



Going Green for a Cool, Healthy Jackson

As part of the Cities Taking Action to Address Health, Equity, and Climate Change grant, Jackson was one of six U.S. cities that received support from the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) and C40 Cities to create transformative community-led projects.

Health, equity and climate risks in Jackson

Extreme heat and humidity are the biggest weather-related threats to the health and wellbeing of people in Jackson, Mississippi. Temperatures are above 35°C (95°F) for an average of 47 days a year, forecast to increase to [58 days per year by 2030](#). Heat affects everyone, but neighbourhoods that have higher poverty rates are at greater risk. Extreme heat is an even bigger problem in Mississippi, where one in four people live [below the poverty line](#) – the highest rate in the U.S.

What is Going Green for a Cool, Healthy Jackson?

To tackle inequitable extreme heat in Jackson, [2°C Mississippi](#), a local non-profit organisation led by Dominika Parry, built a coalition of partners with Mississippi State University's [Jackson Community Design Center \(JCDC\)](#), the National League of Cities, and local consultants from Jackson State University. Together, they are working with residents on the Going Green for a Cool, Healthy Jackson project.

Through a community-led design process, the team identified three sites in the historic Farish Street district for redevelopment.

The [Farish Street district](#) was a hub for Black-owned businesses and one of the most culturally and economically vibrant neighbourhoods in the state. However, the area saw decline in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the end to law-enforced segregation was a victory for the Civil Rights movement, however it had unforeseen

consequences. As African Americans moved beyond the neighbourhood, the cohesive Farish Street community began to dismantle, and many businesses were forced to close.

The Going Green for a Cool, Healthy Jackson project will transform these three Farish Street sites into green spaces, using nature to reduce ambient temperatures and improve health and wellbeing for Jacksonians.

What has Going Green for a Cool, Healthy Jackson achieved so far?

Heat mapping

2°C Mississippi partnered with [CAPA Strategies](#) led by Dr Vivek Shandas, a climate change professor and researcher who studies how urban heat islands disproportionately impact communities of colour.

Volunteers from 2°C Mississippi, Jackson State University and University of Mississippi Medical Center students collected over [70,000 individual measurements](#) of temperature and humidity throughout the day using sensors attached to cars, to create [heat maps](#) of Jackson. Using this data and by engaging with the community, Farish Street was identified as an ideal location for this project, both for its cultural significance and high temperatures.

Creating a community park

The team of residents selected three abandoned sites on Farish Street. In previous decades, these sites had development plans created by external contractors which had not involved community input or engagement.

The project team was committed to not only redesigning these places with input from residents, but also to correcting the harms caused by previous projects.

Jassen Callender, JCDC project lead and university architecture professor, knows that establishing trust with residents is key, “because the Farish Street community has had many projects forced on them over the years and, as a result, many people, at first, were reluctant to engage in this process.” The Jackson team worked to build stronger community relationships as well as new physical spaces.

The project team engaged residents in a year-long community design process to envision how Farish Street could become a vibrant, cool, and green community space. After meeting with residents, the JCDC developed mock-ups with examples of nature-based features from different cities and parks, including green walls, rain gardens and shrubs.

The team were inspired by urban nature projects from all around the world, including [The Promenade](#) in Velenje, Slovenia and [Xuhui Runway Park](#) in Xuhui, China. This way, residents could see their ideas come to life and what it would look and feel like to be in the spaces they were designing together.

Transformation of Farish Street will begin in 2024. A mural will be commissioned, street trees will be planted and there will be a clean-up of the Town Creek fence. Construction of the park will start over the next two years. With the success of the planning process, 2°C Mississippi is working on securing implementation and maintenance funds.

The Going Green for a Cool, Healthy Jackson project has set the stage for a new park in Jackson designed by the community, for the community. It has established trusting relationships with engaged residents and opened the door for more collaboration between residents, non-profits, academia and city government institutions, to benefit the health and wellbeing of Jacksonians.

This project team included the leadership and participation of the following people (in alphabetical order): Dr. Alan Penman (University of Mississippi Medical Center), Anna Marandi (National League of Cities), Dr. Berneece Herbert, Dr. Dominika Parry, Prof. Jassen Callender, Dr. Vivek Shandas, JCDC students: John Spraberry and Nathaniel Roesener.

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