

Partners for Places Project Lessons Report

Project Name: *Using Trees as Green Infrastructure for Economic, Social and Environmental Outcomes*

- **Year Complete:** 2018
- **Local Government:** City of St. Louis, MO
- **Local Foundation:** Commerce Bancshares Foundation, Missouri Department of Conservation, William A. Kerr Foundation

Project Purpose

To employ teens and to host neighborhood tree-planting events to help address storm water management while also enhancing tree canopy, reducing heat island impact, and strengthening community relations.

Key Lessons Learned

Lessons learned about tools and tactics through the project that other sustainability directors could use to advance their work.

Stakeholder meetings were held over the course of the grant term in an effort to keep the multiple partners informed of plans and activities. Sub-teams, such as the youth employment program, held their own meetings as well. Maintaining regular in-person contact, as well as staying connected via email, was core to ensuring role clarity and completion of tasks within the timelines allotted.

Perhaps the biggest lesson learned related to working with new city departments. Due to a change in leadership in the department of public safety, engaging support in the project required more time than anticipated. Future projects would benefit by allowing for more time and ensuring there is support from high level officials from all relevant departments, at the project start.

For the youth employment program, it was particularly important to partner with organizations that had previous experience developing and operating such programs, and who could share best practices in youth recruitment, supervising teens, and program logistics.

Lessons for developing a collaborative process between a local government sustainability director and local place-based foundation(s).

The city's sustainability office proved to be an invaluable resource for engaging local officials, entities and city employees. In this case, the summer youth employment program – Tree Tenders – and the

four community tree planting efforts were successful on each of the objectives: economic, social and environmental. They resulted in attracting residents of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. The concerted effort to involve first responders in these planting events was intended as a way to improve relationships and foster trust between citizens and law enforcement. The St. Louis Fire Department played a significant role in the tree planting events. The Fire Chief showed up and several fire fighters participated in the tree planting activities. They also brought fire trucks and a Safe House and fire hats for the kids. These trucks served to entice curious neighbors into joining in the tree planting efforts.

Additional Information and Resources

This project resulted in the planting of 500 trees in four city parks, which were selected by a diverse group of partner stakeholders based on existing urban tree canopy, areas of high crime, density of the youth population, and storm water focus areas. The planting events were well attended and [promoted on local news](#). The iTree tools used to calculate the benefits can be accessed [here](#).