

ROBUST AND RESILIENT URBAN FORESTS

Boston must better manage its trees and natural spaces to ensure they grow and provide enhanced benefits to their communities in a changing climate.

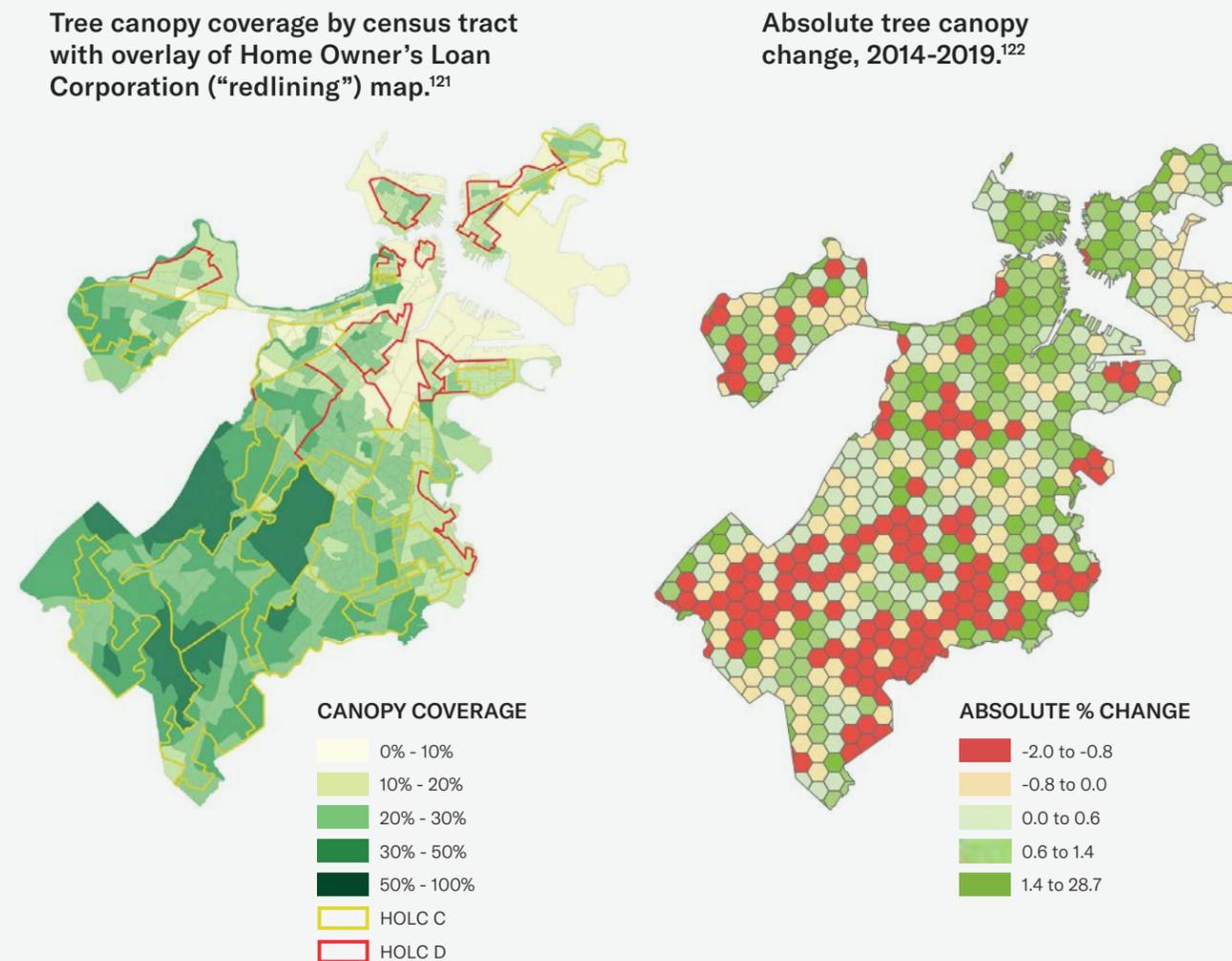
Connecting Outcomes to Goals

Net-Zero Emissions	Resilience	Increasing Social Equity
Planting more trees removes a modest amount of carbon from the atmosphere but is not a scalable net-zero strategy.	Trees provide a cooling effect while healthy soils can support stormwater management.	Expanding tree canopy and green spaces in frontline communities counteracts past neglect, improves air quality, and offers health benefits of proximity to nature.

Progress Assessment

Boston’s tree canopy varies by neighborhood. Historically redlined neighborhoods have lower average canopy coverage (Figure 13 left).¹²¹ Between 2014 and 2019 Boston’s tree canopy experienced roughly the same amount of growth as losses.¹²² Changes were broadly distributed across the city (Figure 13 right), with losses concentrated in areas with significant tree canopy, and gains mostly realized in areas with low canopy. The City of Boston’s Urban Forest Plan¹²¹ provides a needed strategic roadmap for expansion of the city’s trees and natural spaces with a particular focus on neighborhood-level action. Despite the clear need to better manage the urban forest and the commitment from the City, tradeoffs in various land use priorities that reflect conflicting interests among community members will continue to emerge in parks, in housing communities, and along roads.^{123,124,125}

Figure 13. **Preserving and enhancing the urban forest requires addressing past harms while building resilience and improving neighborhoods for future generations.**



Equity Implications & Indicators

Tree Canopy Growth in Underinvested Neighborhoods: Areas that currently have low levels of tree cover should be prioritized for preservation and enhancement of the natural carbon stock to maximize benefits of heat reduction, soil repair, and air quality improvement.

Big Lifts

Prioritize Reparative Planning: Attention must be given to neighborhoods that have seen their urban forests languish by neglect.