

# MANAGING LEAN AND GREEN 2011-2012

## Workshop Summary

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### Tree Planting and Affordable Housing

#### Session 4: January 11, 2012

How do trees improve the quality of life in affordable housing developments and in surrounding communities? What are the benefits, challenges and opportunities that exist for advocacy organizations and affordable housing developers to increase the number of trees on their properties?

#### **Presenter**

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#### **Summary**

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[The New York Restoration Project \(NYRP\)](#) is a non-profit organization dedicated to transforming open space in underserved communities to create a greener, more sustainable New York City. Working in partnership with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, NYRP oversees the ambitious [MillionTreesNYC](#). MillionTreesNYC, one of the 132 [PlaNYC 2030](#) initiatives, is a citywide, public-private program with the ambitious goal to plant and care for one million new trees across the City's five boroughs over the next decade. By planting one million trees, New York City can increase its urban forest—the City's most valuable environmental asset made up of street trees, park trees, and trees on public, private and commercial land—while achieving the many quality-of-life benefits that come with planting trees.

Through PlanNYC, which was launched in 2007, the partnership of NYRP and NYC Parks will plant 1,000,000 trees by 2017. As of January 2012, 546,828 trees have been planted. The Parks Department is scheduled to plant 60% of the trees, NYRP will directly plant about 10% and will give away about 30% to individuals, community groups and non-profit organizations. The trees that NYC Parks plants are street trees and trees in city parks. Public health indexes are used to locate where these trees are most needed. NYRP will meet with private owners and organizations (affordable housing projects, schools, faith-based organizations, etc) to provide details on the benefits of planting trees; why they are important, what they mean to our environment and demonstrate how to plant them and how to care for them. In addition, NYRP works with state and city agencies, such as NYCHA and New York City and State DOTs, with jurisdictions over land that may be tree deficient. A component of NYRP's overall mission is to educate community groups, developers and the general public about systematically including trees into any landscaping considerations. Affordable housing landscapes are currently a focus area in which NYRP would like to have greater impact.

The “urban canopy cover” is a marker of the amount of trees in an area. In New York City, the amount of tree cover varies between 20-24% - which is actually a strikingly large difference. However, it is widely assumed that a more habitable city should maintain a 30% canopy cover. Why? The benefits of trees are significant; they actively perform the sequestration of carbon, the reduction of rainwater runoff and aid in overall biodiversity.

Tree Stewardship: What is required to receive a tree? NYRP requires responsible ownership of the trees that are given away. Young trees take a considerable amount of attention prior to being fully capable of growing on their own; they must be regularly watered (20 gallons/week) and pruned for 1-2 years. It is therefore critical for new tree owners to consider and undertake a maintenance plan before planting. Within city parks, NYC Parks will water for the first two years, but the trees that NYRP plants or gives away, must be properly cared for by the new owner.

Tree Types: What types of trees are typically planted? There are dozens of tree species that NYRP uses, based on spatial layout (shade) site conditions (soil type, depth, moisture) and seasonal considerations that must be understood prior to bringing in trees. A good mix of trees will also ward off any broad, systemic problems that might occur to any one species. In general, the approach is to mix a number of tree types, including some wilder, vernacular trees that will create different layers and work together. A broad range of species are planted, but some common trees frequently planted for their urban hardiness and leaf cover include Honey Locust, Red Oak, and Littleleaf Linden.

Tree Planting Costs: Typically, the trees that NYRP oversees are planted in existing soil cover. Tree pits that are cut into pavement are considerably more expensive (\$1500-2000/tree). However, creating tree areas in playgrounds and parking lots can have tremendous payoffs, and have previously been funded through numerous grants. (whether grants will continue to be forthcoming is not assured) A typical 1” tree is about \$40, a 2” tree about \$80-100, the cost of which is covered by the MillionTrees program. If a contractor is required, the tree planting in soft ground is typically about \$200-250/tree, but NYRP works primarily with volunteer labor and well-trained staff overseeing the planting. If an appropriate funding source is available, NYRP will cover the cost of a contractor. If a building owner wants to put in a street tree, NYC Parks should be contacted first. However, if Parks cannot do it (for instance, if the neighborhood is not in a high need location) then NYRP may be able to provide trees and assist with required street permits.

Tree Acquisition Process: There is no formal process. For information on how to secure trees for your site, please contact **Chris Vanterpool at [cvanterpool@nyrp](mailto:cvanterpool@nyrp) or 212.333.2552**. NYRP can assist with getting volunteers, or helping with resident engagement in the planting process.

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Managing Lean and Green is a monthly workshop sponsored by the Supportive Housing Network of New York, the Pratt Center for Community Development, the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development, and the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board. Enterprise Community Partners is a series contributor.

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