



SPEAK FOR THE TREES  
Boston

# 2024 - 2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

*Guiding Our Growth*

## GROWING TOGETHER



On behalf of all of us at Speak for the Trees, Boston, we're excited to share with you our first ever strategic plan! This three-year plan charts the goals, strategies, and actions that we plan to undertake from 2024 through 2026 to sustainably grow our organization and Boston's tree canopy.

This document is the result of the hard work of dozens of people and many hours of analysis, discussion, and thought. Our team of staff, consultants, and board members interviewed over 40 individuals throughout Boston, analyzed five years of our finances, and spent hours in conversation thinking through the challenges and opportunities that the organization faces. We want to thank all of the people involved for their time, insight, and expertise.

What we learned through this process has been invaluable. It will guide what we do and how we do it so that it better represents our root values of equity and justice. One of the very first things we realized was that our mission statement did not match the ethos of our work. Through extensive discussion, we crafted a new mission statement that better captures our values and goals (see next page). The strategies and actions all flow from this vision of building, together, a stronger and more resilient tree canopy that centers residents' vision and safeguards the health and well-being of Boston's communities.

We invite you to join us in this journey over the next three years.

  
Liz Luc Clowes  
Board Chair

  
David Meshoulam  
Executive Director





*Our Journey*

## HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

Since the organization's founding in 2018, the mission and goal of the Speak for the Trees has been to grow Boston's tree canopy as a way to support social, environmental, and racial equity throughout the city.

Our original mission statement from 2018 — **to improve the size, health, and equity of the urban tree canopy in Boston, with a focus on under-resourced and under-canopied neighborhoods** — did not fully capture the values of the organization and did not center people. To guide our strategic planning process and our collective work, the staff and board worked collaboratively to reimagine the mission statement in a way that better captured the intent and focus of why, how, and for whom we do our work.

Our new mission statement now reads: **Speak for the Trees works together with Boston community members to plant, preserve, care, and advocate for trees and to expand the tree canopy in order to rebuild resilient neighborhoods and safeguard the health of all residents, repairing historic injustices that persist today as environmental inequities in urban communities.**



Our strategic priorities, listed below and described on the next spread, flow from this updated mission. They were designed for tangible impact. Your involvement and support will ensure that we can continue to preserve and expand Boston's tree canopy, foster environmental action, empower communities, and improve the lives of all residents.

### **Our Strategic Priorities**

- Programs That Make a Difference
- Partnerships for Impact
- Diverse Funding
- Holistic Operating Practices



## PROGRAMS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

### The Goal

Work collaboratively with partners to **preserve, maintain,** and **expand** the tree canopy in **low-canopy communities** by **engaging, educating,** and **empowering** residents.

### Guiding Strategies

- **Tree Canopy Growth Through Planting:** Increase tree canopy through the planting of 150 climate-appropriate trees per year and the distribution of 900 free trees per year, empowering residents to contribute to a greener city
- **Educational Programs:** Provide career exploration and lessons about urban forestry by offering age-appropriate indoor and outdoor curricula and nine place-based tree walks to Boston Public School students
- **Distributed Tree Care:** Train six youth groups by 2026 on how to properly care for trees in their communities
- **Community Engagement:** Provide ongoing and regular learning and volunteer opportunities for residents to learn about, steward, and advocate for trees in their community
- **Advocacy:** Position the organization as a leading voice in Boston for sustained and improved tree canopy coverage



## DIVERSE FUNDING

### The Goal

Increase annual revenue **to \$1.45 million** by **2026** through the development of a **sustainable, robust,** and **diverse** revenue portfolio.

### Guiding Strategies

- **Increase Unrestricted Funds:** Grow individual giving by 10% annually by deepening and increasing donor giving through fundraising campaigns, including annual appeals and fundraising events
- **Board Participation:** Increase board giving by 10% annually through engagement in development activities that ensure a collective effort in securing the necessary resources to support organizational growth
- **Strategic Communication:** Develop a robust communication system that enhances engagement with funders and fosters long-term relationships
- **Grow Government Corporate, and Foundation Grants:** Increase grants by government, corporations, and foundations by 10% annually



## PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPACT

### The Goal

Develop **mutually beneficial, collaborative, respectful, and impactful** partnerships to further **awareness** about, **sustainability** of, and **capacity** for the mission.

### Guiding Strategies

- **Increase Partnerships:** Add 15 new community partners in environmental justice neighborhoods by the end of 2026
- **Community-Centric Approach:** Center community feedback and needs and ensure that outreach is culturally and linguistically appropriate to make a meaningful impact
- **Diverse Collaborations:** Build and deepen partnerships with local and national organizations and funders by attending at least five community meetings per month
- **Strengthen Government Relationships:** Improve and maintain ties with government entities through regular communication with elected officials and municipal employees and through annual audits of organization alignment with Boston's Urban Forest Plan



## HOLISTIC OPERATING PRACTICES

### The Goal

**Create, nurture, and regenerate** operating practices and organizational structures that are **adaptable**, allow for **intentional growth**, and develop a **trusting culture** while supporting the **health and foundation** of Speak for the Trees, its programs, partnerships, and employees.

### Guiding Strategies

- **Adaptable Operations:** Create streamlined, integrated, and measurable collaboration systems rooted in organizational values of equity to ensure effectiveness and efficiency
- **Inclusive Culture:** Cultivate a culture of openness, acceptance, growth, and learning to foster success and innovation through ongoing conversations, pulse surveys, and culture audits
- **Equitable HR Systems:** Increase commitment to racial equity internally through HR systems that support staff well-being, diversity, and personal and professional growth
- **Community Representation:** Develop responsive community committees and inclusive board and staff structures that align with the mission and the needs of the communities served





## OUR MISSION AT WORK

Our work is rooted in trees, people, and community. These three components of our work nurture our city and its residents, building a more resilient future for all. Since 2018, our programs have:

### PLANTED TREES

By planting **529 trees** in parks, schools, homes, and other public spaces, distributing **1,240 trees** and **3,300 seedlings** for residents to plant in their yards,

*we have...*

...absorbed over 250 pounds of air pollutants, sequestered over 3,000 pounds of carbon, captured over 160,000 gallons of storm water, and provided decades of shade, resilience, and hope. **As these trees grow, so will their benefits!**

### ENGAGED AND EDUCATED PEOPLE

By educating **86 teens** through our Teen Urban Tree Corps programs, developing **nine lessons** to teach middle and high school students and adults about the importance of trees, and providing **19 training and education events**,

*we have...*

...provided tools and resources for **332 Boston residents** to bring back to their communities and expand our collective commitment to tree equity.

### CONNECTED COMMUNITY

By hosting over **70 free public events** as part of Arbor Week, sharing our work at **community events**, holding **6 community tree walks** to bring residents together to see and appreciate their urban forest, and gathering **145 tree advocates** through monthly **Boston Urban Forest Friends** meetings and an annual symposium,

*we have...*

...built networks and connections to support each other and build coalitions.

## Our Three-Year Strategic Plan Overview

# HOW WE GOT HERE . . .

Over the course of nine months, a core team of seven staff members, four board members, and four consultants from Empower Success Corps (ESC) met regularly to develop our three-year strategic plan. The process included three phases.

## PHASE 1: ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The first phase comprised of interviews with stakeholders, a review of finances, and an analysis of similar organizations in the area. Staff, consultants, and board members spoke with 40 individuals from dozens of organizations, neighborhoods, and city agencies.

## PHASE 2: STRATEGIC PLANNING

The core team examined emergent themes, analyzed the organization's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, developed goals, and clarified its mission statement.

## PHASE 3: ACTION PLANNING

Staff and board members were divided into four groups — Programs, Funding, Partnerships, and Operations. Each developed a set of strategies, with each strategy supported by multiple actions. Each action was then assigned to a staff member, given a start and end date, and allocated a cost.

# . . . AND (SOME OF) WHERE WE'RE HEADED



## 2024: Prep the Site



During our first year, we are working to:

- Deepen partnerships in neighborhoods and with the city
- Increase revenue to \$1.1 million
- Ensure project metrics are met
- Develop internal systems
- Hire a Finance Director
- Hire a Director of Advancement
- Increase board membership to 12

## 2025: Plant the Seedling



In the second year, we will:

- Grow partnerships across more sectors
- Deepen our focus on sustainable practices
- Explore programs that care for residents' mature trees
- Increase revenue to \$1.25 million
- Hire an Advocacy Director to guide policy work
- Create a Development Committee on the board

## 2026: Nurture the Growth

By the third year, we aim to:

- Pilot a tree care program for mature trees on private property
- Assess and fine-tune operational systems
- Increase revenue to \$1.45 million through a memberships and a major donor program
- Assess and refine programs and partnerships
- Create our next three-year strategic plan!



# THANK YOU

*A heartfelt thank you to all who helped develop this strategic plan*

## **Empower Success Corps (ESC) Consultants**

Charlie Arsenault, Jane Mann, Randy Mason, and Jon Reuman

## **Speak for the Trees**

### *Staff*

David Meshoulam, Mekhi Edge, Jerel Ferguson,  
Victoria Frothingham, MarS McCormick, and Joshua Reed

### *Contributors*

Claire Corcoran and Julia Rudolph

### *Board*

Liz Luc Clowes, Christine Araujo, Danielle Kaplan, and Tracy Sopchak

*And everyone who donated their time, suggestions, and feedback*

# CONTACT

*To learn more about our work, please reach out*

60 Clayton Street, #201 Dorchester, MA 02122

trees@treeboston.org 🌿 617-766-5015

treeboston.org 🌿 @Trees\_Boston

# DONATE

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