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## Workshop Policy Brief

Prepared for the City of La Crosse

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### Key Question

How can the City of La Crosse increase green space to mitigate urban island heat effects, considering those effects have been historically inequitably distributed?

### Highlights

- Green space is inequitably allocated in La Crosse based on race and income.
- La Crosse can best improve the inequity of urban heat island effects by increasing urban vegetation.
- We recommend that La Crosse increase tree canopy and create pocket parks in areas where vulnerable populations reside.

The full report is available at  
[www.lafollette.wisc.edu/outreach-public-service/service-learning](http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/outreach-public-service/service-learning)

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Spring 2023

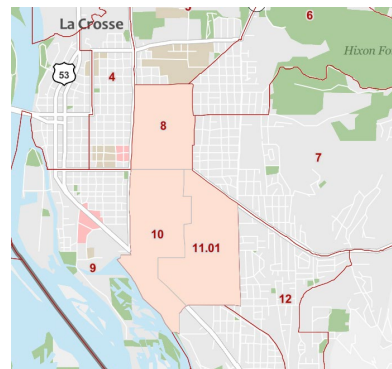
## City of La Crosse Green Space Expansion

Urban heat islands occur when air and surface temperatures in urban areas are warmer than in rural areas due to higher concentrations of non-reflective spaces and less vegetation. Heat islands cause adverse health, physical, and economic effects, and they disproportionately impact vulnerable populations. Expanding green space within the City is a strategy that mitigates heat island effects.

### Problem Definition

Analysis found that the City's tree canopy and impervious surfaces are inequitably distributed. We identified three census tracts that La Crosse should prioritize when considering our recommendations: Census Tract 8, 10, and 11.01. These tracts were chosen because of their low percentage of tree canopy, high percentage of impervious surfaces, and high average summer temperatures.

*City of La Crosse Census Tracts: Recommended Areas to Expand Green Space*



### Policy Options

- Tree Canopy: The expansion of trees on City-owned streets.
- Pocket Parks: The conversion of unused land into small, publicly accessible parks with various green spaces and urban structures.
- Green Roofs: The partial or complete covering of a building's roof with a layer of vegetation and soil, which can vary in intensity of vegetation quantity/size and soil/layer depth.

### Recommendations

- Target green space expansion to areas with vulnerable populations and those lacking access to green space.
- Expand urban tree canopy and create pocket parks to lower the urban heat island effect experienced throughout the City.
- Identify buildings that can feasibly support green roofs and parties who can construct and maintain them.
- Strategize cooling centers for residents to escape high heat events.

Future studies of increasing green space in the City could include modeling the effect of policy options on heat mitigation and community attitudes and preferences in high-impact areas.

