

December 11, 2018

Innovation Letter of Affirmation: Green Heart Louisville Project

On behalf of my colleagues at The Nature Conservancy, both here in Kentucky and throughout the larger organization, I am pleased to offer my enthusiastic endorsement of the University of Louisville Envirome Institute's Green Heart Louisville project for the STARS Innovation Credit.

Green Heart Louisville, under the leadership of Aruni Bhatnagar, PhD at UofL's Envirome Institute, is a truly innovative and ground-breaking scientific study that could demonstrate—for the first time—a direct and scientifically significant link between nature, especially trees and other vegetation, and human health. While there is increasingly solid observational evidence for such a link, Green Heart Louisville is on course to dramatically increase the empirical evidence.

The carefully designed Green Heart Louisville project is examining how “greening” urban neighborhoods affects cardiovascular health and other measures of human well-being. Green Heart Louisville is composed primarily of two basic components: (1) the greening of the study neighborhood and (2) the clinical trial of study and control neighborhood residents to assess health effects. Without the former, the latter has nothing to study. Without the latter, the former is just a big urban tree planting without the science needed for much greater leverage and replicability. The Nature Conservancy is a committed co-producer on the greening portion of the overall project.

Green Heart Louisville is a unique opportunity for collaboration and offers us a new direction for pragmatic conservation science, not only within Louisville but in cities across the world. We see great opportunity to replicate and leverage the results of Green Heart to advance urban restoration and resiliency efforts that focus on nature-based solutions to air quality and other human health challenges globally. We envision that demonstration of nature's direct link to human health will provide a powerful leverage point to improve policies, expand funding sources for nature-based conservation efforts within and beyond cities, and ultimately improve millions of lives. More diverse and larger funding sources are needed to bring nature-based solutions to cities at the scale necessary to address poor air quality and other problems critical to human health and well-being.

The Nature Conservancy looks forward to continuing to build upon our years of work with UofL. In closing, let me stress again our excitement and support for this project among The Nature Conservancy's programs and leadership. The UofL Envirome Institute's intelligence, vision, and partnership are invaluable to us, and we stand with UofL to ensure that this project has the resources, management, and support it needs to be successful. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at: 502/640-1479 or christopher.chandler@tnc.org.



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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Chandler".

Chris Chandler
Cities Program Director

cc: Catherine Fitzgerald, Cities Project Manager, The Nature Conservancy
Aruni Bhatnagar, PhD, Director, The Envirome Institute
Ted Smith, PhD, Director of Center for Healthy Air Water and Soil, The Envirome Institute