools and community centers are places where residents gather and spend time together to learn and grow. As the Boston Public Schools begin to incorporate more environmental education, we have begun to develop activities for young people to appreciate, learn about, and celebrate trees.



## Tree Keepers Training

In 2023 we will be piloting a training program to activate residents of Boston's environmental justice communities to become Community Tree Keepers, caring and advocating for their tree canopy. Through a series of training sessions, residents will learn about the importance of trees, receive training on proper tree care, and learn how to advocate for their local urban forest.

## NeighborWoods Tree Planting

Private land makes up the majority of land in Boston, with plenty of opportunities for planting trees. In the coming years we'll be working with landowners—whether they be residents, houses of worship, or private businesses—to plant trees. We'll make sure that the right tree goes in the right place, and we'll even bring and install the tree.



## Tree Walks

In partnership with 3 community groups, we're developing a series of community-led tree walks in Mattapan, Dorchester, and East Boston. Residents will share their favorite neighborhood trees, their personal tree stories, the challenges that urban trees face, and the role of trees in building healthy and vibrant communities.



# Spreading roots and nurturing each other

Scientists have recently demonstrated that trees live in community: they share food through underground fungal networks and communicate through airborne chemicals. Just like a tree, our organization lives in community—and is nurtured by the stories, love, and partnerships we find there.

## Local Partnerships

Trees are rooted in local neighborhoods, and so are our partners. In 2022 we partnered with groups such as **Allston-Brighton Tree Alliance, Arnold Arboretum, Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation, Edgewater Neighborhood Association, Neighborhood of Affordable Housing, The Trustees of Reservations, Thornton Street Farm, Tree Eastie,** and many more!



## Boston Urban Forest Friends

Every month we convene a network of people and organizations interested in urban forestry to explore and discuss opportunities, challenges, and partnerships. We've also hosted guest speakers from the City of Boston and from across the country. And this year we held our first BUFF Symposium at the Boston Public Library, where we gathered to connect, share, and learn. We invite you to join us.

Read more at [bostonforest.com](https://bostonforest.com)

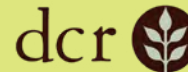


## Collaborating Partners

We continue to collaborate with national organizations such as **American Forests** and **Arbor Day Foundation**. They provide training on the latest software tools, resources related to tree species selection for climate change, connections with local partners, and, through **Alliance for Community Trees**, learning opportunities from urban forestry nonprofits across the country.

We also partner with the **US Forest Service**, the **Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation**, and the **Boston Parks and Recreation Department** to plant trees and build community around trees.

Finally, we partner with local organizations such as **College for Social Innovation** and **TerraCorps** to increase our capacity and deepen our partnerships.



City of Boston  
Parks and Recreation



## Arbor Week

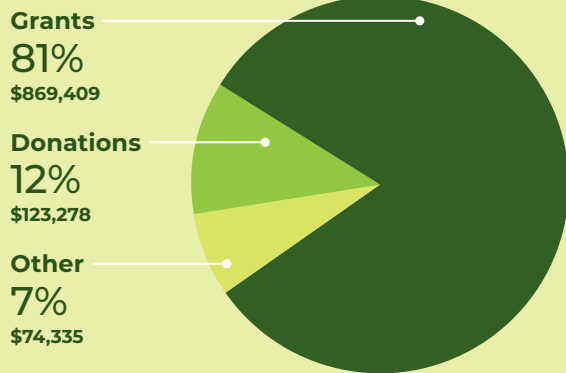
In celebration of the 50th anniversary of Arbor Day, during the last week of April we hosted a week's worth of public walks, talks, plantings, and tree giveaways throughout Boston. We engaged with hundreds of people and raised awareness about the importance of Boston's trees. We're excited to make Arbor Week an annual event.

## Celebrating Five Years

It's hard to believe, but in April, 2023, we celebrated our 5 year anniversary! To kick off the occasion, we hosted our first ever Annual Celebration in November 2022. Our forest friends gathered as we feted three of the amazing tree volunteers, advocates, and organizers from the past year: Hilani Morales, Aalana Foster, and Max Rome.

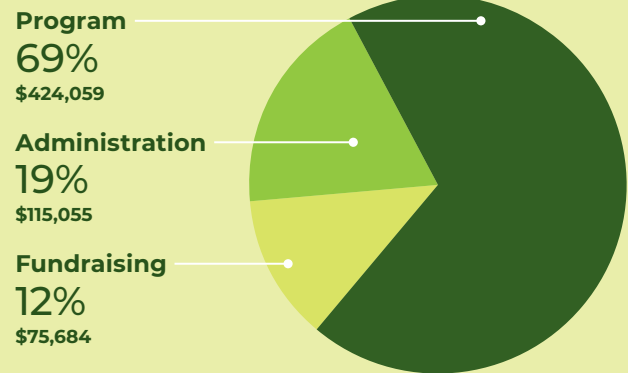
# Financials

Revenue



**Total**  
\$1,067,022

Expenses



**Total**  
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## Thank you

## to our donors!

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