

ICLEI Cities Climate Action Series

Case Study Introducing Local Government Projects and Policies
for Climate Change Adaptation and GHG Mitigation



Seungnae Stream Walking Path

OnTree

Creating a 'carbon neutral forest' through citizens climate action

Songpa District of Seoul

Population	0.66 million
Area	33.86 km ² (5.6% of Seoul)
Annual budget	1.6 trillion won (2022)

Songpa-gu is located in southeast part of Seoul, situated between Gangnam-gu and Gangdong-gu. It has the largest population of the 25 districts in Seoul. Historically, it was where the first capital city of Baekjae, Hanseong, was located during the Three Kingdoms period. Both residential and commercial areas are concentrated in Songpa-gu, all of which create harmony with green spaces, like Olympic Park and Seokchon Lake Park. In accordance with the Songpa Carbon Neutrality 2030 Plan established in September 2020, Songpa-gu has the goal of reducing the projected greenhouse gas emissions of 3.34 million tons by 50% by 2030.



지속가능성을 위한
세계지방정부협의회
이클레이 한국사무소

다시 뛰는 송파!
창의와 혁신의 구정

Image source: Songpa District Office



Background of OnTree App Development

OnTree is an application contributing to create carbon-neutral forests by offering points to users when they take action to protect the environment and share it online. The app's name OnTree means "turn on trees and continue planting trees." Its purpose is to make climate actions fun and easy part of everyday life. It was designed by residents of Songpa-gu and developed with funding of 50 million won from the Songpa-gu local government.

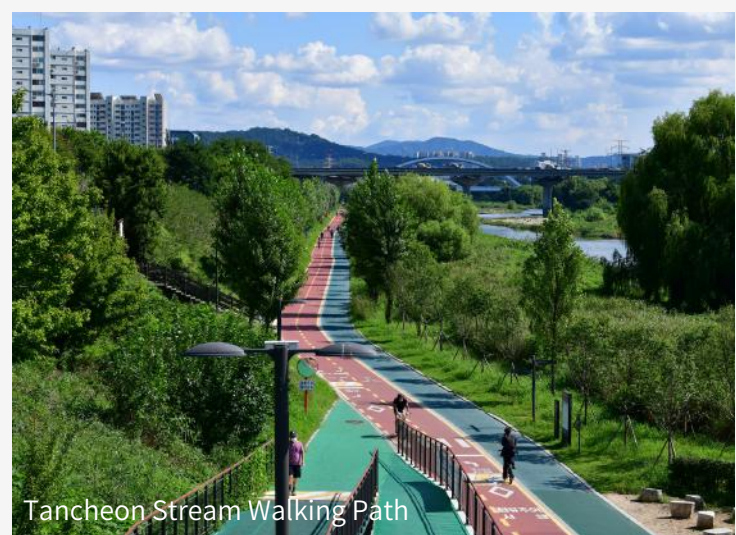
Songpa-gu residents envisioned the environmental activities to do together with children so that they created 'OK EARTH Songpa' in late 2020 with social economy enterprises, cooperatives, environmental enterprises, environmental groups, and daycare center owners in Songpa-gu. They met two or three times a week for a year to elaborate and realize the idea. Through these efforts and financial support from Songpa-gu, the OnTree app was released in the summer of 2021. Songpa-gu actively promoted the app to local governments, educational institutions, environmental groups, and the residents did the same online.

The OnTree app is a result of public-private cooperation achieved through the ideas suggested by residents and the active support of the local government.

Main Activities and Achievements

There are 12 missions given to the users of the OnTree app with 20 points for achieving each mission and 10 extra points for sharing it on social media. For each 1000 points, you are given a tree stamp to contribute to building a carbon neutral forest. You can see how much carbon emissions can be reduced through each mission. The emission figures are based on the Ministry of Environment's Carbon Neutrality Living Practice Guide released in August 2021. For example, if you take a picture of a power cord unplugged from the outlet and upload it to the app, you will receive 20 points and have an effect on carbon reduction of 223 grams.

To encourage the participation, special missions were put in place as well. They included turning off the lights on Earth Day (April 22) and Energy Day (August 22), and using the stairs instead of the elevator on Environment Day (June 5). Also, participants were allowed to form groups (same institution, neighborhood, family) and combine their achievements to foster greater participation. Through such grouping, Songpa-gu



selected the top 10 educational institutions and awarded them with an Educational Institution of Carbon Mitigation Excellence plaque in December 2021.

With the participation for the first three months after launching the app, the first OnTree Forest was created by planting 1,400 trees in Sori Park in Munjeong-dong in November 2021. 141 of these trees were planted by 35 groups of OnTree users and children. For the past one year (August 2021-August 2022), the number of missions completed was 38,000, which are estimated to reduce around 24 tons of carbon.

Planting trees has a positive influence for children in terms of a pleasant experience, sense of accomplishment and environmental education.



1st Ontree Forest



Han River Walking Path

In the long term, creating a carbon neutral forest with neighbors gives the space community value and provides the benefits of green infrastructure for carbon absorption and citizens' recreational facilities.

Local Background

The success of the Ontree app can be attributed to public-private governance and environmental policies that Songpa-gu has long implemented.

Songpa-gu has been promoting policies to make residents participate in district administration. These policies have adopted various measures to expand community participation, which has strengthened public-private cooperation consequently. The Green Songpa Committee, a public-private environmental governance organization launched in 2008, has played a key role in local environmental governance. In 2020, the Songpa-gu Cooperation Committee was launched to implement the public-private partnership projects proposed by the residents. Various entities such as residents, public officials, experts, and intermediary support organizations participate in all stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation to realize residents' ideas.

In terms of environmental policy, Songpa-gu concentrates on building green infrastructure. Green spaces provide many benefits, including offering places for residents to relax, lowering the temperature of the city center, and functioning as carbon sink. Since September 2020, planting 2 million trees policy has been implemented, and the Songpa Trail has been created as a walk along four streams. The Songpa Trail is being used as a space for various environmental activities, such as a spot for performing missions the OnTree app.

Vision Going Forward

The OnTree app has started in Songpa-gu, but its creators have a vision to spread it to other regions in Korea and the entire world in the future. The number of users has steadily increased in other districts of Seoul besides Songpa-gu, such as Gwangjin-gu, Gangnam-gu, Gangdong-gu, and Dongjak-gu, as well as in Gyeonggi-do, Gangwon-do,

Chungcheong-do, Gyeongsang-do, Jeolla-do, and Jeju-do. Gwangjin-gu, a neighboring district, announced that it would create a carbon neutral green forest by around October this year by using the OnTree app.

The Songpa-gu OnTree App has two key aspects. First, residents have played a leading role in realizing the idea and developing the project with the full cooperation of the district office. This is the result of the public-private partnership and environmental policy promoted by Songpa-gu. Second, it has proved that individual actions in daily life can contribute to overcoming climate change, and making its process fun works to attract people to voluntarily participate in climate action. As a result, it benefits all residents in the district and creates community value.

This article was written by ICLEI Korea Office in cooperation with the Environmental Division of Songpa District Office.



Seokchon Lake

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ICLEI Cities Climate Action Series

Date of Issue: September 1, 2022

Issuer: Yeonhee Park

Website: www.icleikorea.org

Publisher: ICLEI Korea Office

Editor: Soeun Park

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