

A green rectangular graphic with a repeating pattern of stylized leaves. In the center is a white rectangular box containing the text "FOREST RELEAF OF MISSOURI IMPACT STORIES" in green, all-caps, serif font.

FOREST RELEAF OF MISSOURI IMPACT STORIES

“As a kid around here you could ride your bike in the shade from Jefferson to Kingshighway, and now you can’t do that anymore”

-Steve Spence

Community Creating Canopy at Compton Heights

Steve Spence is the Beautification Chair of Compton Heights Neighborhood located in St. Louis City. Spence noticed a lot of empty tree wells in his neighborhood. As a tree enthusiast and passionate city resident, he knew that he had to help the City Forestry Division, who was busy tackling ash trees and other tree problems. He combined this beautification mission with a tree planting mission.

Using the Neighborhood Foresters app, a mobile app for tree reporting and civic science created by a local group, Spence completed a tree inventory of Compton Heights. After he obtained this data, he was not surprised to find that there was plenty of room for new trees to join the neighborhood. Spence categorized which tree wells were missing trees and made a list of trees available from Forest ReLeaf and compared it to what the Forestry Division offered. Once he gathered all these resources together, he worked with neighbors to help them pick their tree(s). He focused on oaks because he noticed that the major selection from the City were smaller trees and his goal is to gain canopy for the community. The sort of canopy that Spence remembers from his childhood; the kind of shade that makes riding your bike in the summer a breeze.

Spence knows that to make that magical, mature tree canopy a reality it takes more than just planting the trees. He took the time to make sure his neighbors could have a say in their new tree so they would connect with the new friend moving in and welcome the accompanying responsibilities. Watering for the first 2 summers is critical to a tree’s establishment, and thankfully many residents agreed to keep their new tree neighbors watered. Spence plans to send out a reminder to help keep this new responsibility top of mind. For the trees that don’t have a committed resident, Spence made a watering truck to keep the tree investments flourishing. This is just the beginning. Spence aims to replicate this system for tree plantings in the Fox Park, Benton Park, and Shaw Neighborhoods. This community-centered approach will foster a strong and beautiful canopy so future generations of children can comfortably ride their bikes from Jefferson to Kingshighway (and many other St. Louis communities) beneath the shade!



Forest
ReLeaf
OF MISSOURI

