

New Mexico

NEW MEXICO STATE FORESTRY

Through its participation in an annual International District Health Fair, New Mexico State Forestry's (NMSF) Urban and Community Forestry Program is striving to make the link between human health and community forestry by working with non-traditional partners and connecting in creative ways.

Albuquerque, New Mexico's health care community is working to address multiple social determinants of health and wellness for its most vulnerable community members. Social determinants of health include economic stability, neighborhood/physical environment, education, food, social context, and health care systems¹. Community forestry can play a part in addressing many of these determinants, and NMSF's Urban and Community Forestry Program is working to make that connection.

Albuquerque's International District faces critical social determinants to health and wellness including high poverty and unemployment, urban blight, and crime, while celebrating the 47 languages spoken there². The community health center hosts an annual International District Health Fair, which brings together over 100 groups to provide health screenings and other health and wellness resources. NMSF has participated for the past two years, providing tree seedlings from NMSF's Conservation Tree Seedling program. In addition to providing green resources to a district with one of the lowest tree canopies in the city, NMSF stands side-by-side with health-care groups, emphasizing the connection of green space as a part of health and wellness.

This connection with the International District has led to a hopeful partnership with a long-term arts and community development effort. The "Enchanting Urban Forest" is one of the community-led projects being organized by Artful Life, a nonprofit organization that transforms communities through the co-creation of art. The "Enchanting Urban Forest" project will convert a 0% tree canopy intersection into an art and plant-filled



Tree seedlings provided by New Mexico State Forestry at the Annual International District Health Fair.
Photo: Jennifer Dann, NMSF

space designed by community members working collaboratively with artists and urban foresters. NMSF has been providing technical assistance and resources to allow project coordinators to strongly advocate for city and private foundation funding.

Urban forestry is just one part of a complex approach to addressing the social determinants to health and wellness. By building partnerships through project work, we make important and significant progress in connecting healthcare and urban forestry.

¹ Heiman and Artiga, Beyond Health Care: The Role of Social Determinants in Promoting Health and Health Equity, November 2015.

² <https://www.artful-life.org/international-district>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

New Mexico State Forestry
Urban and Community Forestry Program
<http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/CommunityFor/Community.html>