

Tree Equity: Engaging and Educating the Community Through the Hamilton Tree Equity Project

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A green tree surrounded by residential houses
Photo credit: TomML, Unsplash

Overview

Trees are a vital asset to communities by combating climate change, providing shade, and improving air quality¹. Even though trees provide a myriad of mental and physical health benefits, trees are not equitably distributed in urban cities across North America². Canopy coverage is significantly higher in neighbourhoods with higher incomes, continuing to perpetuate the socio-economic disadvantages faced by these communities as they lack access to the benefits trees provide³.

Hamilton's urban forest is not immune to these problems, with canopy coverage that is 8% lower than the average neighbouring cities and has an inequitable distribution of trees⁴. The goal of our project was to collaborate with Green Venture on their mission to create equity-focused plans and policies for Hamilton's urban forest on CityHousing Hamilton properties⁵.

Objectives

1. Educate the Hamilton community on Tree Equity
2. Support the development and promotion of an online survey for CityHousing Hamilton residents
3. Provide resources for Hamilton residents on common local tree species

Reporting

To educate the Hamilton community about Tree Equity, we created eight social media posts and shared one each week under the "Tree Tuesday" campaign on Green Venture's Instagram account. We highlighted information on topics including the environmental and health benefits of trees, green infrastructure, and the importance of protecting Hamilton's urban forest. In total, our posts reached 9037 people with 565 likes, 36 shares, and 6 comments*.

We assisted with the development of a survey, ensuring that it was accessible, concise, easy to understand, and had a high projected survey completion rate to increase participation. The survey was then added to a Google Form and distributed to CityHousing Hamilton residents by Green Venture. We also created a poster with information about the survey and its importance. Green Venture used this to further promote the survey and increase participation by distributing it on CityHousing Hamilton properties.

To provide resources on local tree species, we collaborated with Nature at McMaster to identify the most common tree species in Hamilton and then conducted independent research on how to identify them. We then created ten "Tree Cards", which are physical or digital information cards including an image of a tree species and related facts, such as height and other identifiable features. Green Venture plans to distribute the Tree Cards to CityHousing Hamilton residents and other community members to inform them about the importance of trees and Tree Equity.

*As of December 6, 2021

Collaborators

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