

City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting

Meeting Minutes – October 8, 2025 - 5:30-7pm

Hybrid Meeting via Zoom & at DPW - 147 Hampshire St.

Attendance (* indicates virtual attendance)

CPP Members: Carrie Burke, Cindy Carpenter, Chantal Eide, Eva Tine*, Gretchen Friesinger, Maggie Booz, Paola Massari*, Ray Fahrner, Rob Vandenabeele*, Sara Cohen, Sophia Emperador, Tracey Orr* [*Members not in attendance*: Ahron Lerman, Christina Mann, Cynthia Smith, Robb Johnson]

DPW/City of Cambridge: Abby Bentley, Ellen Coppinger, Kevin Beuttell, David Lefcourt, Andrew Putnam, Tenly Ransom, Cortney Kirk (CDD)

Guests & members of the public: Erik Kramer/Reed Hilderbrand*, Stephanie Shaw/Reed Hilderbrand, Anne/Reed Hilderbrand, Zania/Reed Hilderbrand, Rose Noland*

Meeting notes submitted by: Sophia Emperador

Agenda Items:

1. Review agenda
2. Meeting minutes review (Sept)
3. Updates from Urban Forest team
 - Updates on 2025 tree planting goals and progress to date (Abby)
 - Update on goals and progress to date for Forest Friends newsletter subscribers and trees adopted (Kristen)
 - Other updates, events, news, etc.
4. Urban Forest Master Plan 5 year review (Reed Hilderbrand)
 - Project overview
 - Our approach
 - 2018-2024 progress update
 - Your questions
 - Mapping and strategy evaluation exercise
5. Other business
 - Participatory budgeting cycle - submit ideas (Oct 12 deadline)
6. Public comments

2) Review prior meeting minutes

The September meeting minutes were approved with edits to include missing CPP members. Ray motioned to approve the minutes, Sophia second the motion.

3) Updates from Urban Forest team

Tree plantings - Lahey will continue to work on tree well pit expansion tasks (some new) and plant B&B trees.

Forest Friends program updates

- current lawnbag giveaway when you sign up
- 1,285 current trees have been planted in front yards
- New Forest Friend interactive map containing updates, watering info and photo updates (to come):

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/772ff817fbaa4090845cb4b4aa5baa46>

CPP Comments:

- Gretchen - Public Art Event @ Clement Morgan - positive experience, events for kids including a scavenger hunt (bring prizes next time), printed tree map
- Set goal for new forest friends sign ups (similar to storm stewards)
- Eva created a quick poster on how to be a tree hero

3) Urban Forest Master Plan 5 year review with Reed Hilderbrand

Reed Hilderbrand: Erik Kramer, Stephanie Shaw, Anne, Zaina

Larger Consultant Team: ARUP, Bartlet, OverUnder, NWH, GroundTruth Ecologies, and Noble, Wickersham & Heart LLP.

- Goals: (1) Evaluate progress; (2) evaluate & recommend strategies; (3) priorities for next 5 years
- Review of 2018-2024 Lidar Surveys
 - Higher resolution data obtained for 2024, measure trees about 8' tall
 - Annual rate of change: 25.3% - 30.2%
 - Rate of gain doubles, loss decreased; net change driven by canopy cover
 - Focus on progress by neighborhood; reduction of heat island hot spots
 - 54% of canopy is on private land (DCR land falls under Open Space)
- Overall:
 - Increase in under-canopy neighborhoods
 - New trees add canopy over time
 - Net gain: mostly due to mature tree growth, more canopy to come as it matures (what isn't captured are smaller trees)

CPP Comments/Questions:

- (Chantal) How are you sure of loss/gain on residential land?
- Will there be particular attention paid to hotspots and main corridors?
- Will you provide suggestions on how to address these areas?
 - they will dig into case studies to support trees in compromised locations and identify strategies for these areas
- (Gretchen) Zoning changes and removal of setbacks - how will these further affect the corridors?
 - -Less private realm, loss of benefits; work harder on planting details/design - move soil etc to help support these trees - prototypical designs to push designs further; have departments work together
- (Maggie) trees must be recognized as infrastructure city-wide, an integral part of the street design; Is there data - success/growth rate of trees in structural soil?

Does it actually feed enough nutrients? Assess the growth rates in different conditions; what conditions are equally important to long growth - what care should be prioritized beyond soil?; Tree canopy age - preemptive planting strategies

- (Cindy) More trees were planted, not much else (such as policy and other strategies) how can this be integrated more broadly?
- TPO evaluation - should include # of trees replanted in a matrix evaluation, the application of the green factor and others factors of influence
- (Sophia) Fresh Pond must be treated differently than the rest of the City - it is managed by a separate set of rules and regulations
- (Sara) Tree species & new plantings (species we are losing now) are we diverse enough? Do we have enough genetic diversification? Looking for recommendations for understory plantings - planning for future growth
- (Gretchen) Tree safety lanes; cool corridors & street trees - we see the growth now, but the decline will be accelerated, will this be a problem?; How do we further support tree growth or their tracking over time for specific locations?
- (Paola) What time of the year was the flyover done? (Andrew indicated that this is always done leaf-on); When a big tree is removed and replaced with a smaller tree, does this affect the canopy cover? Will Lidar capture this loss?

Comments made in the online-chat:

1. Can the city and design team(s) consider use of alternative tree planting methods for large boulevards such as large tree trenches and other alternatives to sand based structural soil?
2. MIT, Harvard, Lesley should be encouraged to do more replant the campus trees beyond just individual new campus development/building projects. How can this be incentivized?
3. Policy related: Will the Comm. On Public Planting has an advisory role in reviewing the removal of trees and evaluations of projects that impact the tree canopy. If so, how will this be implemented?
4. Will you be evaluating recent public tree plantings by the city on DCR property?
5. Is there another LIDAR survey planned for the future?

The consultant team ran a set of in-person exercises - (1) using a stop-light color approach to prioritize a set of scenarios presented offered to the group and (2) using a map and sticky notes, members were encouraged to identify areas of opportunity, both positive and negative.

4) Other business

Members were reminded of the upcoming participatory budgeting deadline and encouraged to submit ideas.

5) Public comments:

No public comments were made.

Next meeting: Our next Zoom meeting will be held on November, 12, 2025 at 5:30pm and will be advertised to the public in advance.

NOTE: The foregoing represents our understanding of the discussions and decisions made during this meeting. The CPP requests permission to quote or reference these notes.

Attachments:

(1) Reed Hilderbrand presentation