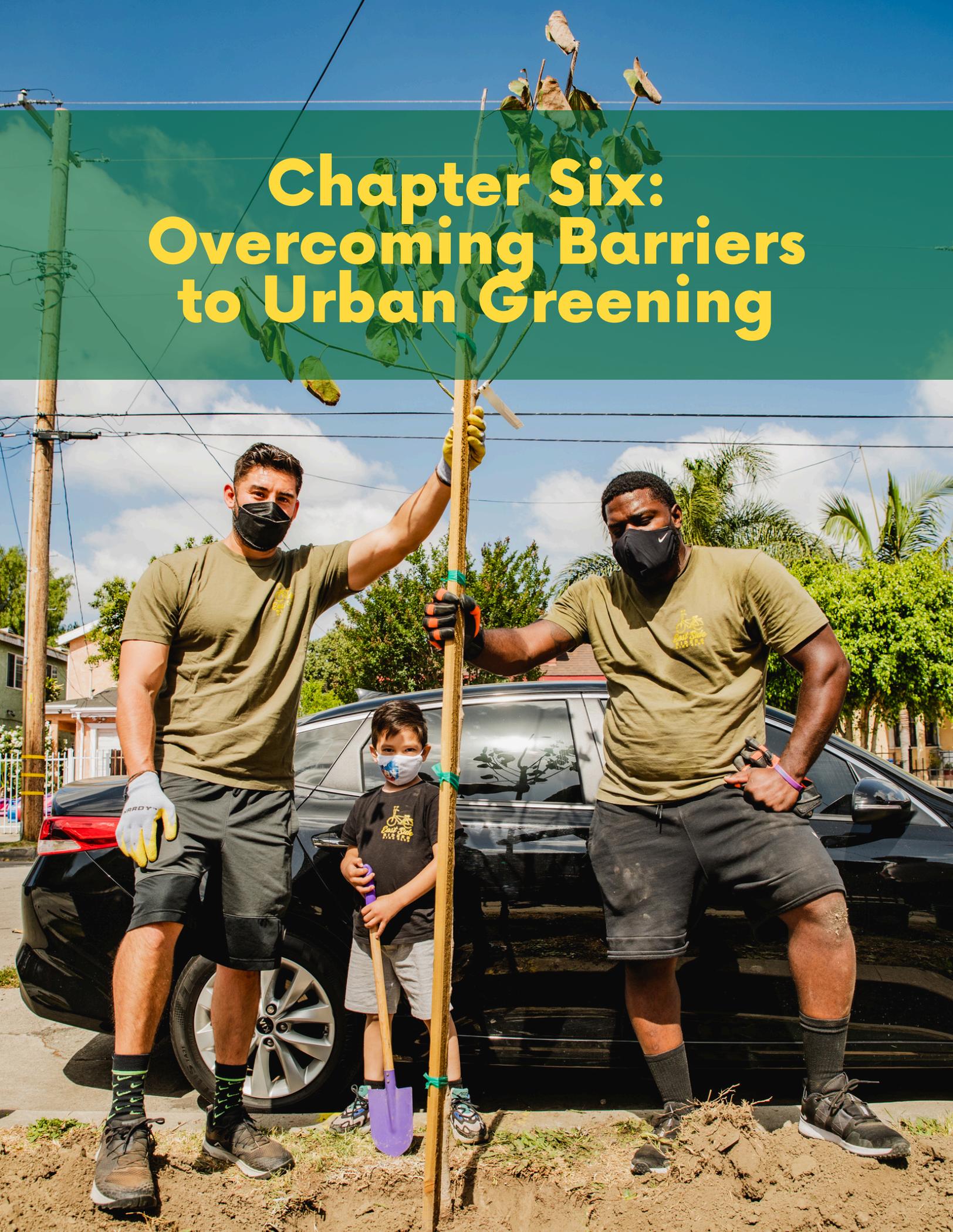
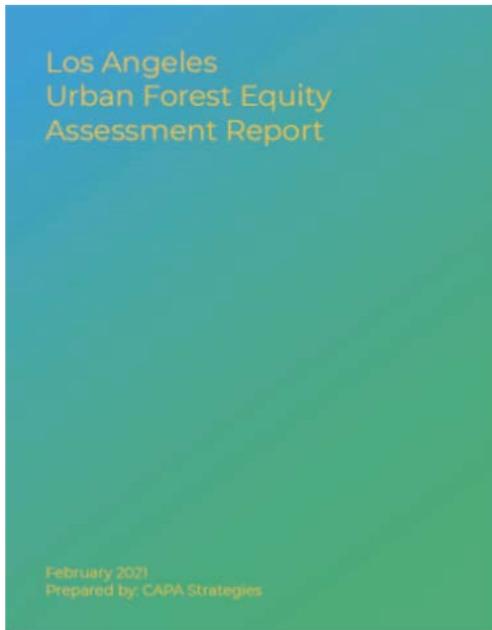


# Chapter Six: Overcoming Barriers to Urban Greening





# Introduction to Urban Greening Barriers in Los Angeles

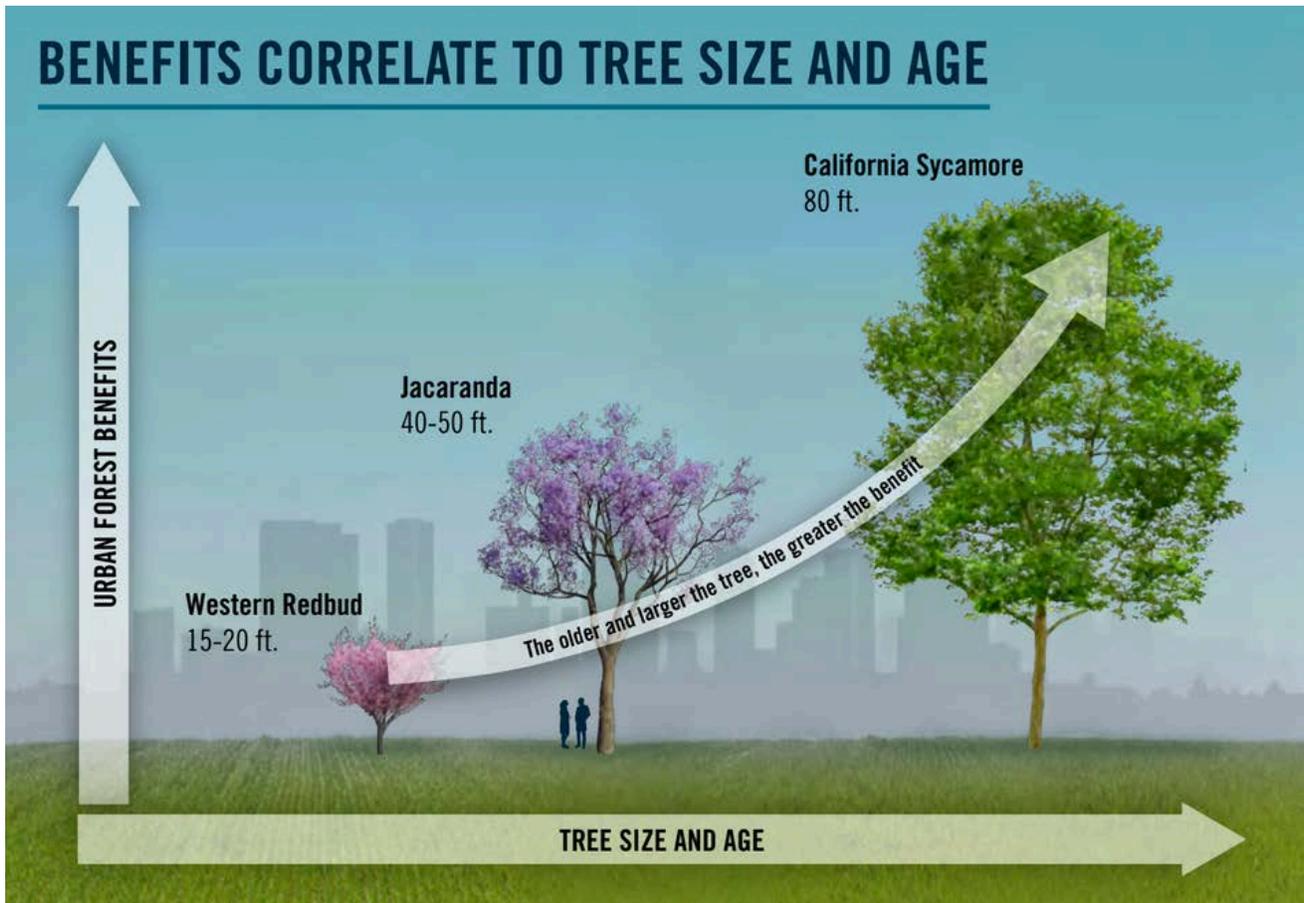


"...a century of deliberate and concerted actions to seal the landscapes and surfaces and divide neighborhoods, cannot be undone overnight. Today, overcoming and contending with decades of destructive urban planning decisions that created the current landscape will require deliberate and concerted action."  
LA's Urban Forest Equity Assessment Report, 2021

So far, we've explored the issue of urban forest equity, learned about why it matters, and investigated a few of its underlying systemic causes. **18% of LA's urban forest is concentrated in just five census block groups, where only 1% of the population lives**, and racist federal housing policies from the 1930s and 1940s, known as redlining, contributed to the tree canopy inequity we experience today, alongside many other factors. Here's what we know:

- 1 The systemic causes of inequities since redlining policies are still present today.
- 2 Simply planting trees in disinvested neighborhoods can further amplify existing inequities (e.g. trust, economic insecurities, tree survivorship, etc.).
- 3 Social, political, economic, and infrastructural barriers are many — Low canopy communities have more concrete and less available growing space, which makes tree planting more complex and costly.
- 4 Los Angeles needs tailored community-based, neighborhood-scale engagement campaigns that center current needs and sharing.

# L.A. Needs More Space For Large Trees & More Funding for Tree Care



But what's preventing us from solving the problem of urban forest inequity quickly? Is the solution as simple as planting more trees in historically disinvested neighborhoods?

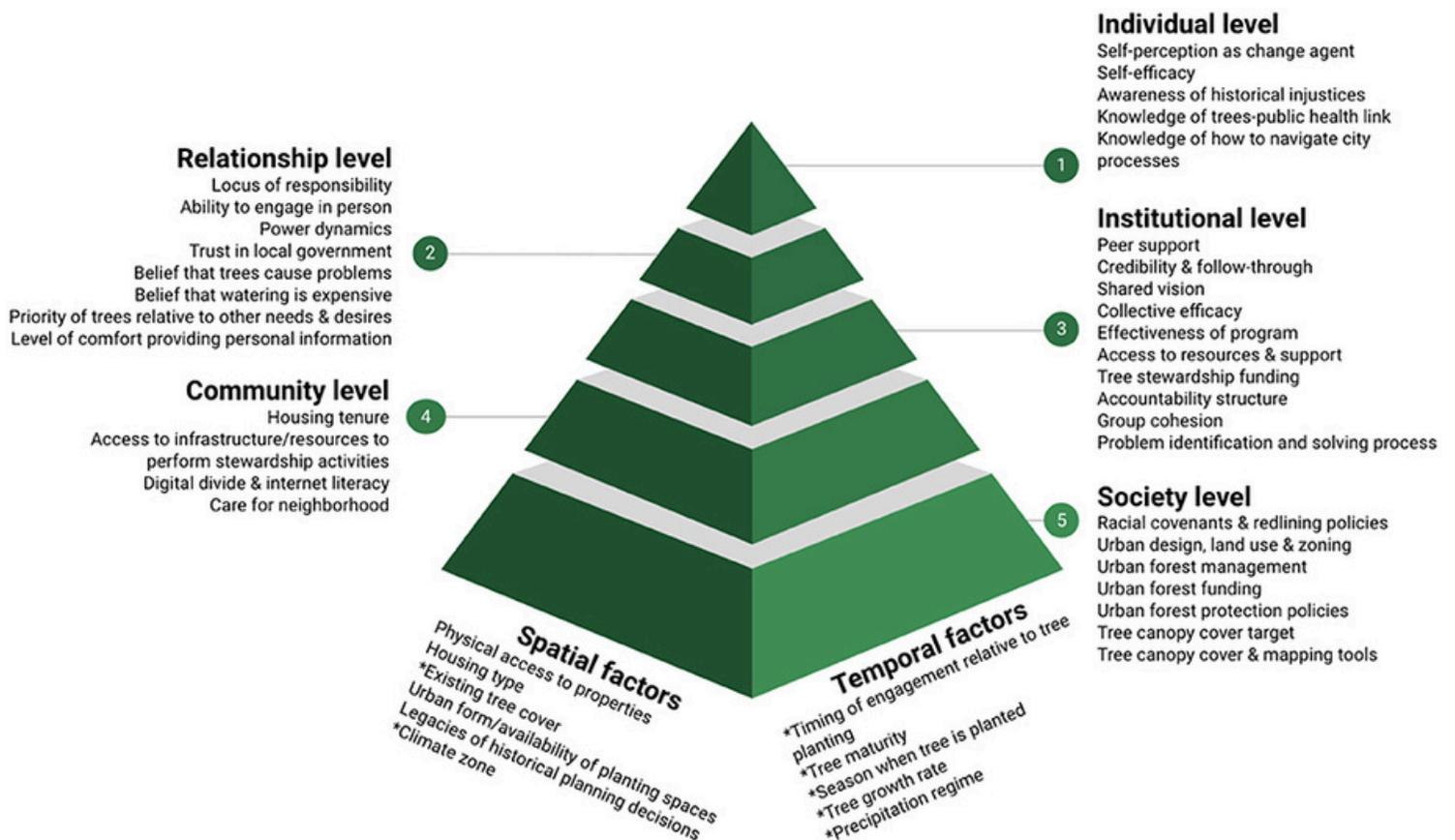
LA's low-canopy neighborhoods need more space for large trees in order to reap the public health benefits of the urban forest. Tree benefits correlate to tree size and age, and the full benefits of an urban forest are best met when trees can reach their full size and potential. As we'll learn, there are many factors that prevent trees from reaching their full mature size — chief among them: limited availability of viable planting space and historically underfunded urban forest management.



# What Factors Aid or Hinder Urban Forest Equity in Los Angeles?

Source: de Guzman EB, Escobedo FJ and O'Leary R (2022) A socio-ecological approach to align tree stewardship programs with public health benefits in marginalized neighborhoods in Los Angeles, USA. *Front. Sustain. Cities*

Tree stewardship involves dynamic interactions between individuals and the social and political conditions and contexts that surround them. The model below, which originated from the pilot Tree Ambassador program, describes factors at each of five different levels — individual, relationship, institutional, community, and society. Community-based tree stewardship is affected by this complex range of influences and nested interactions. The model recognizes that factors can cross between multiple levels...They can also influence tree stewardship in different ways—either aiding or hindering stewardship of trees in support of urban forest equity—based on cumulative and intersectional experiences. The image below reveals the primary factors that can either hinder or aid tree stewardship efforts and the levels at which these occur. Temporal and spatial considerations also influence the success of any efforts to advance urban forest equity.



## Individual Level

Individual level factors are those that are present or absent in an individual (in our case, a Tree Ambassador) who is actively working to affect tree stewardship in their community. These include drivers related to awareness, knowledge, and self-perception.

## Relationship Level

Relationship level factors are those an individual working to affect tree stewardship may encounter as they attempt to engage with their neighbors or other members in the community. These factors may either aid or hinder their efforts and include drivers such as whether a community member prioritizes trees relative to other needs or desires for their neighborhood, and whether they are comfortable providing personal information.

## Institutional Level

Institutional level factors are those that may be present or absent at the institution that is supporting an individual who is actively working to affect tree stewardship in their community—such as a non-profit or community organization, or a city agency. Collective drivers such as a shared vision, group cohesion, and the belief that the group can produce desired results are among these. Other drivers relate to support, follow-through, and processes to identify and address problems as they arise.

## Community Level

Community level factors are neighborhood characteristics that may aid or hinder an individual's efforts to affect tree stewardship. These include physical attributes such as availability of planting spaces and access to properties to conduct canvassing. These also include indicators, such as whether a home is tenant- or owner-occupied, the level of internet literacy present in the community, and the level of care that a resident believes other community members have for the neighborhood.

## Societal Level

Society level factors include elements in the decision-making and information-access realm which occur at a level beyond the community—such as at the municipal, state level, or federal level. These include historical drivers such as redlining, and current drivers such as the presence of robust urban forest management and funding, public tree maintenance, UTC targets, and tree protection policies.

## Spatial Factors

**Existing tree cover:** The existing UTC of a neighborhood can influence the willingness of community members to support additional UTC. Social ties and a sense of community have been shown to be stronger in apartment buildings with more vegetative cover compared to those without (Kuo et al., 1998), and these factors can in turn influence civic engagement in urban greening (Krasny and Tidball, 2015).

**Climate zone:** In LA's semi-arid Mediterranean climate, summers are warm and dry, and rain is uncommon between late spring and fall, meaning a moisture deficit is likely to occur absent supplemental irrigation (Levinsson et al., 2017).

## Temporal Level

**Timing of engagement relative to tree planting:** Engaging community members in the act of tree planting rather than after a tree has been planted enables residents to witness the difference of their efforts, boosting self and collective efficacy while reducing barriers to continued engagement (Krasny and Tidball, 2015).

**Tree maturity:** A young tree planted in LA needs supplemental irrigation and additional care for an establishment period of three to five years, with the frequency of care diminishing as the tree matures (de Guzman et al., 2018).

**Season when tree is planted:** Planting a tree in the cool, wet season (generally fall, winter, or spring) means less supplemental watering is needed in the first months after planting.

**Tree growth rate:** The species growth rate and the size of the tree at the time of planting influence the length of the establishment period (Watson, 2005).

**Precipitation regime:** The seasonal distribution of precipitation in a city or region determines how much supplemental irrigation a tree may need during its establishment period.

# Types of Urban Greening Barriers in Los Angeles

Cities across the United States are rapidly losing urban canopy cover when we need it the most, but there are many barriers that make tree planting and care challenging in a dense urban environment like Los Angeles. In this chapter, we highlight a variety of interrelated and interconnected barriers that can complicate urban greening on a neighborhood level.

## 1 Economic Barriers

Who has the funding and time to care for trees?  
Does the city fund its urban forestry programs adequately?  
Are trees adequately cared for through all phases of their life cycle?

## 2 Political Barriers

How do local government policies contribute to sustaining, preserving, and expanding urban canopy and green spaces?  
How have historic and systemic disinvestment or lack of equitable access to city resources created barriers to increasing tree canopy?

## 3 Infrastructure Barriers

How does the built environment impact our ability to plant trees where they are needed most?  
Is there enough space to plant above or below ground? Which neighborhoods are more heavily concretized?

## 4 Social Barriers

What demographics are urban greening organizations targeting, and in which languages are outreach materials available?

## 5 Cultural Barriers

How have historic and systemic disinvestment or lack of equitable access to city resources created barriers to increasing tree canopy?

These barriers are deeply rooted, often without clear or easy solutions. These barriers are a call to action — a reminder that big problems require creative collaboration and a reminder of the need to work together to organize our communities toward a common vision of a greener, healthier future. While these barriers can pose real life challenges, some stem from community perceptions and can be addressed through holding conversations and listening to community. Let's discuss these barriers in depth and explore opportunities to help your community overcome them.

These types of barriers are not separate from each other — They are interconnected and intersectional. These barriers are symptoms of deeply entrenched problems, often without clear or easy solutions.



A group of diverse people, including men and women of various ethnicities, are gathered in a huddle. They are all pointing their index fingers towards the center of the group. The background is a clear blue sky. The people are wearing various clothing, including t-shirts, a baseball cap, and a face mask. The overall mood is one of collaboration and shared purpose.

These barriers are a call to action — a reminder that big problems require creative collaboration and a reminder of the need to work together to organize our communities toward the common vision of a greener, healthier future.



**Economic Barriers**

# Economic Barriers Overview

## Overarching Questions

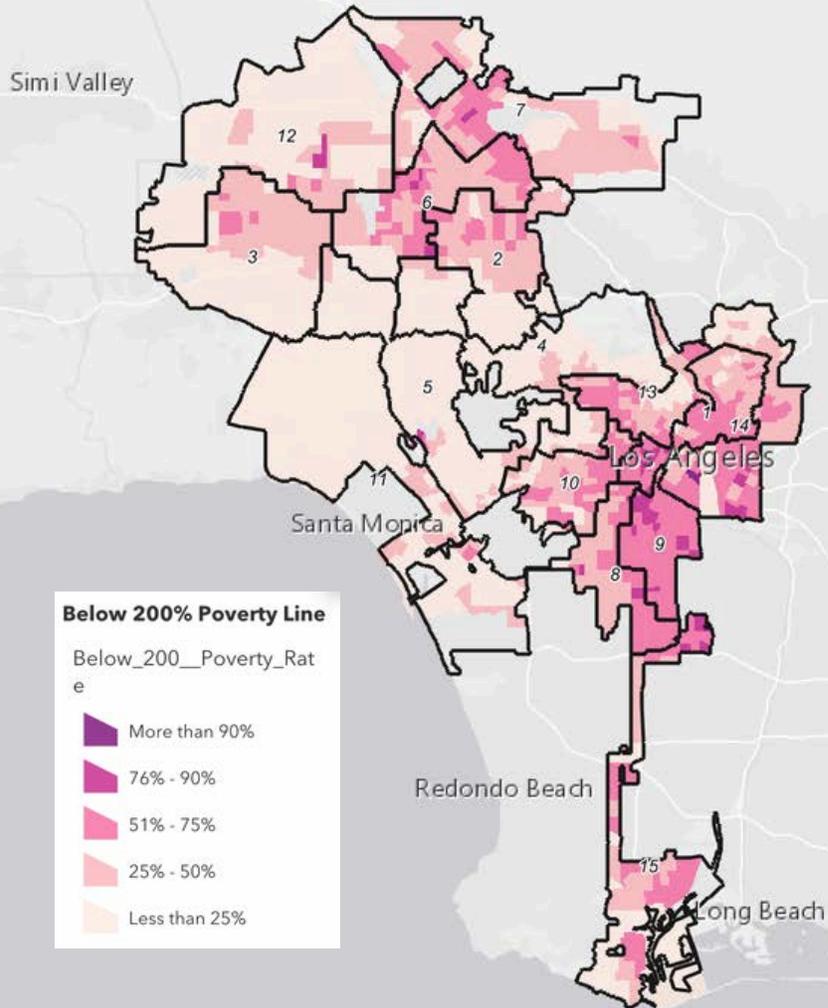
- Who has the funding or financial ability to plant and care for trees?
- Who can afford to steward trees?
- Who has the economic privilege to own a home?
- How do housing tenure and rentership rates impact urban greening?
- Does the City fund its urban forestry programs adequately?
- Are public trees cared for throughout their entire life cycle — from planting through preservation, maintenance, and removal?

## Factors That Can Exacerbate or Cause Economic Barriers

- Housing security
- Housing tenure (renting vs. owning property)
- Displacement and gentrification pressure
- Job availability and job security
- Insufficient government funding for tree planting, preservation, maintenance, and proactive management
- Perceived costs of tree planting and tree care
- Actual costs of tree care

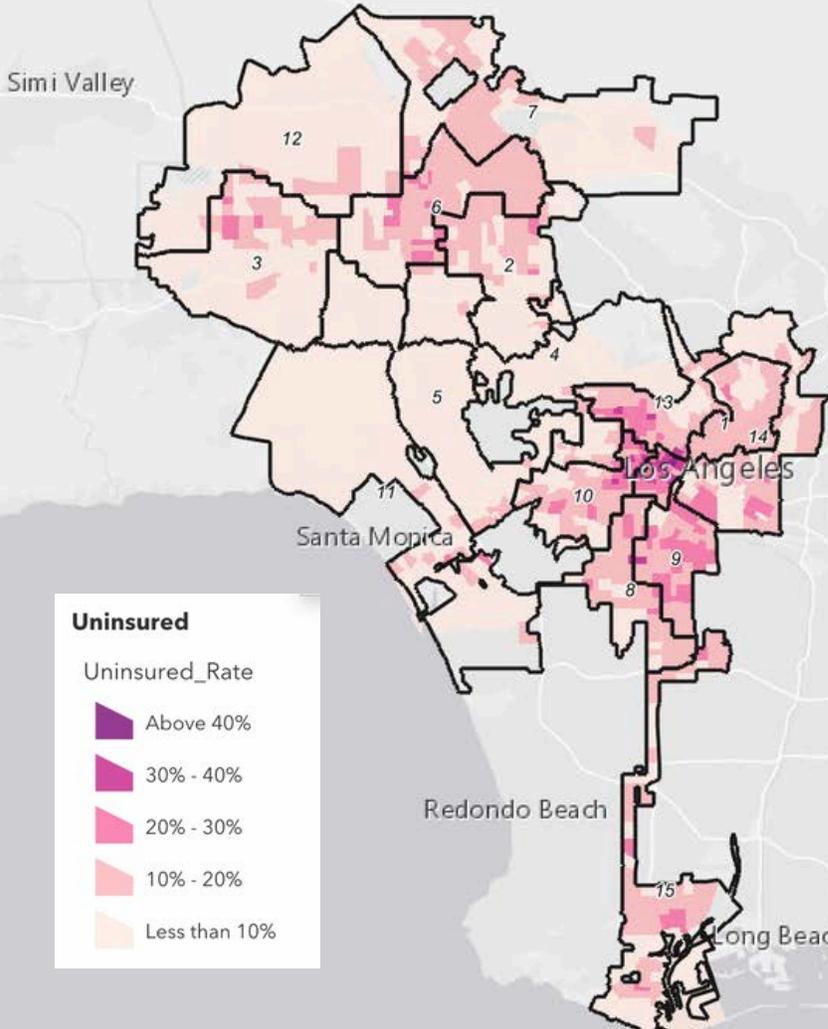
## Economic Barriers Might Sound Like...

- "I don't have the money to water a tree. My water bill is already too expensive."
- "That tree will get big and expensive. I'd rather have a fake tree in my yard to avoid the hassle, mess, and bills."
- "I want trees, but I rent my home and my landlord might not let me plant."
- "If you plant trees here, gentrifiers will come next."
- "More trees?! Tell the City they need to remove the dead trees and trim on my block first."



**Life Below the Poverty Line**

On average, 37 percent of families in L.A. earned less than 200% of the federal poverty line in 2018, equivalent to \$50,200 for a family of four. This map illustrates where low-income Angelenos live.



**Access to Health Insurance**

Individuals who lack healthcare coverage are more likely to have adverse health outcomes. Predominantly Latino communities in L.A. experience uninsured rates **twice as high** as predominantly white communities. This map tracks rates of the uninsured by census tract.

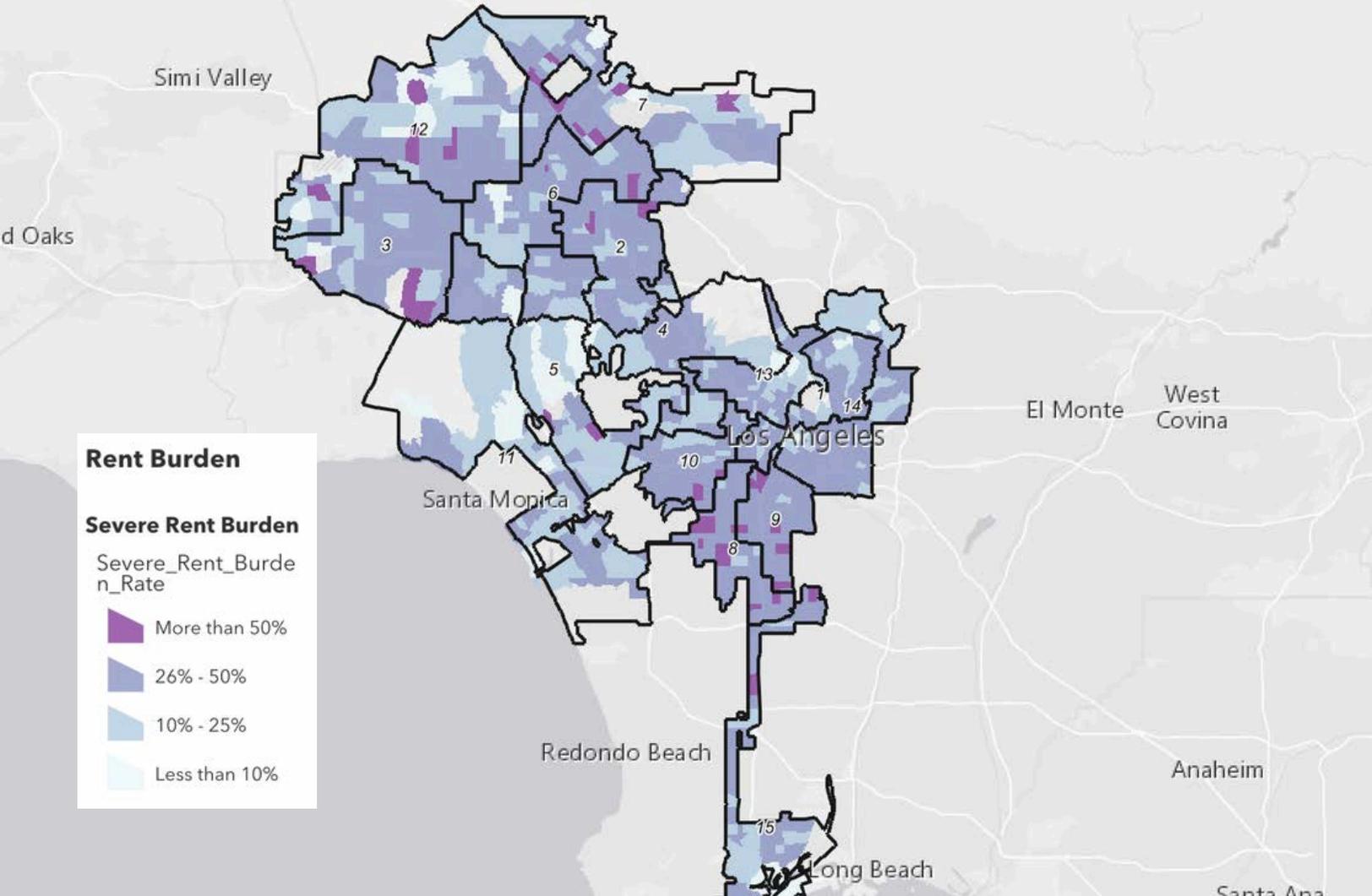
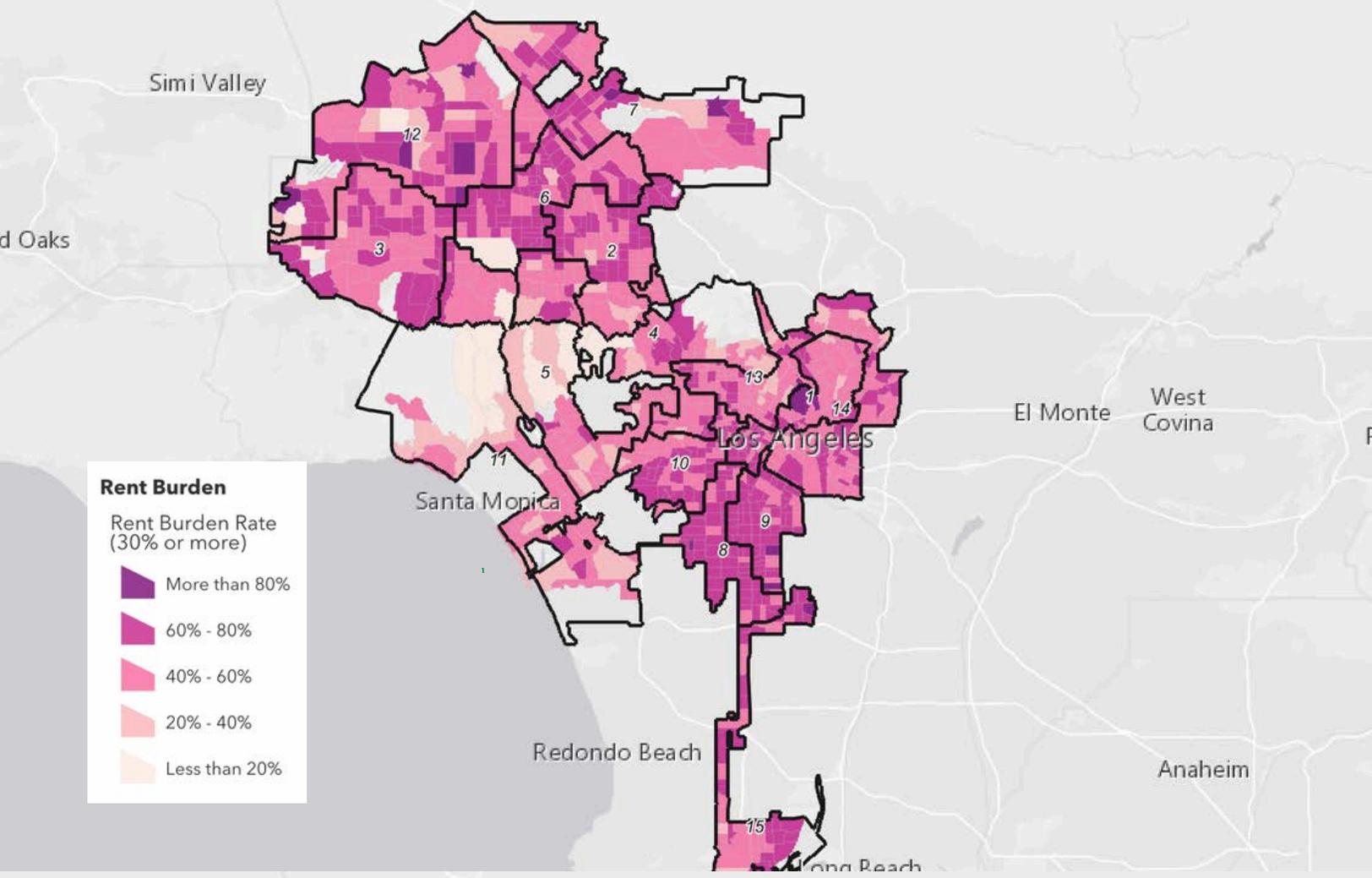
# Economic Barriers

## Digging Deeper

### Economic Inequality & the Rising Cost of Living

- Between 2018 and 2021, the cost of basic necessities jumped more than 20% in Los Angeles, leaving people without emergency funds to account for additional unexpected costs (LA City Controller Report, LA'S Cost of Living Crisis)
- Housing costs are often the largest burden for people in need as roughly 4.1 million households in California spend over 30% of their income on housing.
- When economically insecure families are forced to spend so much of their budget to meet basic needs, there is an increased risk of poverty and falling into homelessness.
- Poverty rates in Los Angeles are among the highest in the nation, with nearly one in three children living in poverty.
- 4 million residents; 1.3 million households (defined as people living in the same house, apartment or living quarters)
- LA's Median Household Income is \$58,385
- On average, 37 percent of families in L.A. earned less than 200% of the federal poverty line in 2018, equivalent to \$50,200 for a family of four.
- Residents in affluent neighborhoods like Bel-Air-Beverly Crest and Brentwood-Pacific Palisades make more than 12 times the per capita income of residents in the poorest neighborhoods such as Boyle Heights and South Los Angeles (City of LA, Department of City Planning, Health Atlas 2021).

| <b>Households That Struggle To Meet Basic Needs, By Race</b> |                           |                   |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------|
|  | <b>Los Angeles County</b> | <b>California</b> |
| Black  | 46%                       | 44%               |
| Latinx   | 56%                       | 52%               |
| AAPI   | 32%                       | 29%               |
| Native   | 59%                       | 44%               |
| White  | 23%                       | 24%               |



# Economic Barriers

## Digging Deeper

### LA's Housing Crisis

- "Los Angeles (LA) has a significant shortage of housing affordable to lower-income households. There are 713,710 households in the City that make less than 80% of Area Median Income (AMI).<sup>260</sup> Housing prices in Los Angeles have grown four times faster than incomes since 2000. And almost two-thirds of all households in the City are rent burdened (meaning they spend more than the recommended 30% of their income on rent or mortgage payments).<sup>261</sup> This shortage of affordable homes disproportionately affects people of color and individuals with disabilities. Within both the City of Los Angeles and the broader region, most racial or ethnic minority groups experience higher rates of housing problems, including but not limited to severe housing cost burden, than do non-Hispanic White households.<sup>262</sup> And there is a significant need for accessible housing in the City of Los Angeles. Over 200,000 Los Angeles households include an individual with an ambulatory disability, and over 170,000 include an individual with a visual or hearing disability."
- 63% of Angelenos are renters, which presents an additional economic barrier, since many tenants don't feel they have the authority to plant trees. This can also lead to turn over before a tree's establishment period ends.
- CONTROLLER: Los Angeles faces a housing shortage, which has resulted in spiraling costs, created barriers to wealth accumulation for low-and-middle income families, and contributed to the growing homelessness crisis in the City and region.
- During the latest home-buying surge, the median home price in L.A. County rose to more than \$700,000. In Los Angeles, homeownership is at its lowest rate since the 1940s.
- Three out of four households reported spending more than 30% of household income on rent and utilities in a recent survey of L.A. residents.
- Los Angeles currently has more than 40,000 residents experiencing homelessness.
- A 2019 report found that Los Angeles is the third-most rent burdened city in the country. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development considers a family to be "rent burdened" if they spend 30% or more of their annual income on rent.
- According to the 2022 LA Homelessness Count, 69,144 people were experiencing homelessness in LA County, a 4.1% rise from 2020, and 41,980 people were experiencing homelessness in the City of LA, up 1.7% from 2020.

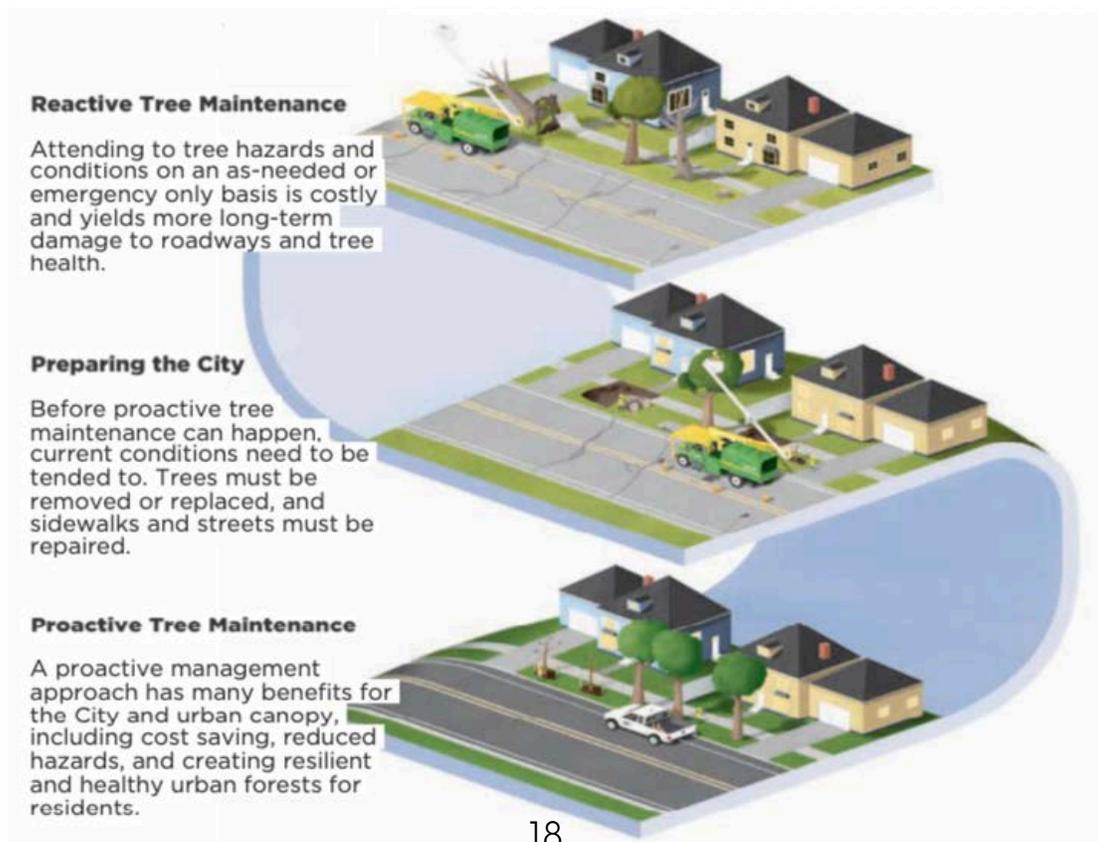


# Economic Barriers

## Digging Deeper

### Underfunded Urban Forest Management in the City of Los Angeles

- Funding can inhibit widespread mobilization and implementation towards urban forestry goals.
- Recent reports also indicate that insufficient funding leads urban forest managers to default to risk management to avoid liability, resulting in gradual tree canopy decline.
- It can be easier to procure funding for planting, but it's often difficult to procure funding for young tree and mature tree maintenance.
- Because many disinvested areas lack available spaces for expanding tree canopy due to the built out infrastructure (e.g. utilities, concrete, roadways, etc.), the funding necessary to redesign roadways for accommodating trees can be cost-prohibitive. Current cost-benefit analyses and funding streams do not account for this reality.
- The City of Los Angeles currently spends roughly \$30 million annually on its urban forestry program, which is insufficient to maintain and expand an urban forest for a city of this size. Assuming best management practices, the total program is estimated to annually cost nearly \$118 million, creating an \$88 million operating gap (LA Urban Forest Financing Study, 2023).



# Perceived Costs of Trees



## Tree Planting

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

## Tree Care

In addition to watering your tree, caretakers must prune and mulch their trees. This takes time and energy. Hiring professionals might be costly. There are grants to help with this! Ask your program lead for information on available funding opportunities.

## 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 13.26 dollars a year.

# Economic Barriers

## Digging Deeper



### Perceived vs. Actual Costs of Tree Care

Some Angelenos are reluctant to plant trees because of the perception that watering, establishment costs, and tree care are high. While trees do require some investment, we often find that the perceived dollar amount keeps people from supporting tree planting. However, the cost of watering a tree is much lower than most folks think, especially when replacing other landscapes such as turf grass. A tree that shades a home or business can help community members save on utility costs and medical bills. 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 other benefits. Some non-profits and city or local government agencies receive state grants to fund tree care. Reach out to program partners to learn more about how to receive these funds.

# Economic Barriers

## Digging Deeper: Unpacking & Understanding the Threat of Green Gentrification

With more than half of all Angelenos renting their homes or apartments, urban greening initiatives must understand the need to communities from green gentrification. Green gentrification is the 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, thereby driving up the costs and effectively pushing out community members who previously lived in that neighborhood. 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. 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 & Affordable Housing Policies

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

Zoning for affordable housing development and affordable housing incentives.

### 3 Aligning Funding with Equitable Outcomes

Funding eligibility and project selection, value capture reports and application of civil rights laws.

### 4 Enhancing Economic Opportunities & Creating Green Jobs

Preserving existing small businesses, targeting local hires, creating jobs in the community, and paying a living wage.

### 5 Community Engagement and Ownership

Language accessibility, strengthening community knowledge and skills, and partnership with community based organizations.

# Economic Barriers

## Digging Deeper: What if Money Does Actually Grow on Trees? Understanding the Economic Benefits of Trees

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



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](http://itreetools.org) for estimations based on USDA Forest Service research. 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.

# Political Barriers



# Political Barriers Overview

## Overarching Questions

- How do local government policies contribute to sustaining, preserving, and expanding urban canopy and green spaces?
- How have historic and systemic disinvestment or lack of equitable access to city resources created barriers to increasing tree canopy?
- How do individual access to political representatives and city services impact urban forest equity?

## Factors That Can Exacerbate or Cause Political Barriers

- Public trust in political representatives
- Attentiveness, responsiveness, transparency, and accountability of political representatives and city agencies
- Level of urgency surrounding other political priorities
- An individual's access to and knowledge of city government and their political representatives
- An individual's ability to navigate city services and processes
- Lack of coordination and consistency between tree planting, preservation, maintenance policies

## Political Barriers Might Sound Like...

- "Trees are nice and all, but we need to solve the homelessness and housing issues first."
- "I don't think the city should be planting new trees when it can barely care for the trees it has."
- "I've called the city six times to ask about my request for free trees, and nothing has happened."
- "What about all the illegal dumping in my neighborhood?"



# Political Barriers

## Digging Deeper

### Lack of Political Coordination & Trust in Government

A unified approach is required in terms of streamlining the need for trees as an "AND" not an "OR" to other needs (e.g. housing, clean-water..). Communities can perceive conflicting municipal messages and priorities from their local leaders that can infringe on the City's own capacity to advance urban greening goals. Studies have also identified conflicting urban greening policies and codes in within City of LA departments.

### Competing Priorities and Limited Resources

Historic and systemic disinvestment or lack of equitable access to city resources created barriers to increasing tree canopy. The range of approaches to expanding and maintaining tree canopy varies by council district, agency, department. Not all council districts prioritize tree planting or care equally. This creates challenges when it comes to securing political support and advancing a coordinated approach

### Disempowerment of Renters

Renters discussed not being given the decision-making power to plant or care for trees. This was complicated by the aforementioned fear of eviction by asking or advocating for trees. Also, renting is often temporary, and renters did not see the value in the long-term investment required to plant and care for trees.

### Costs of Tree Planting & Mature Tree Care

Cost of the initial purchase of trees and tree supplies are barriers, as are costs for watering, pest control, and leaf clean up. Property owners were concerned about increased property taxes if trees increase property value.

### Fears and Concerns

Concerns over a tree's potential physical impact, such as sidewalk damage, tree failure, and interference with power lines was identified as a common barrier to planting trees. Additionally, the added burden of costs, such as the expense to purchase a tree, ongoing maintenance, and repairs for damage caused by trees were mentioned. Participants who identified as renters discussed fears of eviction if asking or advocating for more trees. Both participants who identified as renters and property owners cited fear of gentrification from investing in planting trees as a threat to their property ownership or cost and ability to rent.

# Infrastructure Barriers



# Infrastructure Barriers Overview

## Overarching Questions

- How does the built environment impact our ability to plant trees where they are needed most?
- Is there enough available space to plant trees in historically disinvested communities?
- Where are street repairs, sidewalk repairs, other infrastructure issues needed most?

## Factors That Can Exacerbate or Cause Infrastructure Barriers

- High amounts of concrete or impervious surfaces
- Existing Infrastructure
- Driveway aprons & driveway Entrance
- Fire hydrants
- Lack of curbs or parkways in low-canopy neighborhoods
- Overhead electrical wires
- Railroads
- Street signs
- Streetlights
- Storm drains
- Transit shelters
- Water and gas meters
- Agroperm (pictured left, covered up tree wells)

## How You May Encounter Economic Barriers

- "Planting a tree there will lift my sidewalk, and the city hasn't even fixed the busted potholes on my street."
- "That tree will grow roots that will break my water pipes, and then I'll be stuck with that bill?"
- "Why won't a tree fit in my parkway? I have the space — Can't you see it?!"
- "Does City Plants cut concrete for free?"
- "Trees create too much mess and create hazards."



Picture Source: Los Angeles Times

# Infrastructure Barriers

## Digging Deeper

### Insufficient Space & Concrete

What if There Isn't Available Space to Plant Trees? The competition for limited physical space and the increasing need for private real estate is a driving factor there is a perceived need to occupy areas with pavement that might otherwise contain green space. Often there isn't space for more trees on certain city blocks due to redlining, historical dis-investment in particular neighborhoods, and built-out infrastructure. Tree planting space is often dependent on land use and zoning policies

What if there are no open (grass or dirt) parkways in your neighborhood? What if your sidewalks are too narrow for new street trees, or even NEW tree wells? What if the block is mostly apartment units and very densely packed, with very little space for private property trees?

As we've explored, oftentimes there simply isn't space for more trees on certain city blocks due to redlining, historical dis-investment in particular neighborhoods, and city design and planning. We also know that an estimated 64% of Angelenos are renters. This makes it especially hard to find residents who can commit to a minimum of three years of watering a tree.

With these challenges in mind, how can we foster a connection between people and the planet in this complex urban ecosystem? How can we create community and protect our neighbors during this unprecedented climate catastrophe?

Many active city and non-profit urban forestry organizations in Los Angeles secure state and federal grants to create new tree wells, or "concrete cuts," where they don't already exist. We're also in the midst of a "tree-revolution," and we're exploring — as a city — how to create space for trees where there isn't currently space. Let us know if you're interested in planting trees where there isn't already space — we may be able to help you or point you in the direction of our private property tree program!

### Damaged & Broken Trust

- Planting the wrong tree in the wrong place can cause significant damage to other infrastructure, making our communities less safe, particularly for elderly and folks with disabilities
- Decades of insufficient funding have created significant trip and fall hazards
- Willits Settlement - Sidewalk Repair Lawsuit in 2014, the City of LA was sued by disability advocates and committed to paying \$1.4 billion over a 30-year period to repair all broken sidewalks, some due to tree damage

# Where could you plant trees along this commercial corridor?

Overhead wires leave little space for trees at all, and certainly not large trees that would provide maximum shade

Highly dense commercial or business corridors often mean there's greater competition for space in the public right of way — including increased demands on parking spaces, more concrete, and fewer open tree wells or parkways

# Where could you plant trees along this residential street?

Little to no space on private property for yard trees

Overhead wires leave little space for large stature trees

Public space and parking demand is high

Space is needed for driveway access

No existing parkway and no additional sidewalk space to cut concrete or create new tree wells

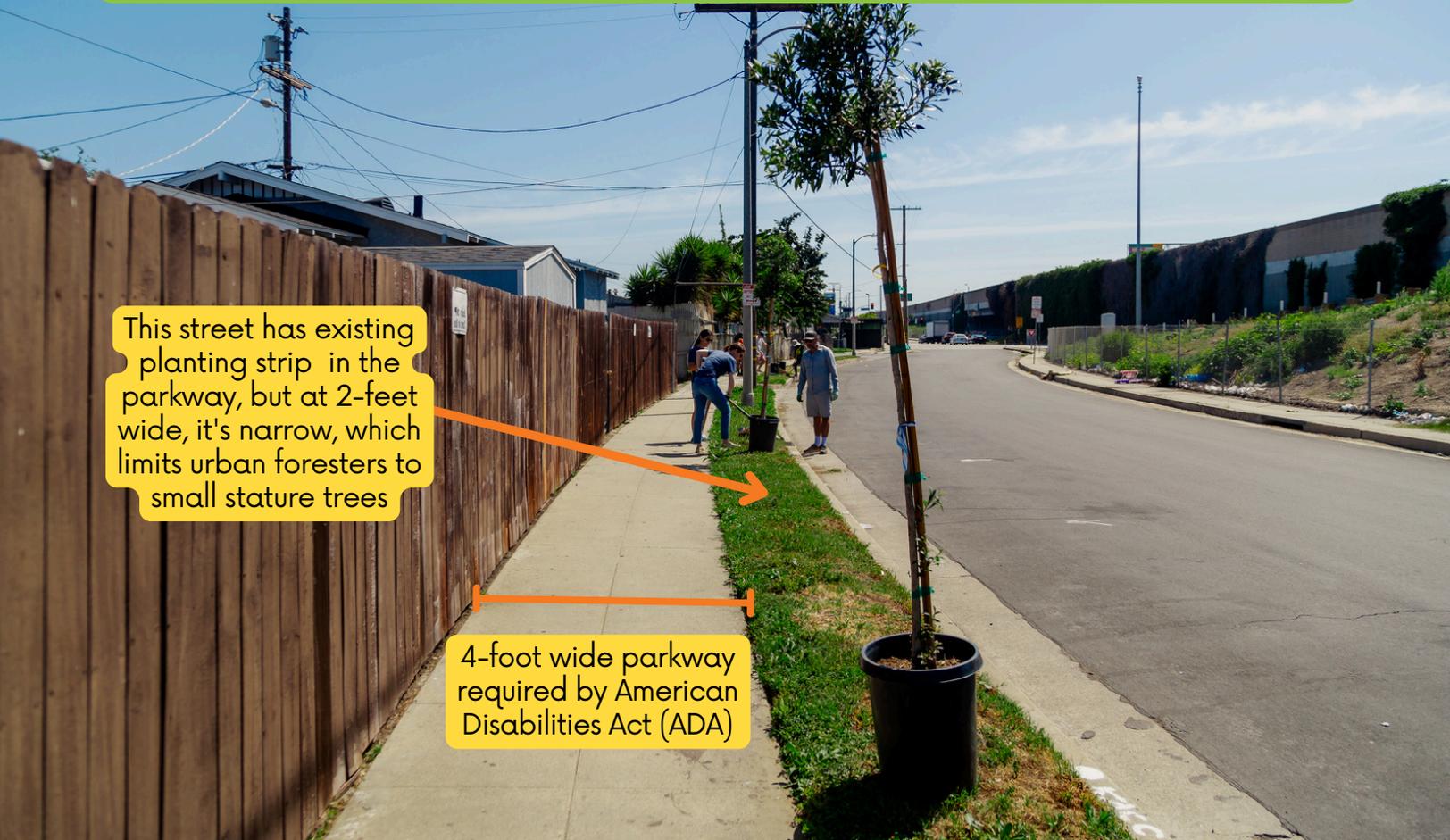




Sufficient space to create a new tree well, but grant funding is needed to cut concrete

4-foot wide parkway required by American Disabilities Act (ADA)

## What's different about these two planting spaces?



This street has existing planting strip in the parkway, but at 2-feet wide, it's narrow, which limits urban foresters to small stature trees

4-foot wide parkway required by American Disabilities Act (ADA)

Hard, compacted clay soil can make it difficult for newly planted trees to get established



Narrow 3-foot parkway can fit a small tree providing minimal shade

## What's different about these two planting spaces?



Irrigated soil will make it easier for trees to establish

Wide 6-foot parkway can fit a large tree for maximum shade

# Social Barriers



# Social Barriers Overview

## Overarching Questions

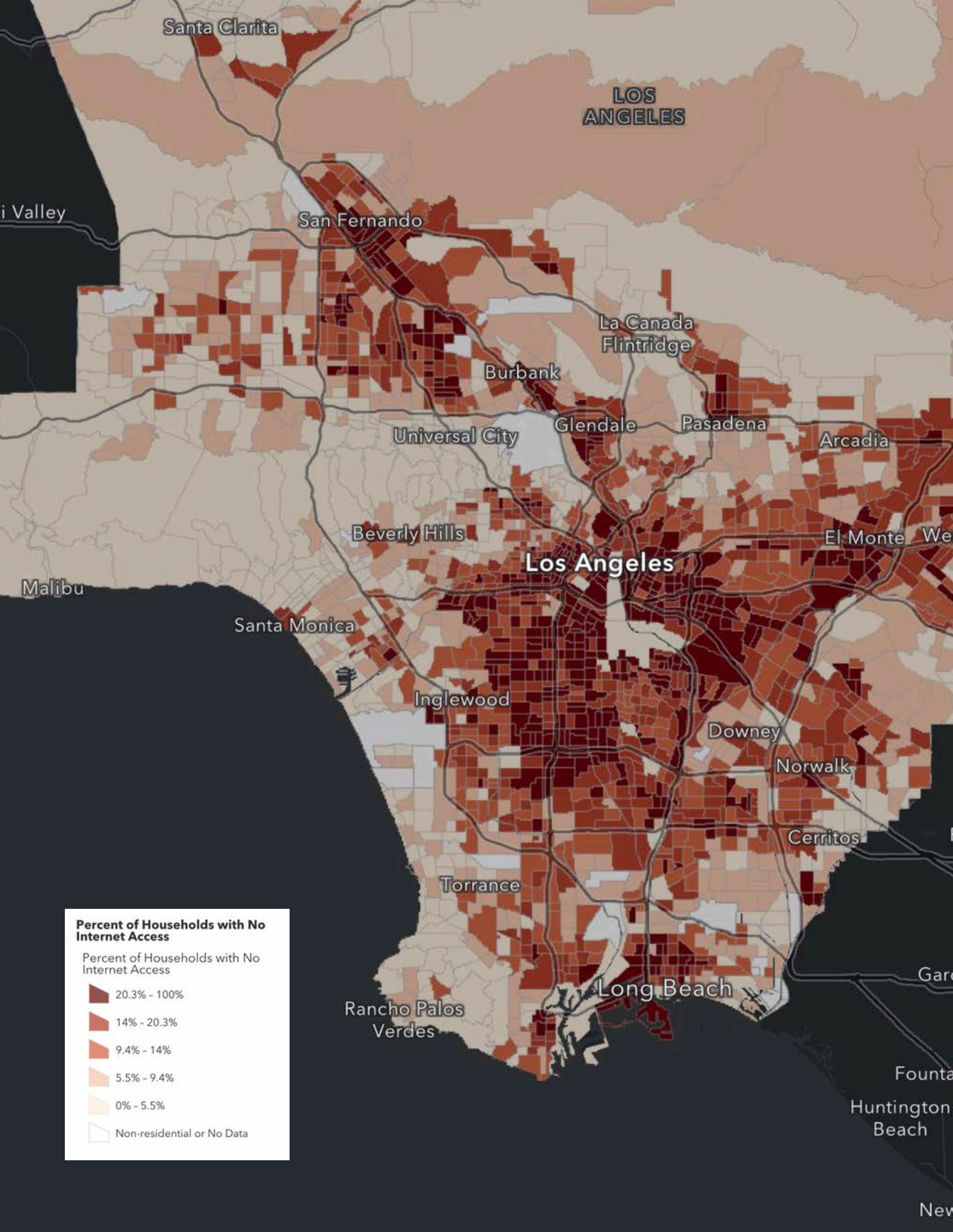
- What demographics are urban greening organizations targeting?
- In which languages are outreach materials available?
- Are elderly and physically limited individuals part of the equation?
- What about technological literacy and access?

## Factors That Can Exacerbate or Cause Social Barriers

- 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. This messaging is often 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 (such as Spanish, Korean, and Mandarin) can create cross-cultural connections for a climate resilient Los Angeles.
- Municipal amenities only available in English
- Sidewalk inaccessibility for disabled and elderly
- Physical inability to plant or care for a tree
- Public services not designed for historically disinvested BIPOC communities.
- 311 app prioritizes affluent communities

## How You May Encounter Social Barriers

- "I don't know how to register for a free tree online."
- "I don't know how to navigate the website for the application. I don't have an email address."
- "The form is not available in my native language."
- "I don't want a tree, I can't even go down my block in my walker with the lifted sidewalk."



# Social Barriers

## Digging Deeper

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.

Considering the diversity of physical abilities within your community is important. Remember your elderly and differently abled neighbors who may find watering and caring for trees difficult. One's physical ability to water or prune a tree should not prevent them from receiving a healthy urban forest's financial and health benefits.

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.



# Cultural Barriers



# Cultural Barriers Overview

## Overarching Questions

- How have historic and systemic disinvestment or lack of equitable access to city resources created barriers to increasing tree canopy?
- What modifications in tree species availability need to be made to approach different ethnic communities?
- What significance do trees have to different ethnic, generational, or religious communities?
- How does Los Angeles' car culture affect Angelenos relationship with trees?

## Factors That Can Exacerbate or Cause Social Barriers

Sometimes, people may hesitate 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 many people are willing to grab the nearest shovel to join your call to action. 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 toward creating that 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? Often, 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 barbecue in your backyard, or going for a jog down the street, green spaces make our neighborhoods more livable.

Our communities can feel an aversion to adopting or planting a tree when the trees that connect them to their culture and ancestors are not allowed or available to be planted.

Another cultural barrier is the car culture. It has also resulted in a landscape dominated by asphalt and pavement in the form of parking and other spaces dedicated to vehicles.

## How You May Encounter Cultural Barriers

- "I want to adopt a tree, but I only want fruit trees for my yard."
- "Will this new tree drop any leaves/flowers? I just don't want that messing up my car."
- "Do you carry any species from [Country of Origin]? I would like to plant something that reminds me of home."
- "I don't want a tree for my home, I'd rather plant trees in my neighborhood/local park for this upcoming holiday (e.g. Tu BiShvat, Arbor Day, Earth Day, etc.)"

# Cultural Barriers

## Digging Deeper



Building relationships within your community takes time and patience. When serving historically disinvested communities, it is best to practice cultural humility. Approach the community with curiosity, open-mindedness, self-awareness, and a commitment to learning from those you are serving. As a Tree Ambassador, you are creating bridges to the barriers our urban forest faces.

Continue to create spaces to hold conversations and actively listen to your neighbors. Engaging with your community is a two-way street that requires respect, honesty, and trust.

The community that you are working with wants to get to know you. Volunteering at non-urban greening events within your neighborhood, such as local food drives, clean-up events, and non-profit fundraisers, is an excellent place to start. Here, you'll meet passionate individuals who have already dialed into your community's social network. 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.

Engage in dialogue to uncover shared community values and highlight tree benefits that resonate with these values. These conversations will help you develop your pitch. Your outreach efforts should foster lasting relationships that extend beyond the physical tree and tap into existing neighborhood resources.

# Community Organizing Conversations

## Developing Your Pitch

One of the most important parts of outreach is developing your "pitch," or how you draw people in and engage them in your work. First, think of a central issue that matters most to your particular audience, and start to consider how trees are a solution to address that specific issue. Is it extreme heat? Clean air? Climate change? By zooming in on the original problem, we can emphasize the importance of trees and make clear their benefits. Here's an example of a pitch, featuring **extreme heat** as the central issue. Using this sample script as a guide, start developing your own pitch:



**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"

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**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?"

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**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."

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**Connect the solution to the core problem**

"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"

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**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?"

# Post-Training Activity: Identifying Leads & Practicing Community Organizing Conversations

The next step in Community Asset Mapping is identifying individuals who relate to each of the assets you identified. Keep your Community Impact Proposal ideas in mind when thinking about "leads," or initial points of contact from your asset map that might be interested in joining forces with you in some capacity — Maybe it's your local librarian, principle, grocery store manager, or a local pastor. Using the internet, community knowledge, lived experience, or any tools at your disposal:

- 1) Identify at least one "lead," or point person you can reach out to within each bubble of your community asset map.
- 2) Find a specific person to reach out to, collect their contact information, and think about how you might eventually approach them.

Practice the conversations and techniques we covered throughout this chapter with a friend, family member, or fellow ambassador. Becoming more familiar with your talking points can help you navigate whatever scenarios you run into while doing outreach. Throughout your practice, be conscious of what scenarios you're comfortable with and which ones you feel less comfortable with - this can help you identify which strategies you should practice more.

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# Tools for Action

## Canvassing Tools

Door-to-door Canvassing Guide - Safety During Canvassing

[tinyurl.com/57arkkb7](https://tinyurl.com/57arkkb7)

## Funding Opportunities

Roots & Shoots - Jane Goodall Mini-Grant

[tinyurl.com/2btfz7ck](https://tinyurl.com/2btfz7ck)

## Websites, News Articles, Podcast, YouTube & Studies

Cool pavement coating - Cool Streets LA

[tinyurl.com/mw5au26s](https://tinyurl.com/mw5au26s)

Gentrification - Youtube

[tinyurl.com/bdeu46kv](https://tinyurl.com/bdeu46kv)

Overcoming Barriers in Urban Planting

[tinyurl.com/4vmfpszx](https://tinyurl.com/4vmfpszx)

Sustainable Cities Urban Greening -Frontiers

[tinyurl.com/2m2un88u](https://tinyurl.com/2m2un88u)

Gentrification - Urban Displacement Project

[urbandisplacement.org](https://urbandisplacement.org)

Empower LA, City of Los Angeles Department of Neighborhood Empowerment

[empowerla.org](https://empowerla.org)

CBSM & Overcoming Barriers in Tree Care - TreePeople, KYCC, & Common Vision

[tinyurl.com/bdh6fruu](https://tinyurl.com/bdh6fruu)

CBSM Inspiring Resident Engagement - ISA

[tinyurl.com/2p898hmv](https://tinyurl.com/2p898hmv)

Vibrant Cities Lab - Resource library

[vibrantcitieslab.com/resources](https://vibrantcitieslab.com/resources)

Chief Sustainability Office, Los Angeles County

[ceo.lacounty.gov/resource-library/](https://ceo.lacounty.gov/resource-library/)

How to make urban spaces greener - Planned Cities

[plannedcities.com/biophilia/](https://plannedcities.com/biophilia/)



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