

Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan

Public Meeting #2

5 Year Update

May 19, 2026

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Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan

Public Meeting #2

Agenda:

- Background
- State of the Forest Today
- Progress towards Goals
- Plan for the Next 5 Years
- Questions / Comments

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Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan

Public Meeting #2

Agenda:

- Background

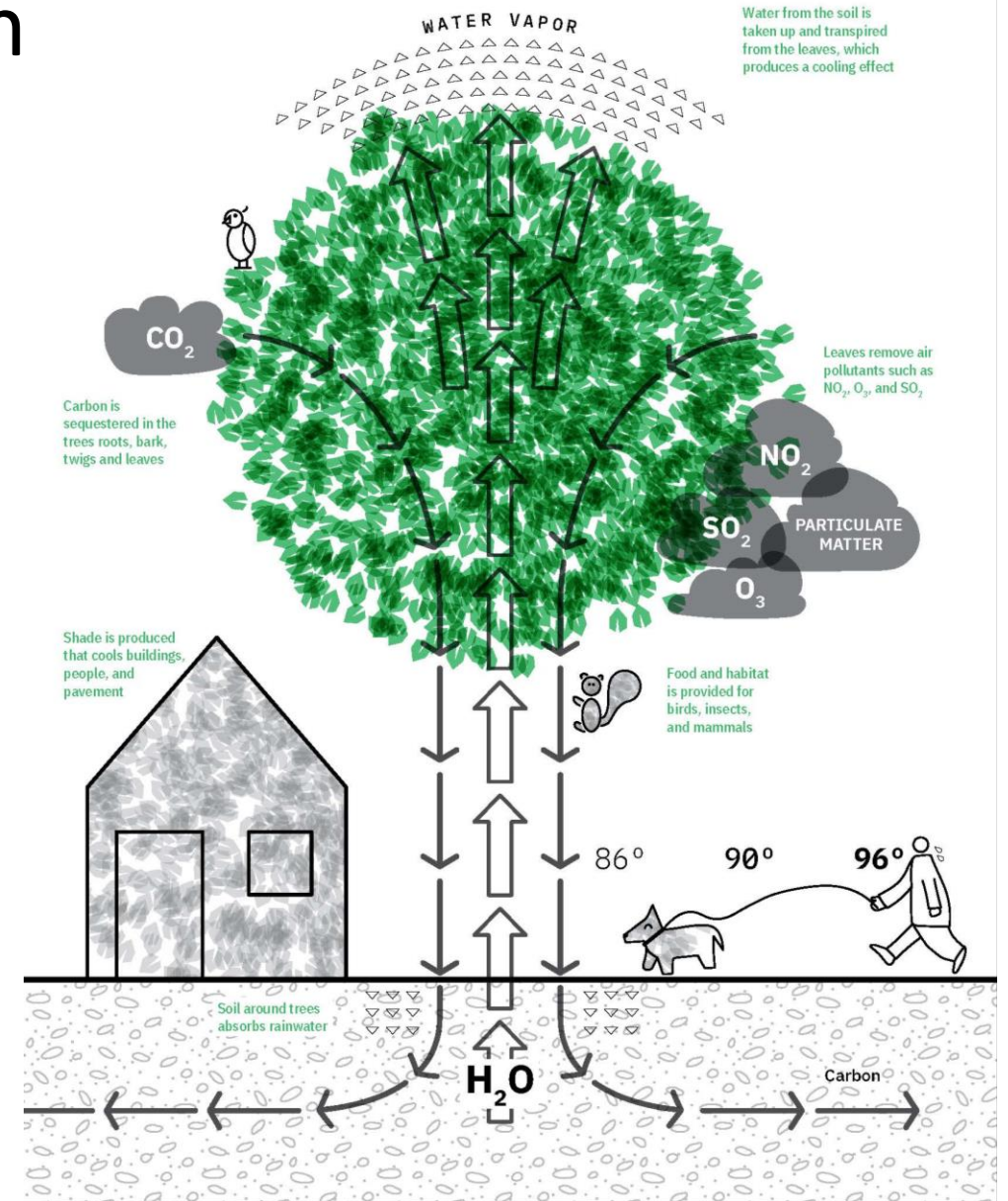
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Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan

A health forest is a vital part of a healthy city

We all share responsibility to care for our urban forest



Background and Process

Builds on the findings of the Cambridge Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA) and supports the goals of the Climate Change Preparedness and Resilience (CCPR) study

Supports the Core Values of Envision Cambridge

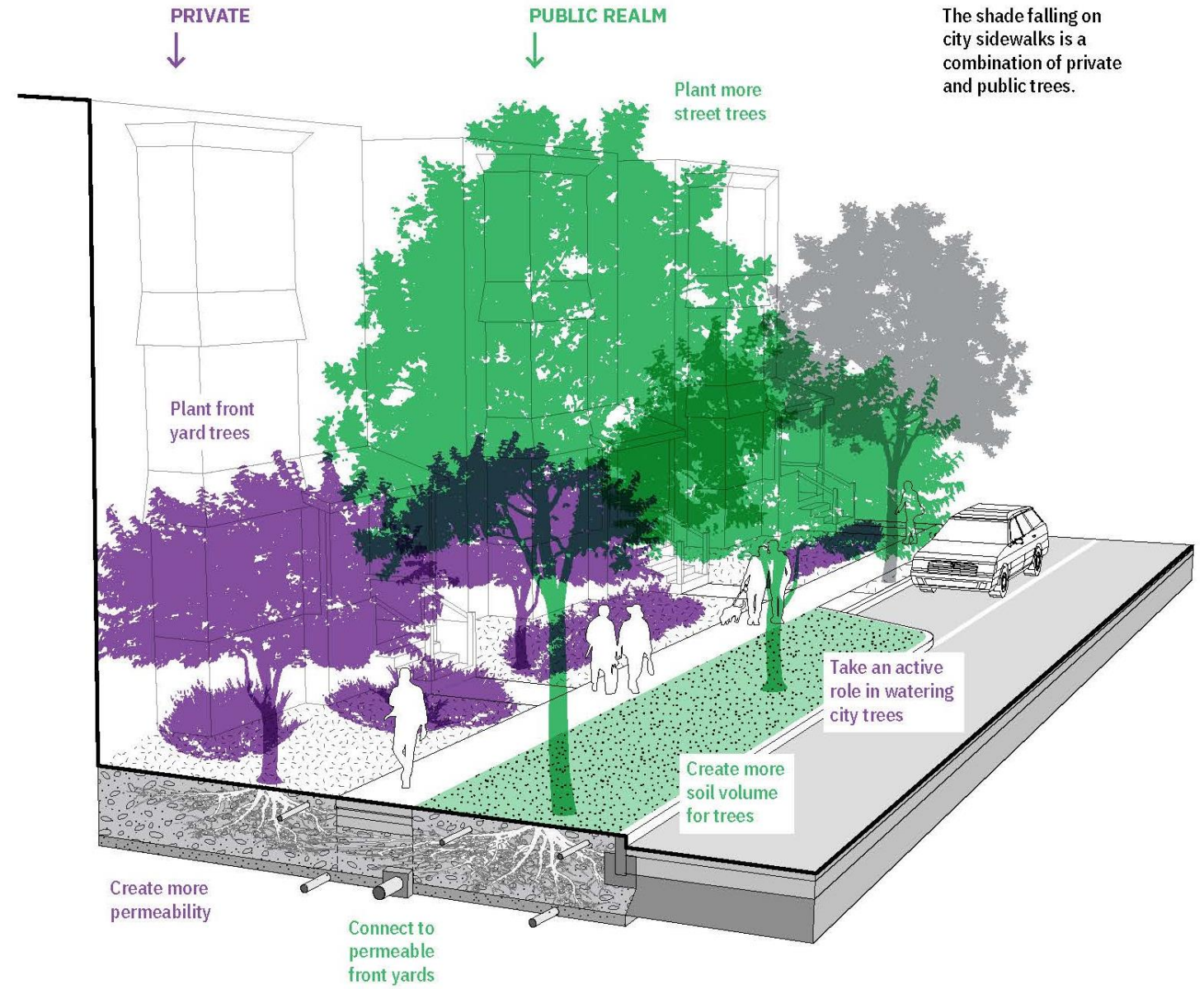
- Livability & Diversity
- Equity
- Economic Opportunity
- Sustainability & Resilience
- Community Health and Wellbeing
- Learning

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Goals

Grow canopy to maintain and improve the livability, resiliency, and well-being of Cambridge and its residents.



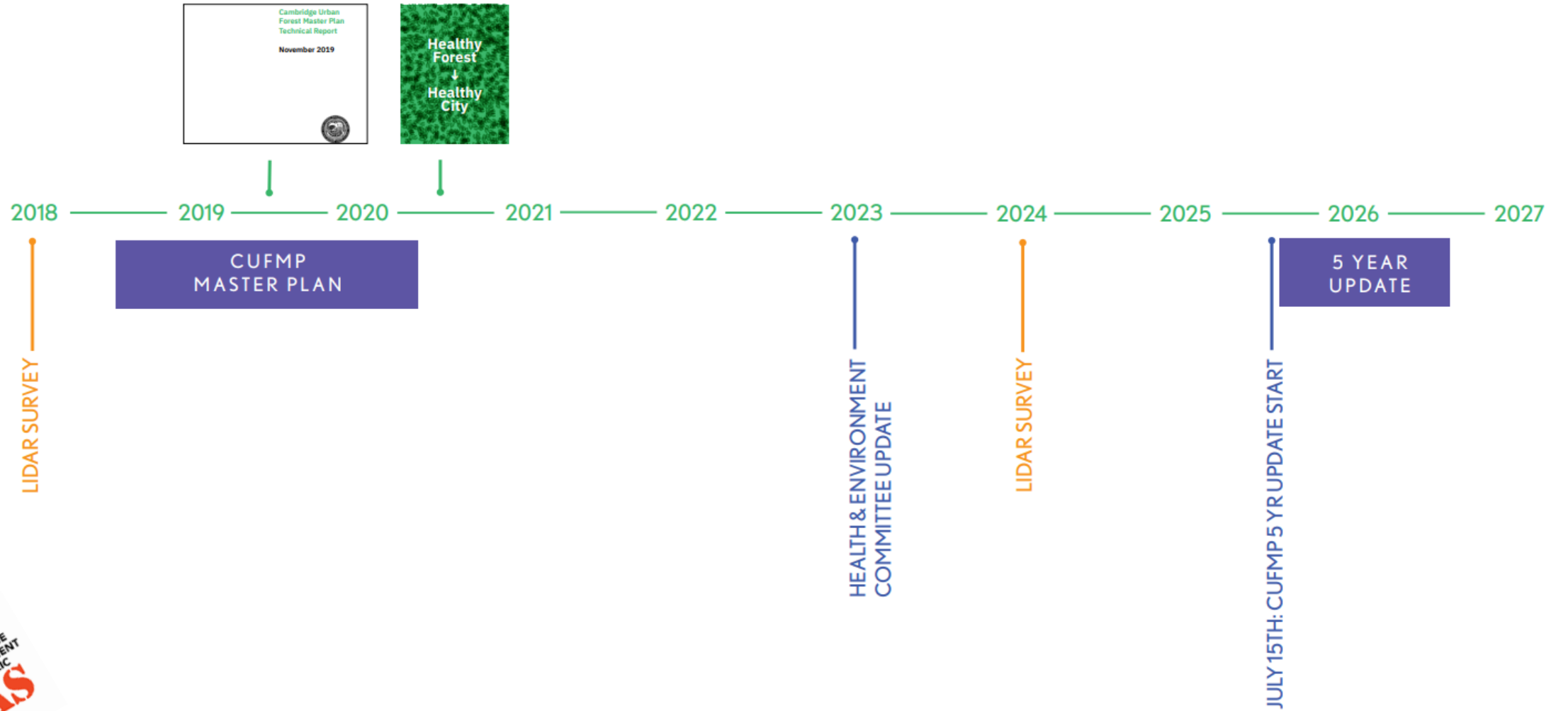
Goals of the 5- Year Update

- 1. Evaluate progress since the 2019 Urban Forest Master Plan, focused on the goals and priorities set forth in the UFMP**
- 2. Evaluate and recommend new strategies or modifications to existing strategies, across policy, City practices and design, and outreach and engagement**
- 3. Set priorities for the next 5 years, identifying the actions that will be most impactful and feasible**

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Timeline



Phase B — Recommendations

2025
SUMMER

2025
FALL

2026
WINTER

2026
SPRING

2026
SUMMER

PHASE A

**ANALYSIS AND
EVALUATION**

PHASE B

RECOMMENDATIONS

PHASE C

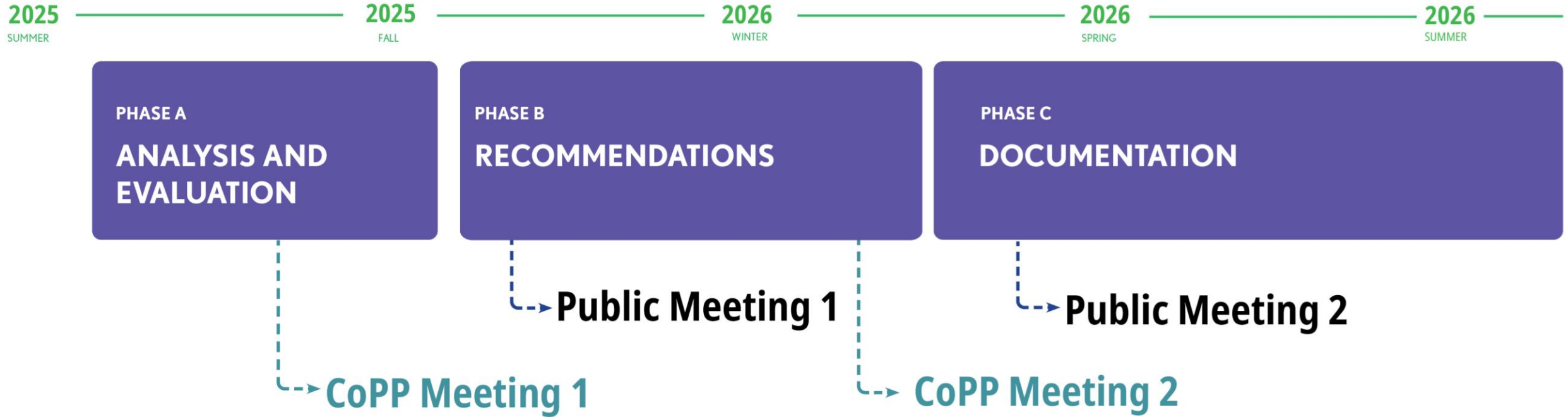
DOCUMENTATION

- **Q: What strategies should be revised?**
- **Q: What new strategies should be implemented?**
- **Q: What and how should the City prioritize?**

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Public Meetings



Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan

Public Meeting #2

Agenda:

- State of the Forest: Main Takeaways

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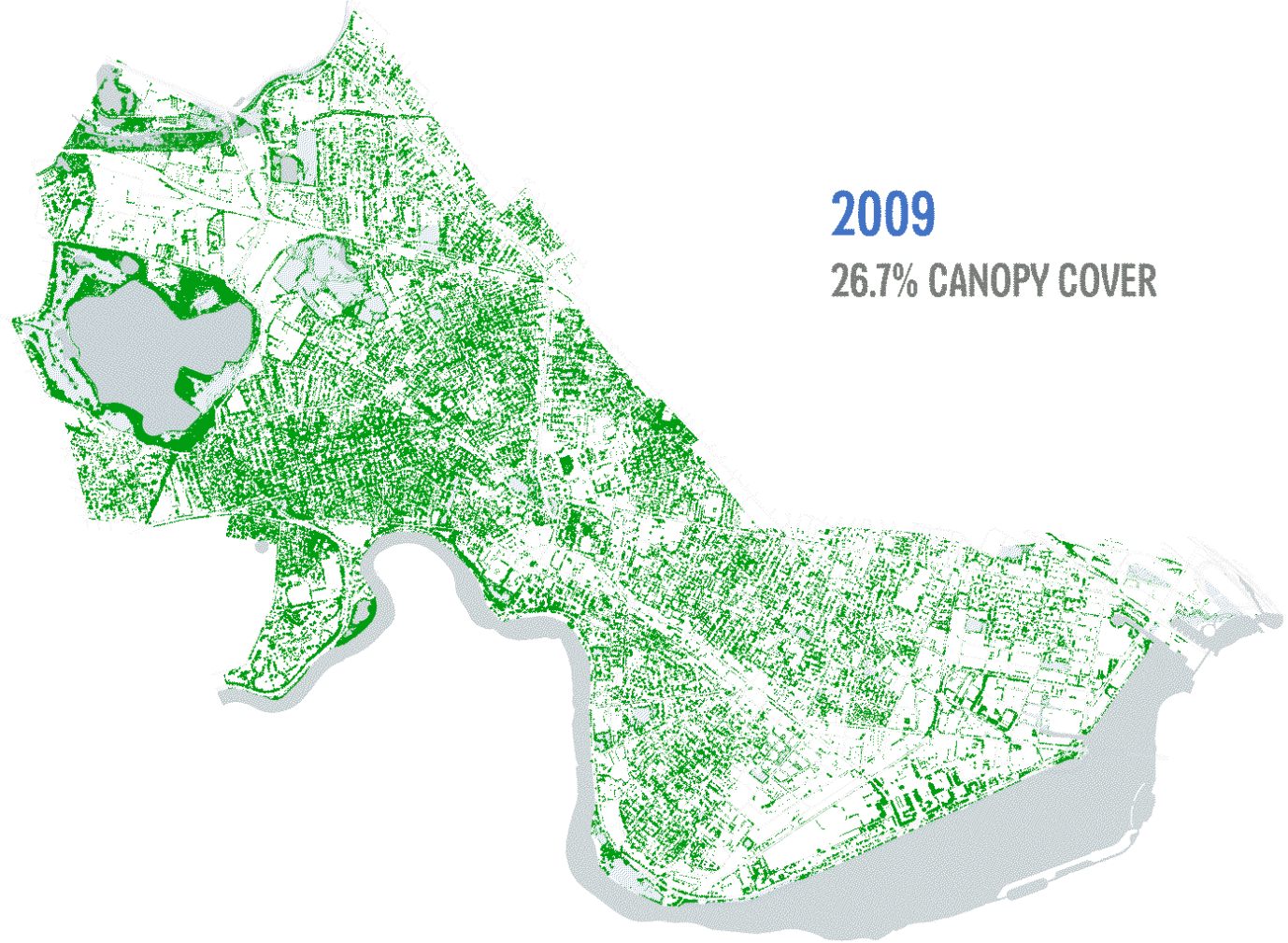


Good News

We have more canopy cover today than we did in 2009.

The rate of loss has slowed.

The rate of gain has increased.

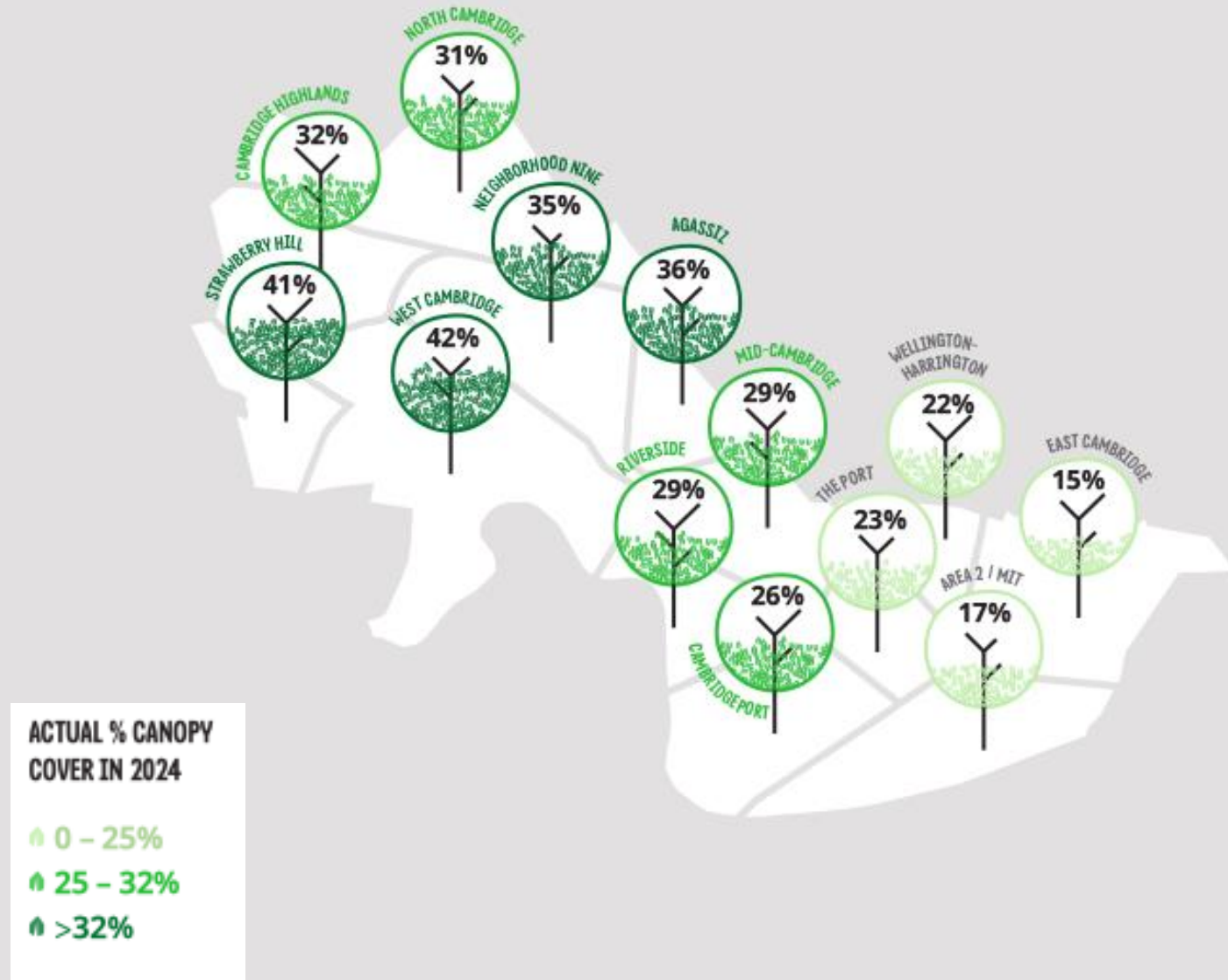


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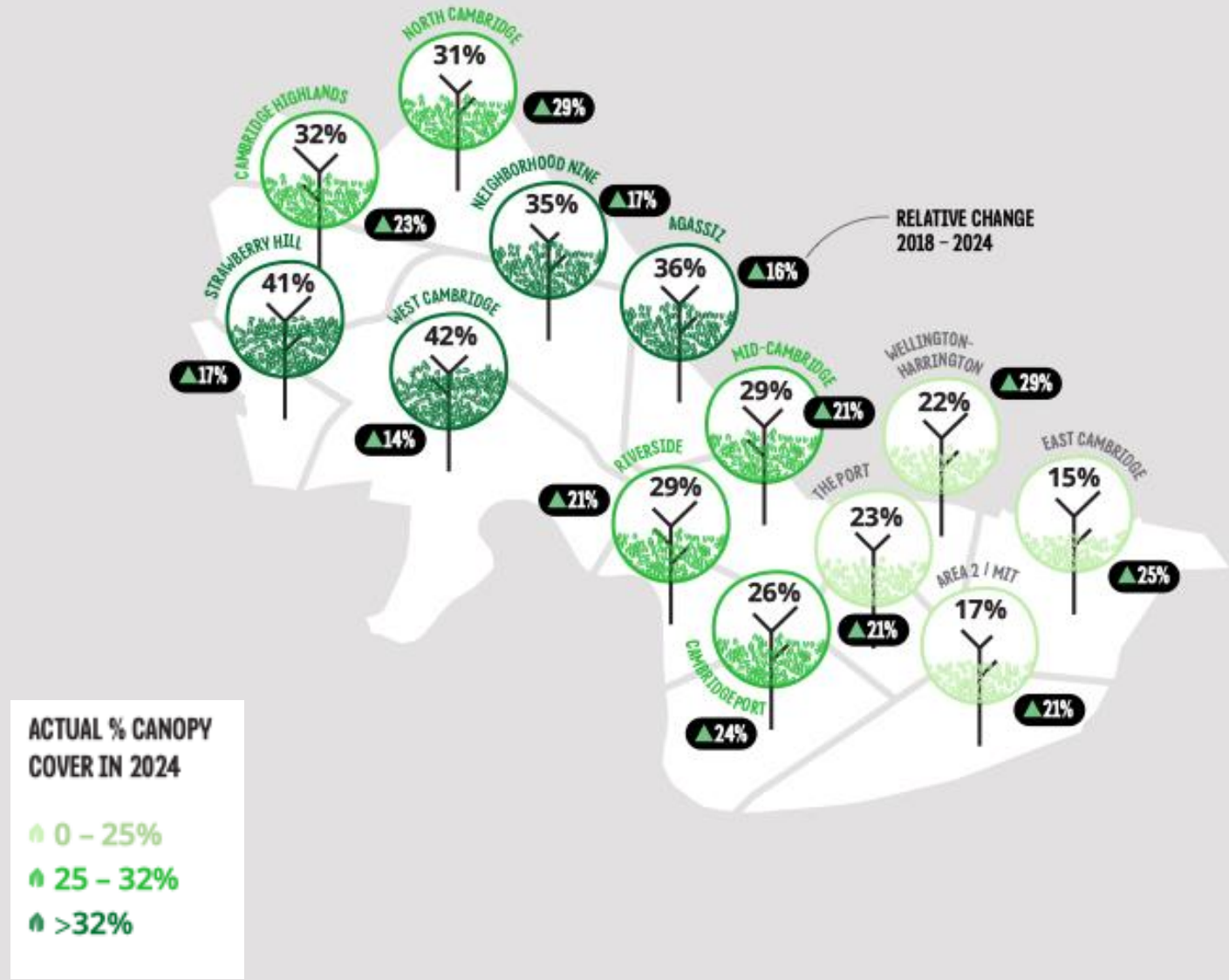
Canopy Cover

While canopy cover is still not equitably distributed ...



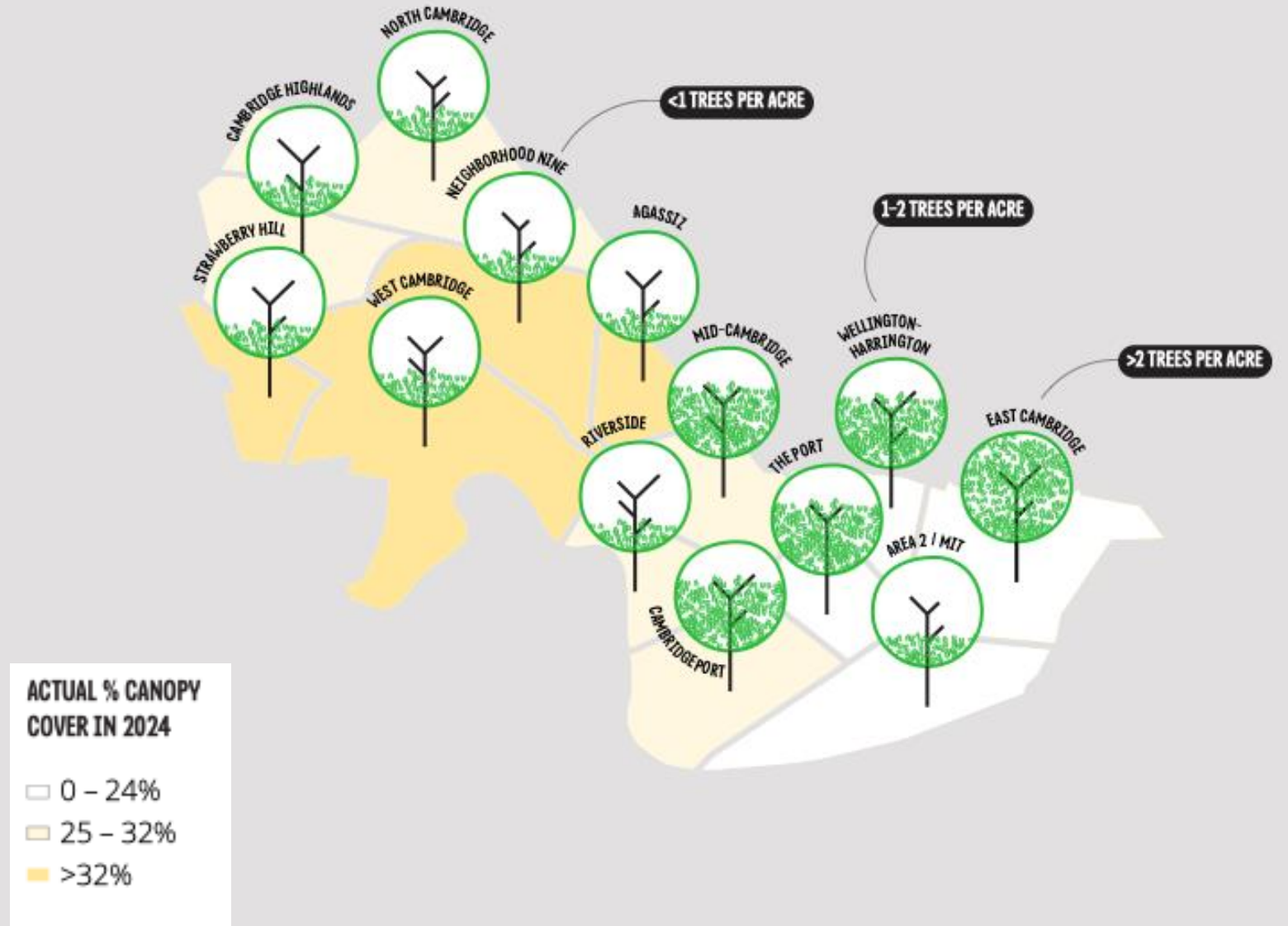
Canopy Growth

Canopy cover is growing, especially in the neighborhoods that need it the most.



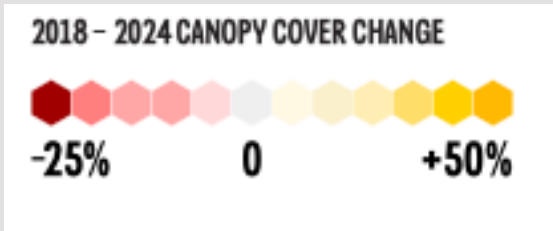
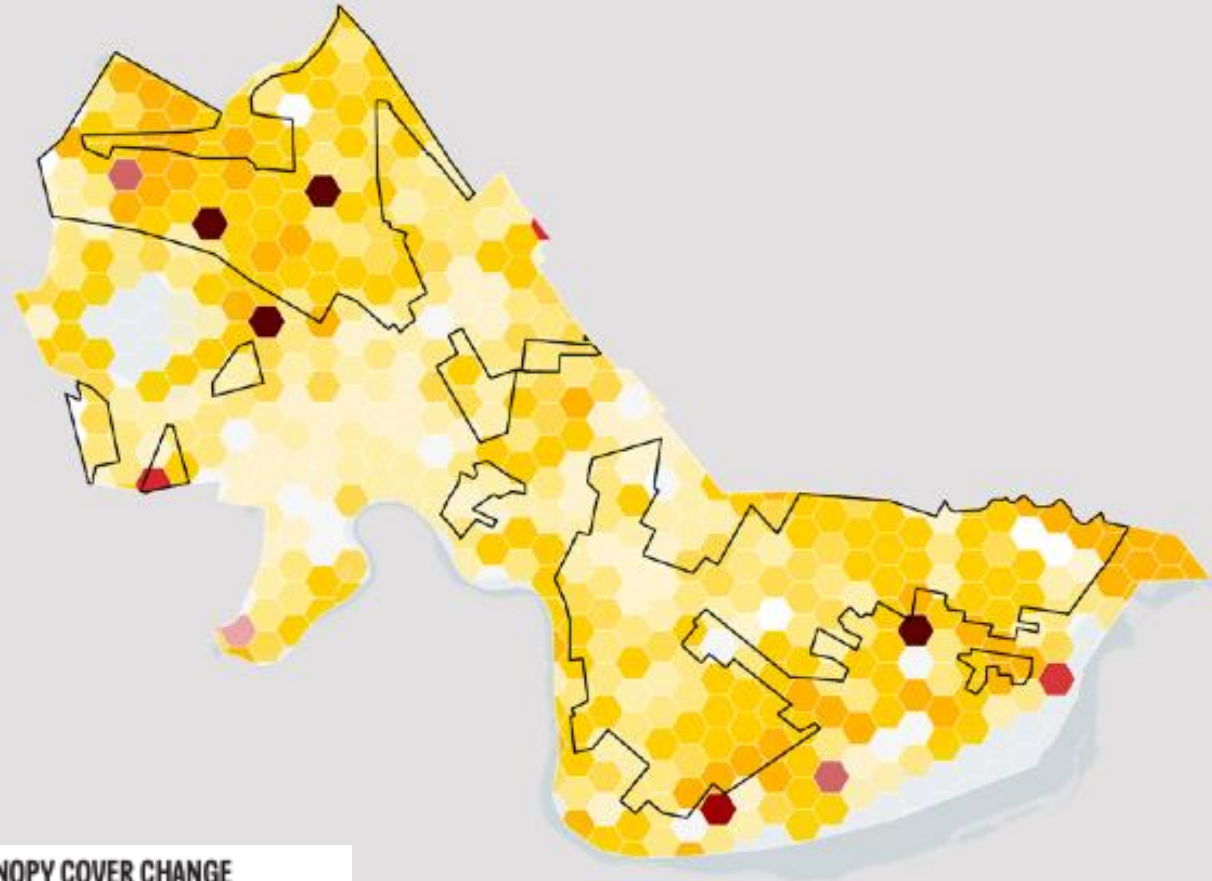
Tree Planting Rates

Because new planting has been focused in the neighborhoods with the lowest canopy cover.



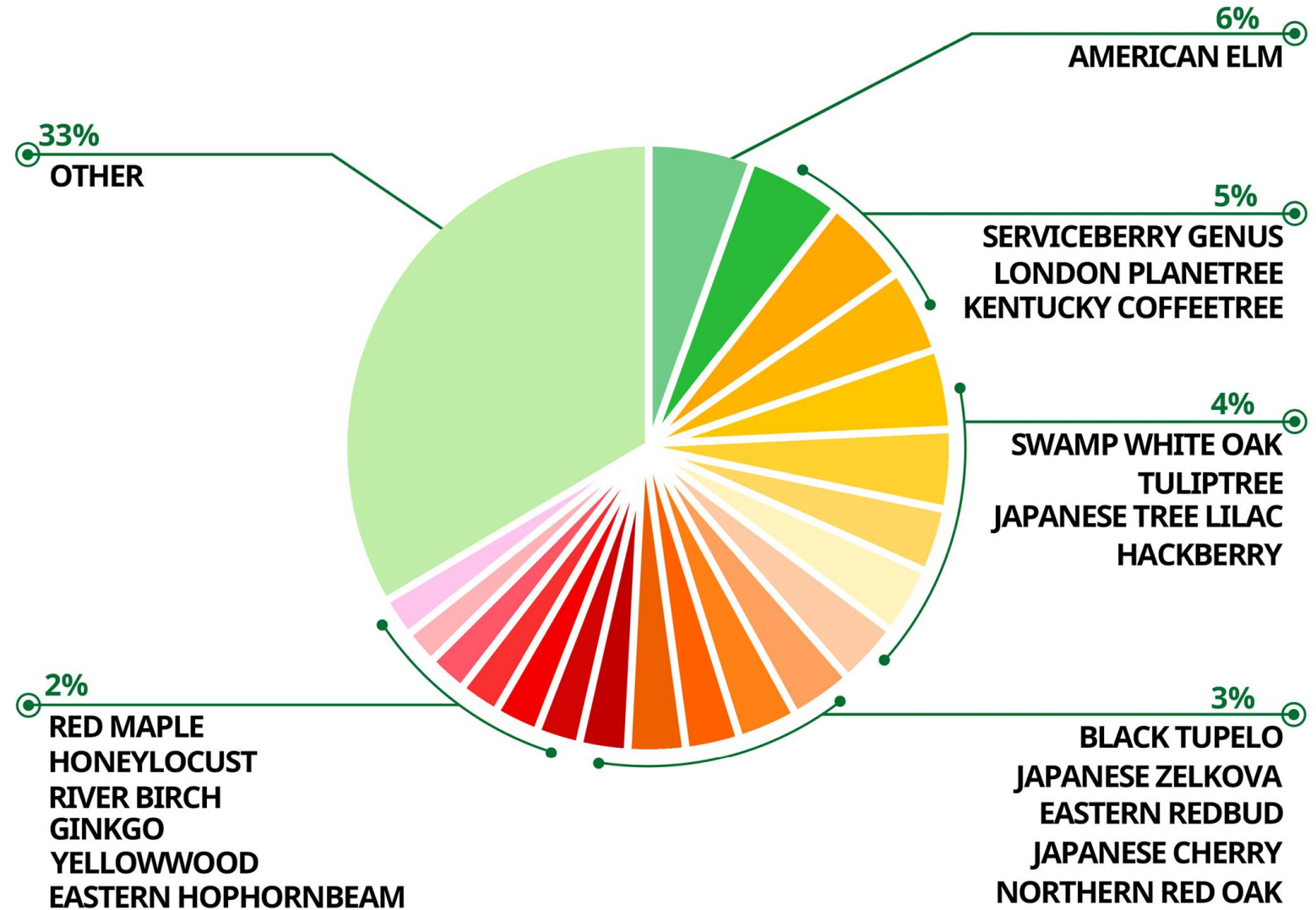
Canopy Cover Chang

The rate of growth is highest in under-canopied neighborhoods.



Canopy Diversity

The City has increased the diversity of its planting, adding 109 unique species in the last 5 years.

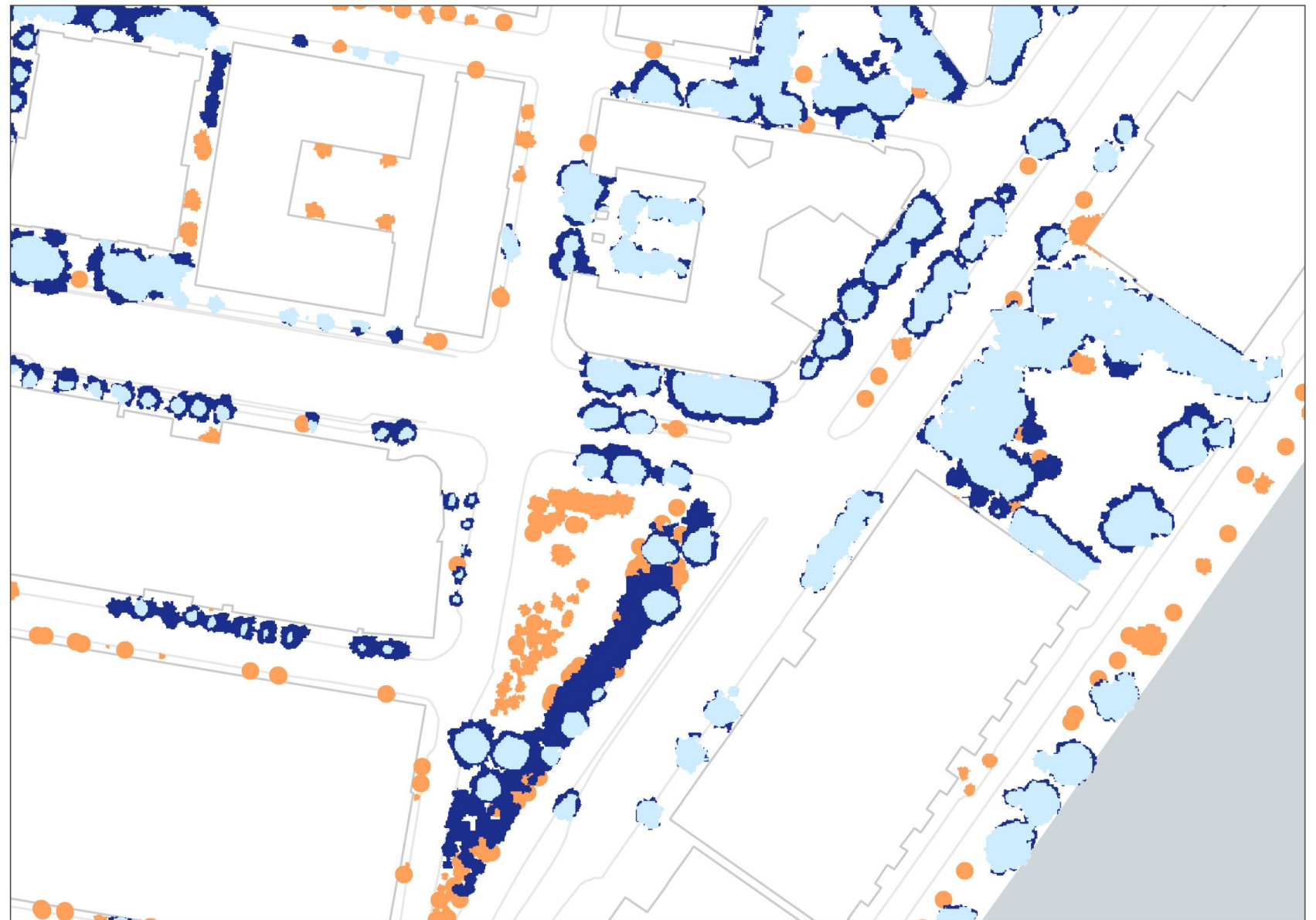


PLANTING BY SPECIES (2020 to 2024)



Canopy Growth

The urban forest is in a period of growth, mostly from existing trees.

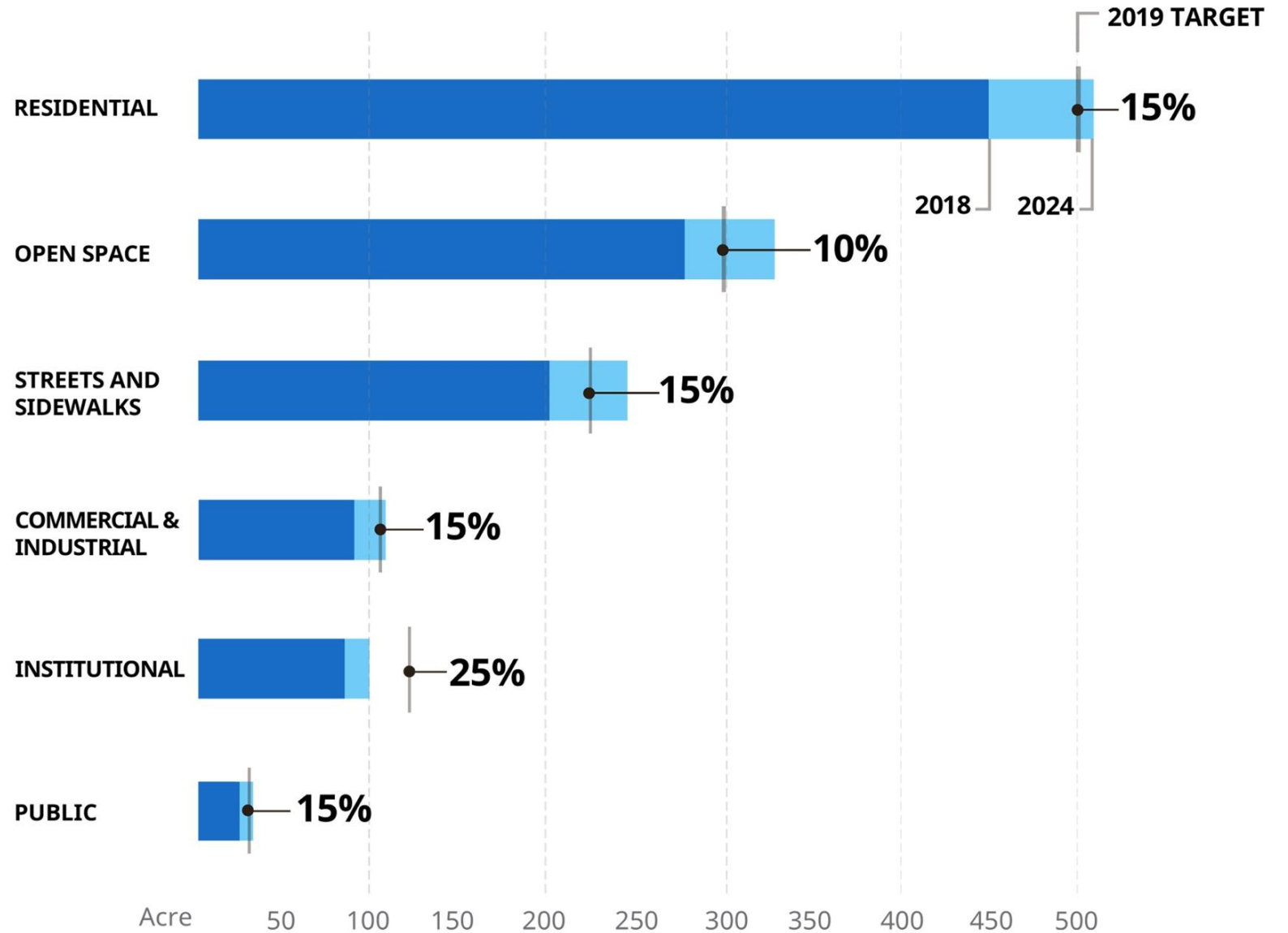


■ GAIN- EXISTING CANOPY GROWTH - 90% **■ GAIN - NEWLY PLANTED TREES - 10%** **■ NO CHANGE**



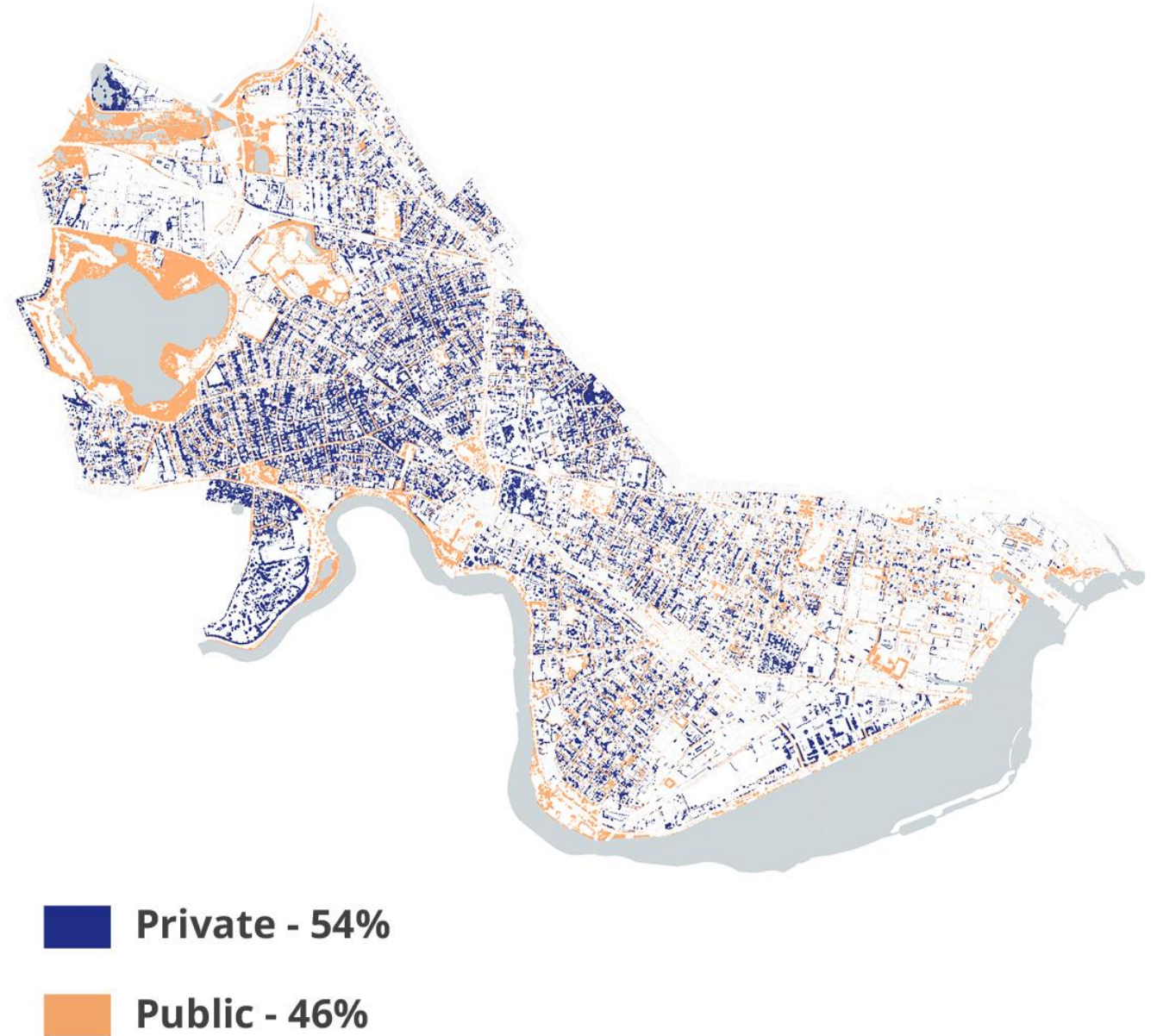
Canopy Growth

Canopy is growing on all types of property.



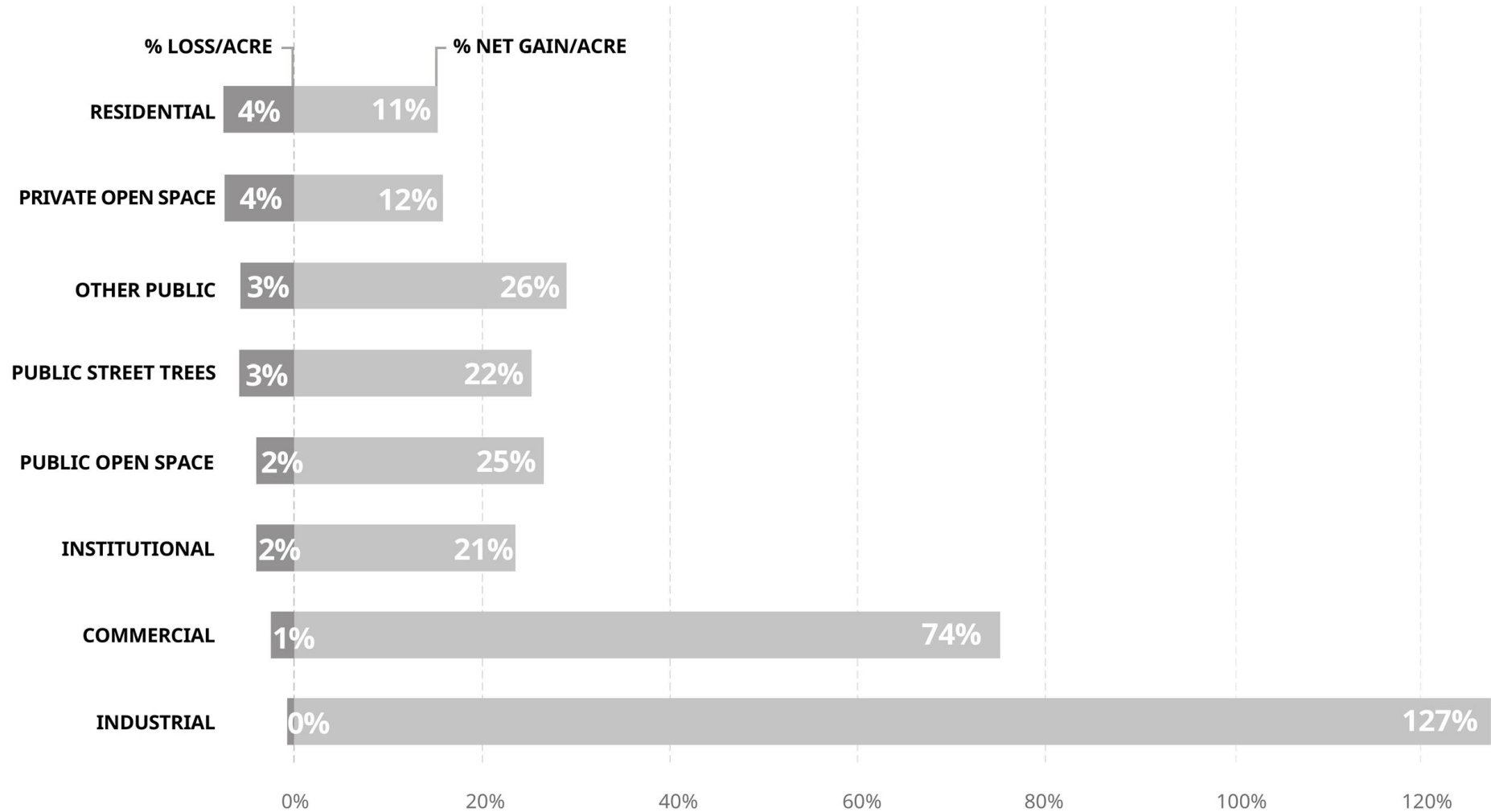
Canopy Ownership

The majority of canopy grows on private property.



Canopy Ownership

The most loss and least growth is occurring on residential property.



Canopy Protections

Not all trees being removed under the Tree Protection Ordinance are being replanted.

Half of the canopy trees which are removed are being replaced with subcanopy trees.



Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan

Public Meeting #1

Agenda:

- Progress Towards Goals

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2020 Goals



MEETING/EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

EQUITY
minimum 25% cover for each neighborhood

RESILIENCE
60% cover for canopy corridors species/genus diversity targets

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY
increase canopy cover across land types by 10 to 25%

FEASIBILITY
evaluate plantable area capacity

2020 Goal
+30%
CANOPY COVER CITYWIDE

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY
- 10% to 25% increase in canopy cover across all land types



2020 Goals

EQUITY

 **25% minimum canopy by neighborhood**

Increase canopy cover where it is currently lacking, particularly in areas with high concentrations of minorities, the elderly, non-English speakers and those with low incomes



MEETING/EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS



IMPROVING/DEVELOPING



FALLING BEHIND



2020 Goals

RESILIENCY

-  60% canopy over sidewalks
-  50% reduction of heat island hotspots
-  Species diversification

Enhance canopy cover in the public realm to create “cool corridors” that reduce heat island where people are impacted the most



MEETING/EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS



IMPROVING/DEVELOPING




FALLING BEHIND



2020 Goals

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

 10% to 25% increase in canopy cover across all landowner types

Incentivize each landowner to increase canopy cover - a thriving forest requires mutual care by many parties



MEETING/EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS



IMPROVING/DEVELOPING



FALLING BEHIND



Image Credit: Billy Hickey



Measuring Progress — 5 Year Plan



Prepare and implement a
SOILS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Expand **DATA COLLECTION** on tree health and use an annual report to **TRACK PROGRESS**



GALVANIZE THE COMMUNITY through an outreach and engagement plan

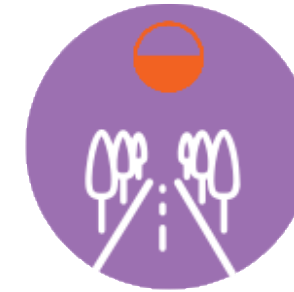
Publicize the **BACK OF SIDEWALK** program



Update the **TREE PROTECTION ORDINANCE**



PLANT 1,000 STREET TREES per year, focusing on priority areas and streets



MAKE SPACE FOR MORE TREES by prioritizing better growing conditions in street redesign



Maximize tree planting in existing **PARKS**, focusing on canopy deficient neighborhoods



Establish a **TREE TRUST** to support planting on private property



REFORM ZONING tools and revise Article 19 to encourage more trees in new projects

Leverage planning review to encourage new public open spaces



INSTITUTIONALIZE TREE PLANTING PRIORITIES in City Departments by forming an interagency resiliency group

-  **COMPLETED AND ASSESS**
-  **IN PROGRESS**
-  **NOT YET STARTED**



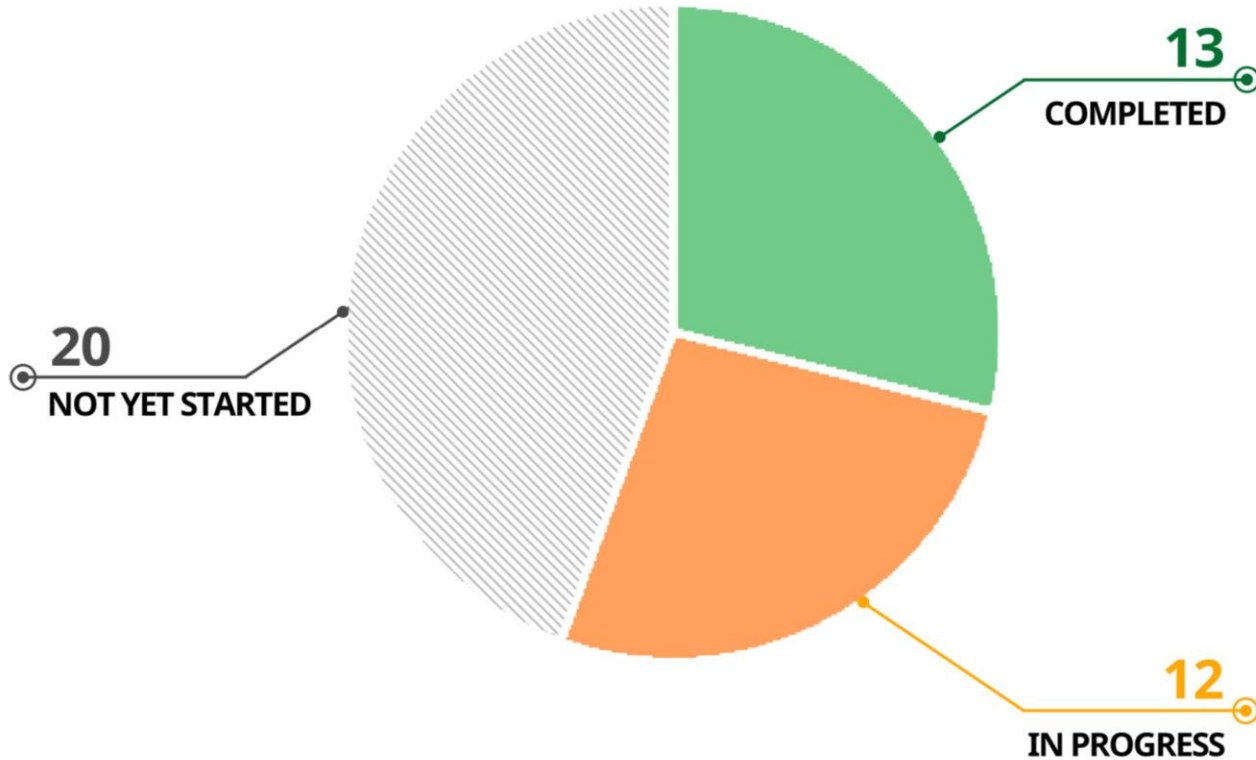
Measuring Progress — Long-term Plan

Of the recommended actions:

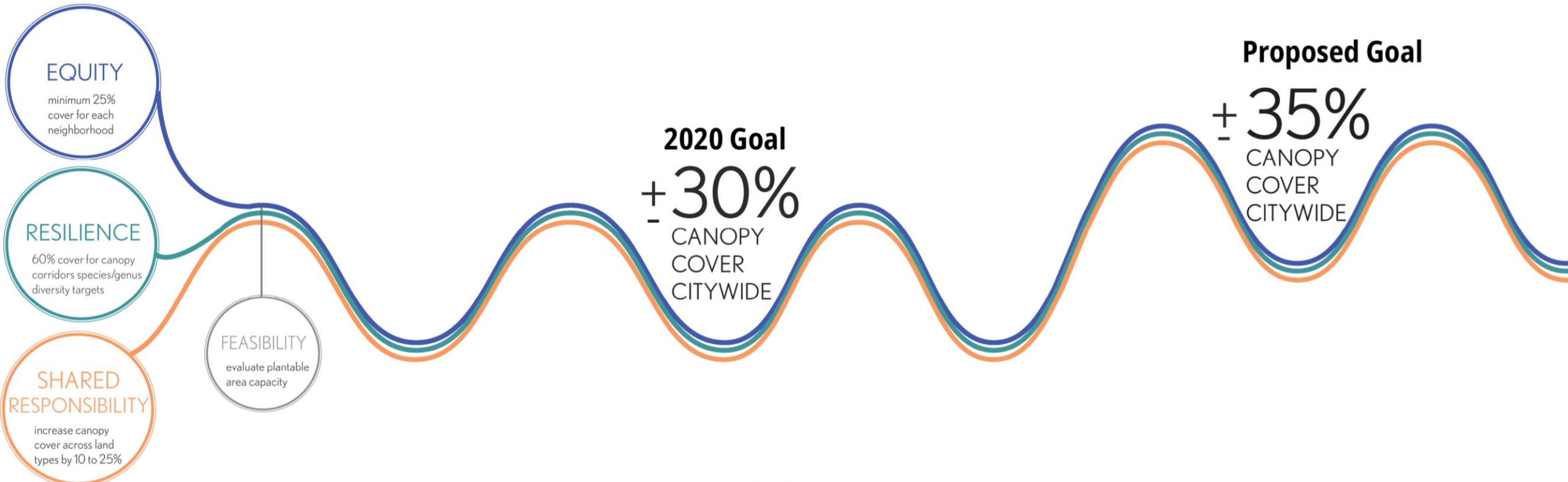
29% are completed

27% are in progress

44% are not yet started



Raising the Target — Citywide Canopy Cover



MANAGEMENT
• 10% to 20% increase in canopy cover
• 10% to 20% increase in tree diversity
• 10% to 20% increase in tree canopy cover



Proposed Targets

EQUITY

- 25% minimum canopy by neighborhood

RESILIENCY

- 50/55% canopy over sidewalks
- 17% canopy within priority areas
- Species diversification
- Source native trees locally for park trees

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

- 8% to 55% canopy cover dependent on landowner type



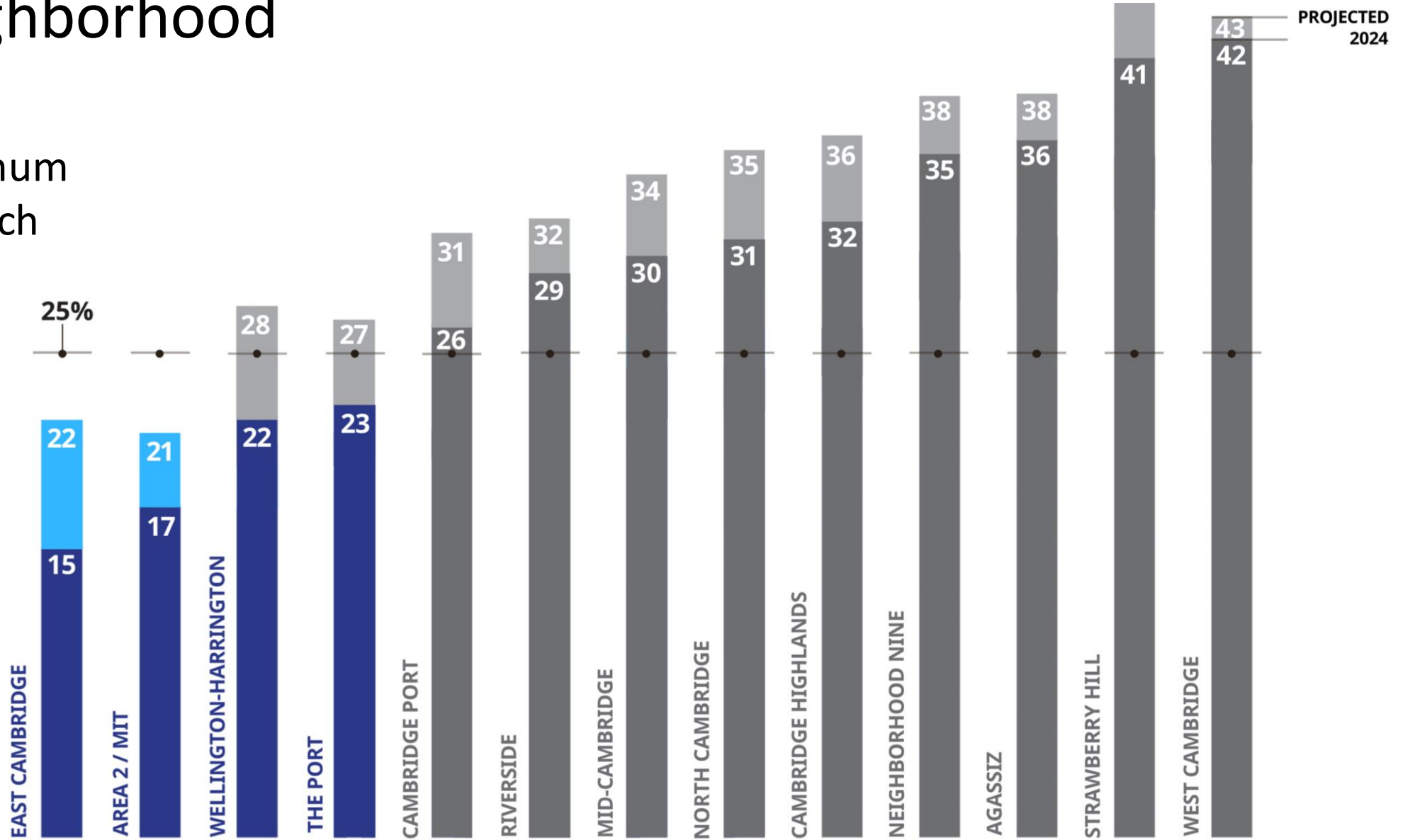
Testing New Targets

Newly planted trees can be projected to maturity to understand possible future canopy cover



Equity - Neighborhood

Keep at 25% minimum canopy cover in each neighborhood



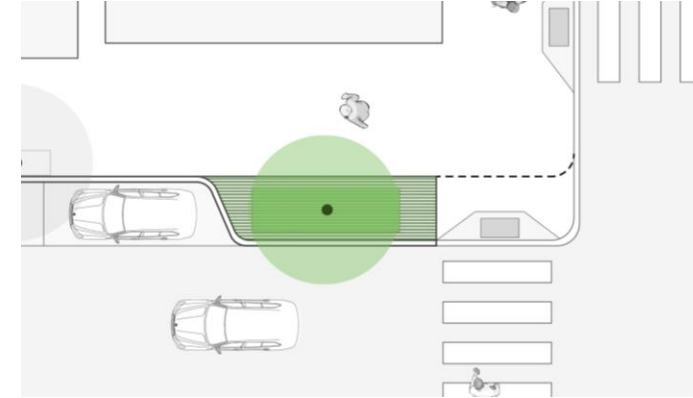
Equity - East Cambridge Case Study



Parking Lots



Street ROW



Street Intersections



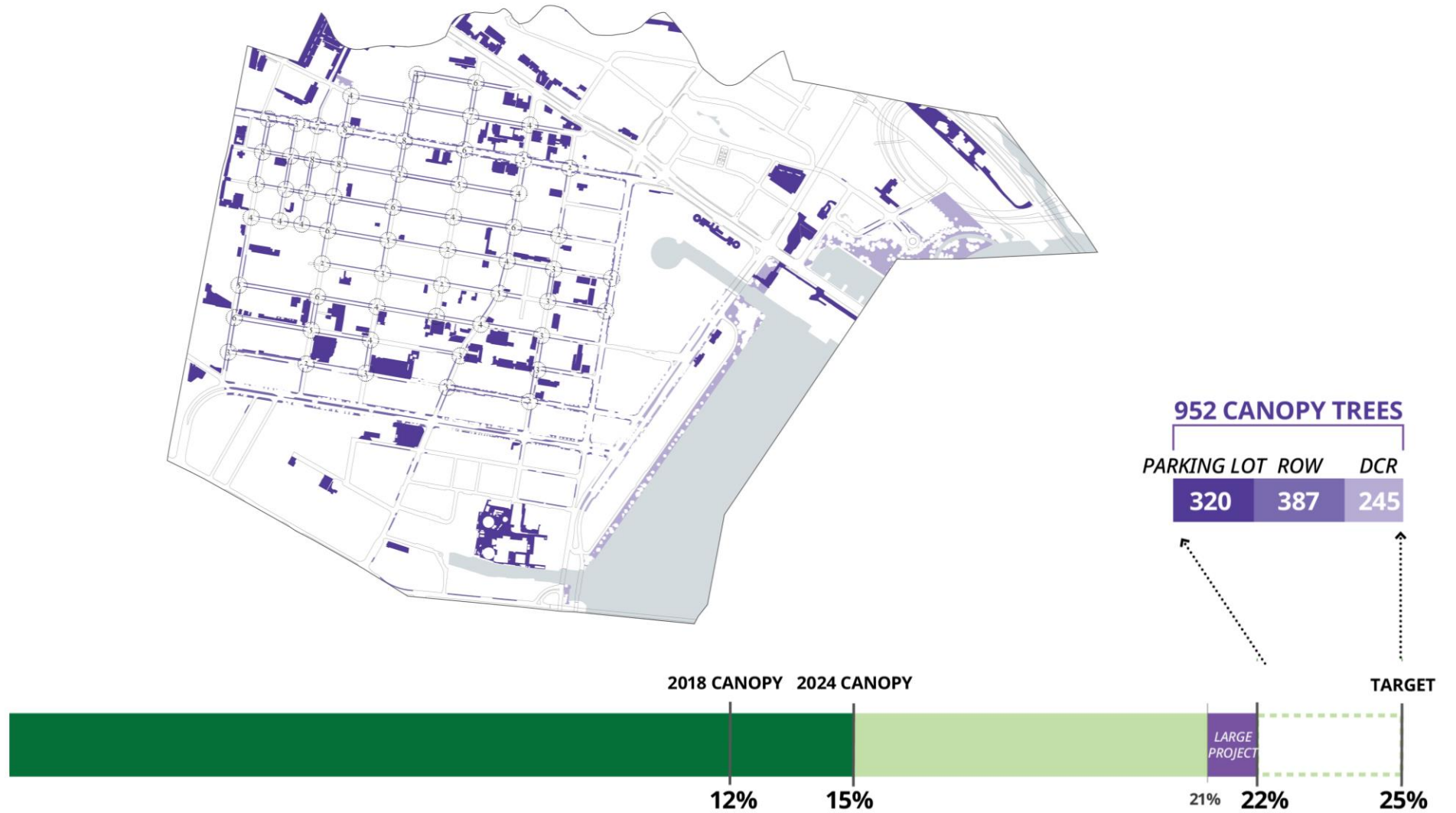
DCR Land Along Memorial Drive



DCR Land Along Edwin H. Land Blvd

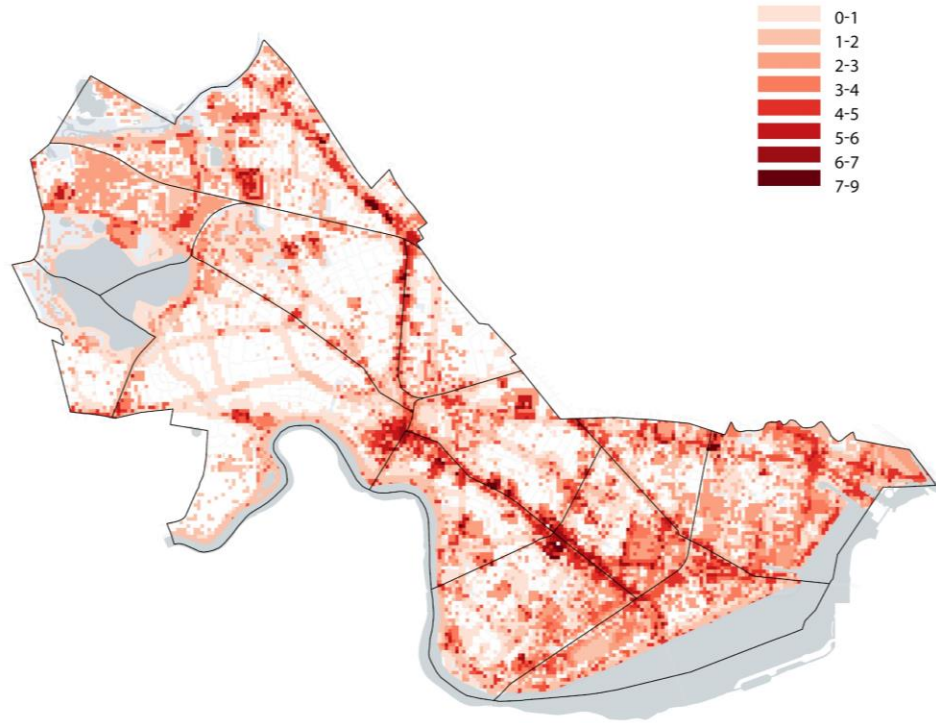


Equity - East Cambridge Case Study



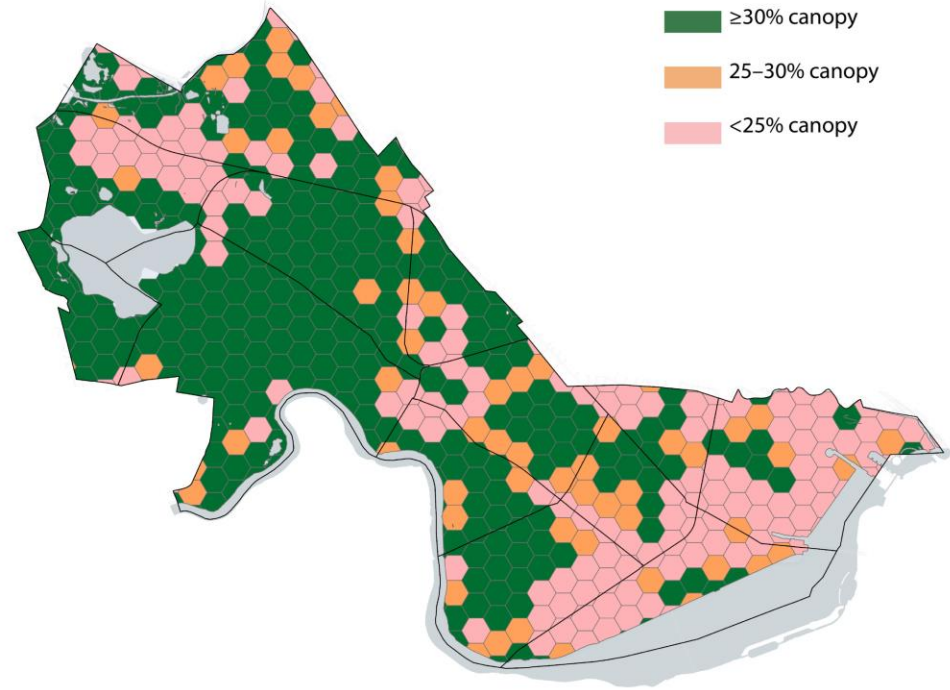
Resiliency – Priority Areas

Priority Areas are determined by:



Areas of high need

+



Low canopy cover (projected)



Resiliency – Priority Areas

Areas of high need are determined by:



Populations vulnerable to heat



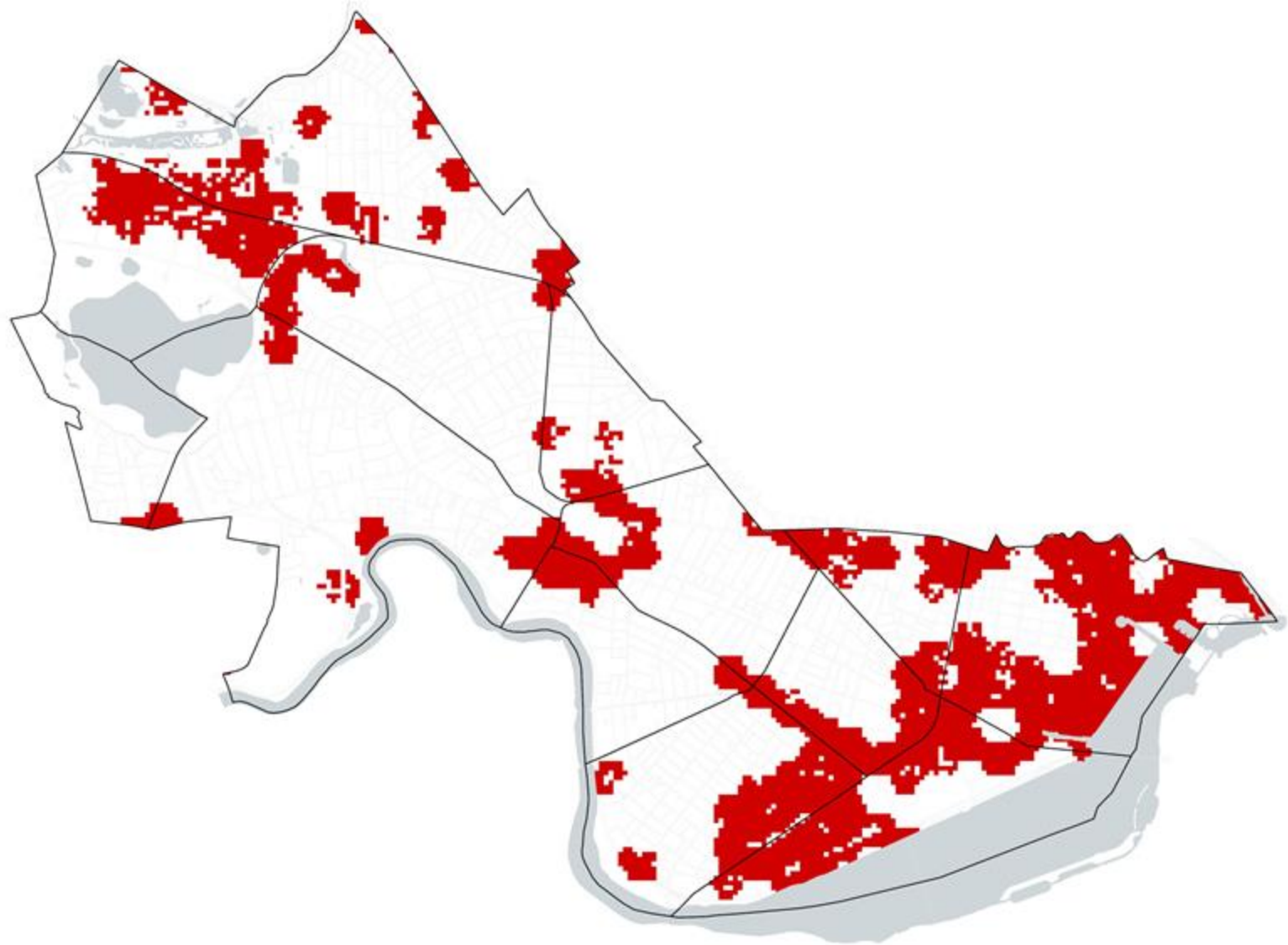
Commonly travelled corridors



Heat islands

Resiliency – Priority Areas

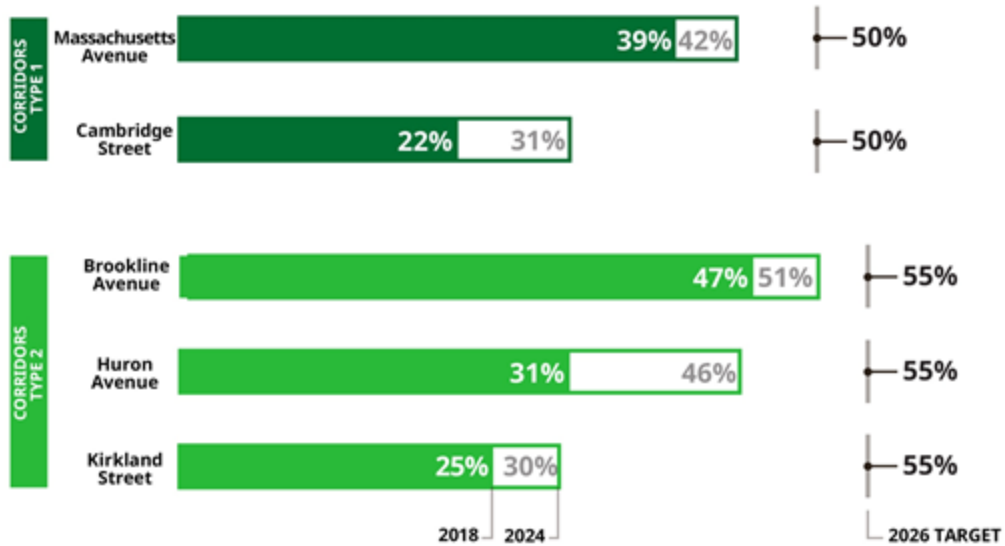
Aim for 17% canopy cover
within priority areas
(current is 11%)



Resiliency - Cool Corridors

50% canopy cover over sidewalks for Type 1 corridors

55% canopy cover over sidewalks for Type 2 corridors



Resiliency – Species Diversity

No more than 10% of a single species, 20% of a genus, and 30% of a family across the city

AND

within neighborhoods



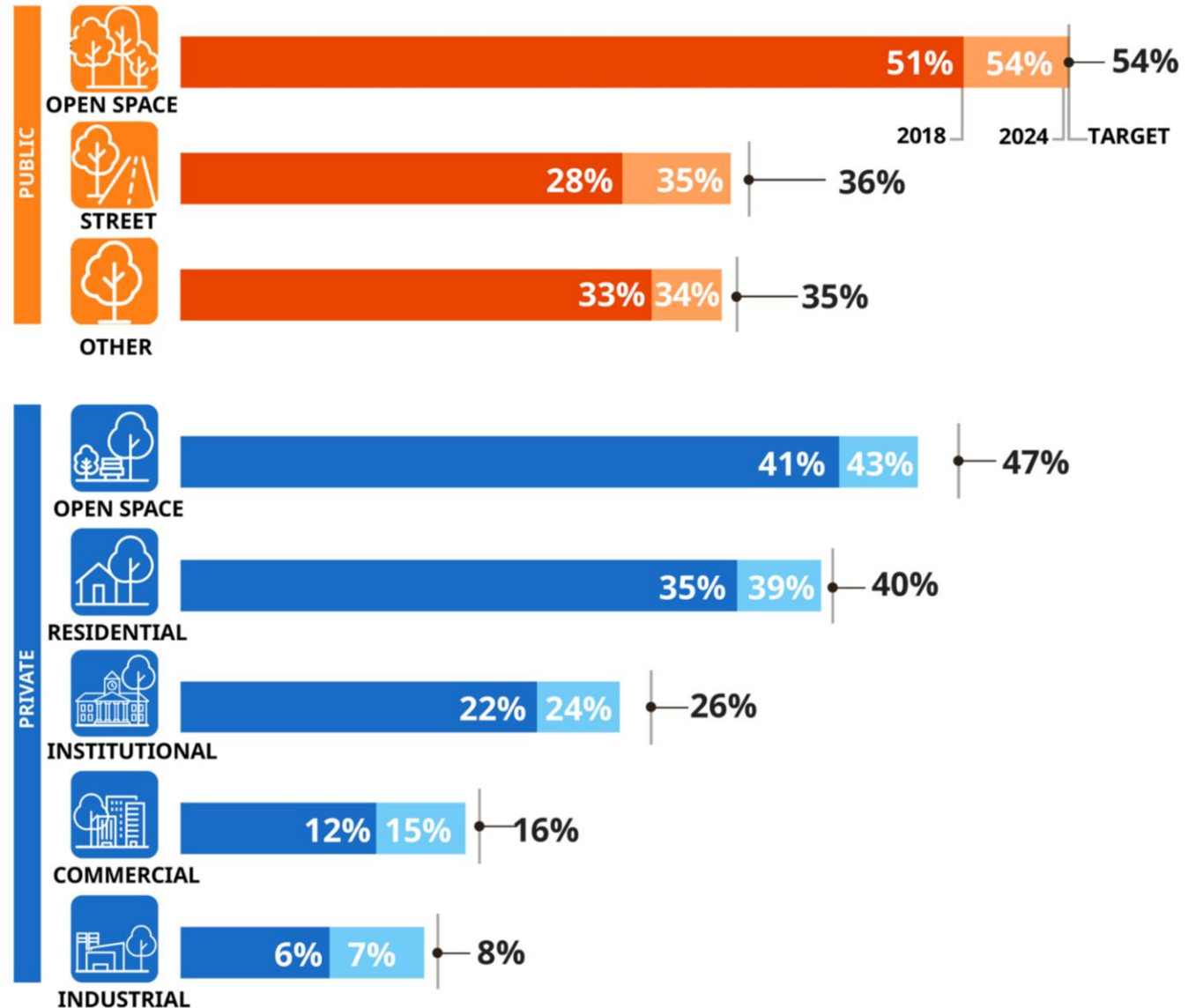
Resiliency – Genetic Diversity

50% of newly planted trees in parks should be native trees sourced locally (within the ecoregion)



Shared Responsibility

Set specific targets for public and private entities



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Agenda:

- 5 Year Plan: Key Recommendations

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Key Recommendations



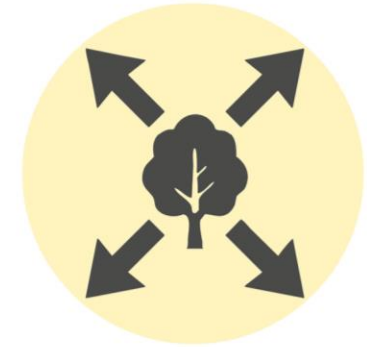
**FOCUS ON QUALITY
OVER QUANTITY**



**MANAGE MORE
STRATEGICALLY**



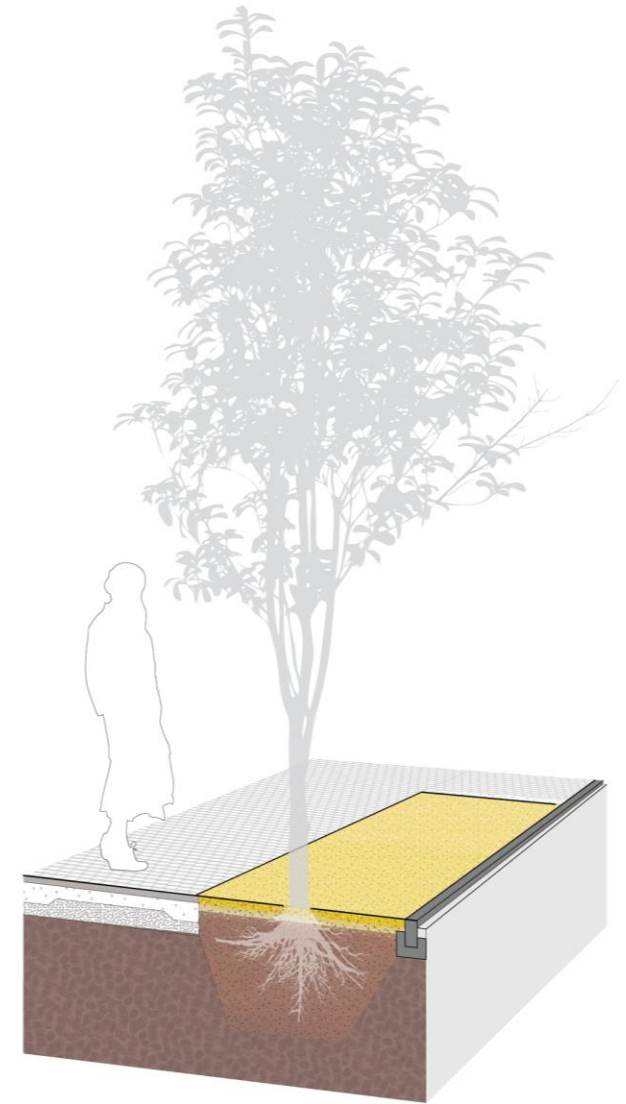
**SHARE RESPONSIBILITY
AND ALSO SHARE COST**



**BROADEN WHAT
RESILIENCY MEANS**

Focus on Quality over Quantity

Implement enhanced planting details and care regimes, especially in the most challenging conditions, to create the best conditions for long-term growth and well-being.



Manage More Strategically

Organize and optimize management strategies based on site type, planting condition, and risk level as opposed to neighborhood.



Share Responsibility And Also Share Cost

Deploy funding tools or cost sharing to incentivize new planting and retention of mature trees on private property.

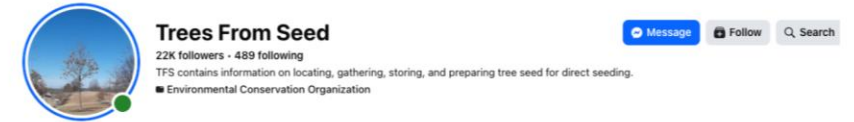
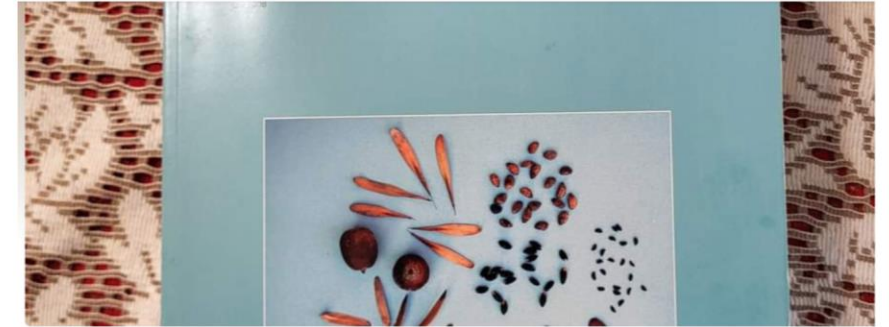
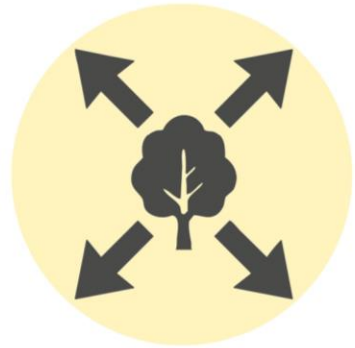
Revise policies to optimize tree protection and in-kind replacement.



Broaden What Resiliency Means

Go beyond species diversity by diversifying tree genetics.

Distribute species strategically to minimize risk from climate pressures.



Native Plant Trust
Conserving and promoting
New England's native plants



Key Recommendations

Focus on Quality over Quantity



Invest more in preparing for and planting each tree

Optimize planting techniques for long-term success

Institutionalize the City's tree priorities

Formalize review practices to ensure compliance and establishment

Manage More Strategically



Expand capacity to monitor the health of the forest

Define management zones that guide resources

Adjust planting techniques with ongoing tree assessments

Share Responsibility And Share Cost



Update the Tree Protection Ordinance

Update Zoning to Incentive Planting

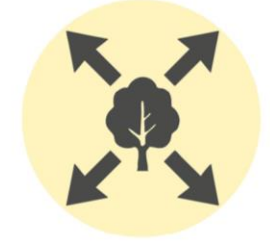
Foster stewardship through programs and partnerships

Increase City messaging on urban forestry efforts

Leverage public-private partnerships to provide flexibility for planting trees on private property

Promote urban forestry education

Broaden What Resiliency Means



Cultivate a more resilient forest

Enable climate adaptation through genetic diversity

Increase City-wide biodiversity

Promote more sustainable practices



Key Recommendations

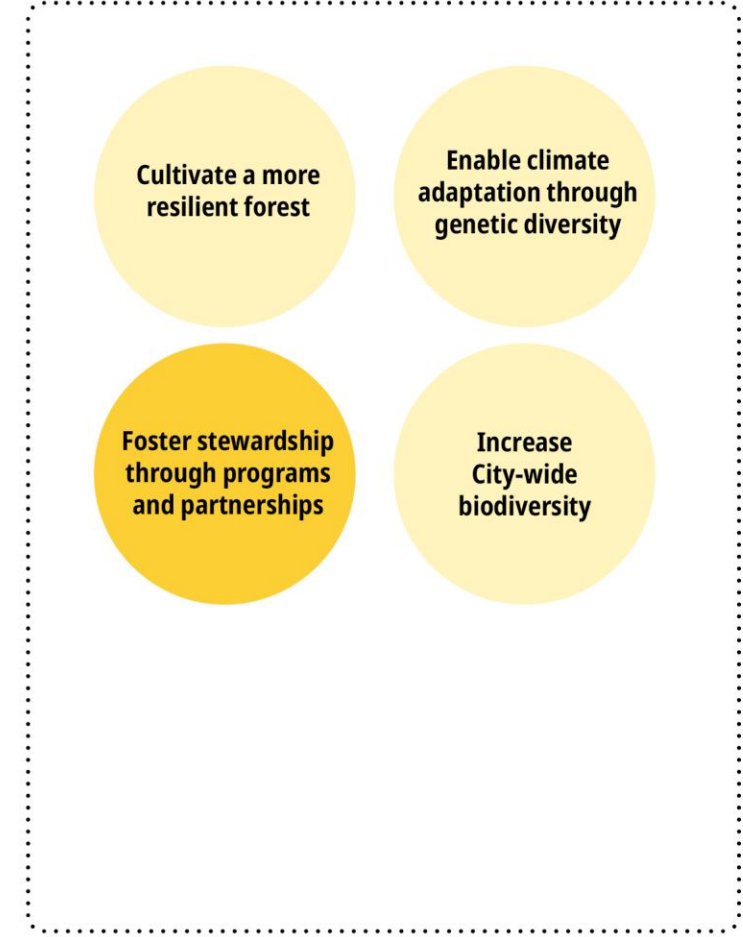
What the City can do.



What the City can do, with your support.



What you can do.



5 Year Action Plan

● Focus on Quality over Quantity
 ● Manage More Strategically
 ● Share Responsibility and also Share Cost
 ● Broaden What Resiliency Means

PUBLIC REALM TREES



1. PLANT 750 TREES per year, focusing on priority areas



2. Implement ENHANCED SOILS AND PLANTING details in priority areas



3. DEDICATE FUNDS for trees during street reconstruction projects



4. ENHANCE MONITORING of tree condition and prioritize care (soils management and watering) in high needs and high risk area



5. Source LOCAL SEED GROWN trees for parks and naturally regenerating areas

Integrate City programs to increase stewardship of public trees

CITYWIDE



6. INCORPORATE DESIGNING FOR TREES into other City department processes and standards



7. Update the TREE PROTECTION ORDINANCE



8. REFORM ZONING tools Strengthen tree requirements in Green Factor and for parking lots

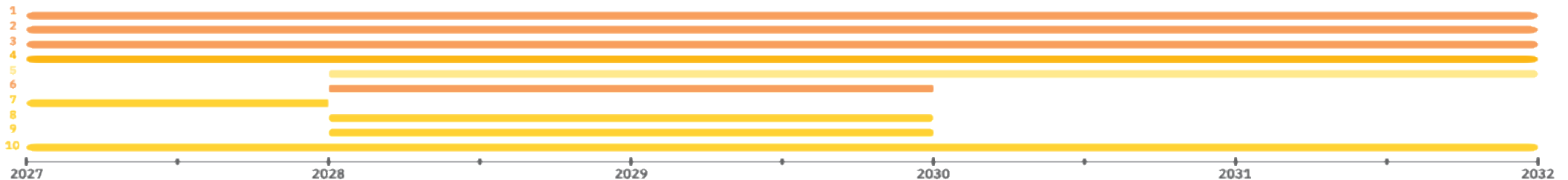


9. BUILD CAPACITY within urban forestry department to lead community outreach and engagement



10. Establish a TREE TRUST to support planting on private property

Expand PARTNERSHIPS to increase planting on private property



5 Year Action Plan

● Focus on Quality over Quantity
 ● Manage More Strategically
 ● Share Responsibility and also Share Cost
 ● Broaden What Resiliency Means

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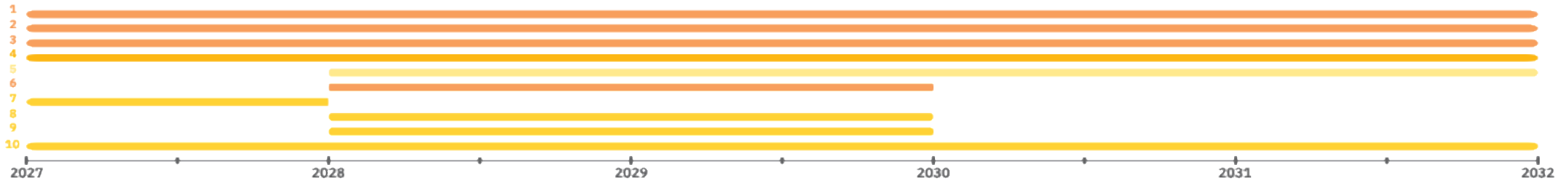


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Respond to Multi-Family Residential Zoning Change

Residential A
50% open space requirement



Residential C1
30% open space requirement

Residential B
40% open space requirement

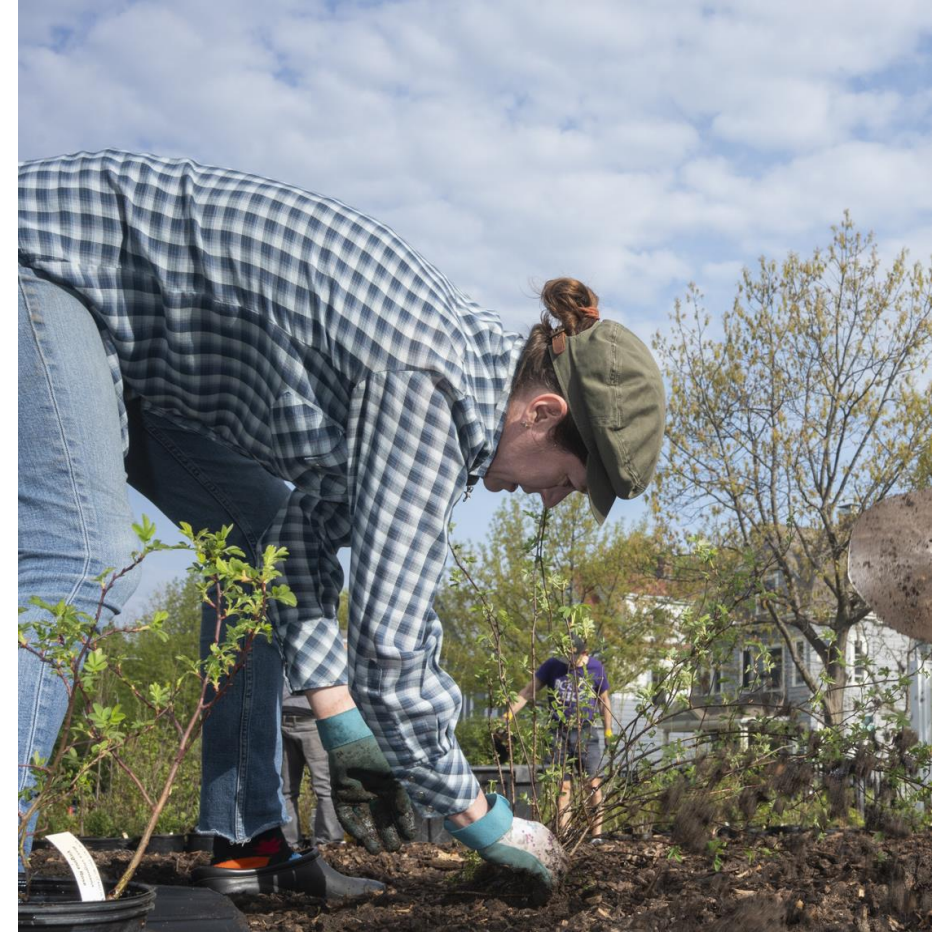
- If those parcels were built out (not assuming they use green roofs as open space) up to 135 acres of canopy cover could be removed, resulting in 26% canopy cover for residential areas.
- Citywide, current canopy cover is 30%. This would reduce to 28%.



Respond to Multi-Family Residential Zoning Change

What can be done to protect trees?

- Strengthen the TPO to protect abutting trees
- Calibrate Green Factor to better protect existing trees
- Re-evaluate open space definition (green roofs)



Policy change: Abutting trees (private and public)

Protect critical root zones in TPO

- Define a tree-protection zone buffer around existing trees (ie. 30'), including extending onto neighboring properties and public sidewalks.

Identify abutting trees in City applications

- Show abutting trees within 30' of the property boundary on Building Permits and Tree Protection Plan

Protect from over-pruning in TPO

- Define a threshold for maximum allowable pruning of the tree's canopy within a specified timeframe



Policy and Partnerships: Parking facilities

- 6.48.1 On grade, open parking facilities which contain five or more parking spaces must have at least five percent of the interior area of the parking facility landscaped
 - Each planting area to be at least 25' long and contain at least one tree.
 - At least one tree for every ten parking spaces.
- Green Factor only comes into play with new surface lots.
- Parking lot ordinance applies to newly striped parking lots and new parking lots.



Policy and Partnerships: Parking facilities

- Modify the parking lot ordinance to include more specific canopy tree planting requirements (percentage of canopy cover at maturity and minimum soil requirements).
- Provide funding (tax rebates, grants, proceeds from the Tree Fund) for planting in existing parking lots.
- Create a database of parking lot owners amenable to accepting more planting on their parking lots that can provide off-site in-kind mitigation for TPO removals instead of mitigation payments to the Tree Fund.



Outreach and Engagement

Be a Leader in Stewardship

- Join Forest Friends and care for the City's trees
- Create and Lead Neighborhood Teams

Be a Tree Advocate

- Speak up for trees at public meetings
- Voice support for policy changes recommended in this plan (TPO, GF, Tree Trust, parking lots)
- Share messages with your neighbors about the importance of sourcing locally and planting diverse species



Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan

Public Meeting #2

5 Year Update

May 19, 2026

Questions & Comments

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Focus on Quality over Quantity

5 Year Plan Actions:

- Implement enhanced soils and planting details in priority areas
- Dedicate funds for trees during street reconstruction projects
- Incorporate designing for trees into other City department processes and standards



Manage More Strategically

5 Year Plan Actions:

- Enhance monitoring and prioritize care of trees within high needs and high risk areas
- Integrate City programs to better monitor and manage trees:
 - Create or modify digital interface for volunteers to record tasks
 - Create an ability for City to send out targeted messages about tree care



Share Responsibility and also Share Cost

5 Year Plan Actions:

- Update the Tree Protection Ordinance
- Strengthen tree requirements in Green Factor
- Incentivize planting within parking lots
- Establish a tree trust



Share Responsibility and also Share Cost

5 Year Plan Actions:

- Continue to build and expand partnerships to plant on private and public lands (Green Cambridge and DCR)
- Build capacity within urban forestry department to lead community outreach and engagement
 - Develop outreach materials and an updated communications toolkit for urban forestry
 - Improve communications with residents in advance of nearby tree work
 - Build visibility of existing programs such as Forest Friends and Water by Bike



Broaden What Resiliency Means

5 Year Plan Actions:

- Source locally seed grown trees for parks and naturally regenerating areas
 - Pilot programs with local community groups to grow seedlings from local seeds
- Develop a digital tool to provide analytics that will assist the forestry manager to make tree decisions in the field

