TREEPEOPLE

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For Immediate Release

How Police Radar Technology is Used to Map Tree Canopy

TreePeople and CURes Team Up to Support L.A. County's Decision Making

LOS ANGELES, CA, May 14, 2019 – TreePeople in partnership with Loyola Marymount Center for Urban Resilience (CURes) hosted policymakers, educators, and urban foresters for a presentation and discussion around a brand-new high-resolution assessment of L.A. County's tree canopy cover, climate impacts, and environmental equity.

Made possible through a grant from the USDA Forest Service, Loyola Marymount Center used high-resolution remote sensing data, both imagery and LiDAR (which is technology typically used by law enforcement for police radar). The combined technology created fine scale 8-class land cover, and combined the resulting data with CalEnviroScreen, demographic, and temperature data.

This process allowed us to assess existing conditions and identify potential priority areas where enhanced urban greening could contribute to climate resilience, environmental equity, and public health.

● In the City of LA, about a fifth (18%) of the city's tree canopy grows where only 1% of the city's population lives.
● This tree canopy exists within only 5 census block groups (a geographic unit used by the Census) even though they only account for less than 1/10th (8%) of the total land area; those census block groups are in Pacific Palisades, Los Feliz, Brentwood, and Shadow Hills.
● By area, the land uses with the largest amount of existing tree canopy in LA County are: Recreational, Residential, and public right of ways (namely, streets) -- but the biggest opportunity for MORE tree canopy is residential land uses (by far!)

- We also saw that home value is positively correlated with tree canopy - the higher the home value, the higher the tree canopy.
- We then conducted a prioritization exercise to determine where trees are most lacking and where more trees would meet the highest need. We used a few "lenses" to determine three (3) priorities:
    1. Heat island mitigation (hottest areas of the county)
    2. Public health improvement (areas where chronic conditions such as asthma are in high concentration)
    3. Socioeconomic status (low-income communities of color, and where there are disproportionate numbers of very young or old individuals -- which are most prone to extreme heat effects)

The prioritization using these lenses tells us that the areas which are in highest need of protective tree canopy are Southeast County (especially along the 110 corridor), the northeast part of the San Fernando Valley, and northern LA County. To see the full presentation, visit TreePeople.org/LAtreecanopydata.

"This important study highlights how TreePeople's Calles Verdes (Green Streets) program in San Fernando Valley and in south L.A. will increase the urban tree canopy in low-income neighborhoods which are the most vulnerable to extreme heat and have the highest rates of public health issues," notes TreePeople CEO Cindy Montañez.

About TreePeople
TreePeople unites the power of trees, people, and nature-based solutions to grow more climate-resilient and water-secure communities as the region faces extreme weather, historic drought and a hotter, drier future. The organization inspires, engages, and supports people to take personal responsibility for the urban environment, facilitates collaboration among public agencies and business, and promotes leadership in grassroots volunteers, youth and communities. In this way, TreePeople seeks to build a powerful and diverse coalition to grow a greener, healthier and more water-secure Los Angeles for present and future generations.