

## Rebuilding the Tree Canopy in Northeast Ohio

In 2019, Cuyahoga County began rebuilding the tree canopy, a mission rooted in environmental stewardship, community engagement, and sustainability. As urbanization encroached on green spaces and industrialization left scars on the landscape, the county recognized the urgent need to replenish its tree canopy.

At the core of Cuyahoga County's initiative was the aim to increase tree canopy coverage, enhancing the county's ecological resilience, mitigating the urban heat island effect, and improving air quality. The County sought to foster community involvement, by instilling a sense of environmental responsibility among residents and promoting a culture of sustainability. To achieve these goals, Cuyahoga County implemented a multifaceted approach, encompassing tree planting initiatives, education, and partnerships with local organizations and businesses.

Through extensive research and assessment, priority areas for tree planting were identified based on factors such as canopy coverage, population density, and environmental vulnerability. Community input has been solicited through public forums and outreach programs, ensuring that the initiatives resonate with local residents and address their concerns.

Cuyahoga County's revitalization efforts include tree planting events which rallied volunteers to contribute for a worthy cause. These events not only contribute to the county's tree canopy goals but also foster a sense of camaraderie and environmental stewardship within the community. Moreover, the county provides resources and incentives for residents to plant and maintain trees on their properties, further expanding the green footprint across the region.

Collaborating with state and local governments, the county has championed legislation to protect existing trees, support tree canopy preservation and expansion, streamline the permitting process for tree planting, and incentivize developers to incorporate green spaces into urban design. These policy measures serve as a catalyst for sustainable development and ensure that the benefits of a robust tree canopy are safeguarded for future generations.

Neighborhoods once devoid of greenery now boast lush tree-lined streets, providing shade, improving air quality, and enhancing the overall quality of life for residents. The success of Cuyahoga County's tree canopy rebuilding efforts and commitment to environmental stewardship has garnered national recognition, inspiring other communities to embark on similar initiatives and sparking a green revolution across the country.