

ARPA Project #HN021-0845 TREES

(Approved May 15, 2023)

Project Description

The Hamden Alliance for Trees proposed a pilot project, using ARPA funds and in collaboration with the Town, to work with residents of a Southern Hamden neighborhood to learn and implement effective ways to beautify their streets with trees and to help restore a vital tree canopy.

A robust tree canopy in Hamden is essential for the health of our town residents. There are areas of Southern Hamden, particularly in the 5th District, that lack green infrastructure and would greatly benefit from planting trees on town-owned tree lawns.

Borrowing methods from a successful model developed by Urban Resources Initiative in the City of New Haven, this project hopes to foster environmental revitalization and stewardship, and to encourage community building. Community meetings will help to identify small groups of neighbors who can volunteer to work together to address their block's green scape and come to an agreement on planting—and caring for—trees on their street. These volunteers can potentially reach out to neighbors by knocking on doors and providing educational materials about trees.

The success of this project depends upon a strong and on-going partnership among community residents, activists, legislative council members, Hamden Public Works and the Hamden Tree Commission.

The grant will fund: • Street trees, mulch, and trunk protectors appropriate for the site as determined by the Tree Commission. • Watering equipment, including hoses, hose reels, nozzles, buckets, and watering bags as needed. • Educational materials and meeting supplies.

The Town of Hamden will administer ARPA funds. We expect that most of the grant will be used to purchase trees and watering supplies. This pilot project will serve as a valuable opportunity, and a possible template, for Hamden to continue to address the greenscape concerns of the town and its residents.

Scope of Work

The goal is to plant about 12 trees in the Newhall/Highwood neighborhood.

- Reach out to residents who have already received a town street tree to help plan community meetings and to participate in the tree stewardship pilot program.
- Hold community meetings with residents to determine their interest in trees and to increase their knowledge of the importance and value of trees.
- Facilitate the creation of volunteer neighborhood tree stewardship groups.

Canvas residents in the Newhall/Highwood neighborhood and arrange to plant trees as requested by property owners in this district. Provide needed supplies to residents so they can properly care for the planted trees. Provide beginning and end-of-project surveys addressing residents' knowledge and satisfaction with trees on their street.

Report on Performance Measures

Introduction

The team working to complete this project included Hamden Tree Warden Chris Rhône, volunteer Planting Coordinator Mike Montgomery, and HAT members Diane Hoffman and Susan Neitlich. HAT core supporters led by Diane and Susan, conceived the project. Diane and Susan organized and held the meetings, created and carried out surveys, canvassed households (along with other HAT supporters), and made follow up contact with residents who requested and received trees. The outstanding work of both Mr. Rhône and his tree planting crew, and of Mr. Montgomery, reviewing sites, selecting trees, and educating residents, was indispensable to the success of this project.

Meetings/Initial Surveys

We held three meetings to gather information about residents' knowledge of and satisfaction with street trees in the Fifth District.

1) Zoom meeting with 4 representatives of the local Tau Xi Omega chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. March 7, 2024. This meeting was held to establish a relationship with the sorority and discuss our goals and how the group could be involved.

2) Meeting at Friendship Baptist Church of Hamden, 26 Edwards Street, with the local Tau Xi Omega chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. April 19, 2024. Fourteen community members attended the meeting.

We asked questions (orally) to gauge the group's knowledge about neighborhood street trees (*see attachment below*).

3) Meeting at Brundage Library, 91 Circular Avenue, April 3, 2024. Two community members attended. This meeting was not well attended as there was a huge rain storm that evening. The same questions as above were asked.

In those three meetings, we found great support for planting trees in southern Hamden. The AKA members were very knowledgeable about the many benefits of street trees and volunteered to help, as they could, with canvassing. All members of the group agreed that it is very important to plant trees in southern Hamden neighborhoods to increase shade, clean air, and well-being.

Households Canvassed

Volunteers contacted households as we canvassed from 5/21/23 to 7/5/24. We canvassed 233 households on the following streets in the Fifth District:

Augur St. 2
BrydenTerrace 15
Butler St. 5
Edwards St. 12
Giles St. 1
Goodrich St. 1
Homelands Terrace 1
Marlboro St. 11
Morris St. 1
Morse St. 75
Newbury St. 4
Newhall St. 29
Prospect Court 1
Shelton St. 35
Shepard St. 5
St.Mary St. 22
Wadsworth St. 3
Winchester Ave. 10

Trees

Requests and Planting

During our canvassing, 14 residents requested and received trees. Ultimately, 16 trees were planted (2 residents received 2 trees). Two additional residents who initially requested trees later declined to have the tree planted. Several of the requests were gathered at the town's Earth Day festival on April 27. After the trees were planted, we supplied all of the residents with a water bag, a trunk protector, and written watering instructions. (One resident declined a water bag.) Three households received a hose.

All trees were planted on the grassy strip in the town's right of way at the following addresses in the Fifth District:

96 Augur on Morris
104 Augur on Morris
35 Giles
50 Homelands Terrace
21 Marlboro Street
30 Marlboro Street
9 Morris Street
4 Prospect Court
20 Wadsworth Street
517 Newhall Street
474 Newhall Street
237 Butler Street
496 Shelton Avenue
130 Bryden Terrace

The following varieties were planted:

4 Cherokee Brave dogwoods (6' tall)
2 Spring Grove dogwoods (6' tall)
1 Black Gum (1.5" caliper*)
2 American Hophornbeam (2" caliper*)
1 Columnaris cherry (2.5" caliper*)
6 First Blush cherry (#25 container—large size)

*The trunk diameter measured 6" above the ground or root flare.

Feedback

We made direct contact in person or by phone, after the trees were planted, with 9 of the 14 residents. We asked if residents had questions or other feedback, and we provided oral watering instructions. The residents we spoke to were all very appreciative of the trees and their positive impact on their neighborhood.

Denise Burns, on Newhall Street, said she was planning to care for and enjoy the tree for years to come and was very much looking forward to seeing it bloom in the spring.

Drew Sweet, of Prospect Court, wrote to say:

"The new tree near our home is doing well. We are so glad to have it, since it was planted near the site of a beloved old tree that died and had to be taken down. I have learned how to use the water bag to avoid flooding the tree, and I appreciate how the bag simplifies giving the tree the large amount of water it needs each week. We look forward to seeing all the new growth in the spring and will certainly enjoy it in the years to come."

Max Ballardo, of Homelands Terrace, wrote:

“Earlier in the year I reached out to the town concerned about the taking down of a few trees. After talking with some tree commissioners they came promptly and talked to me about options to plant more trees in the neighborhood. One was planted at the front of my house. This is a beautiful addition that was carefully planned in its location. The commissioner helped as well after the planting with careful instruction on how to care for the tree. I look forward to seeing this tree grow.”

Education

Tree-related books for children and adults were purchased for the collection of the Whitneyville branch library. On October 10, DEEP Urban Forester Chris Teter gave a presentation at a community meeting at the Whitneyville library about caring for our community urban forest.

Conclusion

There were three major take-aways from the project:

- There was great enthusiasm for planting trees in the Fifth District, part of which has very limited tree canopy. It will be important to continue this tree planting program in this neighborhood so residents have the opportunity to participate in creating a healthier and more beautiful place to live.
- Introducing a culture of tree stewardship is a gradual process that can begin with an individual's request and care for a tree. Once the trees are in the ground, momentum builds. The residents begin to notice where trees have been planted, and the residents who have received trees feel part of a larger valuable project. For example, one Hamden resident who received a tree this fall saw that a tree around the corner from her home had a water bag, and she wondered if her tree needed one. (We did give her a water bag; the one she noticed was from a previous planting.)
- The most effective method to promote the residents' active engagement in a tree planting program is for canvassers/tree ambassadors to have one-on-one conversations in which residents can express their concerns and hopes for how trees will impact and benefit their lives.