

Branching Out for Health Equity: Academic Medical Centers and Community Partners Advancing Access to Urban Greenspace

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Background & Project Overview

Access to Urban Greenspaces & Health Inequities

- Greenspace access disparities contribute to health inequalities in the USA.
- Multiple pathways link greenspace access to public health.

Role of Academic Medical Centers

- Academic medical centers can play a pivotal role in promoting health equity.
- Partnering with community organizations to improve urban greenspace access is one approach.

Medical Education Initiatives

- Academic medical centers can shape the next generation of doctors as health-equity advocates.
- Advocacy for greenspace expansion as it directly impacts human health is crucial.

Resource Allocation for Preventive Health

- Institutions can allocate resources to address key community health issues.
- Community greening serves as a preventive health investment.

Philly TREEs Project

- Philly TREEs, a medical-student-led initiative at the Perelman School of Medicine.
- Aims to enhance tree equity and community well-being in Philadelphia.
- Demonstrates how academic medical institutions can achieve urban tree-canopy goals equitably through community partnerships.



PSOM students helping with the November 2020 planting in Point Breeze, Philadelphia.



Check out more – our story!
The Lancet Planetary Health

Philadelphia TREEs: Towards Racial and Environmental Equity

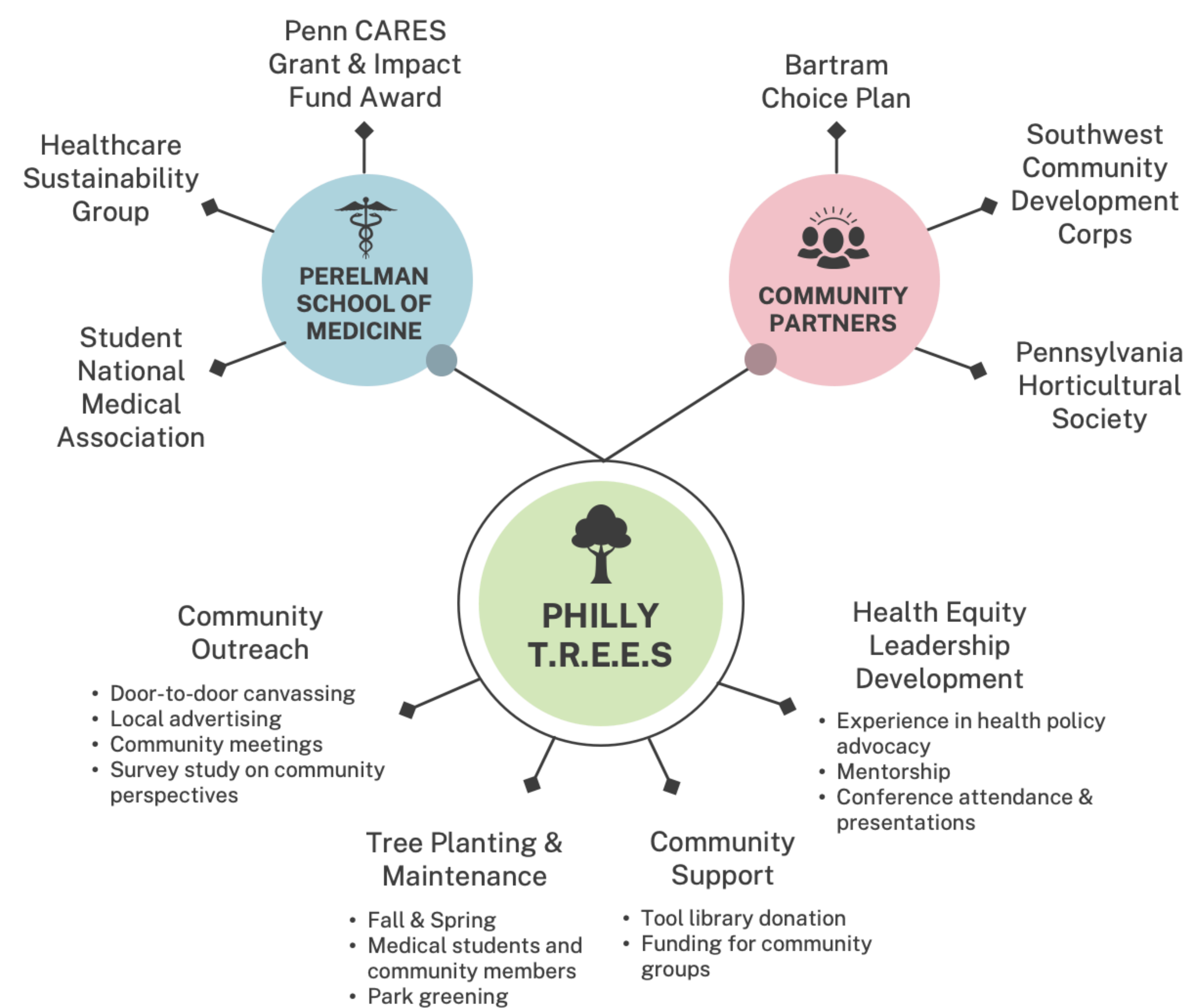


Figure 1. Community partners, support, and initiatives of the Philly TREEs project

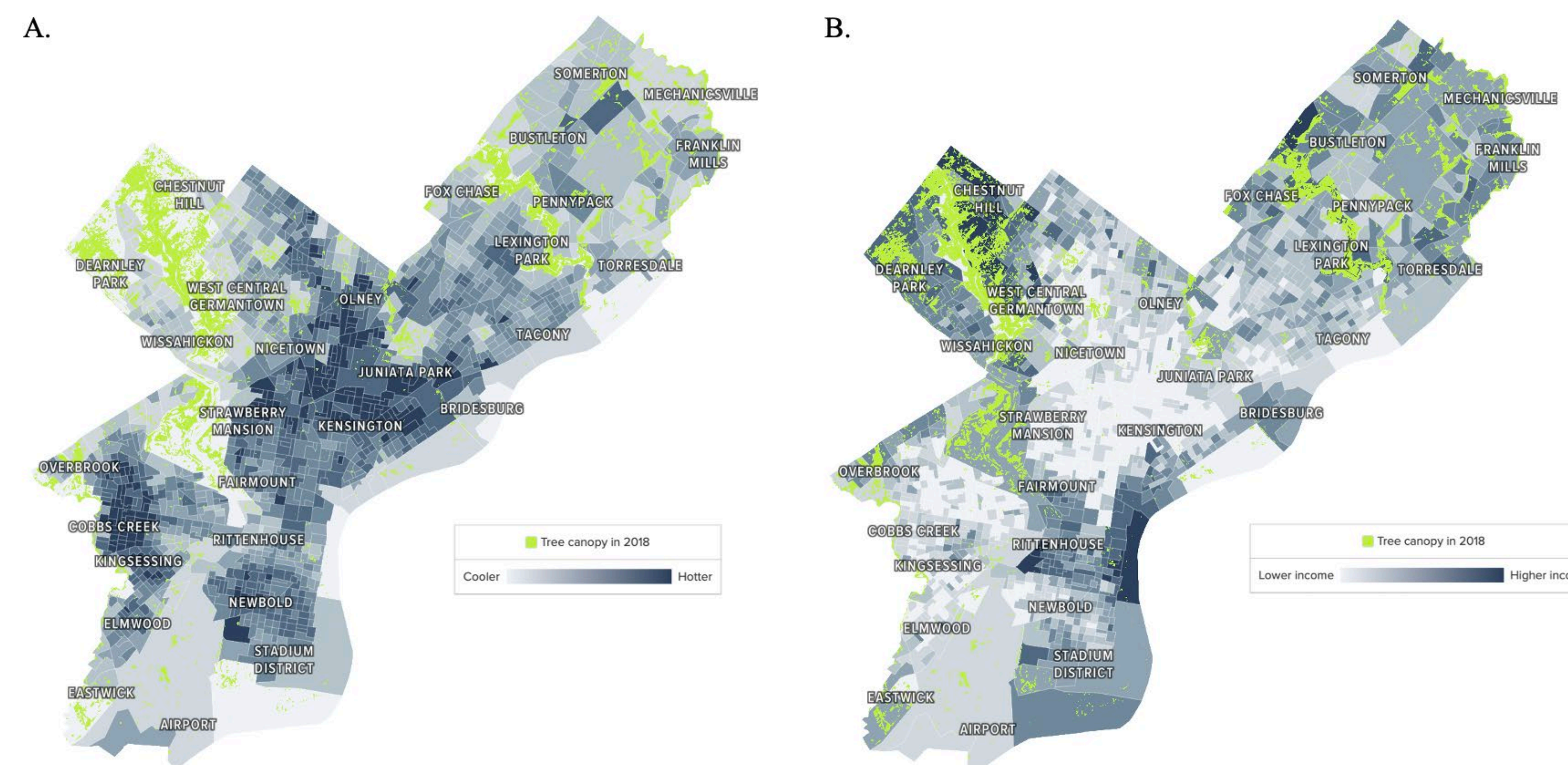
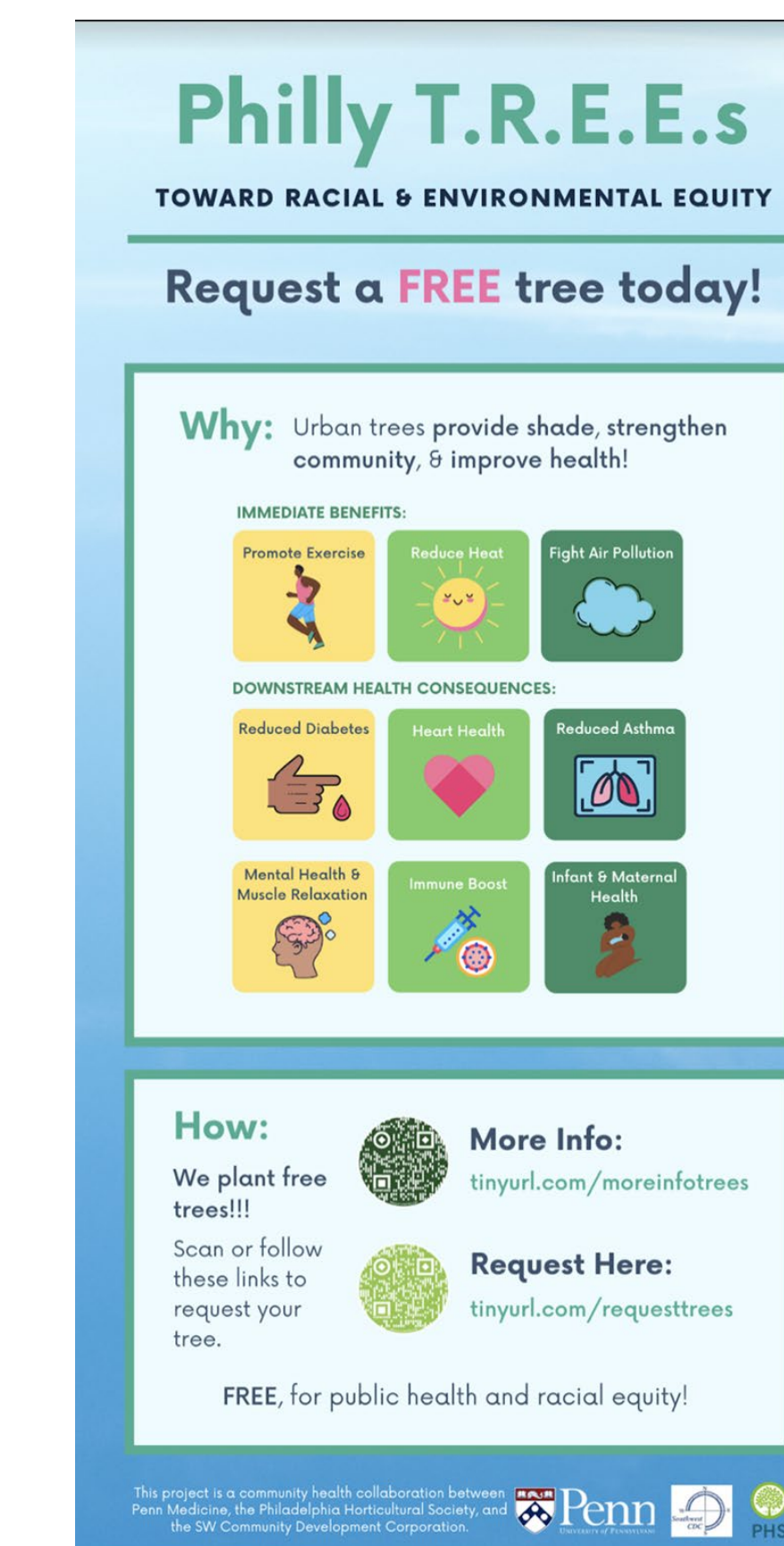


Figure 2. Philadelphia 2018 tree canopy with heat exposure and median income. For the City of Philadelphia, 2018 tree canopy with: A) heat exposure; and B) Median Income. Images generated with permission from Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (phillytrees.azavea.com)



Left: A Philly TREEs ad ran in the local paper SW Philly Globe Times. Right: Flyer passed out door to door in the community to spark conversations about public health, trees, and how to request them for free.

Project Results: 2020-2023

Student Membership

- 50 medical and graduate students actively engaged in the project.
- Leadership roles were held by 9 students during this period.
- Medical students gained valuable experience for future careers.

Educational and Career Development

- Exposure to environmental health-equity work through academic programs.
- Faculty mentorship contributed to their growth as medical leaders.
- Student leaders engaged in relevant academic presentations and training.

Diverse Community Engagement

- Activities included door-to-door canvassing, tree planting, tree care, and park greening.
- Participation encompassed 15 community greening and outreach events.

Tangible Impact

- Result: Approximately 200 trees planted or cared for.
- Ten garden plots transformed into green spaces.

Advocacy and Legislative Engagement

- Student leaders met with municipal, state, and federal legislators.
- Advocacy efforts aimed at advancing health-equity legislation.