

Boston Food Forest Coalition

FOUNDED: 2015

CURRENT ORGANIZATION BUDGET: \$2,395,000 (FY24)

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Boston is facing a climate emergency. Each year, the city experiences record heat and temperatures, as well as an increase in extreme weather events. Boston's history of discriminatory neighborhood development practices, such as redlining, has led to an inequitable distribution of green space across the city, placing the burden of climate-induced impacts on the city's Black and Brown residents.

Recently, the City of Boston reported that communities of color have 20% less parkland and 40% less tree cover than predominantly White neighborhoods. This leads to hotter daytime temperatures, a disparity of 7.5 degrees, making these residents more vulnerable to increasing urban heat waves. Research shows that less access to green space negatively impacts residents' physical and mental health.

Founded in 2015, the Boston Food Forest Coalition (BFFC) acts at this intersection of racial equity and climate resilience. As a nonprofit community land trust, BFFC transforms vacant lots into public "edible parks," known as food forests, placed into permanent community control and ownership. Working together with grassroots leadership, BFFC is building a new model of green infrastructure in Boston neighborhoods, providing more equitable access to healthy green space and greater connection to each other and the natural world.

Two-Year Goals

CLIMATE RESILIENCE/ RACIAL EQUITY

- Build 3 new food forests a year in collaboration with local leaders in neighborhoods with limited green space
- Support & train new teams of stewards to care for the parks

BUILD A SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION

- Grow staff capacity from 8 to 13 FTEs
- Hire first Development Director
- Expand Board of Directors

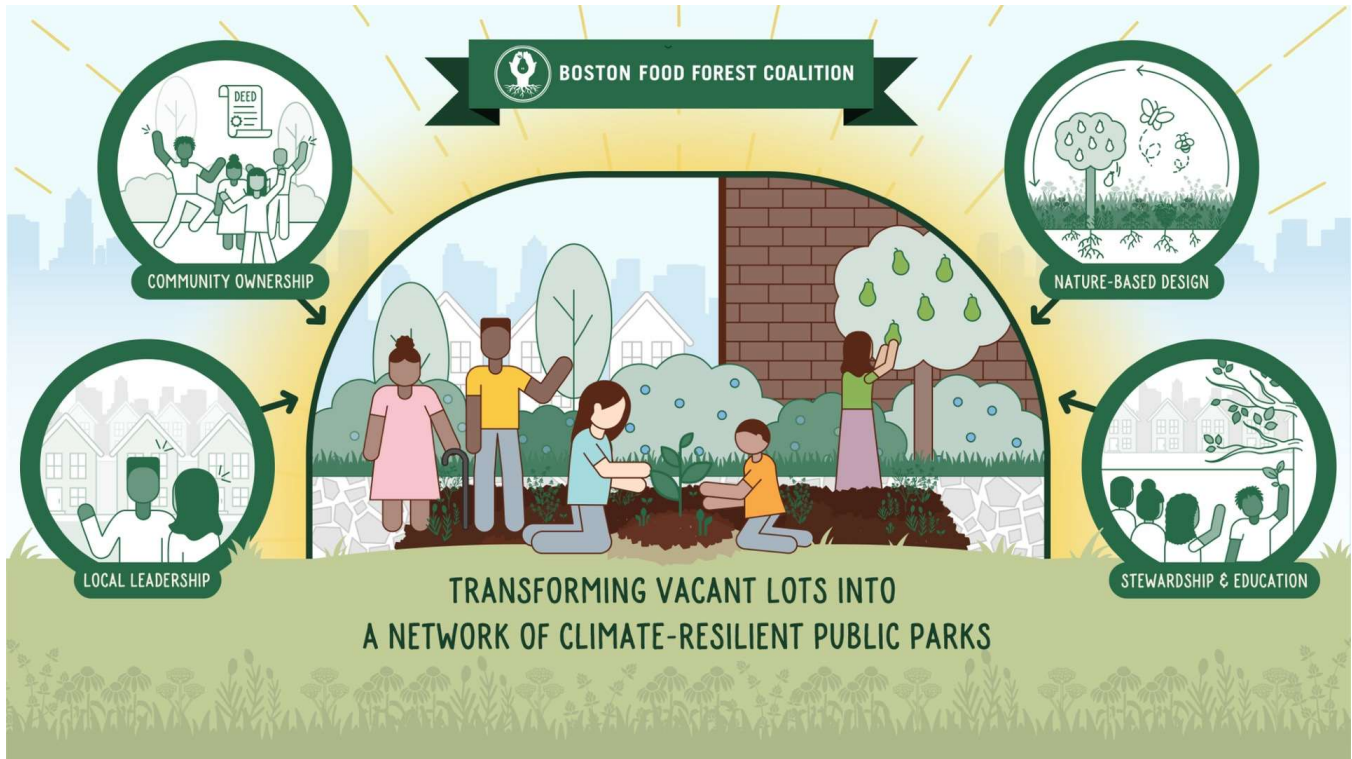
Investment Opportunity

Boston Food Forest Coalition's goals for growth and impact will require an annual budget of \$2.6M by 2026. BFFC is seeking funds to maintain existing food forest parks and build three new parks a year through 2030. Each new park requires an upfront investment for design and construction, followed by support and training for the community stewards who will maintain and care for the parks. BFFC looks to add its first Development Director to lead this fundraising effort and additional program staff to support the growth in the number of food forests.

Ways to Invest

- \$450-800k to design & build a new food forest park
- \$12,000 annually to maintain an existing park
- Contribute to the Equity Fund to support the stewards
- Volunteer to work in a park
- Suggest a possible location for a new food forest park

Boston Food Forest Coalition Model



What Is a Food Forest Park?

A food forest park is a diverse planting of edible plants that attempts to mimic the ecosystems found in nature. Food forests are three-dimensional designs, with life extending in all directions—up, down, and out—open to the community from sunup to sundown.

BFFC's Key Strategies

The Boston Food Forest Coalition (BFFC) envisions a future where every Boston resident can access a food forest park in their neighborhood. By transforming vacant lots into locally-run, public, edible food forests, BFFC's mission contributes to strengthening climate resiliency, increasing access to healthy locally grown food, and reducing racially driven disparities in greenspace access and its associated benefits. The food forest parks also create important community gathering spaces, connecting neighbors across class, race, language, and culture. The BFFC model combines four **key strategies** to create a vibrant network of climate-resilient food forest parks across Boston.

1. Local Leadership: Working with local leaders and neighborhood groups, BFFC develops neglected vacant lots into public parks for community gathering and urban forest gardening, prioritizing communities of color with less access to green space and its critical benefits.

2. Community Ownership: In partnership with the City of Boston, BFFC acquires city-owned vacant land parcels for food forest development. These parcels, purchased for \$100, are placed into community control and remain protected in the BFFC community land trust in perpetuity.



3. Nature-Based Design: In conversation with the community, a unique three-dimensional design is developed for each food forest site, including tree canopy for needed shade, fruit and nut shrubs for food, plants to attract beneficial insects and pollinators, inviting structures (pathways, benches, gazebos), and welcoming signage and artwork.

4. Stewardship & Education: BFFC works with the same neighbors who design the park to train and support them to steward the food forest park once it opens to the public. BFFC’s network of educators provides technical assistance and team support to the stewards and gardening and environmental workshops for stewards and the public.

The current sites in BFFC conserve over 130,000 square feet of land. BFFC is poised for major growth and impact. Its goal is to build 30 food forest parks by 2030, held in trust for generations to come. The time to join BFFC in this critical work is now.

“The City of Boston needs community land trusts like BFFC working on green space creation in order to mitigate some of the challenges of a changing climate that we are already seeing in our city.”

— Sheila A. Dillon, Chief of Housing and Director of the Mayor’s Office of Housing, City of Boston

Leadership & Governance

The Boston Food Forest Coalition is a 501(c)(3) organization, incorporated as a community land trust. Authentic representation and power-sharing is critical to its mission. The Board of Directors is at least two-thirds local neighborhood residents and stewards, actively caring for the food forest parks. The other Board members are nonprofit leaders and key partners.

BFFC Executive Director and Founder, Orion Kriegman, is a certified permaculture designer, with decades of community organizing and environmental and economic justice experience.

Financial Sustainability

BFFC exceeded its revenue goals the last few years through a combination of government funding, foundation grants, and individual giving. An anonymous 3-year capacity grant, ending in 2024, allowed BFFC to grow its staff and build the organization’s infrastructure. BFFC is looking to secure a base of annual fundraising and multiyear gifts that will ensure it can reach its ambitious goal of 30 food forest parks by 2030.

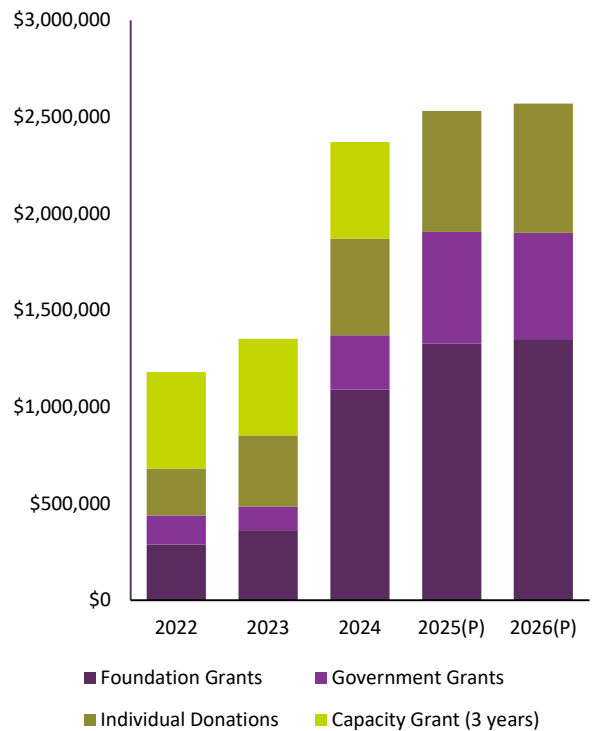
KEY INVESTORS

- City of Boston, GrowBoston
- City of Boston, Community Preservation Committee
- Cummings Foundation
- Liberty Mutual Foundation
- Mabel Louise Riley Foundation

KEY SUPPORTERS

- Local neighborhood organizations (e.g., Edgewater Neighborhood Association, Old West Church, Egleston Square Branch Public Library)
- Mayor’s Office of Housing
- Mass Audubon’s Boston Nature Center

Revenue by Source





Success Story

EDGEWATER FOOD FOREST

The Edgewater Food Forest in Mattapan began as a vacant lot littered with abandoned shopping carts and other refuse. In 2021, neighbors decided to change that. These residents—many of whom are members of the Edgewater Neighborhood Association—came together to transform the lot into a public green space and resource for the community. In partnership with BFFC, they created a vision for a food forest that would feature edible plants, benches, chess tables, a compost bay, a rain catchment system, and a bandstand. Through clean-up days, neighborhood meetings, planting workshops, and lots of collaboration, their vision came to life. In May 2023, the Edgewater Food Forest opened to the public, an oasis in the neighborhood. Permanently protected in the community land trust, this food forest will be, as Mayor Michelle Wu stated at its grand opening, “transformational for generations to come.”

Program Performance and Organizational Health

Below is a summary of the key measures that the Boston Food Forest Coalition will track to demonstrate progress, create internal accountability, capture lessons learned, and adjust strategy as necessary.

	FY 2024	FY 2025(P)	FY 2026(P)
Program Performance			
Total food forest parks	11	14	17
# of community stewards	60	80	100
Stewards actively caring for their food forest parks weekly (i.e., gardening, weeding) <i>Note: Goal is to hold percent steady as number of stewards increase.</i>	75%	75%	75%
Organizational Health/Capacity-Building			
Number of staff members	8	11	13
Number of Board members	5	8	10
Total Revenue	\$2.4M	\$2.5M	\$2.6M

Social Impact

Boston Food Forest Coalition envisions a network of food forest parks that will create a tapestry of green spaces across the city. This green infrastructure will provide each neighborhood with much-needed access to natural spaces. Besides cooling urban hotspots, the research suggests that access to green space has a positive impact on mental and physical health. BFFC advocates for city-wide policy changes and exists as a model for the role that local communities can play in climate resilience.

BFFC has identified key indicators to track progress and impact over time. Below is a summary of the social impact that BFFC aspires to have in the next two years.

Indicator	Current Numbers	2026(P)
CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND RACIAL EQUITY		
Cool urban hotspots – total trees and shrubs planted*	525	800
Total land conserved (square feet)	130,000	180,000
COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS		
Stewards who agree or strongly agree that they are more connected to their neighbors because of the food forest park	Add to steward survey in 2024	Report on change
Stewards highly likely to invite a neighbor to get involved in the coalition. <i>Net promoter score out of 100 with a score of 50-70 considered very good.</i>	55	65

**NOTE: Scientists have found that when done thoughtfully, planting urban trees and enhancing urban forests and urban green canopy can lower air temperatures in city neighborhoods by around 10 degrees. Source: OneTreePlanted.org*