

## Know Your Community-

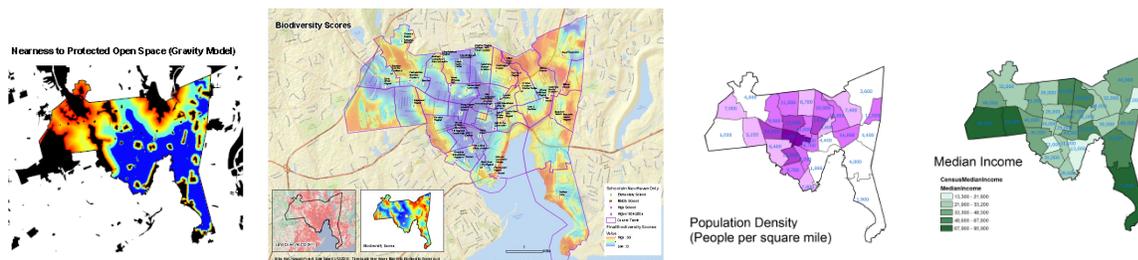
### New Faces Gather at the First New Haven Urban Wildlife Refuge Community Advisory Board Meeting

The New Haven Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership held the first meeting of the Community Advisory Board in January 2015. Twenty six people from diverse backgrounds gathered around the table. They ranged in age from 15 to about 75 and included students, school board members and local neighborhood leaders. These residents were joined by the original nine Urban Wildlife Refuge Partners. The Partners' objective is to ensure that urban work is guided by the values, interests, culture and needs of the surrounding community.

"We want to see a groundswell with our priorities and projects informed by the community rather than driven from the top-down," said one of the Urban Wildlife Refuge Partners as the meeting opened.

The conversation was lively as new advisory board members discussed issues including equitable access to parks, crime, poverty and habitat restoration. **At one time these issues seemed to have little to do with one another but under the Service's Urban Wildlife Refuge initiative we are beginning to explore inherent connections between ecological, social and economic factors.**

Community members serving on the advisory board will work with the Urban Wildlife Refuge partners and Brian Hall at Harvard Forest to develop and apply a leading edge GIS decision support tool that will incorporate socioeconomic and ecological parameters. The board will use this tool, coupled with deep place-based knowledge and cultural interests to select future restoration sites and help direct the focus of the overall Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative in New Haven.



The GIS decision support tool being developed by the New Haven Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership will incorporate ecological factors like bird migration routes and nearness to protected land as well as socioeconomic indicators like access to green space, income and crime.

"Conservation plans that truly focus on the human component are not extremely common. What's exciting about this project is we are trying to create natural areas that are great for wildlife but also benefit people. To be beneficial for people we feel the land has to be accessible to them. With 120,000 individuals living in the city of New Haven every acre we restore has the potential to touch thousands of lives." -- Brian Hall, Harvard Forest GIS