



## 20 QUESTIONS TO ASK RESIDENTS IN LOW-CANOPY COMMUNITIES

AN ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION ENVIRONMENTAL  
JUSTICE TRAINING RESOURCE

### HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE:

It is important to ask questions that will help you understand the viewpoints of those you hope to serve, *and* to avoid the urge to offer your viewpoint or “solutions” before you fully comprehend their opinions. It is also important to create reciprocal relationships with people whose time and perspectives you seek.

Below is a list of questions designed to open lines of communication with residents. But before you share it with them, run it by a community leader or a community-based organization employee to determine:

1. If the questions are worded appropriately
2. If any questions should be added or removed
3. How best to gain resident feedback to these questions in an equitable way (e.g. by offering compensation or reciprocal services like a free tree consultation, or help with community-based programs).

You may want to share these questions with your colleagues and have them help you identify which community-based leaders would be good candidates you should engage with. You may also want to have an internal discussion on how these questions fit with your existing community engagement efforts.



### QUESTIONS TO UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS AND NARRATIVES:

1. What is special about your neighborhood?
  - What do you like about living here?
  - What do you want others to know about the neighborhood?
2. What are some of the biggest challenges you face in this neighborhood?

### QUESTIONS TO UNDERSTAND RESIDENTS' VIEWS ON TREES AND TREE-PLANTING:

3. Please describe your thoughts and feelings when you hear the word “tree” or “trees”. You can also write or draw anything that comes to mind on the blank sheet of paper provided.
4. What are some positive outcomes of planting trees in this neighborhood? They can be financial, social, environmental, or something else.
5. What are some negative outcomes of planting trees in this neighborhood? They can be financial, social, environmental, or something else.
6. What questions do you have about *trees*?
7. What questions do you have about *programs* to plant and care for trees in your neighborhood?

### QUESTIONS TO GAUGE RESIDENTS' TRUST IN YOUR ORGANIZATION:

8. Based on your experience with [organization name] and its employees, place a check mark next to statements below that you believe are accurate.

This organization and its employees...

- have skills and knowledge that are needed to improve urban trees and green spaces in my community.
- share information openly and deliver on their promises.
- care about serving my best interests and those of my neighbors.

9. What is one word that comes to mind when our organization is mentioned?
10. Would you contact us for help with (specific problem)?
11. Are you comfortable interacting with the organization?
12. Are our organization's partnerships with new communities further developed or maintained after first contact?
13. Do you believe your community has benefited from interactions with our organization?

## QUESTIONS TO FACILITATE RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN FORESTRY DECISION-MAKING:

14. Where should we start planting trees *first*? (Select one option):

- Between the sidewalk and street
- In parks
- On private property
- At schools
- In [neighborhood name]

For the questions below, select ALL relevant options.

15. Which characteristic(s) of trees are most important to you?

- Shade
- Beauty
- Oxygen
- Wildlife habitat
- Capturing and filtering rainwater
- Something else (please describe):

16. Where would you like to see trees planted in your community?

- Between the sidewalk and street
- In parks
- On private property
- At schools
- In [neighborhood name]

17. How would you like to participate in tree planting?

- I can help to find homes for new trees by contacting people in my neighborhood (see example of [Root Nashville's Neighborhood Planting Captain program](#))
- I can help plant trees
- I can cheer others on who are planting trees
- I can bring snacks or water to share with volunteers
- Something else (please describe):

18. What kind of support would you need or want to participate in tree planting?

- Supplies (e.g. shovels, gloves)
- Demonstration and instruction on how to plant trees
- A trained volunteer to help me plant trees
- Refreshments and snacks
- Something else (please describe):

19. How would you like to stay in touch with us after tree planting?

- I would like to call you if I have any questions or concerns about a tree.
- I would like you to call me every so often to see how my tree is doing.
- I would like you to attend community meetings in my neighborhood to answer questions and address tree concerns
- Something else (please describe):

20. How do you think we should measure the success of our urban forestry program?

- The majority of residents involved in the program had a positive experience.
- The majority of residents felt adequately involved in decision-making throughout the process.
- The majority of residents feel confident in the stewardship plan for the trees planted.
- Something else (please describe):



## **THE ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION AND FAIR FORESTS CONSULTING**

At the Arbor Day Foundation, we believe everyone should have access to the powerful benefits of trees. To help strengthen our focus on communities that need trees most, we partner with experts like Dr. Christine Carmichael from Fair Forests Consulting. This resource, crafted by Dr. Carmichael, is part of our ongoing commitment to empowering our partners to grow their environmental justice work in urban forestry.

Alliance for Community Tree members have access to our full environmental justice training series in the ACT Member Resource Center. Learn about this network and how to join at [arborday.org/ACT](http://arborday.org/ACT).