

# Community Greenspace

Annual Report 2021



NEW HAVEN / **URBAN  
RESOURCES  
INITIATIVE, INC.**

The Urban Resources Initiative is a university–not-for-profit partnership actively engaged in community forestry activities throughout New Haven.

URI's mission is to foster community-based land stewardship, promote environmental education, advance the practice of urban forestry, and provide Yale students with clinical learning opportunities.

URI works in three areas: community forestry, environmental education, and training and capacity building.



*Volunteers from Ward Street Neighbors in front of newly-planted perennials.*

URI is both a program of the Hixon Center of Urban Ecology at the Yale School of the Environment as well as a nonprofit guided by a local board of directors. The strength of this partnership is the connection of the expertise of the University and the board members whose diverse interests represent all corners of New Haven. Together we are creating field opportunities for Yale students to learn while simultaneously giving back to the community. Founder Bill Burch describes this as a “mutual pathway of learning” where community members and Yale student interns learn from each other and together improve the environment.



## URI Staff

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Colleen Murphy-Dunning

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GREENSKILLS MANAGER

Caroline Scanlan

FIELD CREW REPRESENTATIVE

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GREENSKILLS PROGRAM MANAGER

Matthew Viens

## 2021 Greenspace Interns

Mitch Baron, '22 M.A.R.

Chris DeFiore, '22 M.F.

Paul Freudenburg, '22 M.E.M./M.Arch.

Musa Joko, '22 M.F.

Carlos Velazquez, '24 M.E.M. /M.S. (with Tsinghua University, Beijing, China)



*Chris Ozyck (far left) and Caro Scanlan (second to left) with the interns on a very sunny day.*



*L-R: Carlos Velazquez, Mitch Baron, Musa Joko, Paul Freudenburg, and Chris DeFiore.*



# 2021 Season Highlights

## Fair Haven Neighbors in Action: Environmental Restoration and Community Building

With over a decade of experience and dozens of tree plantings under their belt, Fair Haven Neighbors in Action are a true testament of industriousness, perseverance, and love for community. The legacy of their work is present both physically in the canopied landscape of Poplar, Exchange, and Walcott Streets, and spiritually, in the connections and relationships built between neighbors. Legacy is not rashly built; it takes a series of small, concerted efforts over many years to materialize, and this year represents another page in the chapter of a group that has left a lasting positive impact on the social and environmental landscape of New Haven.

The summer started off at a leisurely pace, with the group engaging in stewardship of previous years' work through the maintenance of street trees and tree pits. Despite the low numbers, the neighborhood showed noticeable improvements after each activity, which left the group feeling proud and accomplished. The highlight of the summer came through the planting of a memorial crabapple tree in front of a neighbor's house on Exchange Street. Eager volunteers from inside and outside the community worked together to plant the tree, demonstrating the power that environmental restoration holds as a tool for community building.

*Written by Carlos Velasquez, FHNA's 2021 intern.*



*Planting a crabapple tree on Exchange Street with Fair Haven Neighbors in Action on a hot July 17. Longtime group leader Ed Rodriguez is at right.*

## Dedication of The Botanical Garden of Healing dedicated to Victims of Gun Violence

In its fifth summer as a Community Greenspace, the New Haven Botanical Garden of Healing was formally dedicated on Saturday, June 12, 2021. Leader Marlene Miller-Pratt, Mayor Justin Elicker, Alder Richard Furlow (D-27), and Senator Richard Blumenthal spoke to the over 200 attendees who turned out despite the intermittently rainy weather. The ceremony concluded with a moving reading of the names of each of the persons whose lives were cut short by gun violence in New Haven since 1976.

The ceremony marked the culmination of years of visioning, searching for a site, planning, construction, and planting. Within the short time that the park has been open, it is clear that it has already been one of the most impactful sites URI has supported. Both those who have lost loved ones to gun violence and the wider New Haven community spend time in the garden, whether to visit the brick with a lost loved one's name, admire the colorful flowers, or to sit and enjoy the beautiful view of West Rock and the West River.



Three new groups joined the Community Greenspace program this summer:

- **Friends of Fort Wooster Park**
- **Ward Street Neighbors**
- **333 Valley Street**

Each of these groups had a successful summer, and we look forward to continuing to support them in the future! See the following pages for more details on these groups.



# 2021 Active Community Groups: Parks



## Friends of **Beaver Ponds Park**

*Neighborhood:* Beaver Hills  
*2021 intern:* Mitch Baron  
*Group since:* 2004



## **Beaver Ponds Park Urban Oasis**

*Neighborhood:* Beaver Hills  
*2021 intern:* Musa Joko  
*Group since:* 2015



## **Blockwatch 303** (emeritus)

*Neighborhood:* Westville  
*2021 intern:* Paul Freudenburg  
*Group since:* 2001



## New Haven **Botanical Garden of Healing** dedicated to Victims of Gun Violence

*Neighborhood:* West Rock  
*2021 intern:* Mitch Baron  
*Group since:* 2017



## **Cherry Ann Park**

*Neighborhood:* Newhallville  
*2021 intern:* Mitch Baron  
*Group since:* 2014

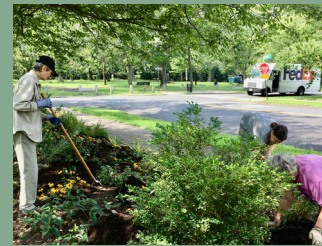
**Parks groups** (continued onto the following pages) work in City of New Haven parks.

**Emeritus groups** have completed their planting and revitalization goals, but continue to receive support from URI for ongoing stewardship.



## **Dover Beach**

*Neighborhood:* East Rock  
*2021 intern:* Chris DeFiore  
*Group since:* 2006



## **East Edge Gardeners** (emeritus)

*Neighborhood:* Edgewood  
*2021 intern:* Musa Joko  
*Group since:* 1998



## Friends of **East Rock Park**

*Neighborhood:* East Rock  
*2021 intern:* Chris DeFiore  
*Group since:* 2008



## Friends of **Edgewood Park**

*Neighborhood:* Edgewood  
*2021 intern:* Paul Freudenburg  
*Group since:* 1996



## **Fairmont Park**

*Neighborhood:* Fair Haven Heights  
*2021 intern:* Chris DeFiore  
*Group since:* 2013





## Farmington Canal

*Neighborhood:* Newhallville  
*2021 intern:* Paul Freudenburg  
*Group since:* 2012



## Friends of Fort Wooster Park

*(new group 2021)*  
*Neighborhood:* Annex  
*2021 intern:* Mitch Baron  
*Group since:* 2021



## Hemingway Butterfly Garden

*Neighborhood:* Fair Haven Heights  
*2021 intern:* Chris DeFiore  
*Group since:* 2020



## Lenzi Park

*Neighborhood:* Wooster Square  
*2021 intern:* Musa Joko  
*Group since:* 2002



## Mill River Trail

*Neighborhood:* Fair Haven  
*2021 intern:* Carlos Velasquez  
*Group since:* 2016



## Monitor Square *(emeritus)*

*Neighborhood:* West River  
*2021 intern:* Chris DeFiore  
*Group since:* 2004



## Quinnipiac River Park

*Neighborhood:* Fair Haven  
*2021 intern:* Carlos Velasquez  
*Group since:* 2014



## Rainbow Park

*Neighborhood:* Dwight  
*2021 intern:* Carlos Velasquez  
*Group since:* 2005



## Scantlebury Park

*Neighborhood:* Dixwell  
*2021 intern:* Musa Joko  
*Group since:* 2004

Some parks groups have been granted additional support through the **Urban Oasis** program, a partnership between URI, the City of New Haven Department of Parks and Public Works, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Audubon CT, and Common Ground High School. These groups focus on creating wildlife habitat in urban areas, and some receive additional support for five weeks each summer from a crew of students from Common Ground High School. Urban Oasis groups included **Beaver Ponds Park Urban Oasis**, **Cherry Ann Park**, **Dover Beach**, the **Farmington Canal Trail**, and the **Mill River Trail**.



# 2021 Active Community Groups: Streetscapes



## Bradley/Wooster

*Neighborhood:* Wooster Square  
*2021 intern:* Chris DeFiore  
*Group since:* 2004



## Cedar Hill (emeritus)

*Neighborhood:* East Rock  
*2021 intern:* Mitch Baron  
*Group since:* 2004



## Chatham Square Neighborhood Association

*Neighborhood:* Fair Haven  
*2021 intern:* Musa Joko  
*Group since:* 2012



## Clifton Street River Garden

*Neighborhood:* Fair Haven  
*2021 intern:* Carlos Velasquez  
*Group since:* 2010



## Fair Haven Neighbors in Action

*Neighborhood:* Fair Haven  
*2021 intern:* Carlos Velasquez  
*Group since:* 2010

**Streetscape** groups work on beautifying curbstrips, medians, roundabouts, and other streetside areas.



## Oyster Point

*Neighborhood:* Hill  
*2021 intern:* Mitch Baron  
*Group since:* 1999



## 333 Valley Street

*(new group 2021)*  
*Neighborhood:* West Rock  
*2021 intern:* Paul Freudenburg  
*Group since:* 2021



## Ward Street Neighbors

*(new group 2021)*  
*Neighborhood:* Hill  
*2021 intern:* Carlos Velasquez  
*Group since:* 2021



## Westville Roundabout (emeritus)

*Neighborhood:* Westville  
*2021 intern:* Musa Joko  
*Group since:* 2017



## 2021 Active Community Groups: Vacant Lots



### **Arch Street** (*emeritus*)

*Neighborhood:* Hill

*2021 intern:* Carlos Velasquez

*Group since:* 1995



### **Blake Street Pocket Park**

*Neighborhood:* Beaver Hills

*2021 intern:* Musa Joko

*Group since:* 2018



### **Bradley Street Pocket Park**

(or **Mulberry Jam**)

*Neighborhood:* Downtown

*2021 intern:* Paul Freudenburg

*Group since:* 2019



### **Orchard Street**

*Neighborhood:* Dixwell

*2021 intern:* Chris DeFiore

*Group since:* 2007



### **Saltonstall & Lloyd**

*Neighborhood:* Fair Haven

*2021 intern:* Mitch Baron

*Group since:* 2002

**Vacant lot groups** work on city-owned vacant lots, including in “pocket parks” which are not official city parks. Some vacant lot groups also work on streetscapes in the blocks adjacent to or nearby the lot.



### **Shelton Avenue**

*Neighborhood:* Newhallville

*2021 intern:* Paul Freudenburg

*Group since:* 2020



### **Shepard & Huntington**

*Neighborhood:* Newhallville

*2021 intern:* Chris DeFiore

*Group since:* 2007



### **Shepard Street**

*Neighborhood:* Newhallville

*2021 intern:* Mitch Baron

*Group since:* 1999

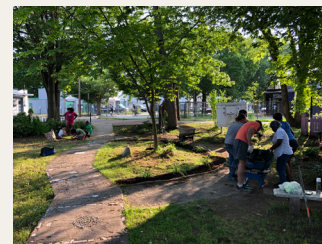


### **Washington Avenue**

*Neighborhood:* Hill

*2021 intern:* Paul Freudenburg

*Group since:* 2016



### **Watson & Bassett**

*Neighborhood:* Newhallville

*2021 intern:* Musa Joko

*Group since:* 1996

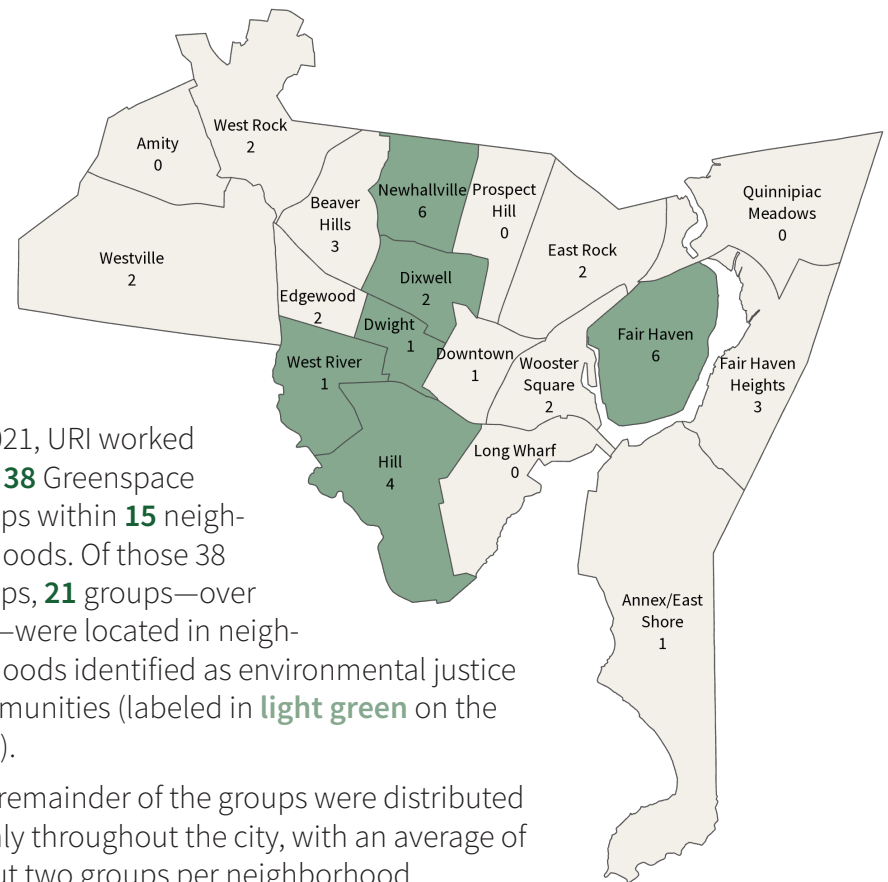


# Equity, ParkScore, & the Park Restoration Initiative

New Haven's citizens have experienced a long history of environmental injustice and the inequitable distribution of environmental resources. This phenomenon is in large part due to environmental racism and the long-standing practice of disinvestment in historically low-income communities, which are usually majority-BIPOC.

Concrete examples of these inequities include an uneven distribution of tree canopy coverage and greenspace access across neighborhoods. Climate change will only exacerbate these disparities, as temperatures increase and severe weather events become more common, while the COVID-19 pandemic has also heightened the importance of outdoor spaces to community life.

To provide support in the communities with the most need, **URI focuses on partnering with leaders in historically neglected communities.** The map on the facing page, as well as other metrics, shows the results of our efforts at meeting that goal.



In 2021, URI worked with **38** Greenspace groups within **15** neighborhoods. Of those 38 groups, **21** groups—over half—were located in neighborhoods identified as environmental justice communities (labeled in **light green** on the map).

The remainder of the groups were distributed evenly throughout the city, with an average of about two groups per neighborhood.

To learn more about specific inequities within New Haven's park system, in 2021 URI partnered with the Trust for Public Land's (TPL) ParkScore Index to systematically evaluate New Haven's park system and learn about acreage, amenities, access, investment, and equity. Regina Sung, an intern hired to complete the ParkScore project, visited 136 greenspaces across New Haven to collect data on location and acreage, in addition to counting amenities such as trash cans, picnic tables, basketball courts, or public restrooms.

Positively, the results showed that New Haven ranks highly in access to greenspaces, with 96% of residents living within a 10-minute walk of a park. However, parkland acreage and park amenities were inequitably distributed among the city's neighborhoods; for instance,

the majority-people of color Hill neighborhood has only 21 acres of parkland for its 15,500 residents.

This information will guide future projects of URI's Park Restoration Initiative, which supports work at City of New Haven parks aimed at correcting inequities in park amenities and infrastructure. For example, previous projects of PRI have included constructing a pavilion and installing a splash pad and playground equipment at Cherry Ann Park in Newhallville.

The ParkScore project was made possible by a grant from the Greater New Haven Green Fund (<http://www.gnhgreenfund.org/>). We are grateful for its support and for the Fund's efforts to realize its mission of engaging and empowering citizens to help create clean, healthy, and environmentally sustainable communities.



## Summary Statistics: Community Investment

Number of volunteer events: **222**

Number of community volunteers: **736**

Total community volunteer hours: **3,619**

These community investment statistics are our primary way of quantifying how well we are reaching our goal of “community building.” As hoped, participation significantly grew compared to last year’s pandemic summer, with an 84% increase in number of volunteers and a 60% increase in cumulative volunteer hours.

The average Greenspace group this summer saw about 10 individual volunteers (excluding the outlier Botanical Garden, the mean number of individual volunteers was 11.3 and the median was 9).

Like last year, the **Botanical Garden of Healing** drew the highest total volunteer participation: 154 individual volunteers contributing 473 hours of community service across 15 volunteer events. Unlike most Community Greenspaces, these volunteers came from across the city—a necessity for a site of its size and complexity. The new group with the highest participation this summer was **333 Valley Street**, headed by community leader Honda Smith in the West Rock neighborhood, where 16 volunteers contributed 32 hours of service.



*Community members at Blake Street Pocket Park in Beaver Hills.*



*Community members at the Orchard Street greenspace in Dixwell.*



## Summary Statistics: Planting

Number of trees planted: **39**

Number of shrubs planted: **100**

Number of perennials planted: **539**

The number of trees, shrubs, and perennials planted each summer serves as our primary measure of how well we are meeting our goal of “ecological rehabilitation.” Although at first glance these numbers appear to indicate a decline from last year’s, this is attributable to the planting of the entire Botanical Garden of Healing in 2020, which accounted for over 1,500 perennials and 100 shrubs.

Highlights from this year’s planting include 7 trees at **Fairmont Park** in Fair Haven Heights, planted as part of an long-term forest restoration project in the park; 63 new perennials at **East Rock Park**, as part of a new education center and pollinator habitat; 25 new shrubs and 13 new perennials at **Scantlebury Park** in Dixwell; and 40 new perennials along the **Farmington Canal Trail** in Newhallville.

Invasive species removal also contributes to our goal of ecological rehabilitation, although we don’t track specific data for this activity. Sites with natural forested areas, such as **Fort Wooster Park** and **Beaver Ponds Park**, devoted lots of time and energy to invasive species removal this summer.



*Planting shrubs and perennials at Scantlebury Park.*



*Preparing to plant a red oak tree at 333 Valley Street.*



## Summary Statistics: Tree Survivability

Number of trees planted, 2020: **20**

Number of trees surviving, 2021: **20**

Survival rate: **100%**

URI interns and community groups document survival rates of trees as an indication of how well the program is meeting its goal of stewardship. The survival rate above is commensurate with past survival rates, which are usually in the mid-90s.



*Planting a sugar maple tree at Beaver Ponds Park.*



*Watering a newly-planted tree at Edgewood Park.*



# Community Greenspace in the News

Jan. 29, WSHU Public Radio: “[Conn. Community Gardens Are At The Center Of COVID Relief — And Food Security](#)” (featuring URI Director Colleen Murphy-Dunning and Associate Director Chris Ozyck)

June 9, *New Haven Independent*: “[Moms Reach Finish Line on Healing Garden](#)” (featuring the Botanical Garden of Healing)

June 12, NBC Connecticut: “[New Haven Botanical Garden of Healing Opens](#)” (featuring the BGH)

June 12, *New Haven Register*: “[‘New Haven, we will heal’: Community dedicates garden memorializing gun violence victims in New Haven](#)” (featuring the BGH)

Sep. 1, *Register*: “[Neighbors make mulberry jam as New Haven seeks agreement for ‘Mulberry Jam’ parklet](#)” (featuring Bradley Street Pocket Park/Mulberry Jam)

Sep. 15, *Yale News*: “[Fellowship nurtures Yale students’ connections to New Haven](#)” (featuring interns Carlos Velasquez and Musa Joko)

Oct. 1, *Independent*: “[City, Statewide Gun-Control Group Team Up On Violence Prevention Strategy](#)” (featuring the BGH)

Oct. 2, *Independent*: “[10 New Bricks Laid at Homicide Memorial](#)” (featuring the BGH)

Oct. 14, *Daily Nutmeg*: “[Making Peace](#)” (featuring the BGH)



Community members next to new plantings at Quinnipiac River Park.



Longtime leader Jody Kelly and her young neighbor working on the Shepard Street greenspace.





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