Arbor Day Foundation™

WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY TREES DAY

PARTNERS IN COMMUNITY FORESTRY CONFERENCE 2026



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HOW TO PLANT A DUAL LANGUAGE URBAN FORESTRY PROGRAM

Lessons on building a community led forestry program from Providence, Rhode Island



How to Plant a Dual Language Urban Forestry Program



PRESENTED BY

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Site Prep

Providence, RI, USA

- East Coast of the United States with a population of about 200,000
- This land has been home to Narragansett, Pokanoket, Nipmuc, and Wampanoag Peoples since time before written record.
- Rhode Island thrived off the transatlantic trade of goods and services, many of them directly tied to slavery: rum, molasses, cotton, textiles
- Pollution remains from the Industrial Revolution and the textile boom, and companies used the land, and the river, as a disposal site for toxic byproducts.



Site Prep

Providence, RI, USA

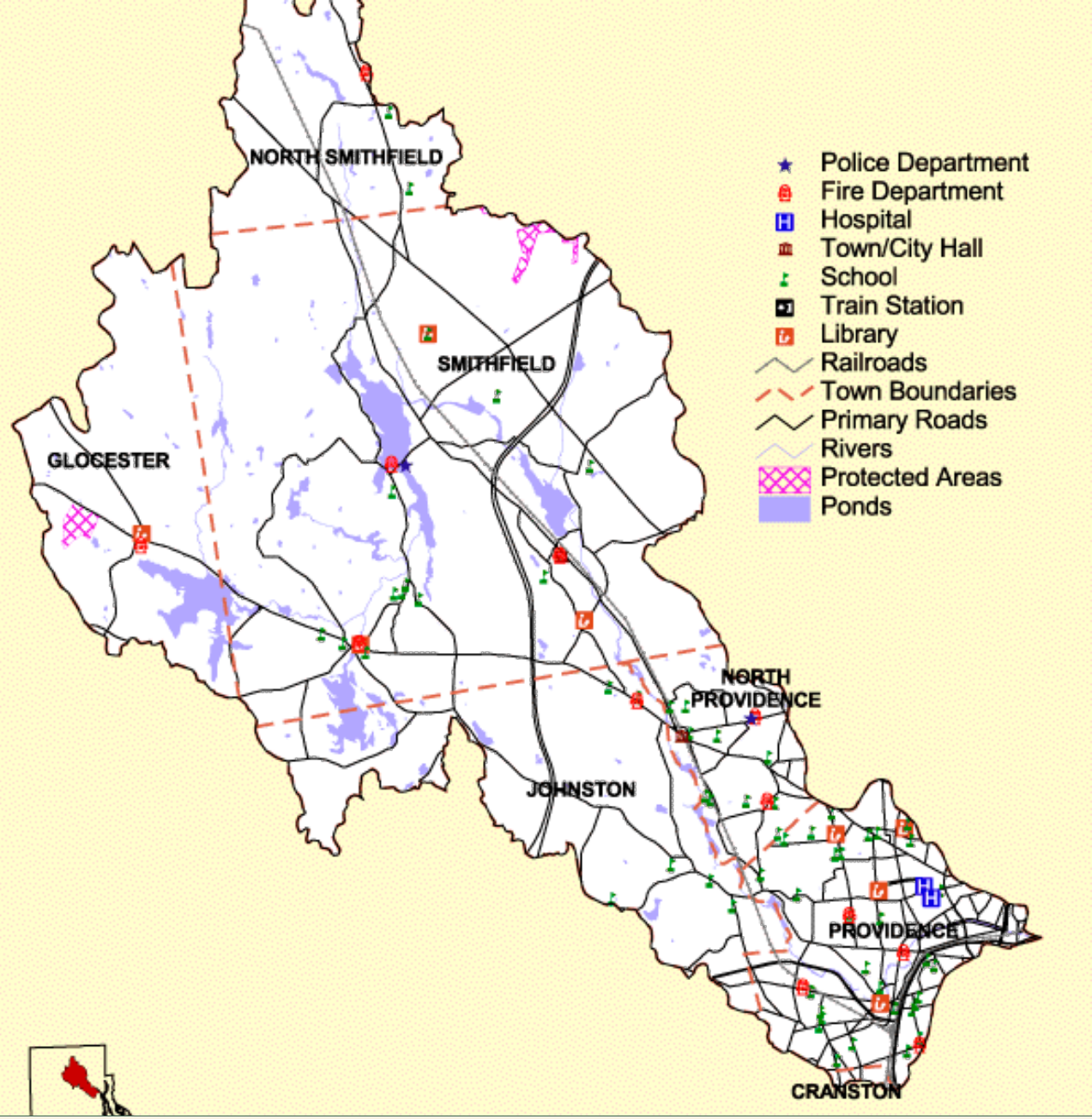
- Downstream of a superfund site
  - Providence is downstream from Centredale Manor, the site of three-plus decades of industrial polluting from chemical production and drum reconditioning, creating one of the most toxic Superfund sites in New England
  - Within the areas we primarily serve, the population is majority latine, lower than average family income, and lower tree canopy cover than more affluent areas of the city



Site Prep

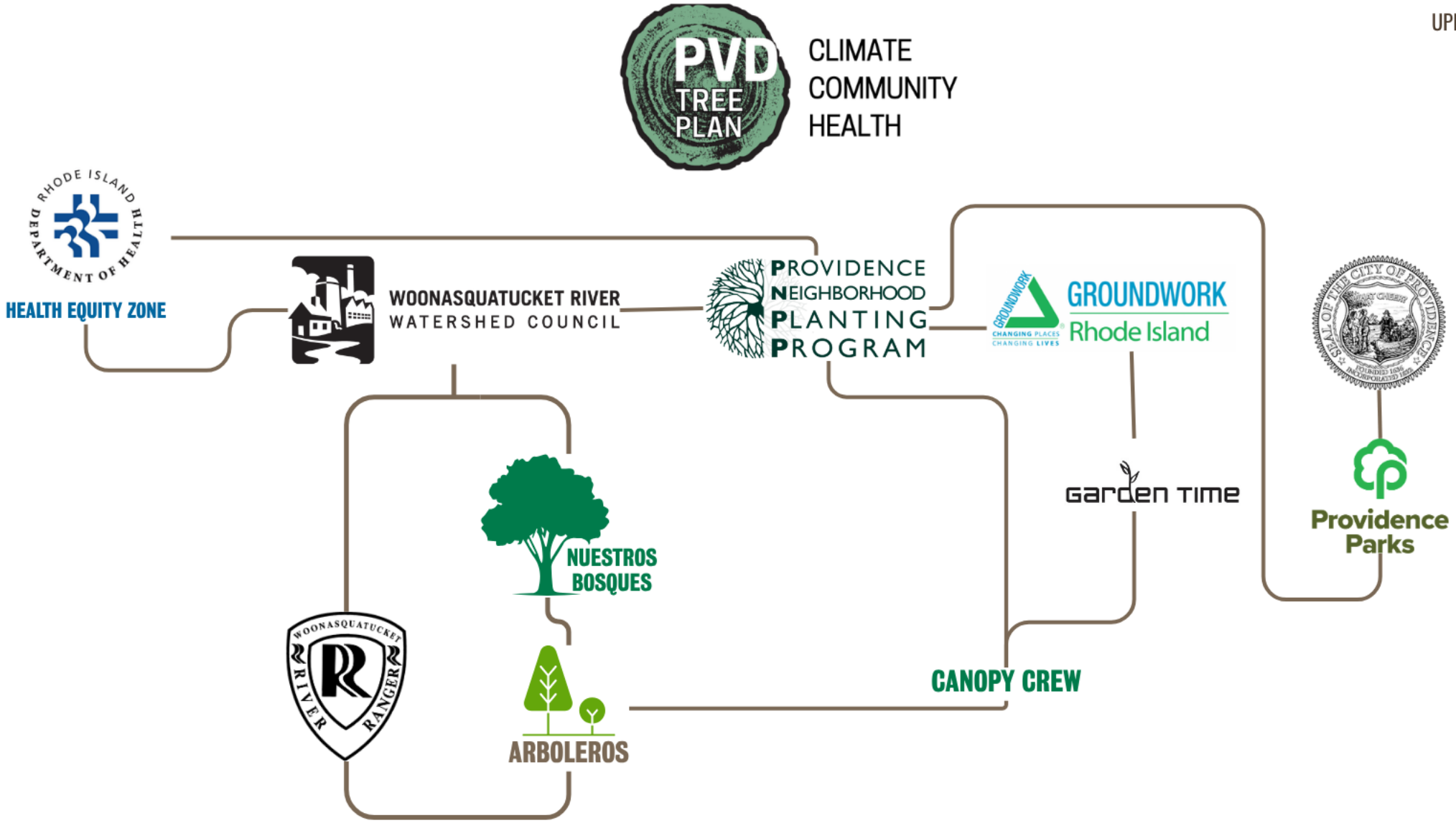
WRWC + Nuestros Bosques Goals

- **WRWC History**
  - Since the 1990s, the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (WRWC) has worked with communities to protect and fortify the Woonasquatucket River's natural resources in Providence and five nearby cities and towns.
  - Departments:
    - Bikes, Greenway, Community Action, Recreation, Education
- **Nuestros Bosques History**
  - $1 million pass through grant from the Hispanic Access Foundation
  - Grant term is 3 years, but we started a year late following a legal challenge



ORGANIZATIONALTREE CHART

UPDATED 10/28/26



Site Prep

PVD Tree Plan

- The PVD Tree Plan lays out a vision and strategic pathway to a healthy, just, and resilient urban forest in Providence.
- Community-led initiative and the product of a multi-year collaboration among many individual, community, nonprofit, and City stakeholders
- Published in Fall of 2023
- Goal is to plant and maintain more trees in historically underserved areas
- https://pvdtreeplan.org/



Planting

Nuestros Bosques Goals

- **Maintain and Plant Public Trees**
  - Focus on low tree equity communities with low tree canopy
- **Foster Resident leadership**
  - Offer a stipended urban tree stewardship course
  - Monthly hands-on urban forest care days
  - Public workshops
- **Plant Micro/Miyawaki Forest**
  - Plant a tiny forest and facilitate community led care of this forest in 02908 or 02909



Planting

Arboleros

- 10 Week Introductory Program on Urban Forestry
- Bilingual English/Spanish
- Every session taught in one language, then the other – two languages at same time
  - Chose not to do simultaneous translation in order to preserve class cohesion
  - Gives people an opportunity to practice each language
- Stipends, food, childcare
- Way more interest than spaces
- Always working on getting people from outside our bubbles



Planting

Arboleros - Class Topics

- **Tree Equity**
  - What areas in town have trees and why
  - Connections with asthma rates, income and other factors
- **Tree Biology and ID**
  - Parts of a tree, photosynthesis, seasonal changes, common species and how to describe trees
- **Ecology**
  - Urban ecology, food webs, forest succession, ecosystems, invasive species





Planting

Arboleros - Leadership Class

- 6-week class focused on preparing participants to lead their own plantings in the spring
- Written with PNPP
- 29 Class participants from:
  - Arboleros graduates
  - PNPP Tree leaders
  - Campeones Climaticos - a WRWC Nuevas Voces leadership class
- Teachers from Nuestros Bosques, PNPP, Canopy Crew and Groundworks



Planting

Forest Care Days + Other Events

- 478 people at 32 events as of the end of September
- Public events enable us to share our work with more people
- Hands on learning opportunities for participants of all kinds at all levels
- Additional paid learning opportunities for class participants
- Mix of learning opportunities and project time
- Opportunities for class participants to design/lead sections
- Adds variety to our offerings, i.e. street tree care, mushroom log inoculation, maple tapping and boil events, etc.



Pruning

Arboleros

- Class Structure
  - Two 10-week classes and a 6-week class was ambitious
    - Wrote the curriculum as we went which was sometimes overwhelming
  - Weather was a challenge when we wanted to be outside as much as possible in New England
  - No one likes classes that are pure lectures!



Pruning

Arboleros

- Class size
  - Small classes were easier to manage, but with the interest it was hard to turn people away
- Pacing
  - Dual language means information takes twice as long to go through
  - Took a while to figure out what is a digestible amount of information to cover
  - Want to prioritize relevant, empowering information




FROM DATA
TO ACTION
Próximos Eventos
Upcoming Events
MARTHA'S
VINEYARD

Pruning

Events

- **Size**
  - We are consistently drawing 20+ participants since our first few events
  - Reassess the volume of work for these larger groups
- **Schedule**
  - In 2026, we had monthly events from April through October
  - Need to reassess how many we are doing and when
- **Topics**
  - Want to cover things that interest our participants, always asking for feedback



Die Back

When Things Fall Apart

- **Orchard Loss**
  - Benton Street Orchard was sold out from under us
  - Donated by Father Raymond, an important neighbor
  - We were working on relocating trees and plants, and grafting some of the trees that were not movable, but then the lot was bulldozed without notifying us
- **Staffing Challenges**
  - Only one person is full time on this grant, hard to be constantly pulled between priorities





Buds

CPU Hez Forestry

- **Health Equity Zones**
  - Rhode Island does not have county level health departments
  - Health Equity Zones (HEZs) connect state health departments with community members to help inform public health policies and programs
  - Forestry is one of the core components of public health



Buds

Leveraging funds

- **Partnerships**
  - Models like the HEZ network will provide infrastructure, connections and relationships with other groups when this funding ends
  - Along with grants from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, we hope to continue this work after our current UCF grants end in 2027



Buds

Spring Plantings

- 29 graduates from the Leadership class are expected to lead plantings in the spring of 2027
- Participants have to identify sites, talk to neighbors, and figure out who will be watering these trees for the next 2 summers
- Participants will be supported by staff throughout the winter with site selection, approval and options for trees
- Using PNPP's existing structures to streamline this process
- ***Logistically complex process that we are only able to pull off through partnering and multiple funding sources!!***



Buds

Miniforest!

- Thanks to the help of our partners at the Rhode Island Tree Council, we have secured a 1,200 sq ft lot to plant a Miyawaki inspired micro forest
- Providence, like many cities, has a housing crisis, so finding land in our zip codes felt impossible at times
- Aiming to do soil prep in the spring of 2027, and plant in the fall of 2027
- Participants will be an integral part of the entire process, and helped to identify this site as a potential location



Semillas to Carry

- *Be specific about who you want to show up*
  - Make it easier for people to show up – host events after work hours, pay people, feed people, and make events kid friendly
- *Be Service Minded*
  - Listen to what people want, even if it feels hard to reach
- *Go further together*
  - Leverage existing networks, reach out to similarly minded organizations, don't try to reinvent the wheel


WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER
WATERSHED COUNCIL
NUESTROS BOSQUES
PLANTE ÁRBOLES CON WRWC
💚 Talleres y clases de silvicultura urbana centrada en la comunidad
💵 Estipendios pagados por clases
🌳 Atendiendo 02909 y 02908
🌱 Apto para familias
PLANT TREES WITH WRWC
💚 Community-Centered Urban Forestry workshops and classes
💵 Paid Stipends available
🌳 Serving 02909 & 02908
🌱 Family-Friendly
APRENDER MÁS
LEARN MORE
contact@wrwc.org
wrwc.org

WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER
WATERSHED COUNCIL

Thank you.

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