

NEST Waterbury | Connecting Canopies

Mya Gray: You can't have a strong neighborhood without having trees, without having adequate tree canopy and green space for residents to enjoy.

I'm really proud to be a part of NEST.

We focus on affordable housing that doesn't have to be just bare and concrete. Greening the landscape, but also making it walkable, breathable.

Title: Around the U.S., loss of tree canopy is leading to hotter cities, reduced air quality, and an overall decline in public health.

NEST's greening work helps address the environmental conditions that directly shape housing stability, health, and quality of life.

Mya Gray: We set out to start urban forestry in 2021, in order to increase the tree canopy, because the data has shown that this census tract has lost a dramatic amount of trees in in the area in the neighborhood.

It just fully aligns with our real estate development and creating these beautiful homes. By adding the trees and adding plants and vegetation, it truly increases not only the esthetic of it, but also the feel of it.

Love and Care Community Garden. We've planted fruit trees. We planted other types of trees that just increase tree canopy, and also give folks access to being able to pick a fruit off the tree at some point, once they reach their maturity.

So we've done some urban forestry education workshops with the youth and getting them involved in the tree planting. Our community building and empowerment is one of the ways that we're able to build strong neighborhoods.

Josephine Hintz: Our collaboration with NEST, it started a couple months back. They had the opportunity to provide us with about 45 saplings of all different species of trees that are native to New England.

We had the kids come in one day and do a whole planting and learning session.

Marce: It's just nice, like you get to just sit here and like, learn about this thing that you're taking care of.

It's a cool thing that we're being able to donate and give back.

Josephine Hintz: The lessons that they're learning, these are all very applicable experiences that are not just something to be left behind once they graduate.

Mya Gray: If we just do it on our own, that's fine. It's a nice gesture, but when we get the community involved, it shows that we need each other and that it can't be done without them.

It's not just building houses and leaving. It's about inspiring the community and inspiring residents to believe that they deserve better, that they belong here, and that they deserve to have spaces that are healthy and fulfilling.