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 c
- (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 loosing 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

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan 5 Year Update

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC PLANTING
OCTOBER 8, 2025

REED HILDERBRAND ARUP BARTLETT TREE EXPERTS SCIENTIFIC TREE CARE SINCE 1907 GROUNDTRUTH, INC NW&H Noble, Wickersham & Heart LLP

AGENDA

— Project Overview

— Our Approach

— 2018 to 2024 Progress Update

— Your questions

— Mapping and Strategy Evaluation Exercise

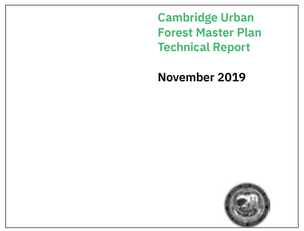
GOALS OF THE 5-YEAR UPDATE

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

CUFMP TIMELINE



2018 — 2019 — 2020 — 2021 — 2022 — 2023 — 2024 — 2025 — 2026 — 2027

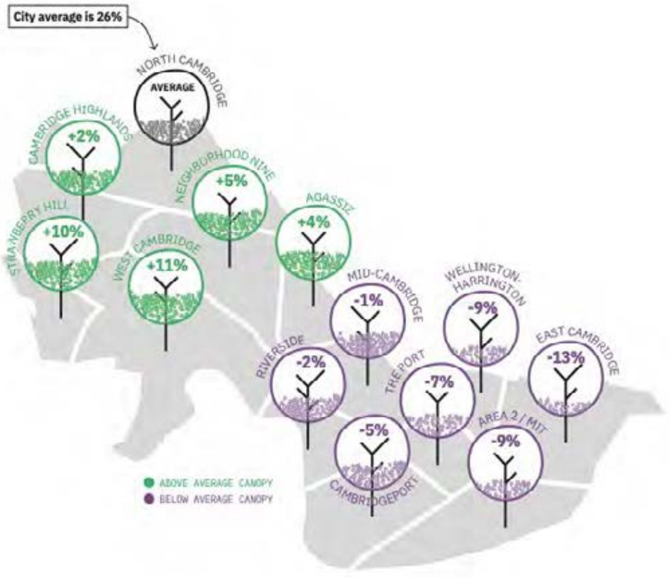
LIDAR SURVEY

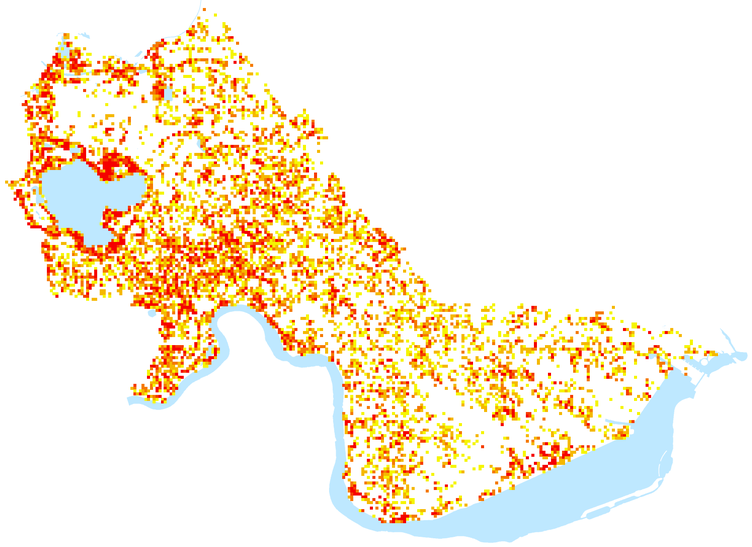
CUFMP
MASTER PLAN

LIDAR SURVEY

5 YEAR
UPDATE

2020 CUFMP MAJOR FINDINGS



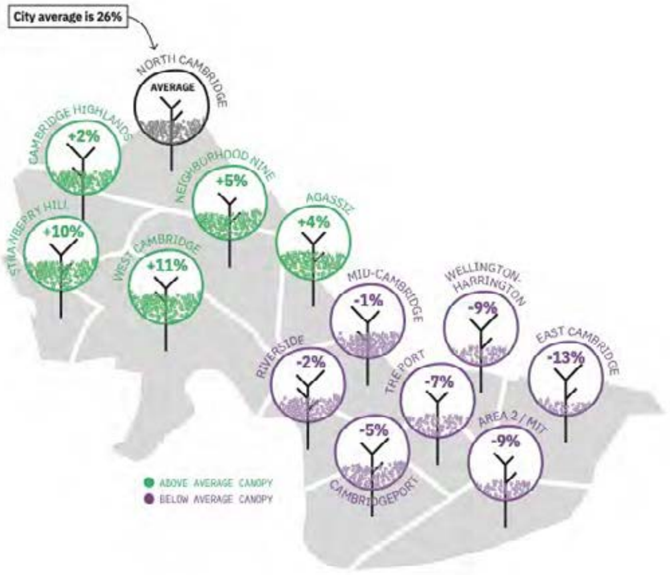


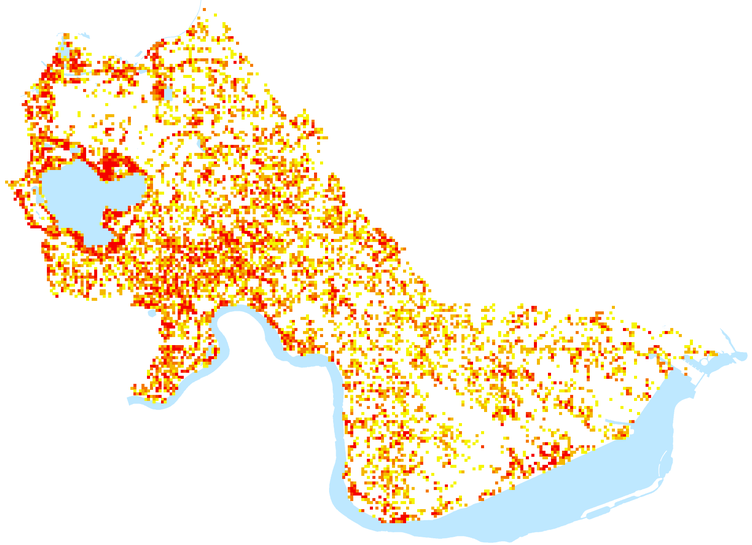
The forest is not equitable

The forest is susceptible to risk

More loss happens on private property

2020 CUFMP MAJOR FINDINGS





The forest is not equitable

↓

Focus efforts in low canopy communities

The forest is susceptible to risk

↓

Diversify species & Reduce heat island

More loss happens on private property

↓

Share responsibility

CUFMP TARGETS

EQUITY

RESILIENCY

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

CUFMP TARGETS

EQUITY

→ 25% minimum canopy by neighborhood

RESILIENCY

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

CUFMP TARGETS

EQUITY

RESILIENCY

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

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

CUFMP TARGETS

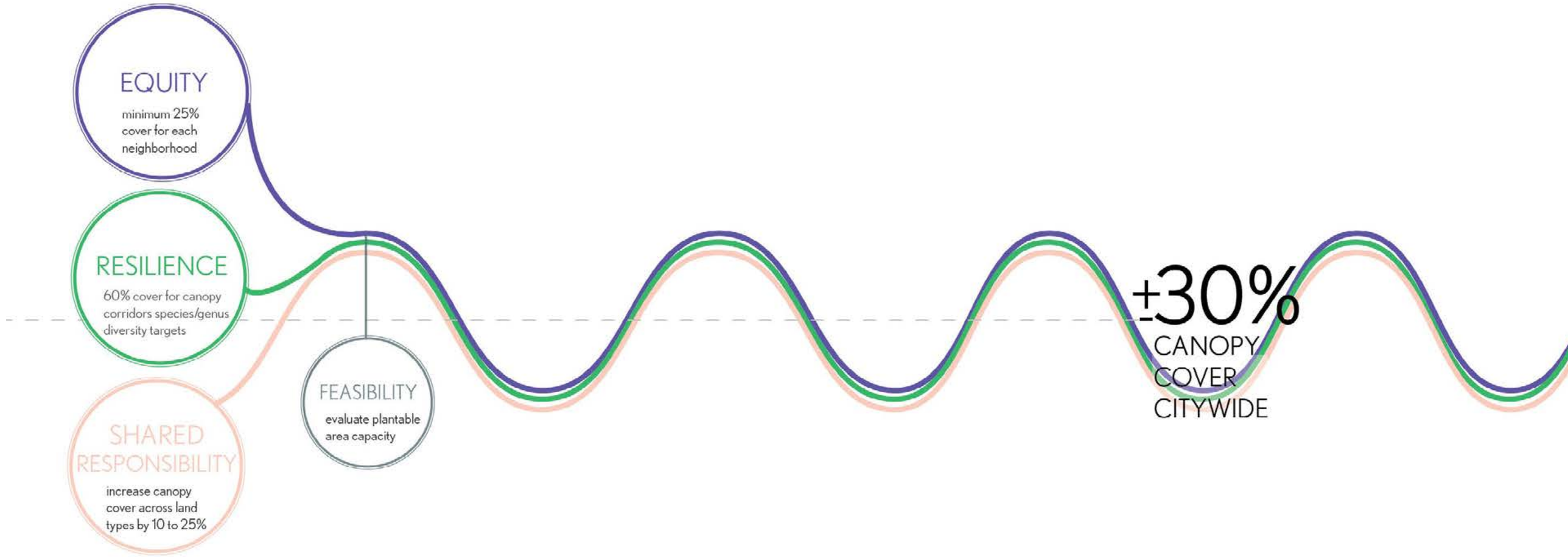
EQUITY

RESILIENCY

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

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

CUFMP TARGETS



MEASURE PROGRESS OF THE 5 YEAR ACTION PLAN

UFMP ACTION PLAN

EQUITY RESILIENCE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

CURB LOSS

GROW CANOPY

PUBLIC REALM STREET TREES

1

Prepare and implement a SOILS MANAGEMENT PLAN

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

4

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

5

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

6

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

CITYWIDE

2

GALVANIZE THE COMMUNITY through an outreach and engagement plan

Publicize the BACK OF SIDEWALK program

3

Update the TREE PROTECTION ORDINANCE

7

Establish a TREE TRUST to support planting on private property

8

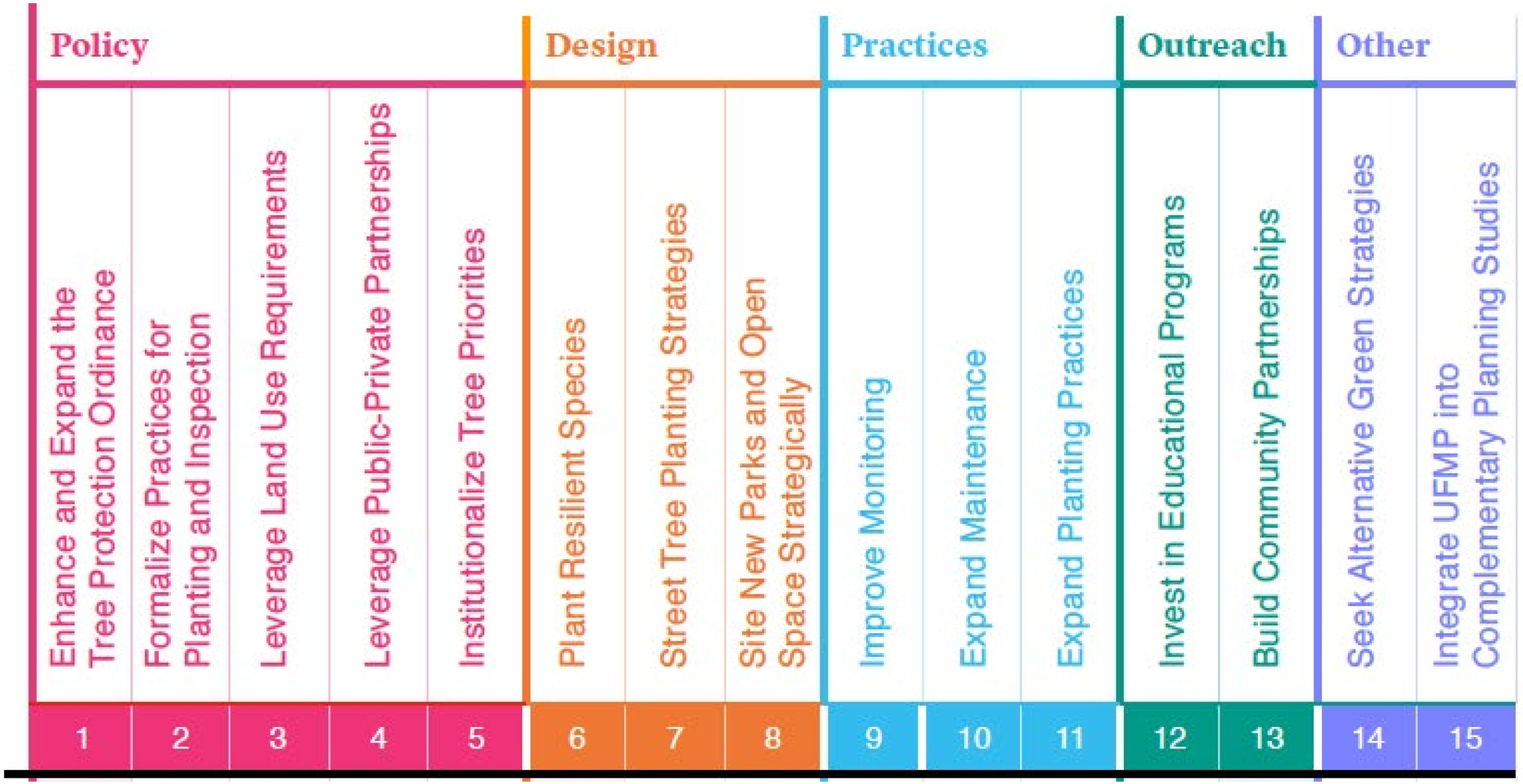
REFORM ZONING tools and revise Article 19 to encourage more trees in new projects

Leverage planning review to encourage new public open spaces

9

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

CUFMP STRATEGIES

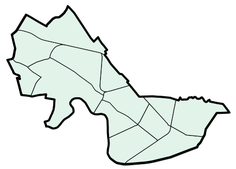


REPORT STATUS ON ACTIONS

POLICY STRATEGY 1A

Redefine Significant Trees to 6” DBH

IMPACT AREAS



STEM LOSS

GROW CANOPY

SUMMARY

For projects requiring a special permit from the Planning Board or development projects subject to large project review (25,000 sq. ft. or more), the city’s tree protection ordinance provides certain protections. These protections only apply to “Significant Trees,” which are defined as trees greater than 8” DBH.

Other cities and towns locally and across the country offer protections for trees with a lower DBH. In particular, protections for trees with 6” DBH or greater is common.

ANALYSIS

The statistical sample of Cambridge’s tree population completed as part of this study found that of 4,118 trees inventoried, 41 percent measured greater than 8 inch DBH versus 60 percent which measured 6” DBH or greater. If the city were to redefine Significant Trees as 6” DBH or greater, this would increase the number of trees captured under the ordinance for the purposes of new or redevelopment by about 49 percent.

PROS

Increases the number of trees protected by the ordinance

Burdens large projects rather than individual residents or the City

CONS

Applies to more proposed development projects and thus requires additional city resources to review and approve plans

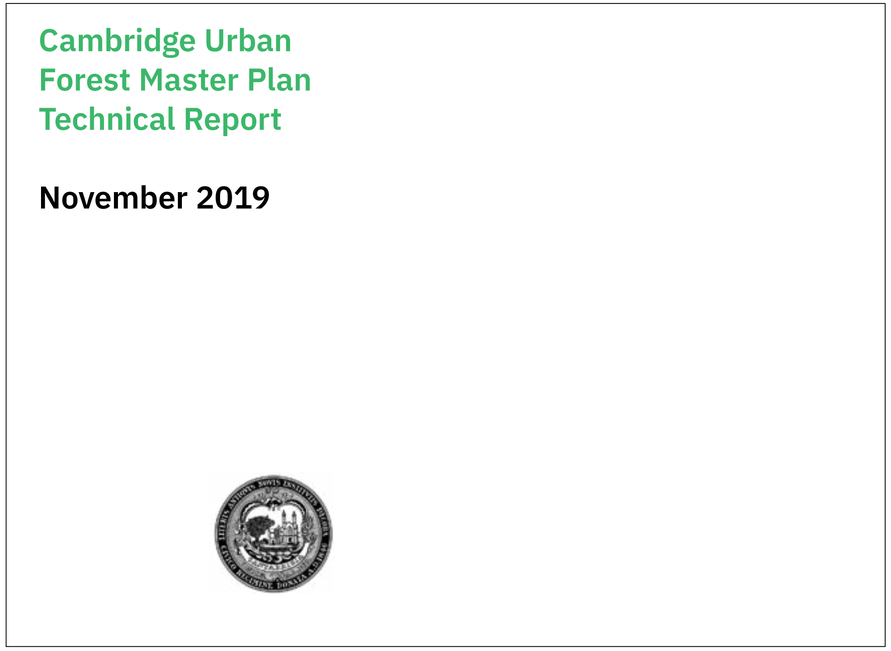
Adds cost to certain projects, including those which provide housing and other community values

PRECEDENTS

National:
Atlanta, Georgia
Seattle, Washington
Oakland, Florida
Miami, Florida
Anna, Texas

Local:
Concord, Massachusetts
Lexington, Massachusetts
Brookline, Massachusetts

DELIVERABLES



CUFMP 5-Year Update Report

HF-HC 5 Year Update

Project Overview

Our Approach

2018 to 2024 Progress Update

Your Questions

Mapping and Strategy Evaluation Exercise

PROJECT TEAM

REED HILDERBRAND
Landscape Architecture

OVER UNDER
Graphic Communications

ARUP
Climate Science & Resiliency Planning

NOBLE, WICKERSHAM & HEART
Policy & Financing Strategy

BARTLETT TREE EXPERTS
Arborist

GROUND TRUTH ECOLOGY, LLC
Urban Forestry

PROJECT PHASES

2025 SUMMER — 2025 FALL — 2026 WINTER — 2026 SPRING

PHASE A

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

PHASE B

RECOMMENDATIONS

PHASE C

DOCUMENTATION

PHASE A ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

2025 SUMMER — 2025 FALL — 2026 WINTER — 2026 SPRING

PHASE A
ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

PHASE B
RECOMMENDATIONS

PHASE C
DOCUMENTATION

- Q: What is the current status of the urban forest?
- Q: What progress was made?
- Q: What are new risks?

Tasks:
- Mapping Analysis
- Interviews
- City Data Analysis
- Tree Survey
- Best practices review

PHASE B RECOMMENDATIONS

2025 SUMMER — 2025 FALL — 2026 WINTER — 2026 SPRING

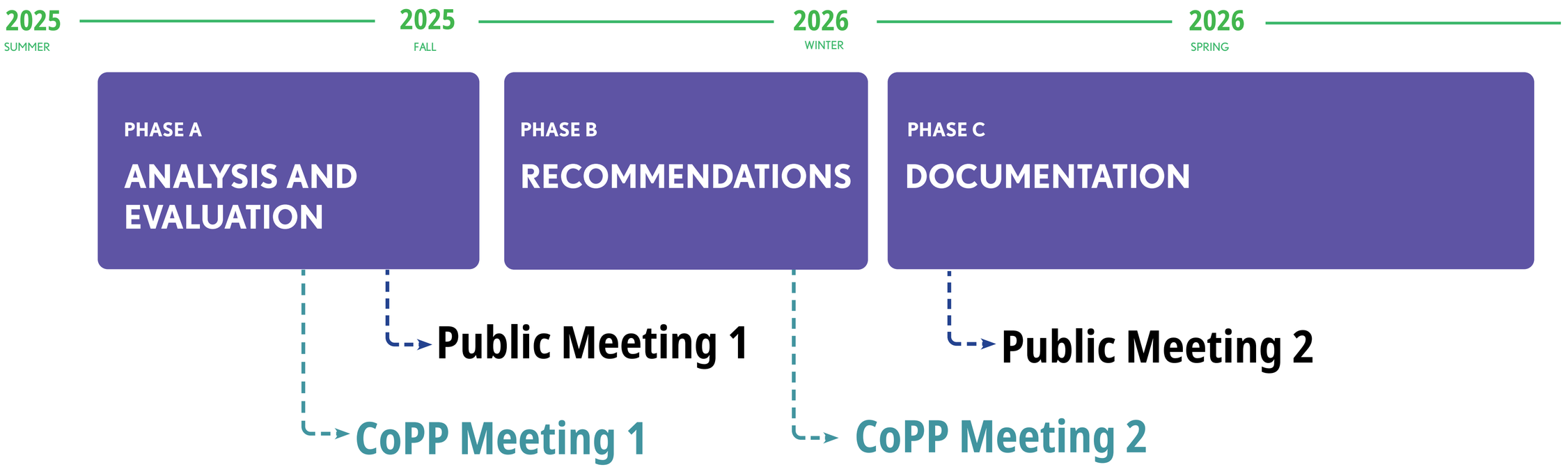
PHASE A
ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

PHASE B
RECOMMENDATIONS

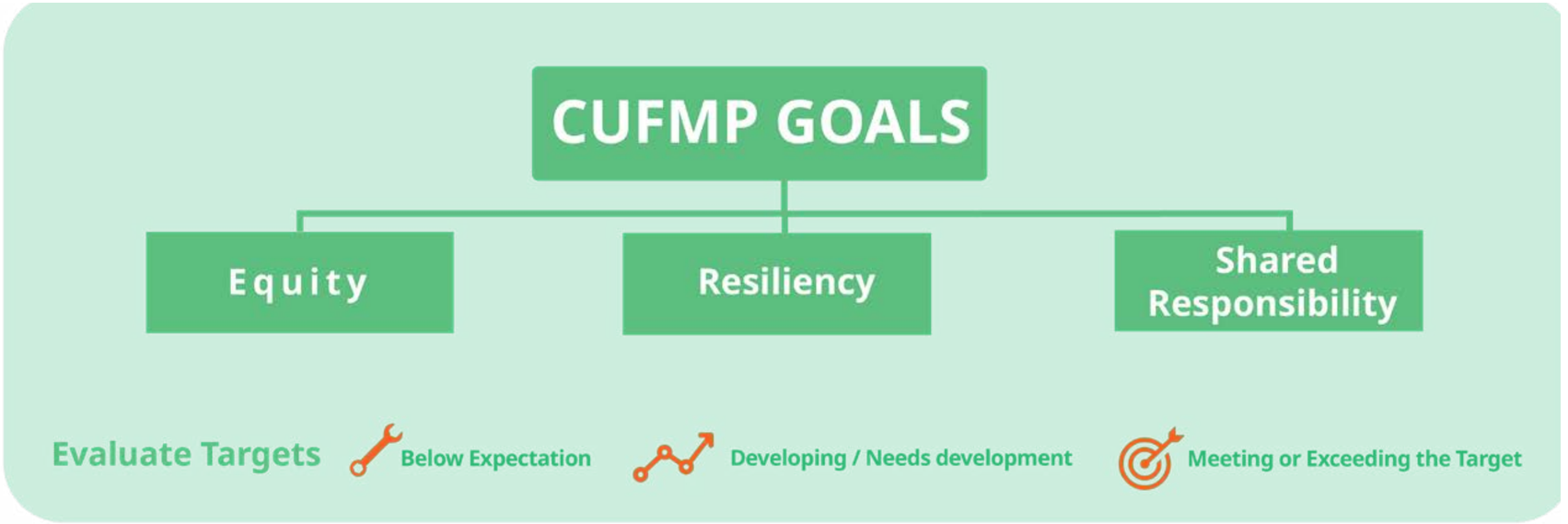
PHASE C
DOCUMENTATION

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

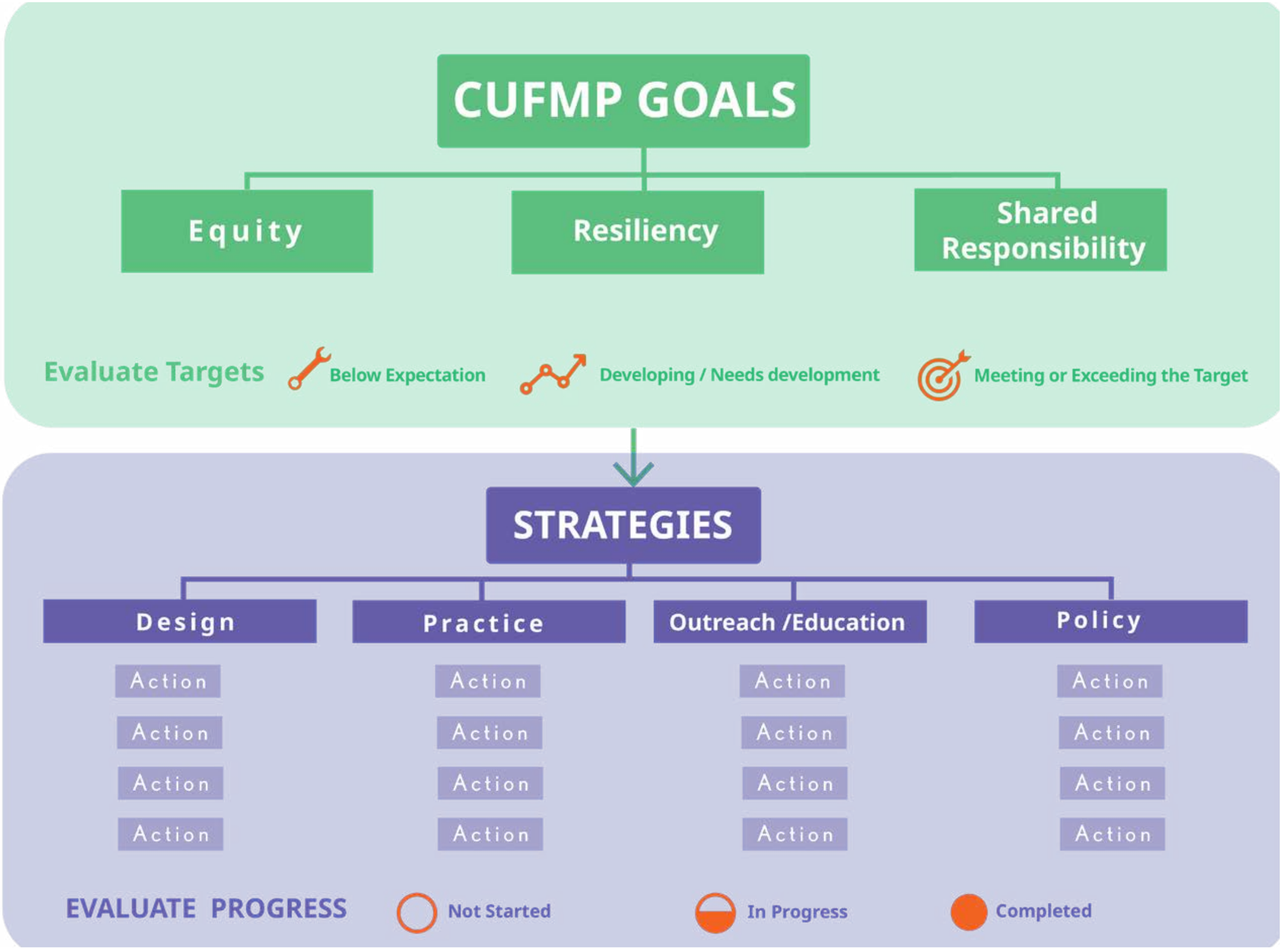
ENGAGEMENT


2025
SUMMER
2025
FALL
2026
WINTER
2026
SPRING
PHASE A
ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION
PHASE B
RECOMMENDATIONS
PHASE C
DOCUMENTATION
Public Meeting 1
Public Meeting 2
CoPP Meeting 1
CoPP Meeting 2

MEASURING PROGRESS



MEASURING PROGRESS



Project Overview

Our Approach

2018 to 2024 Progress Update

Your Questions

Mapping and Strategy Evaluation Exercise

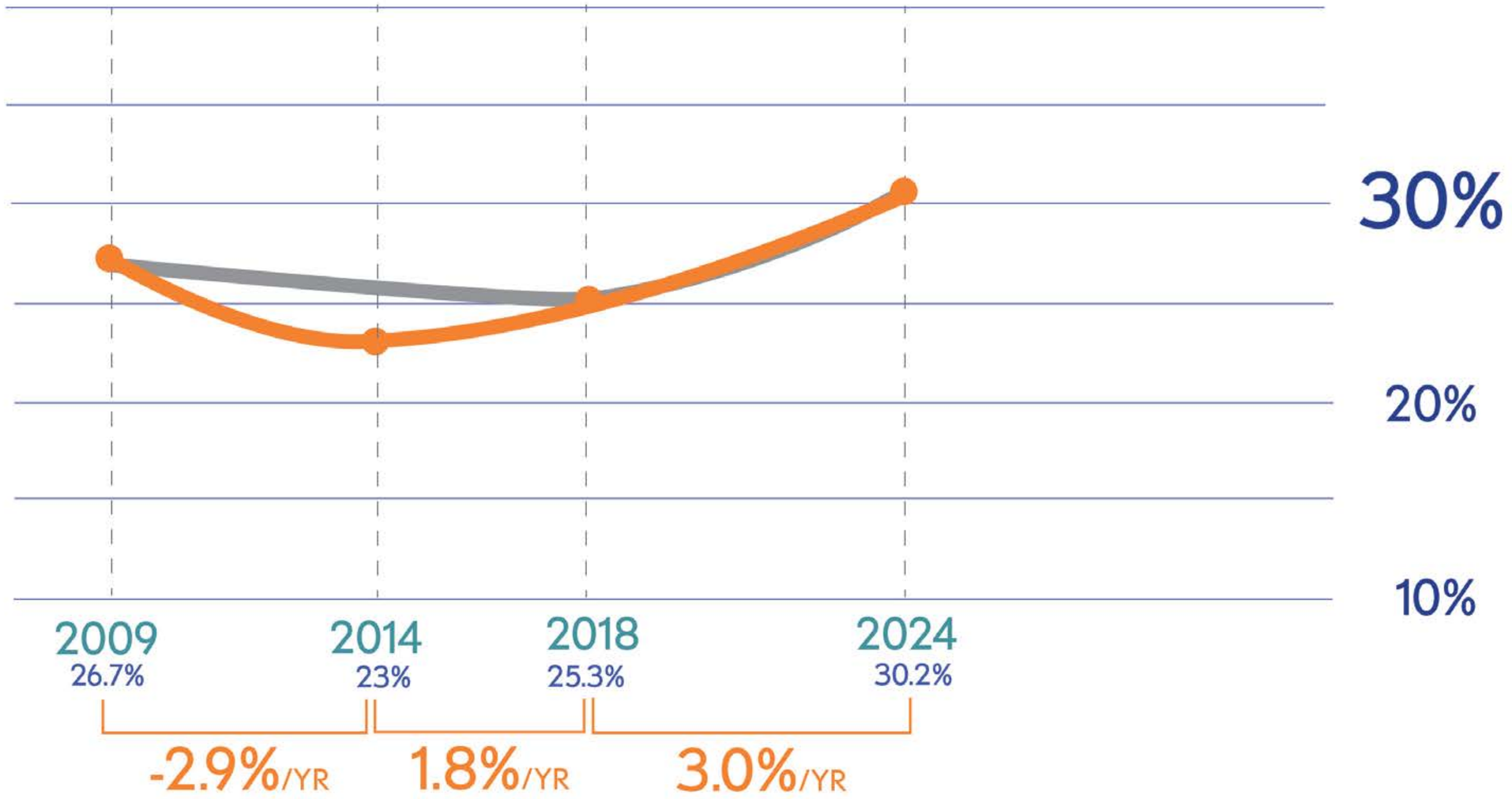
2009 TO 2024 CANOPY CHANGE

Citywide Percent Canopy Cover (UVM data)

ANNUAL RATES OF CHANGE

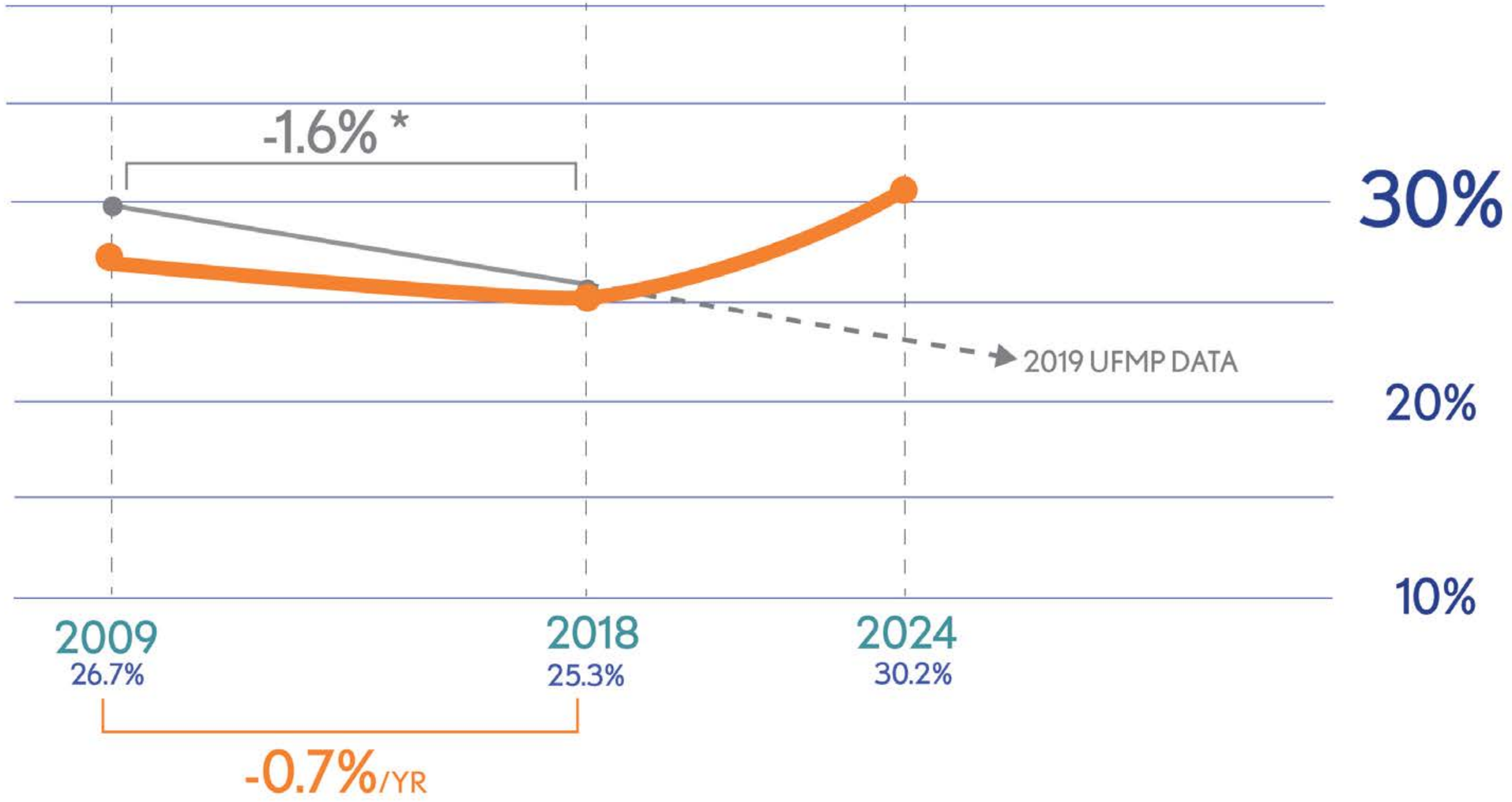
ANNUAL RATES OF CHANGE

ANNUAL RATES OF CHANGE INCLUDING 2014

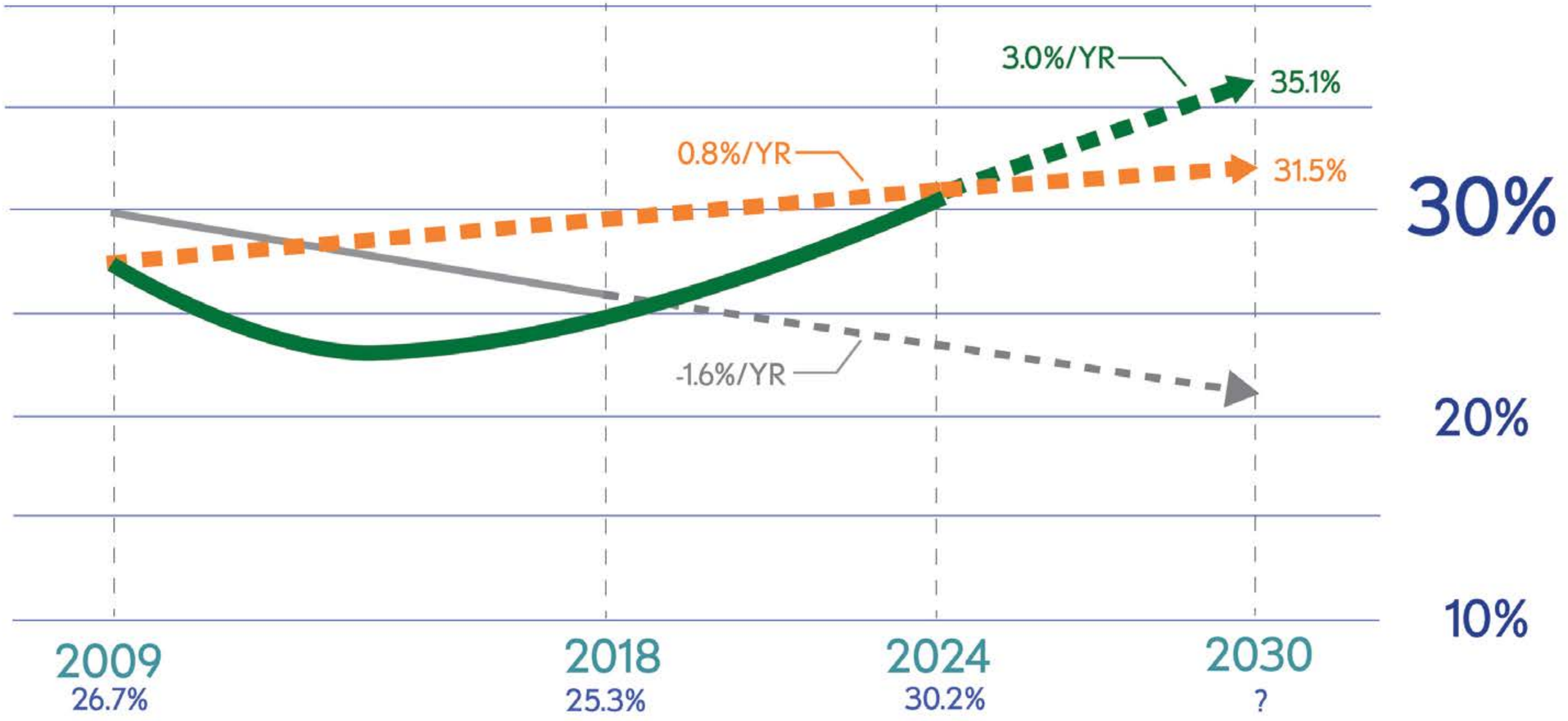


2019 UFMP PROJECTION

Note: 2019 UFMP was based on canopy data that was later further processed by UVM and resulted in different canopy cover assumptions.



2030 PROJECTIONS



2018 TO 2024 PROJECTION
2009 TO 2024 HISTORIC PROJECTION
2019 UFMP BASELINE PROJECTION

CITY PLANTING SUCCESSES

Significant increases in City plantings to over 1,200 trees per year

Diversifying planting strategies: Planting at interim lots

CITY PLANTING SUCCESSES

Diversifying planting strategies:
Densifying planting

Diversifying planting strategies:
Miyawaki forests

POLICY SUCCESSES

More residential trees replanted through the Tree Protection Ordinance

More trees protected through the Green Factor Zoning ordinance

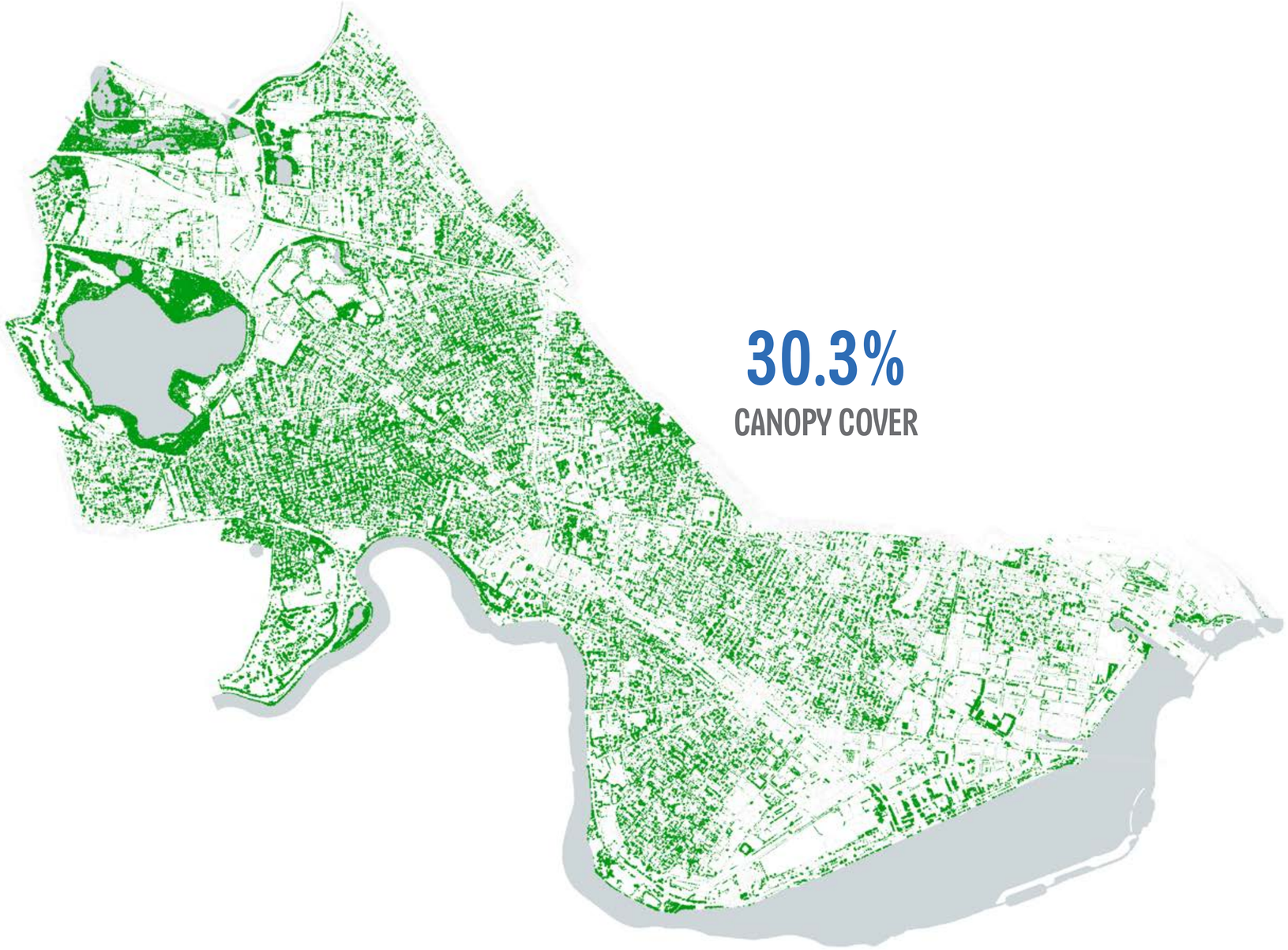
OUTREACH/ENGAGEMENT SUCCESSES

Increased Forest Friends volunteers

Planting Days

2024 CANOPY COVER

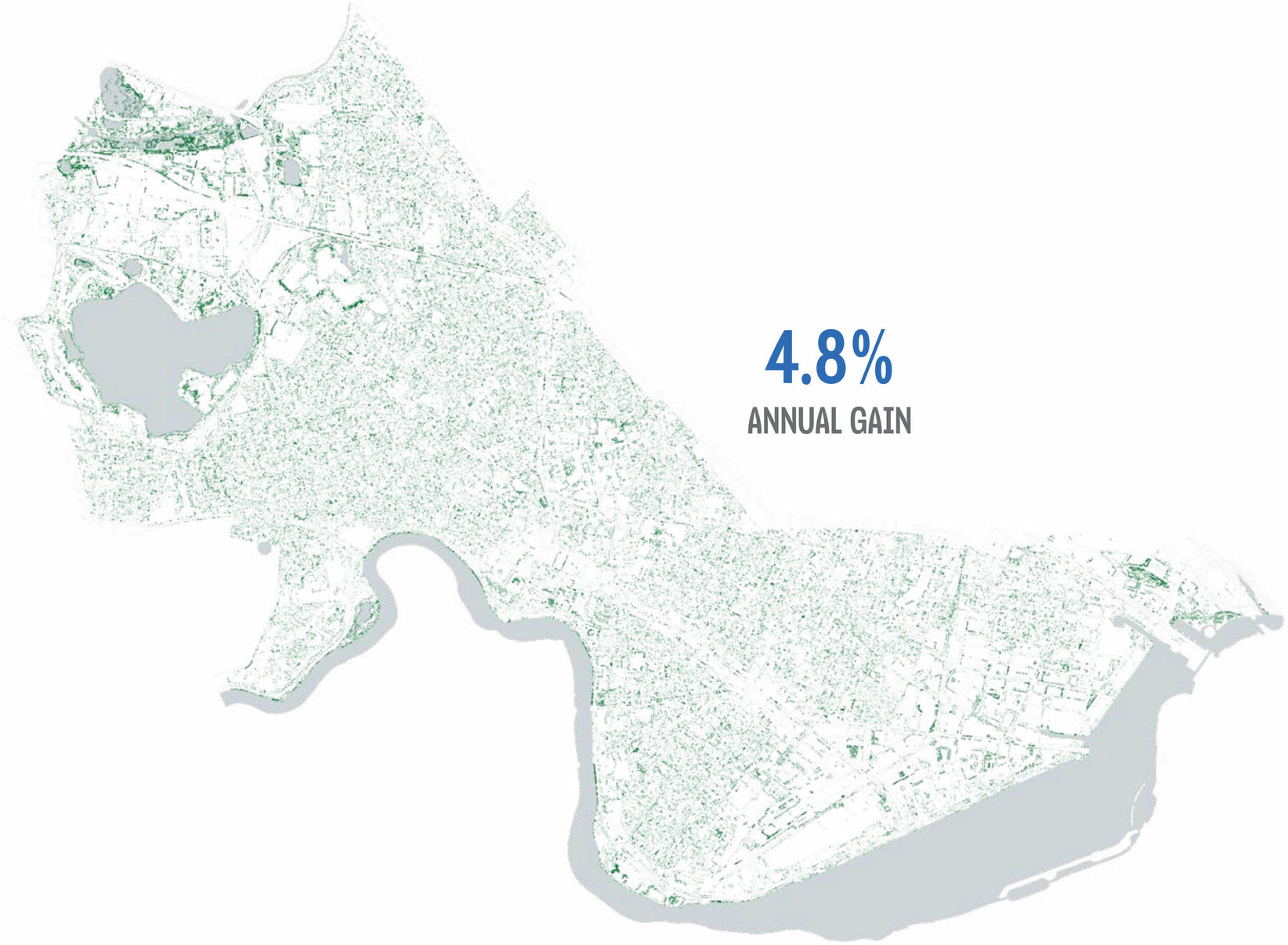
CANOPY COVER CITYWIDE INCREASED BY 5% FROM 2018



30.3%

CANOPY COVER

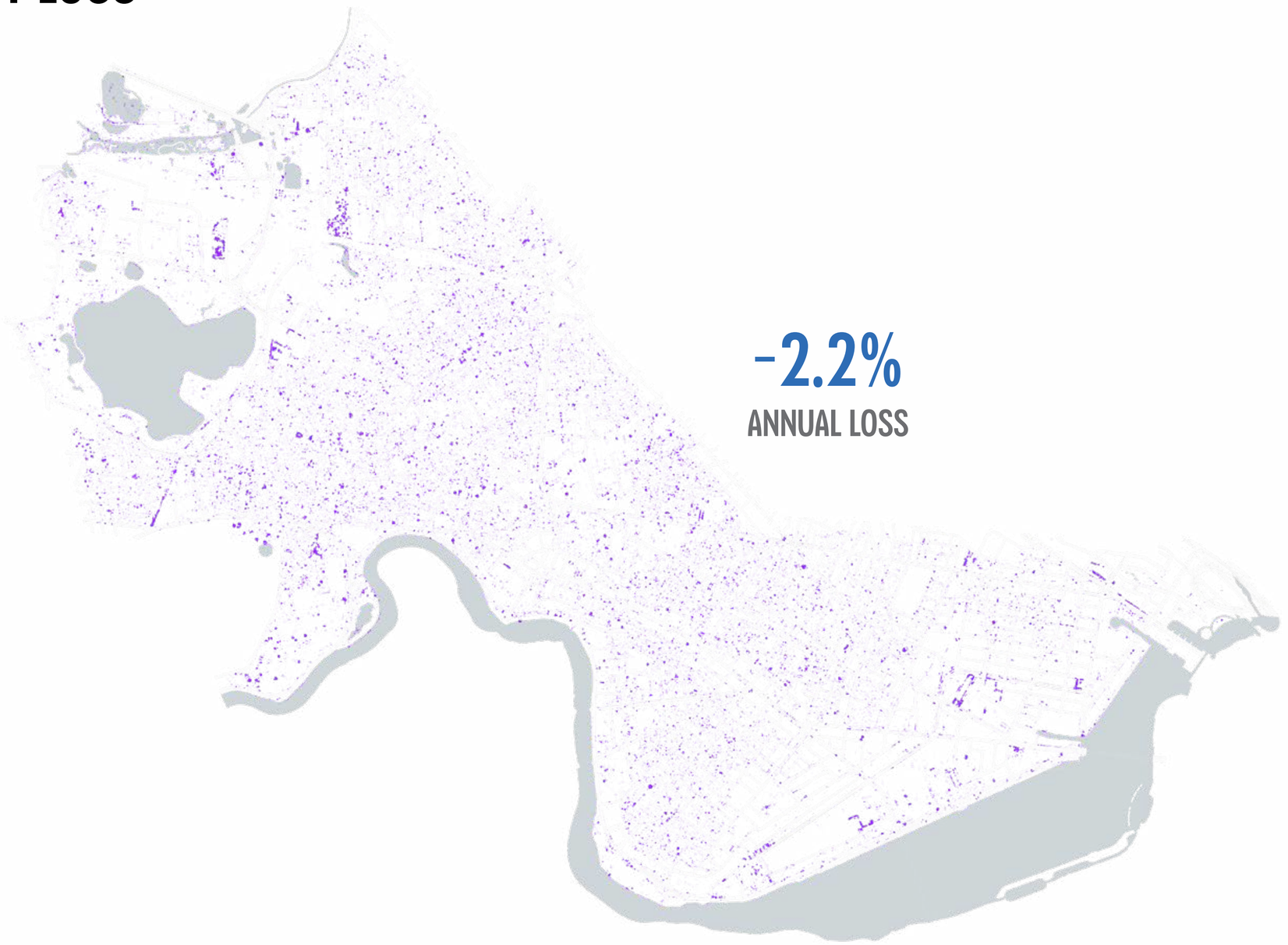
2018 - 2024 CANOPY GAIN



4.8%

ANNUAL GAIN

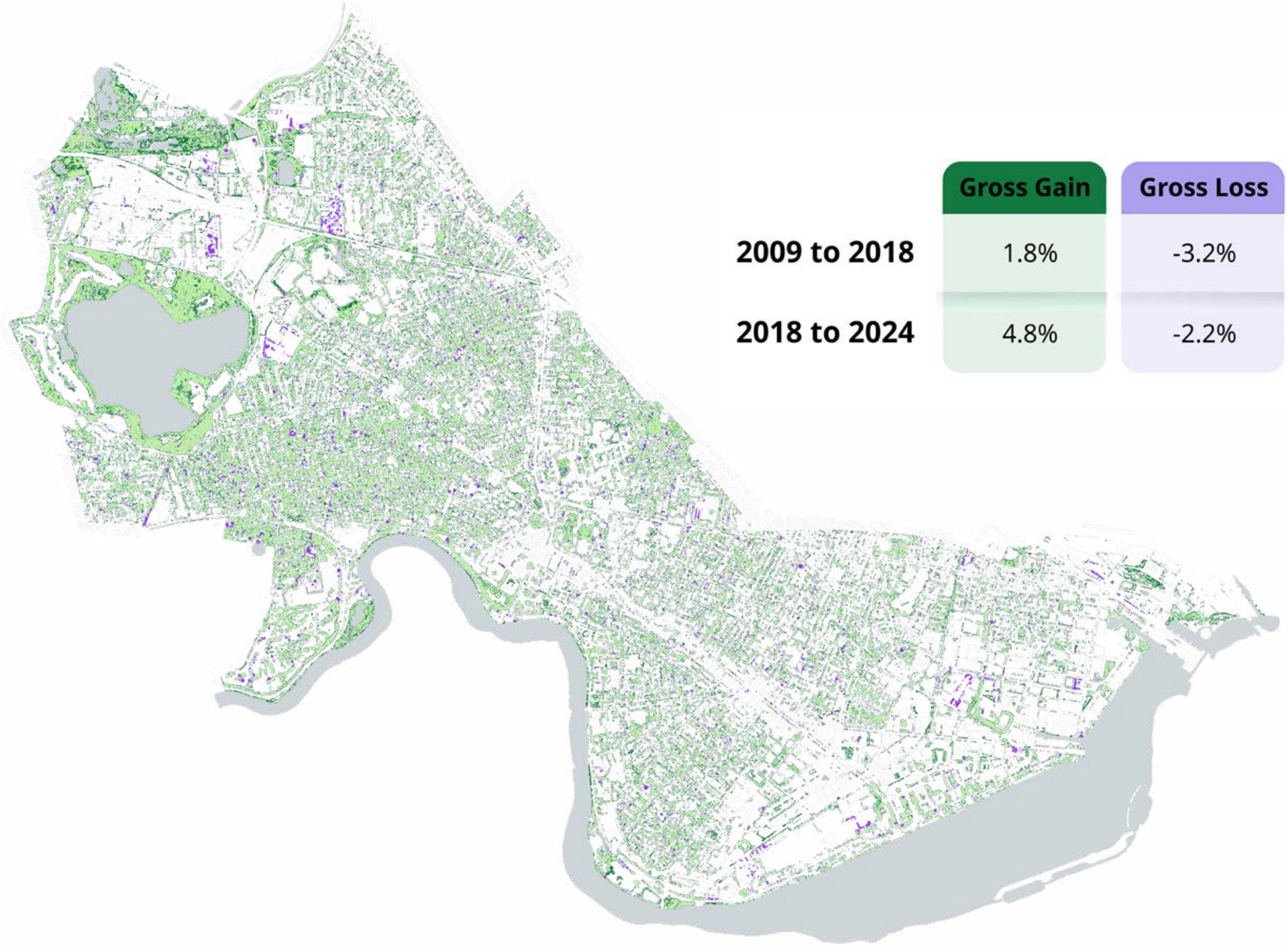
2018 - 2024 CANOPY LOSS



-2.2%

ANNUAL LOSS

2018 TO 2024 CANOPY CHANGE



	Gross Gain	Gross Loss	Net Change
2009 to 2018	1.8%	-3.2%	-0.8%
2018 to 2024	4.8%	-2.2%	3%

NO CHANGE

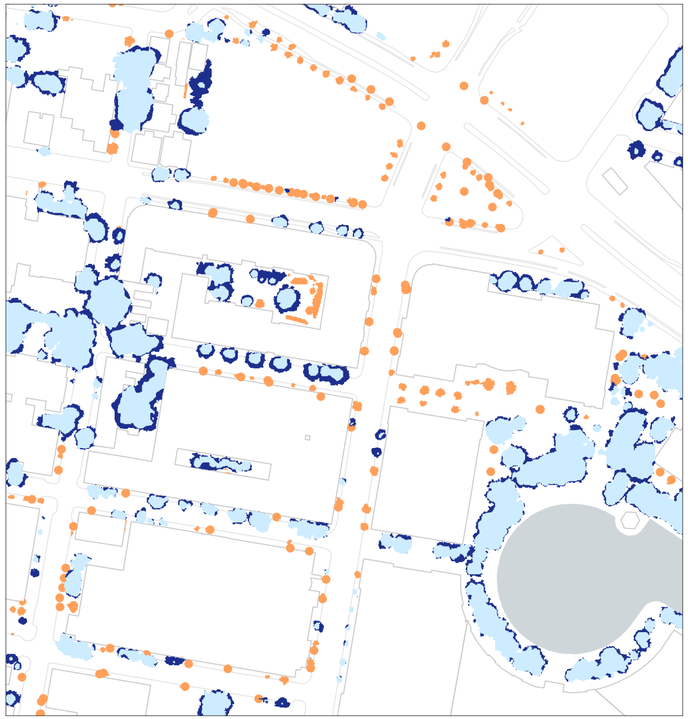
GAIN

LOSS

CITYWIDE CANOPY GAIN

NEW TREES - STREET TREES

First St @ Cambridge St

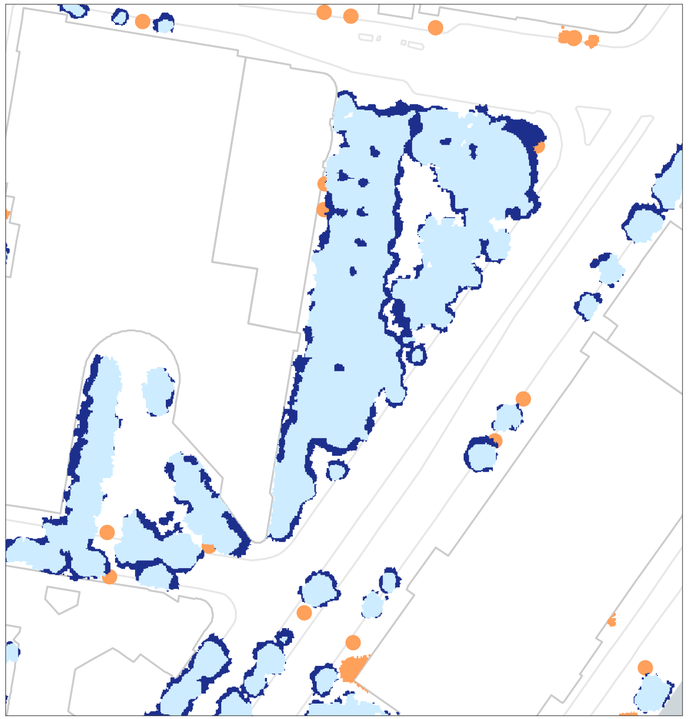


NEW TREES - LARGE PROJECTS

Cambridge Crossing

EXISTING CANOPY GROWTH

Charles Park

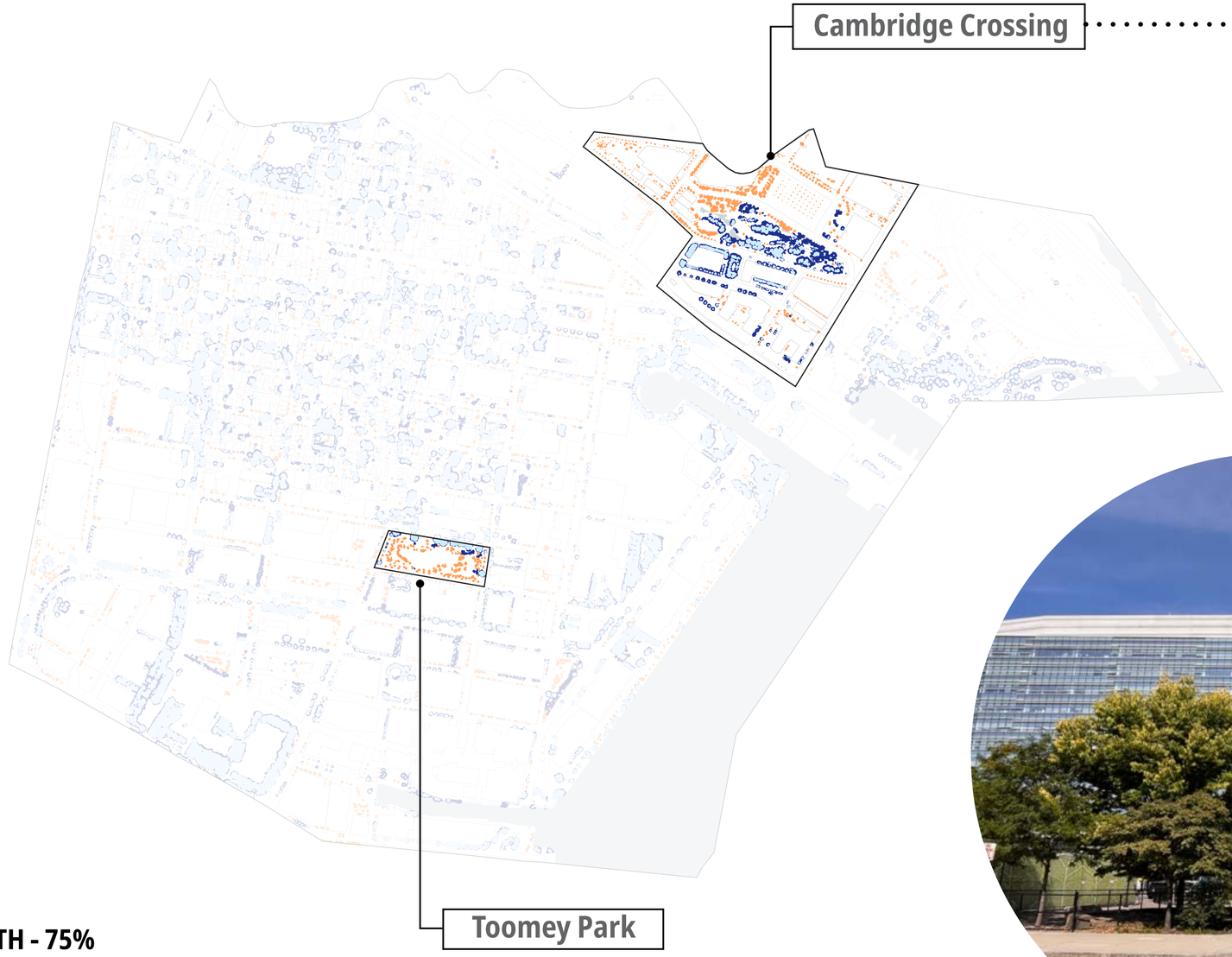


GAIN- EXISTING CANOPY GROWTH - 90%

GAIN - NEWLY PLANTED TREES - 10%

NO CHANGE

EAST CAMBRIDGE CANOPY GAIN



GAIN- EXISTING CANOPY GROWTH - 75%

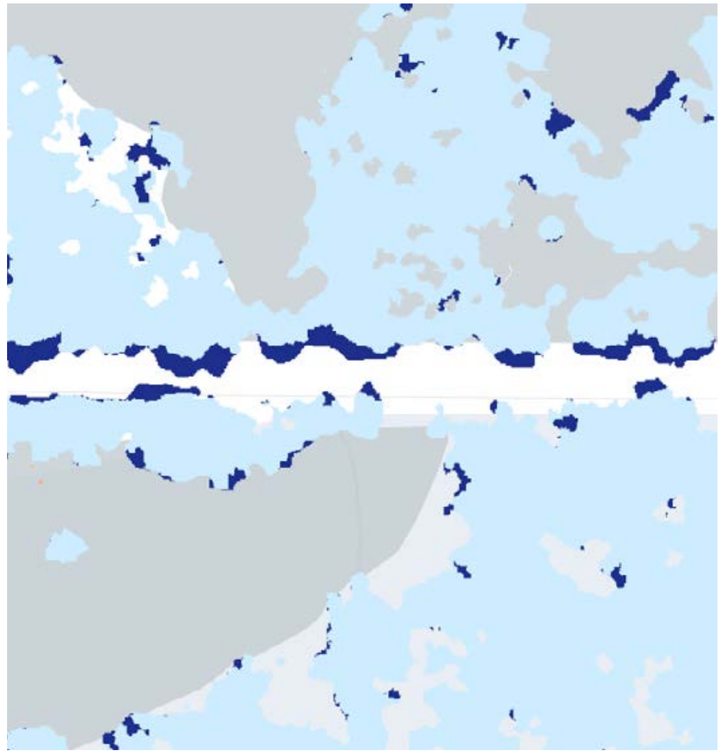
GAIN - NEWLY PLANTED TREES - 25%

NO CHANGE

CITY WIDE CANOPY LOSS

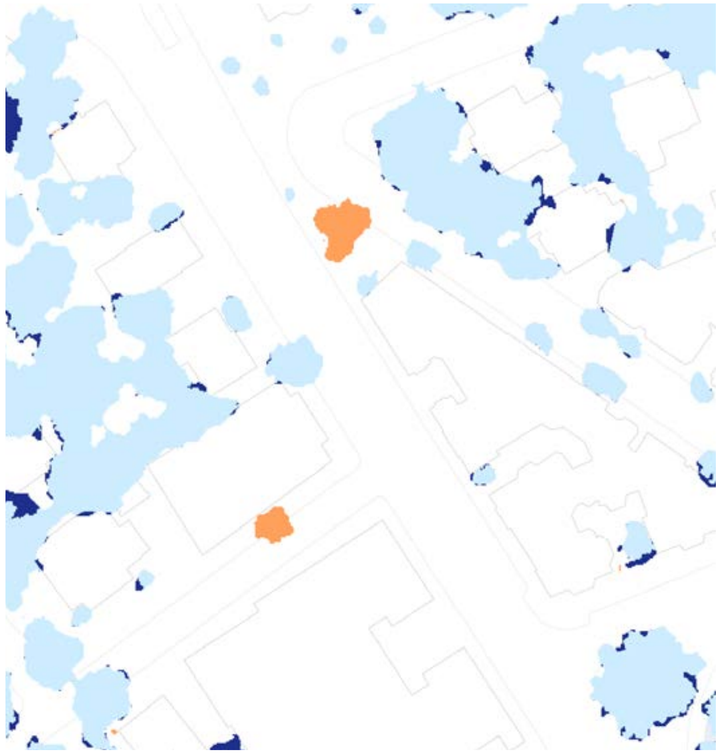
NEW TREES - STREET TREES

Acorn Park Dr



TREE REMOVAL - SINGLE

Lesley University Brattle Campus

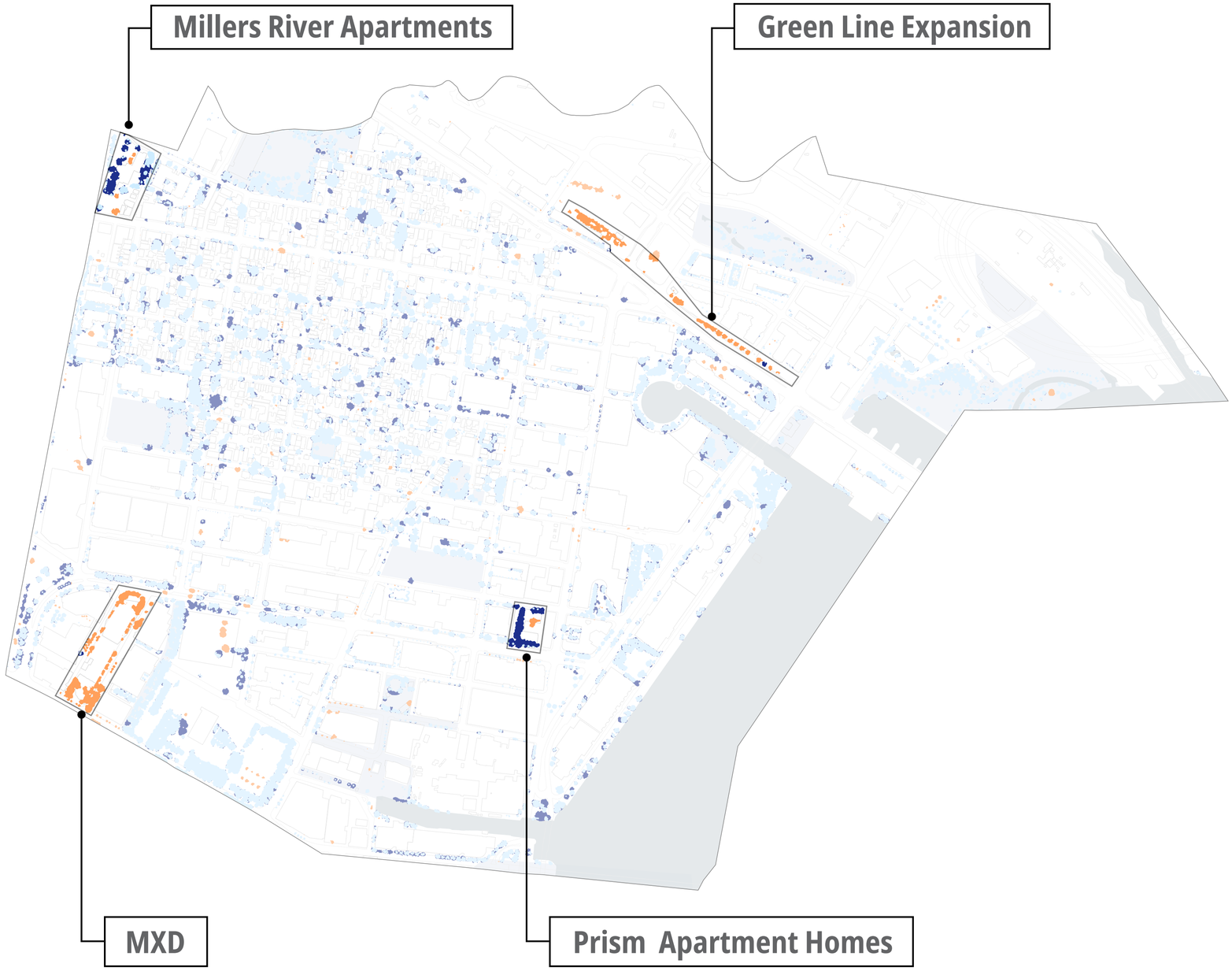


TREE REMOVAL - LARGE PROJECT

MXD /Blue Garage

- LOSS - PRUNING PRACTICES
- LOSS - TREE REMOVAL
- NO CHANGE

EAST CAMBRIDGE CANOPY LOSS

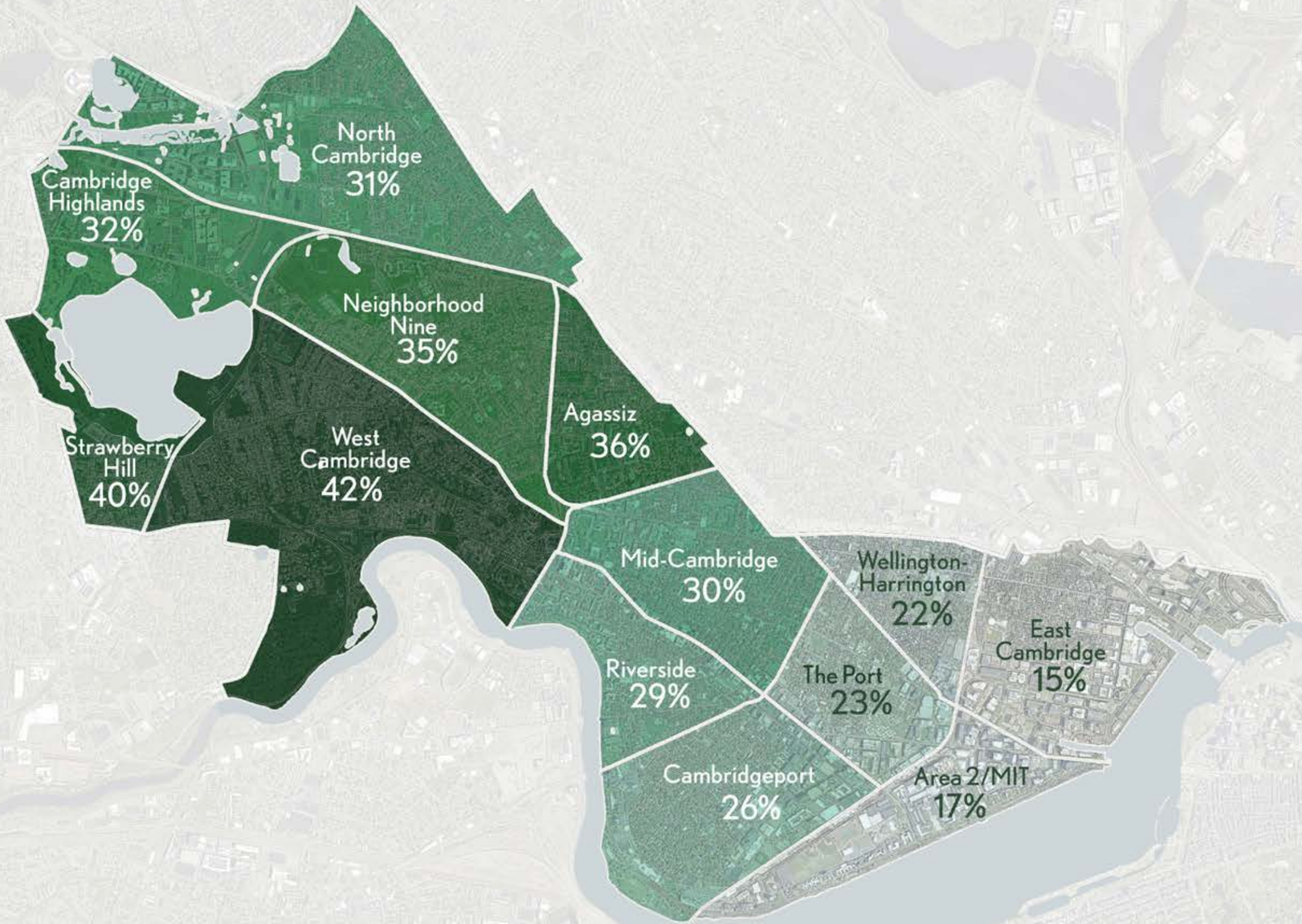


LOSS - PRUNING PRACTICES

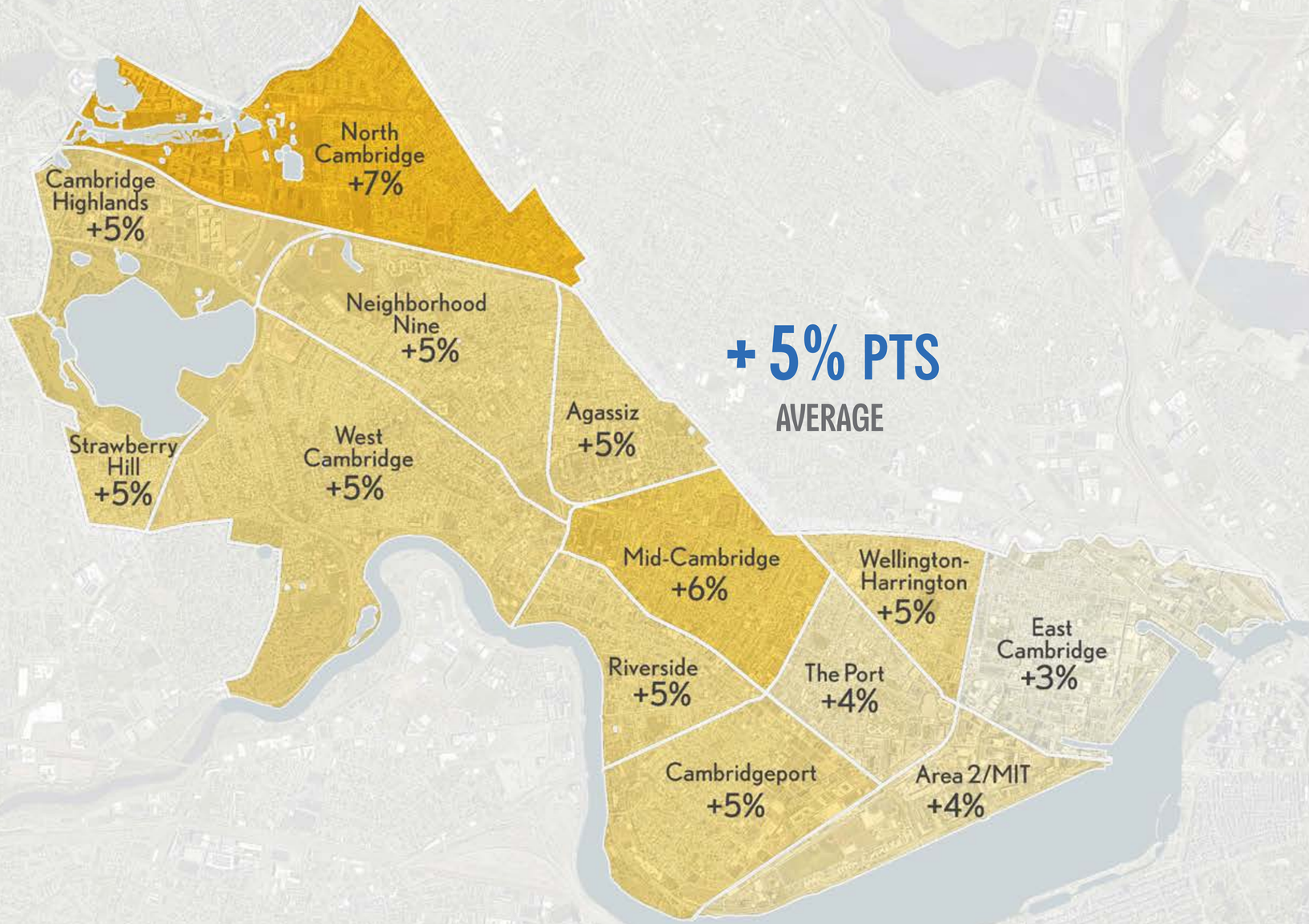
LOSS - TREE REMOVAL

NO CHANGE

EQUITY: 2024 CANOPY COVER BY NEIGHBORHOOD



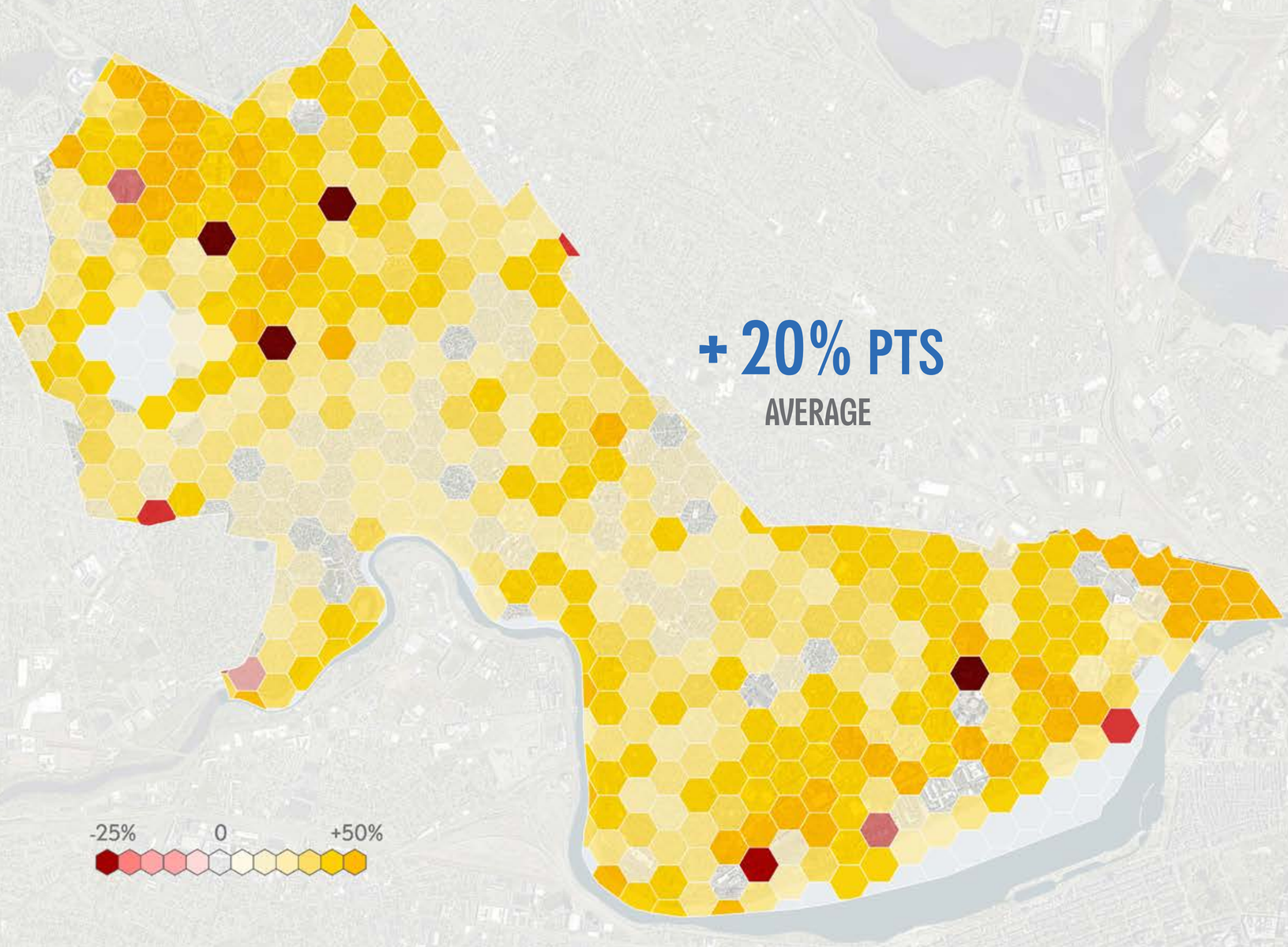
EQUITY: 2018 TO 2024 CANOPY COVER CHANGE BY NEIGHBORHOOD



+ 5% PTS

AVERAGE

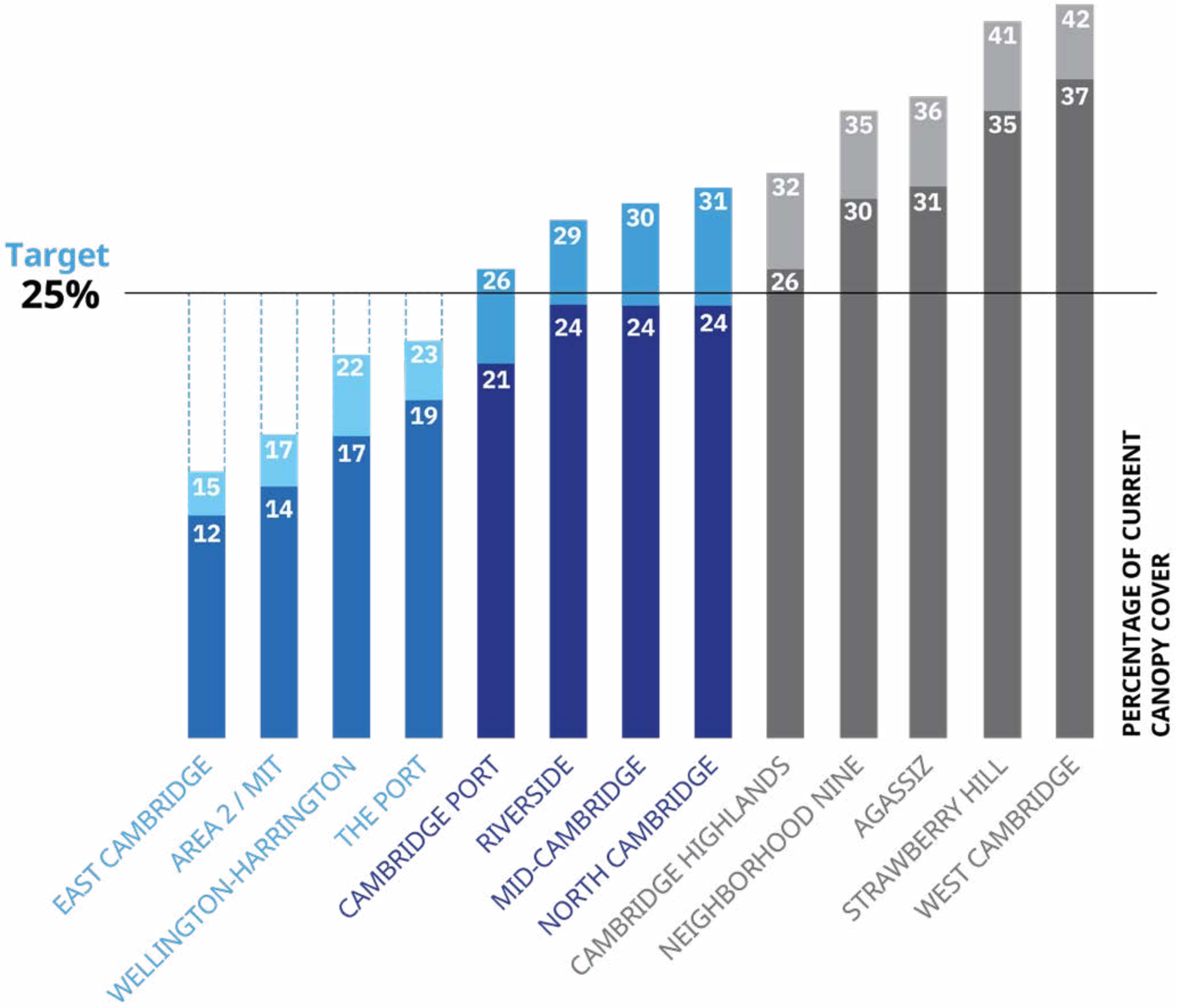
EQUITY: 2018 TO 2024 RELATIVE CANOPY COVER CHANGE



+ 20% PTS

AVERAGE

EQUITY: CANOPY COVER CHANGE BY NEIGHBORHOOD

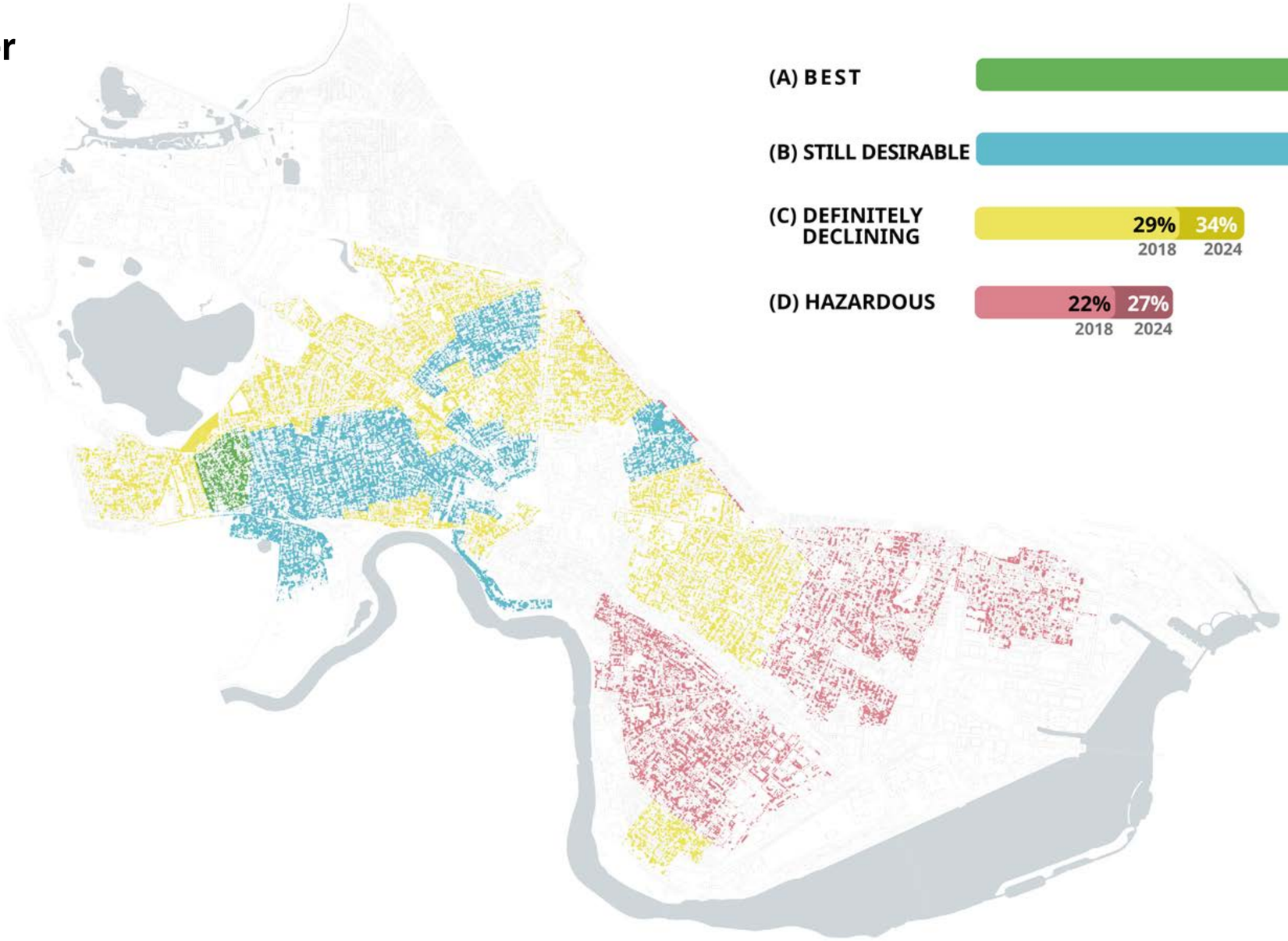


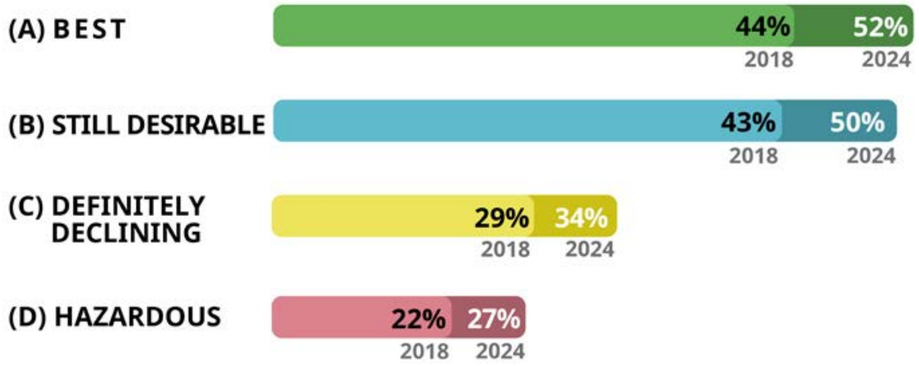
4 NEIGHBORHOODS REACHED TARGET

4 NEIGHBORHOODS MADE PROGRESS

EQUITY: REDLINING

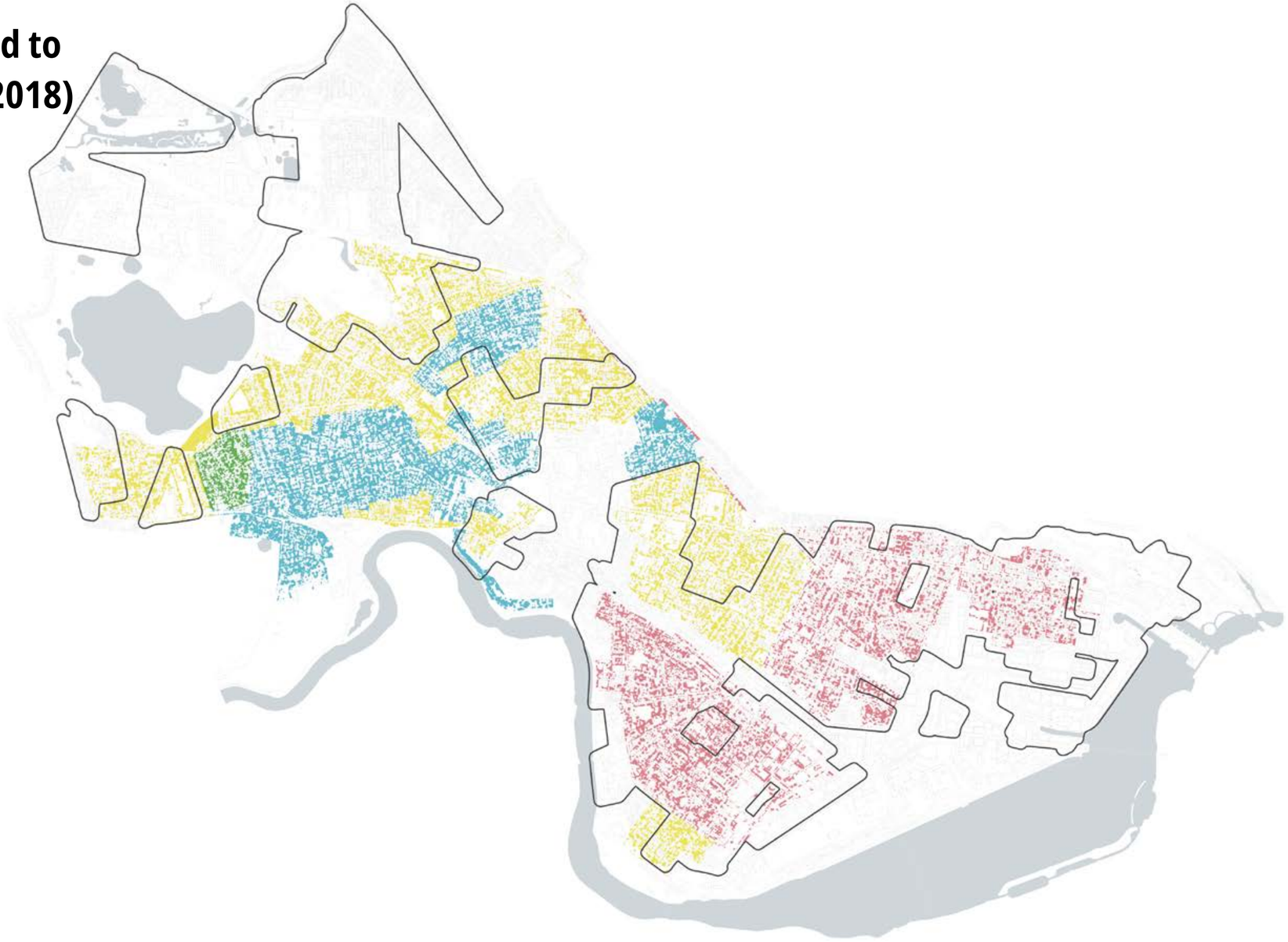
Redlined areas have lower canopy cover





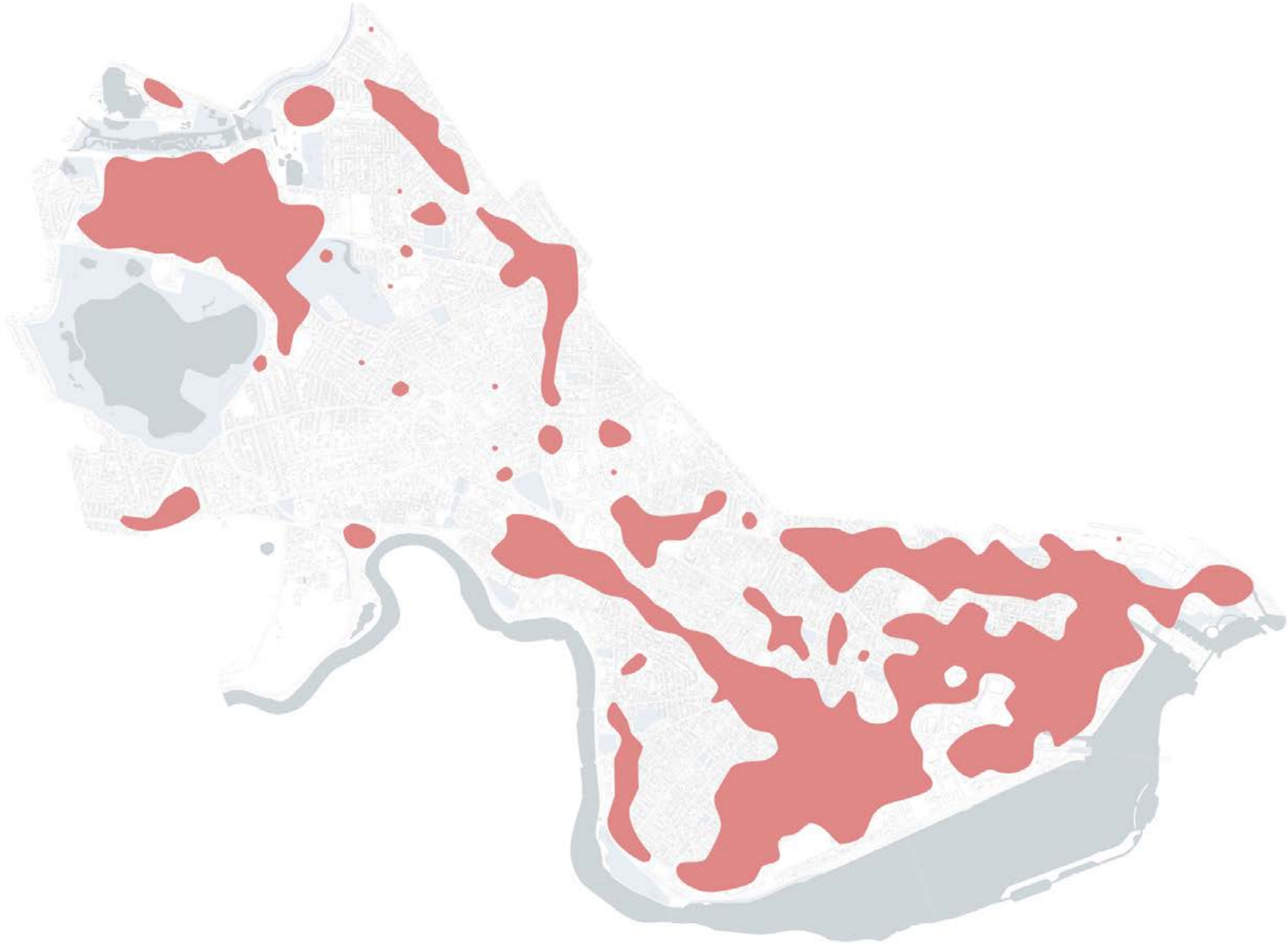
EQUITY: VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Redlined areas correspond to vulnerable populations (2018)



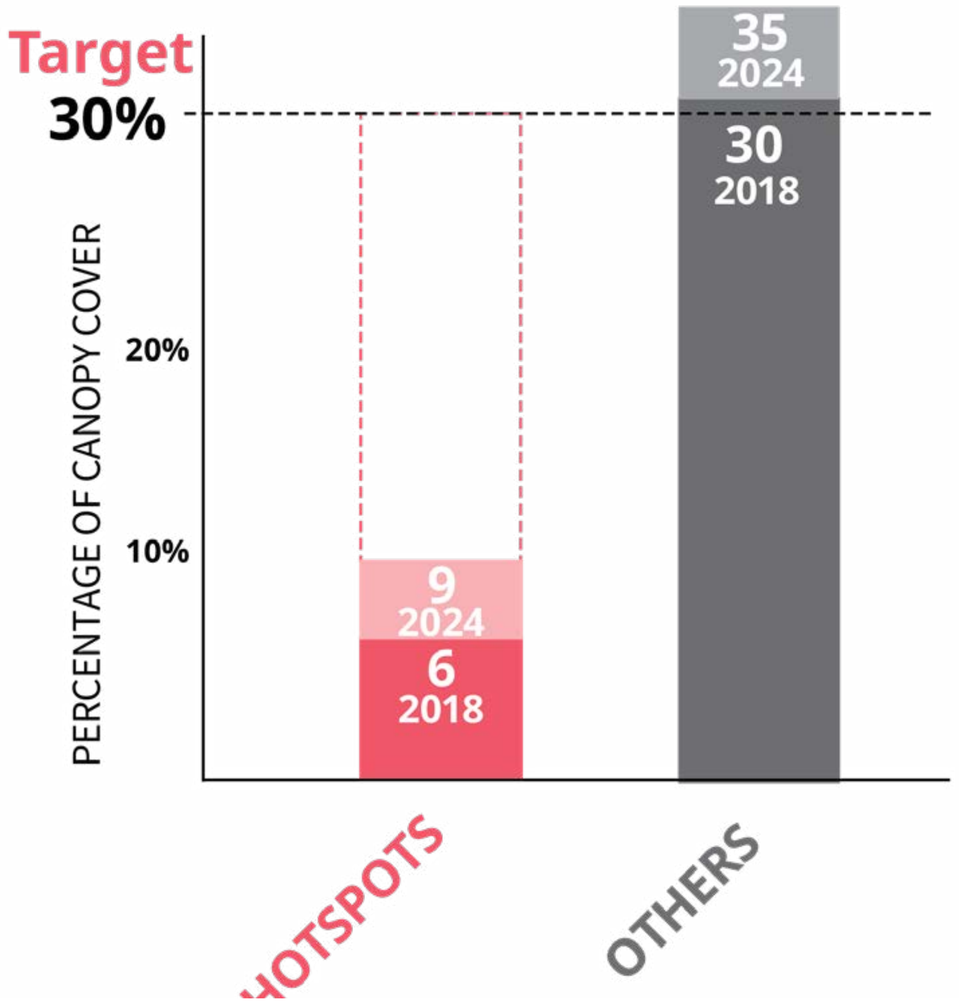
RESILIENCY: HEAT ISLAND HOTSPOTS

Areas that feel like 92 degrees on a 90 degree



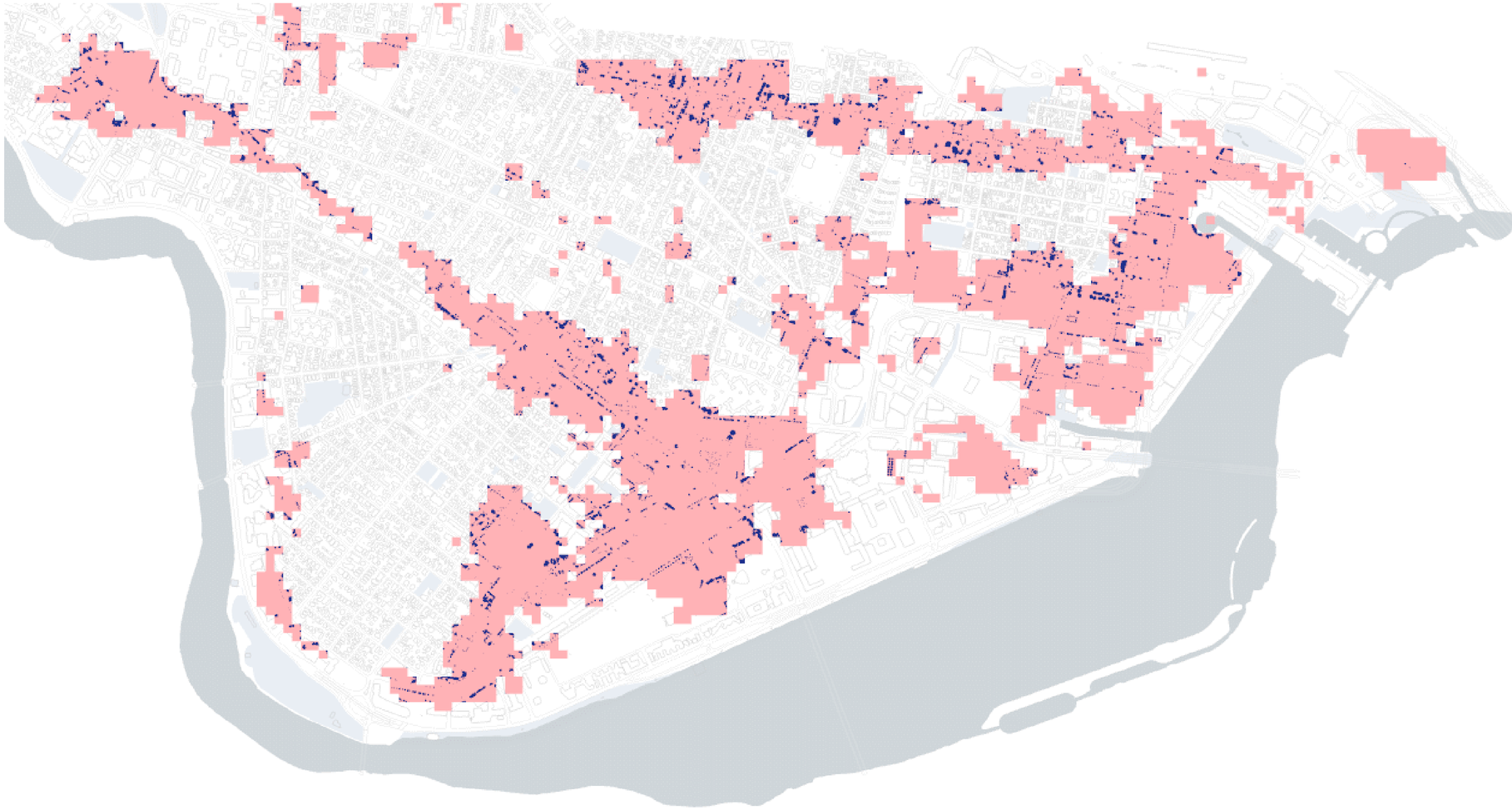
RESILIENCY: REDUCTION OF HEAT ISLAND HOTSPOTS

Canopy cover increased by 3% PTS



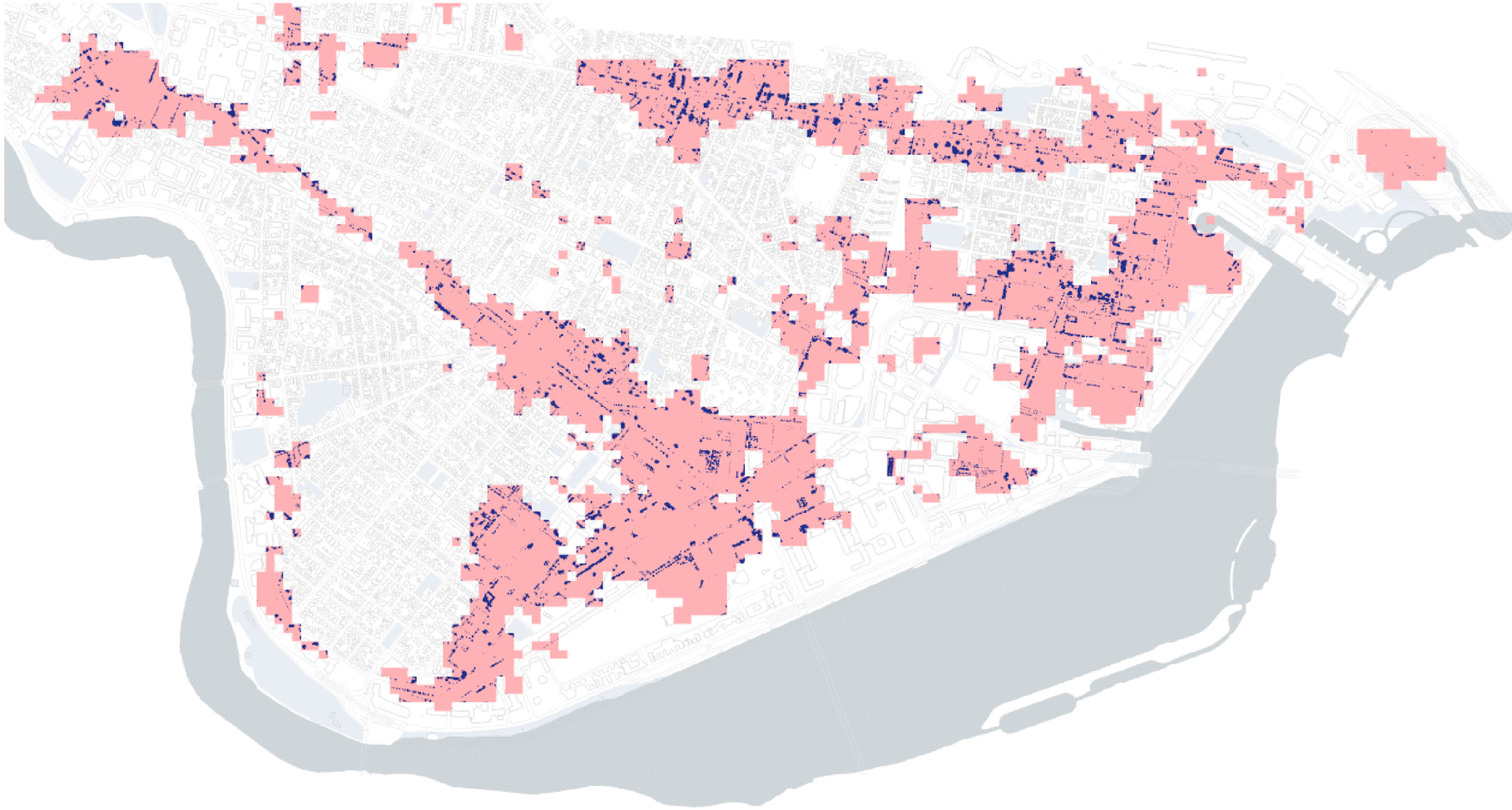
RESILIENCY: REDUCTION OF HEAT ISLAND HOTSPOTS

2018 canopy cover is 6.3%



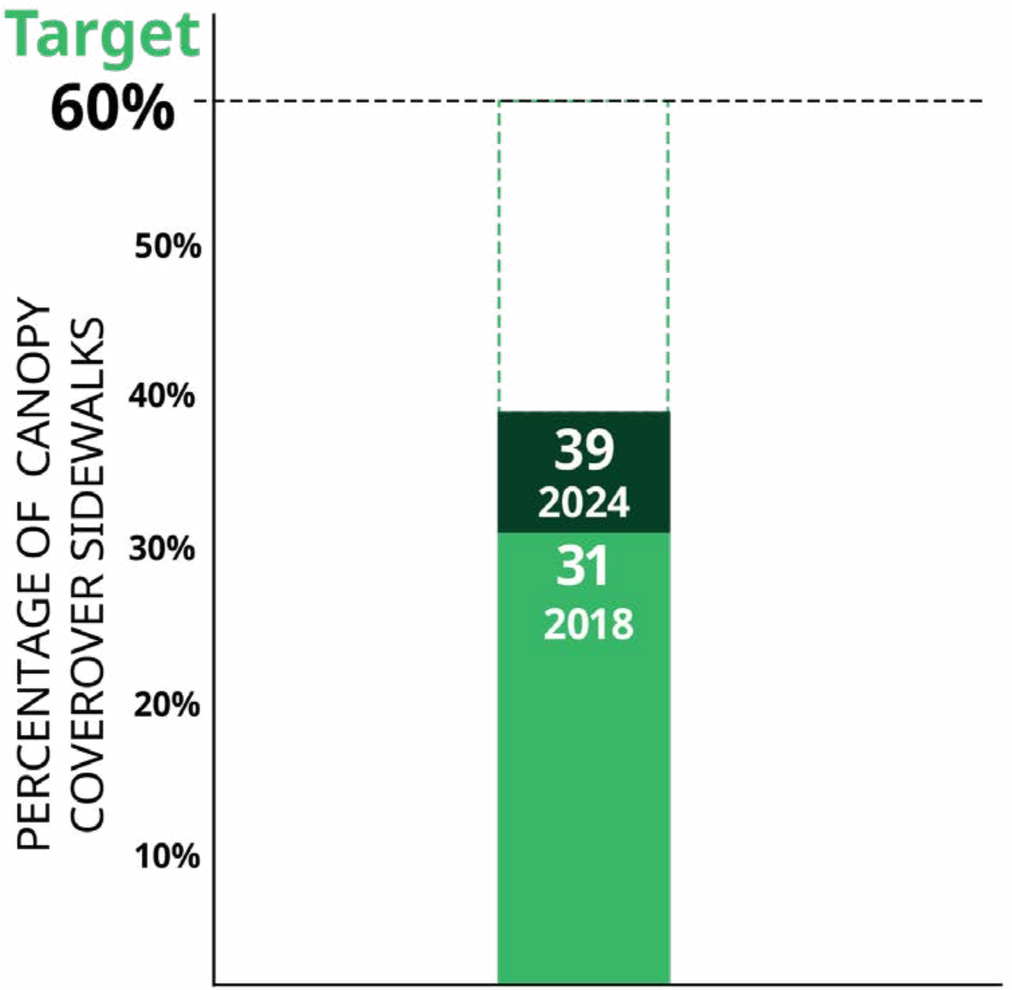
RESILIENCY: REDUCTION OF HEAT ISLAND HOTSPOTS

2024 canopy cover is 9.3%

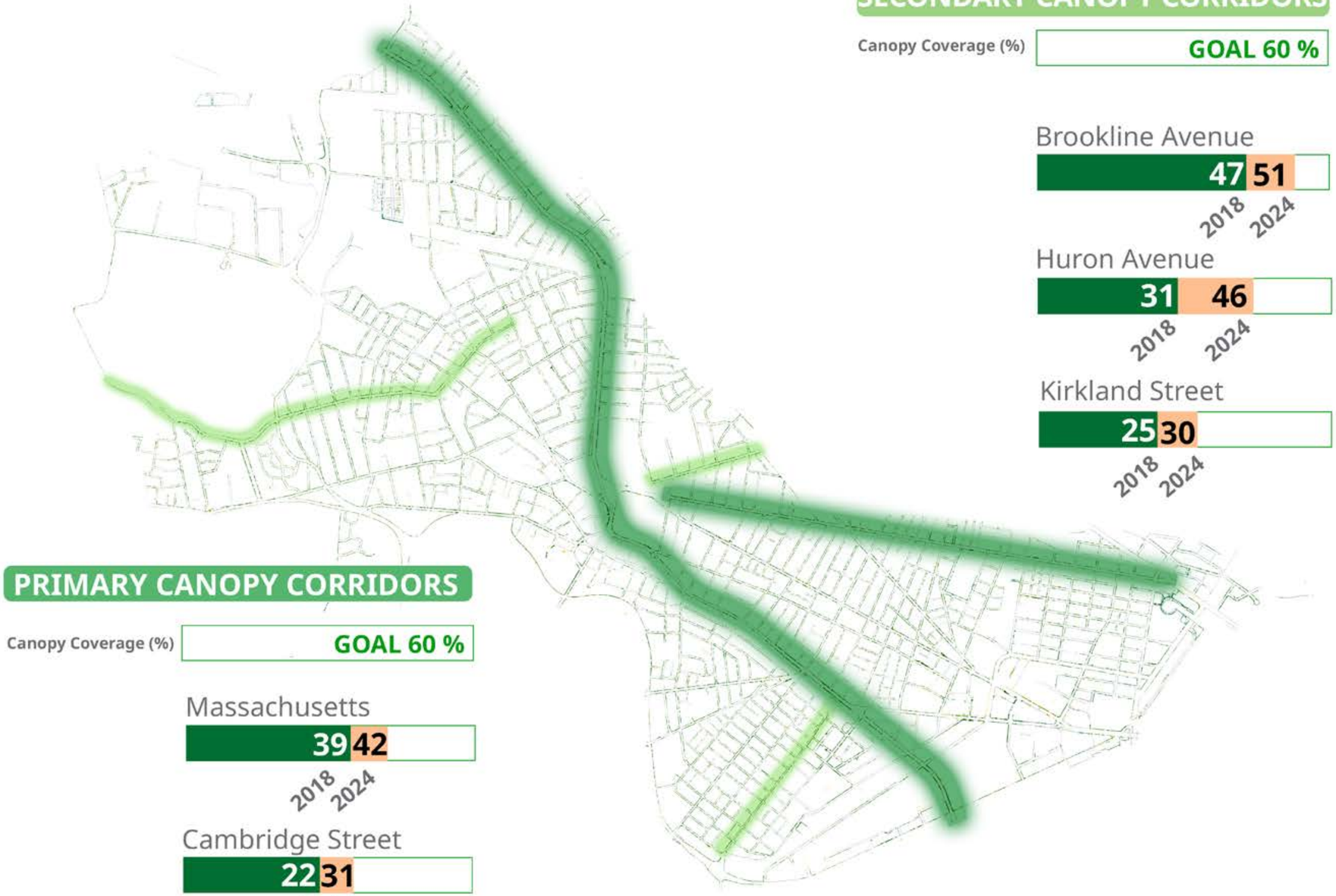


RESILIENCY: CANOPY COVER OVER SIDEWALKS

Canopy cover increased by 8%



RESILIENCY: CANOPY COVER OVER SIDEWALKS



SECONDARY CANOPY CORRIDORS

Canopy Coverage (%) — GOAL 60 %

Brookline Avenue

2018	2024
47	51

Huron Avenue

2018	2024
31	46

Kirkland Street

2018	2024
25	30

PRIMARY CANOPY CORRIDORS

Canopy Coverage (%) — GOAL 60 %

Massachusetts

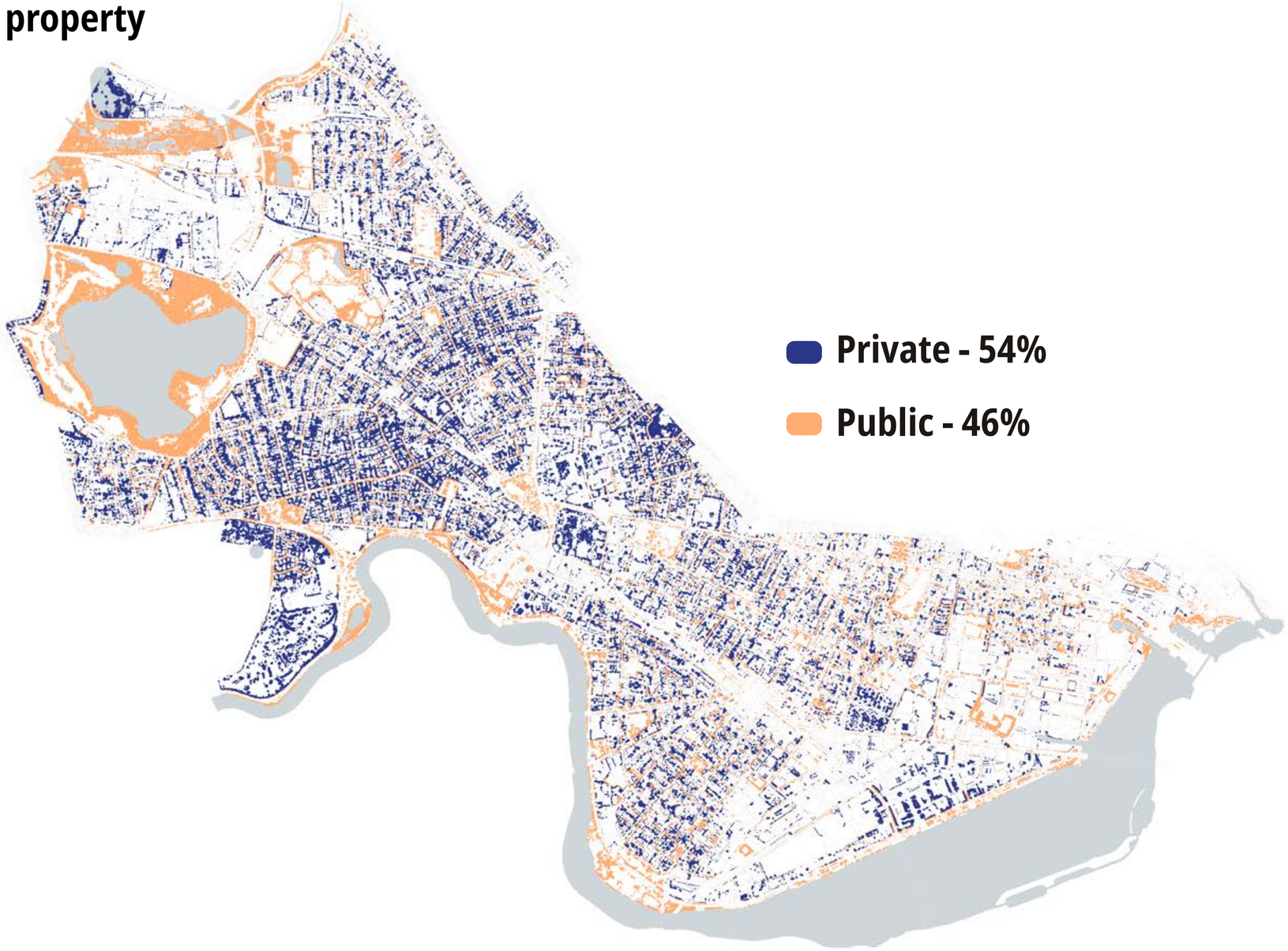
2018	2024
39	42

Cambridge Street

2018	2024
22	31

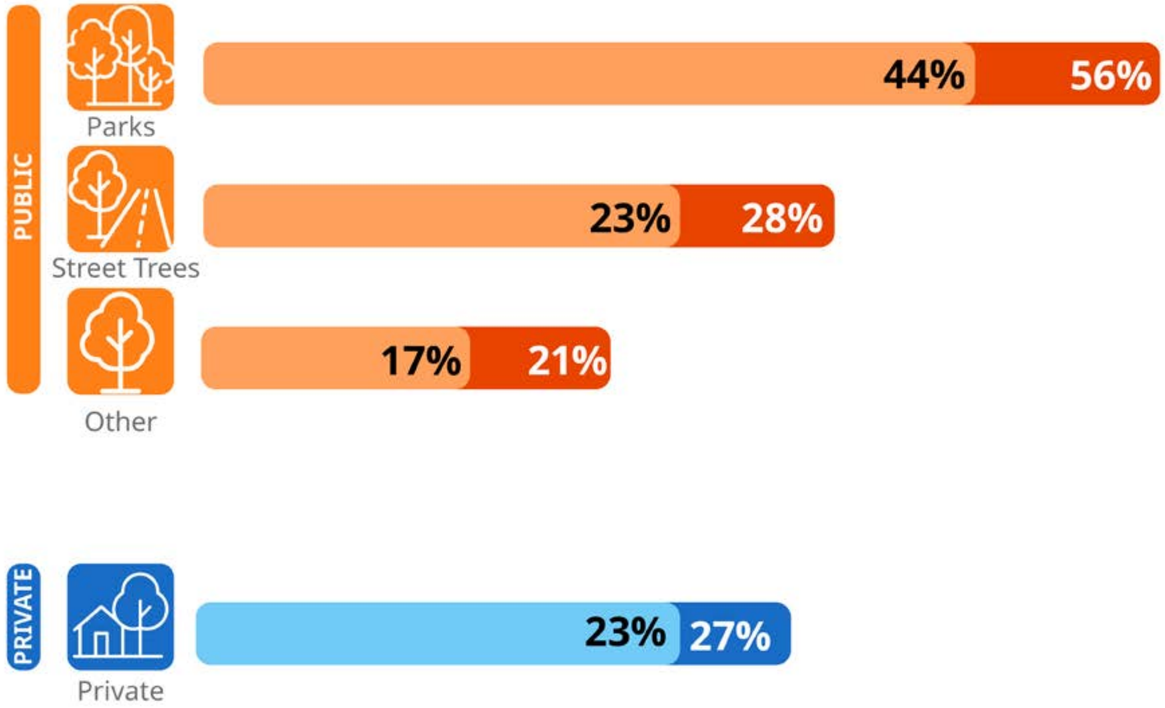
SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: PERCENT CANOPY ON PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC

More canopy is on private property



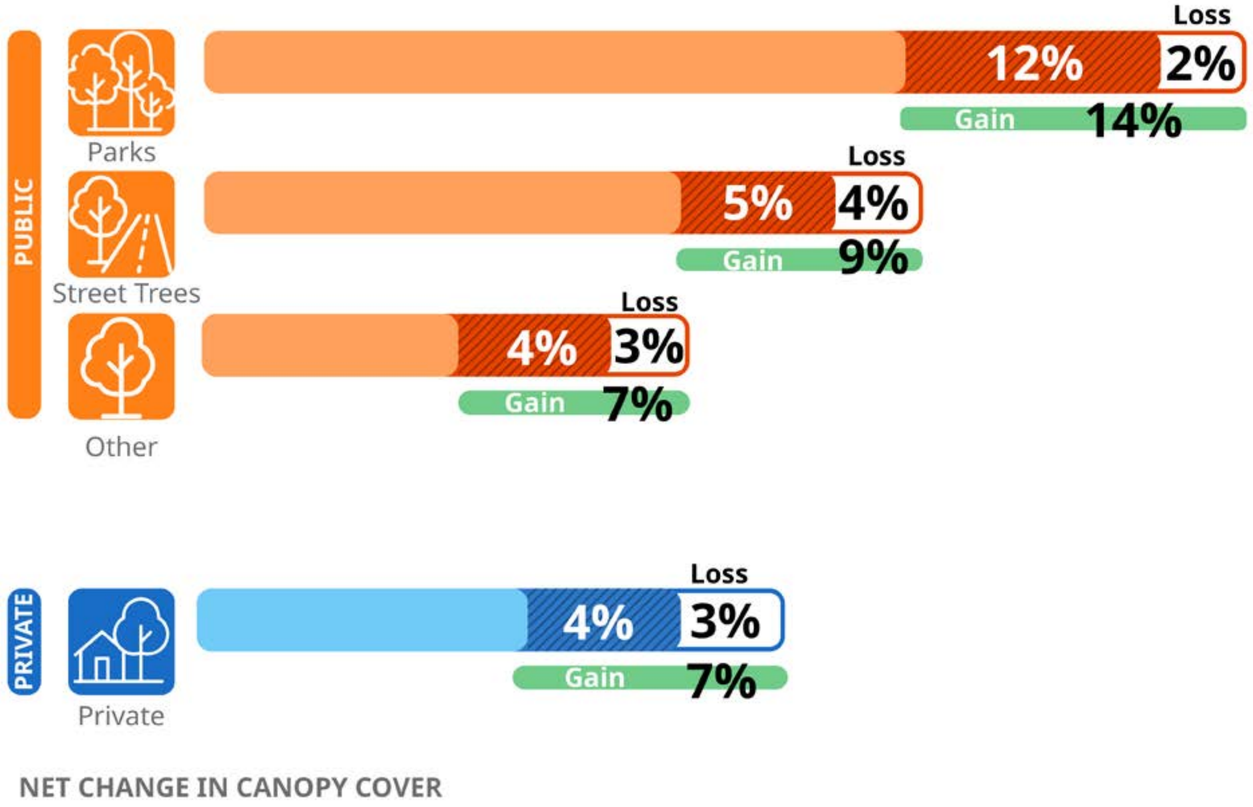
SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC CANOPY COVER

Public property has higher canopy cover than private property



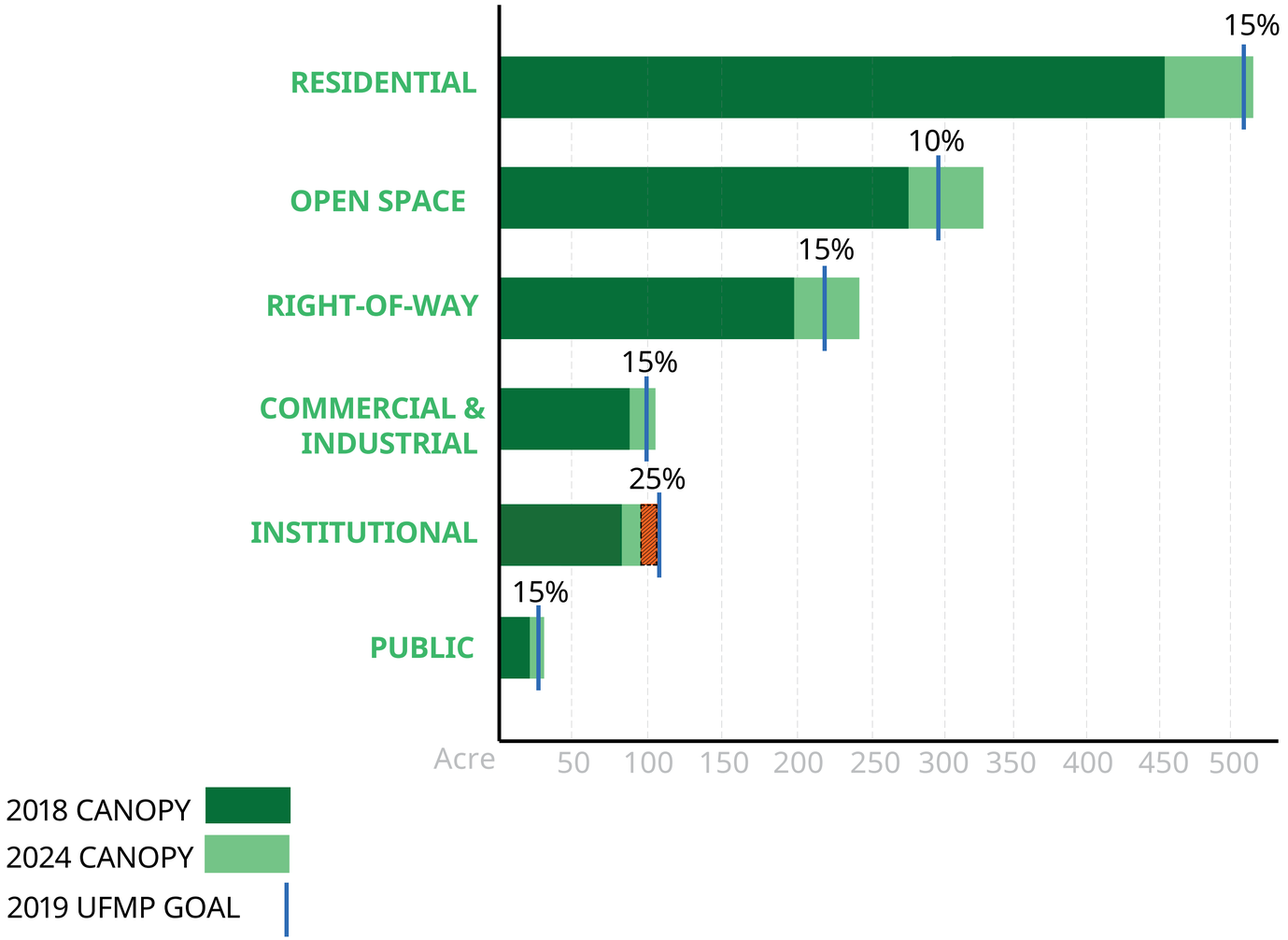
SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC CANOPY COVER

More canopy gain on public property, particularly on parks



SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: STAKEHOLDER GOALS

Great progress on increasing canopy cover by stakeholder



Project Overview

Our Approach

2018 to 2024 Progress Update

Your Questions

Mapping and Strategy Evaluation Exercise


rose
(success)


bud
(potential)


thorn
(challenge)