City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting
Meeting Minutes – 10 September 2025 - 5:30-7pm
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Attendance (* indicates virtual attendance)
CPP Members: Ahron Lerman*, Cindy Carpenter, Chantal Eide, Cynthia Smith, Gretchen Friesinger, Ray Fahrner, Robb Johnson, Sara Cohen*, Sophia Emperador, Tracey Orr*, Christina Mann, Paola Massari, Eva Tine, Tenley Ransom, Rob Vandenabelle, Carrie Burke

DPW/City of Cambridge: Abby Bentley*, David Lefcourt, Andrew Putnam, Courtney Kirk, Kristen Kelleher

Guests & members of the public: none

Meeting notes submitted by: Chantal Eide

Agenda Items:

1. New CPP members:
    a. New CPP members were introduced and all members went around the room introducing themselves.
2. Review previous meeting minutes:
    a. May 2025 minutes were approved
    b. June 2025 minutes were approved
    c. July 2025 minutes were approved
3. Updates from Urban Forest team (Abby, David, Andrew & Kirsten) - 15 min.
    a. Updates on 2025 tree planting goals and progress to date, on Cambridge and DCR land (Abby)
        i. This spring, 556 trees were planted, 120 of which were on DCR land. The city will maintain, water, and prune the DCR trees for 5 years at which time they will become DCR's responsibility.
        ii. For Fall planting, we are looking for planting sites. Right now there are 211 locations.
        iii. Cambridge Parkway was considered as a site but DCR did not approve because our requested tree well sizes were too big.
        iv. Abby showed a map of where the DCR trees were planted. Some were along Alewife Brook Parkway near the Whole Foods.
    b. Update on goals and progress to date for Forest Friends newsletter subscribers and trees adopted (Kristen)
        i. Kristen has done some work on the website.
        ii. We have over 1000 Forest Friend newsletter subscribers.
4. Urban Forest Master Plan 5 year review Andrew) - 30 min.
    a. Consultant for the project
        i. Reed Hildebrand is the consultant for the project

b. Brief overview, overall project scope and timeline
   i. They'll be looking at the state of the urban forest, at risks to the urban forest, and at targets for the urban forest.
   ii. The 5 year update will describe the current conditions, assess recommendations, and evaluate areas for improvement.
   iii. They'll look at any successes from the last 5 years, challenges, and what is seen as potential. What strategies are effective for stemming loss and growing canopy for the last 5 years.
   iv. Some preliminary results from UVM are that there has been 5% growth since 2020.
   v. There will be two meetings with CPP. CPP will play the role of the task force.
c. CPP inputs - when, kinds of inputs requested
5. Monday 27 October at 11am there will be a meeting of the Health and Environment subcommittee.
6. Updates from CDD - none
7. Other business & announcements - 5 min.
   a. Danehy Park Family Day - September 20 (rain date September 27)

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7pm.

………………………………………

Items for further/future discussion: (topics tabled for this month or proposed for next month)
● We very much look forward to Reed Hildebrand's presentation next month.

Action items: (describe item, identify person responsible and time frame)
● All committee members should familiarize themselves with the Urban Forestry Master Plan Technical Report.

Public comments: none

………………………………………

Next meeting: Our next Zoom meeting will be held on 8 October 2025 at 5:30pm and will be advertised to the public in advance.

Attachment:
1. Presentation on the history of the Urban Forest Master Plan, given by Andrew Putnam

Health and Environment Committee

Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan 5 Year Update

September 27th, 2025

Health and Environment Committee

Agenda:

- Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) Background
- Timeline & Goals of UFMP 5 Year Update
- 2018 to 2024 Progress & Reported Canopy Coverage
- 2024 Canopy Report
- Questions / Comments

Health and Environment Committee

Agenda:

- Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) Background

Urban Forest Master Plan

Background & Process

Overview

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

- Recognizes the capacity of the urban forest to realize the Core Values from Envision Cambridge

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

Urban Forest Master Plan

Background & Process

Overview

- Task Force of 18 private citizens representing residents of Cambridge, subject experts, local institutions, and business groups met 11 times during 2018 and 2019.

- Documented the State of the Urban Forest
- Evaluated Risks to the Urban Forest, **including factors contributing to canopy loss**
- Set Targets, Prioritization, and Action Steps

- Developed a Technical Report to advise stakeholders on data-driven solutions for preserving and expanding the urban forest and achieving goals.
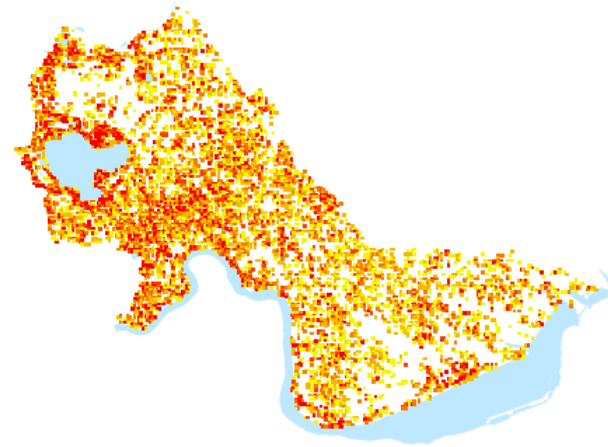
2020 CUFMP MAJOR FINDINGS

The rate of canopy loss meant inaction would result in 10-15% canopy coverage by 2050

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

→ **25% minimum canopy by neighborhood**

RESILIENCY

→ **60% canopy over sidewalks**

→ **50% reduction of heat island hotspots**

→ **Species diversification**

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

→ **10% to 25% increase in canopy cover by across all landowner types**
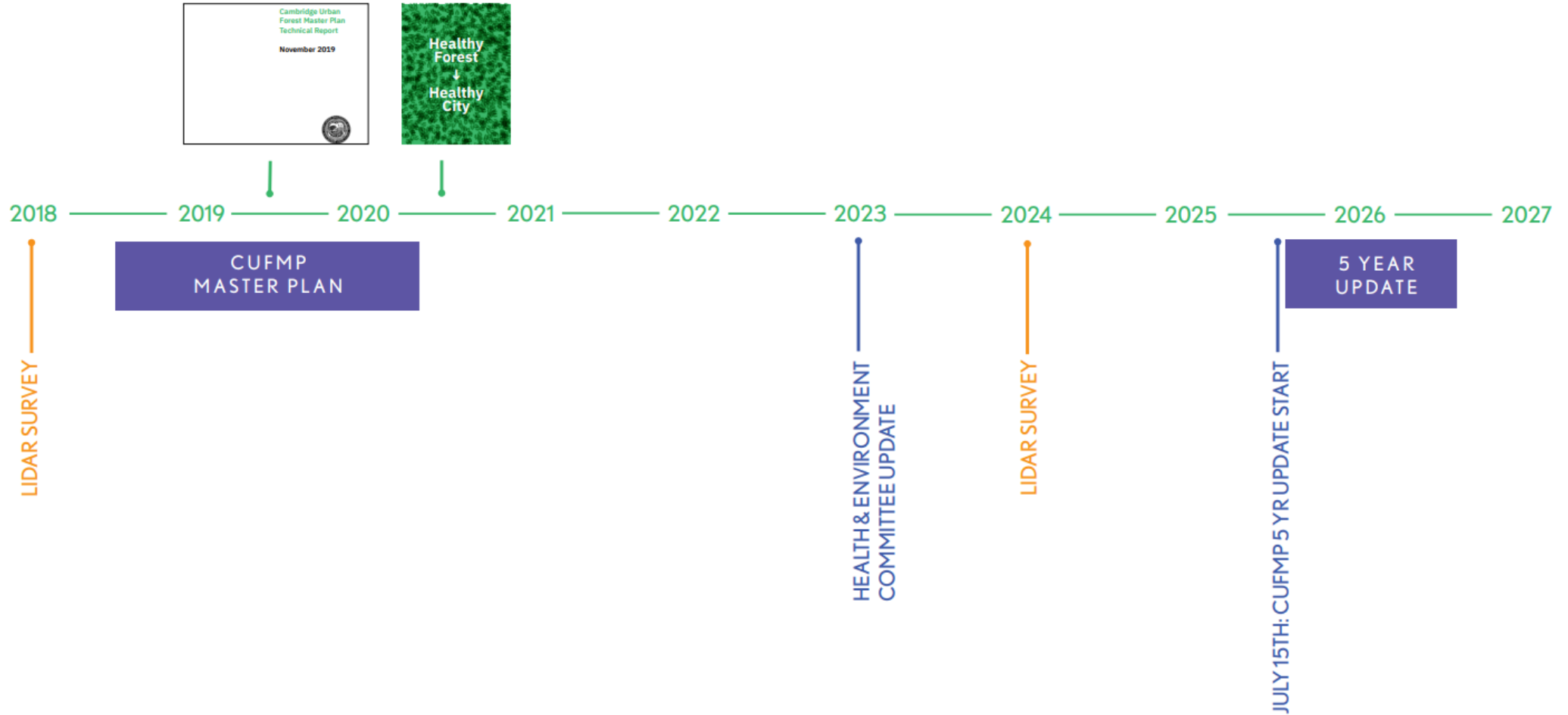
Health and Environment Committee

Agenda:

- Timeline & Goals of UFMP 5 Year Update

CUFMP TIMELINE

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

Cambridge Urban
Forest Master Plan
Technical Report

November 2019

Healthy
Forest
↓
Healthy
City

CUFMP
MASTER PLAN

5 YEAR
UPDATE

LIDAR SURVEY

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE UPDATE

LIDAR SURVEY

JULY 15TH: CUFMP 5 YR UPDATE START

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

PHASE A ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

2025	2025	2026	2026
SUMMER	FALL	WINTER	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	2025	2026	2026
SUMMER	FALL	WINTER	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
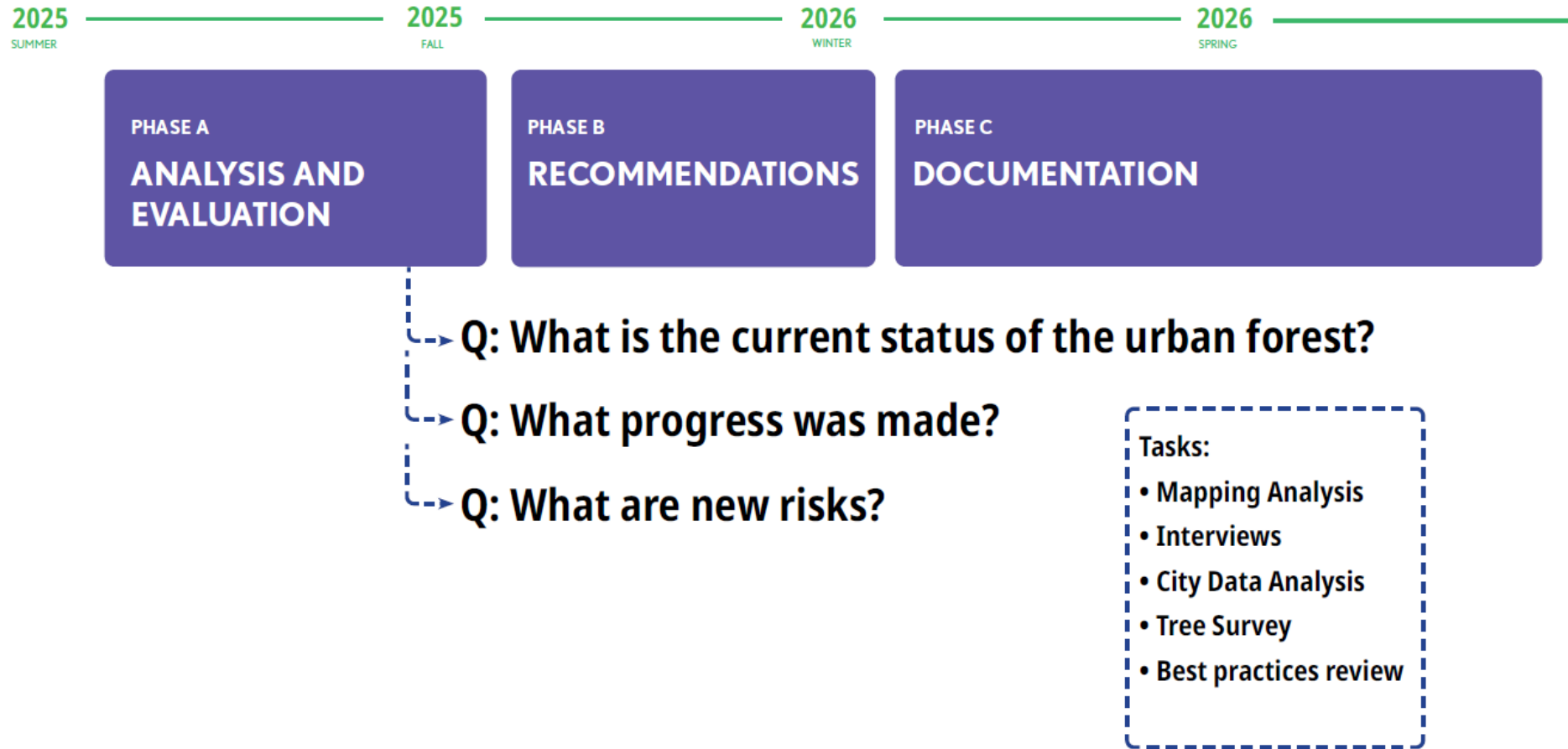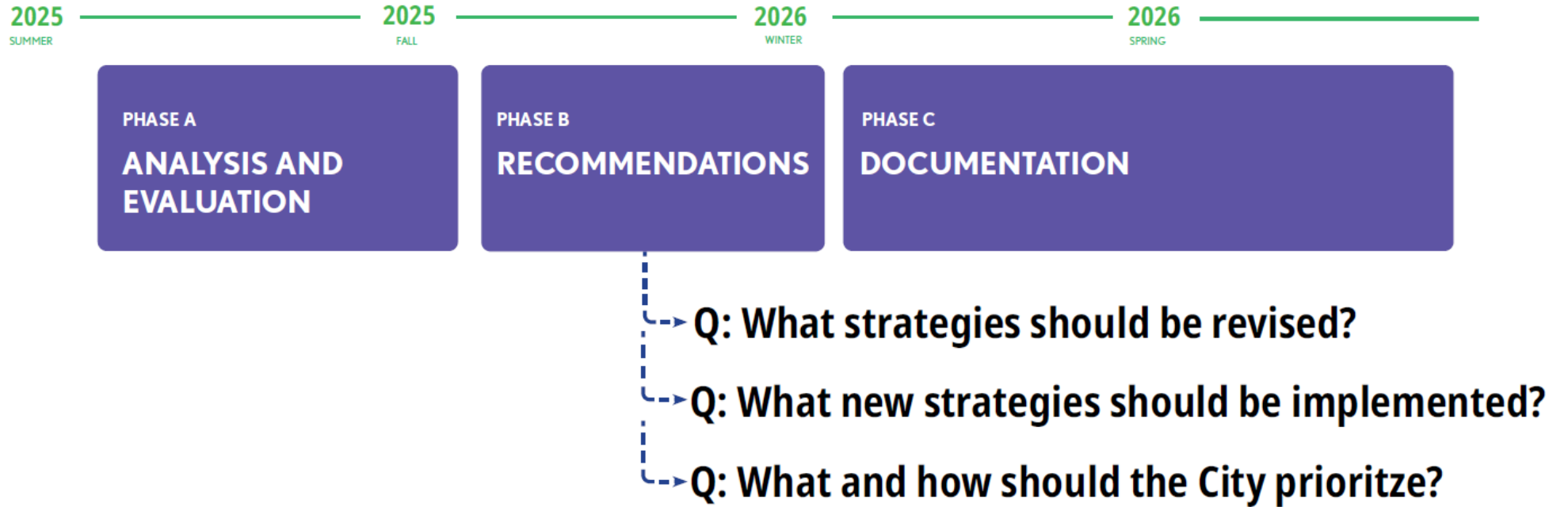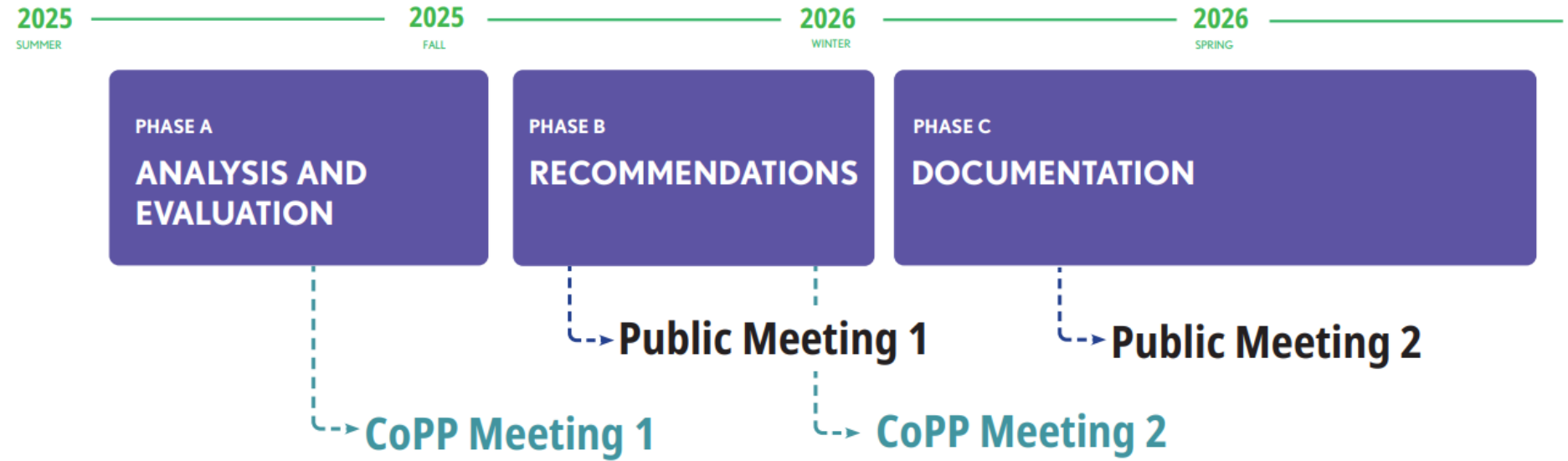
The Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan seeks to grow tree canopy to maintain and realize the livability, resiliency, and well-being of Cambridge residents.

MEASURING PROGRESS
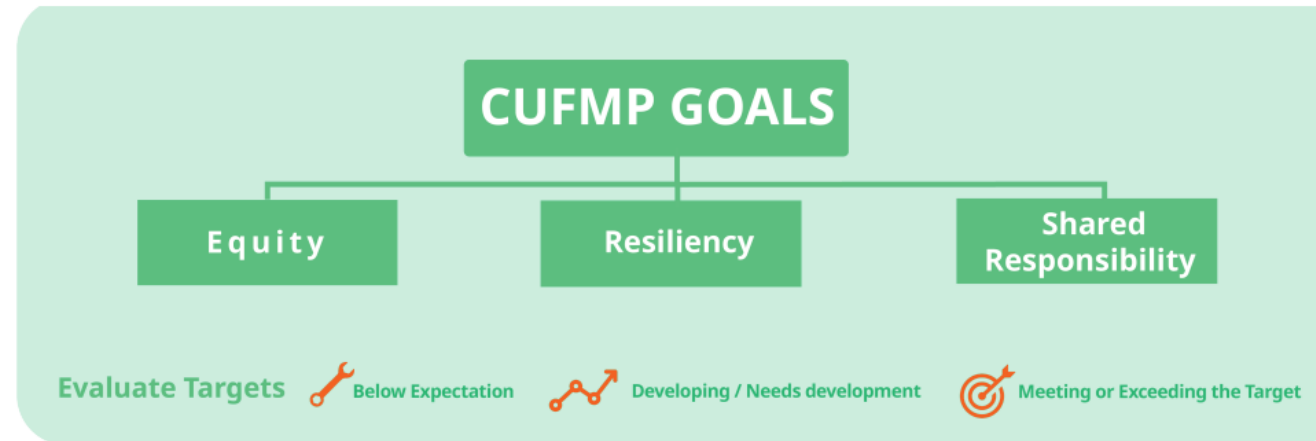
CUFMP GOALS

Equity | Resiliency | Shared Responsibility

Evaluate Targets — Below Expectation — Developing / Needs development — Meeting or Exceeding the Target

MEASURING PROGRESS
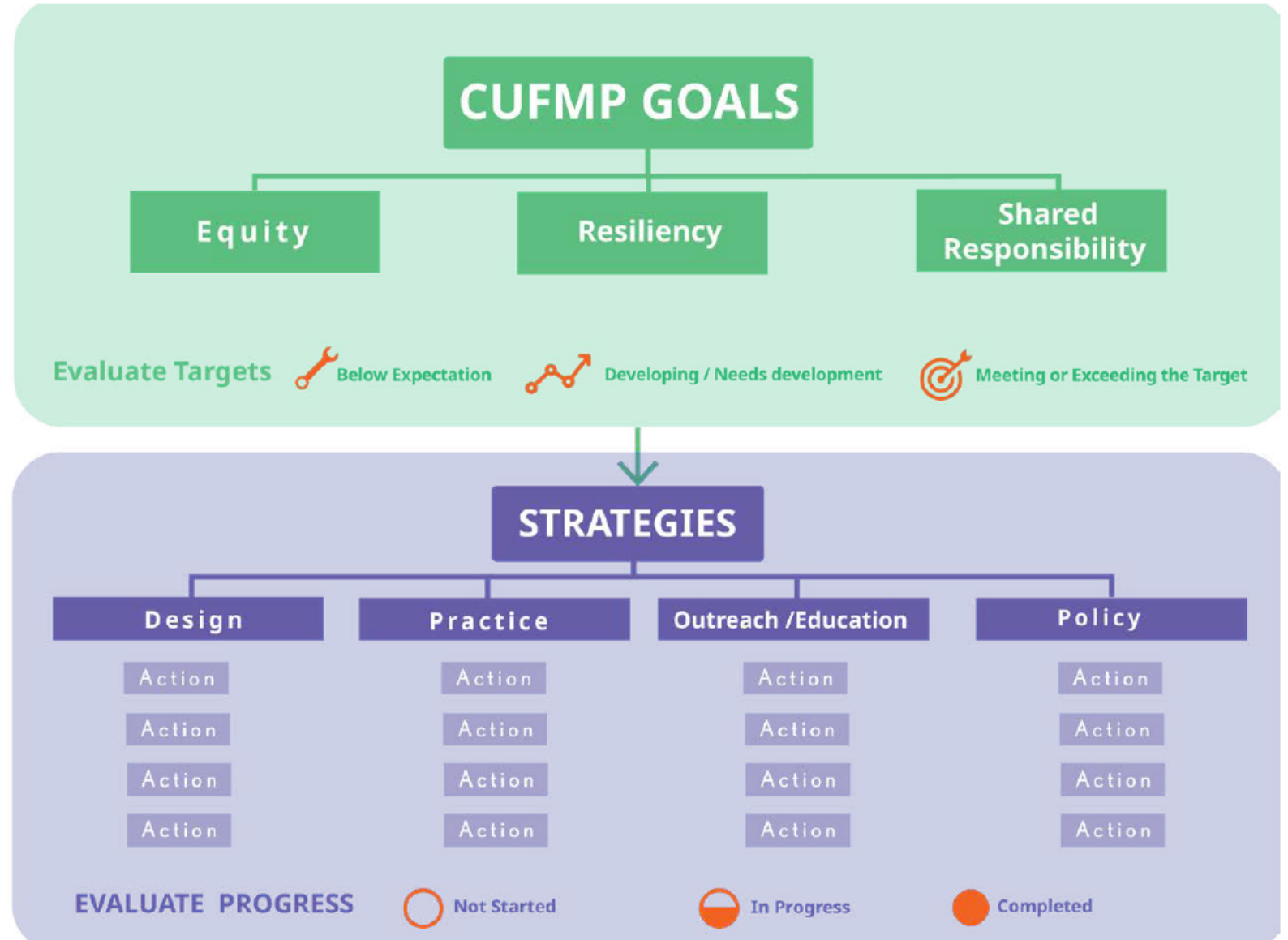
Health and Environment Committee

Agenda:

- 2018 to 2024 Progress & Reported Canopy Coverage

Urban Forest Master Plan
Reported Canopy Coverage

2019 CUFMP AND UVM STUDIES

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

Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan Technical Report

November 2019
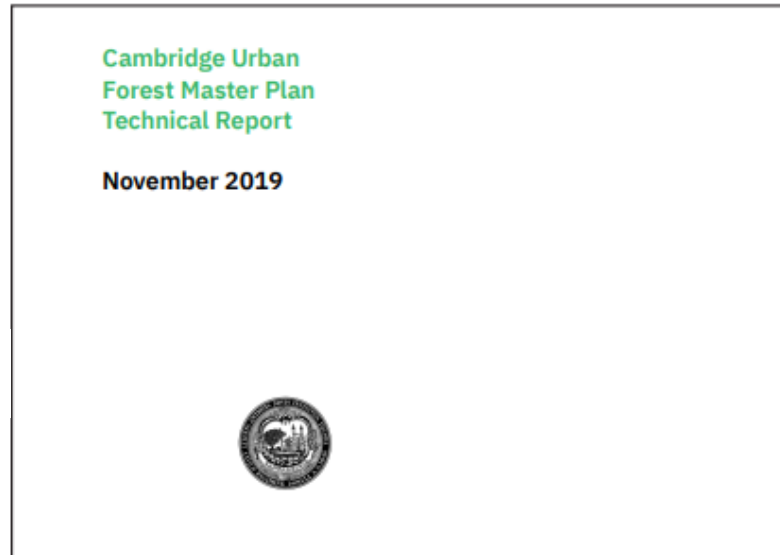
2019 CUFMP:
2009 canopy cover: 30%

Tree Canopy Assessment
Cambridge, MA
2009-2020

PREPARED BY:
The University of Vermont

PREPARED FOR:
City of Cambridge
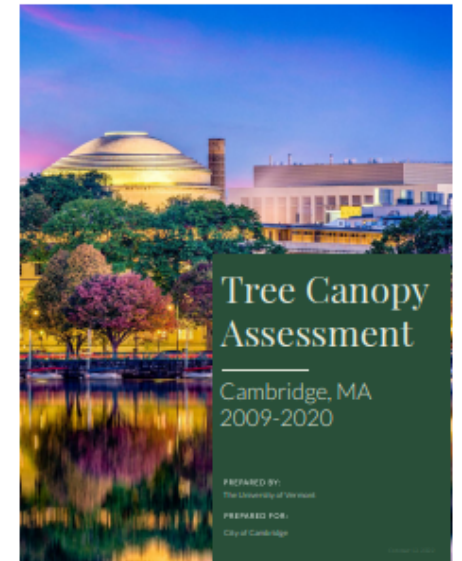
2020 UVM Report
2009 canopy cover: 26%

Tree Canopy Report
Improved Techniques

- LiDAR imaging, processing techniques and resolution continue to improve

- Harmonized flyover data provides accurate results for tracking change in canopy coverage

Accuracy Improvements

Due to improved accuracy achieved through the harmonization process, tree canopy numbers in this assessment may differ from previous analyses. Original tree canopy outputs for 2009 and 2014 were much coarser in resolution and required smoothing prior to harmonization.
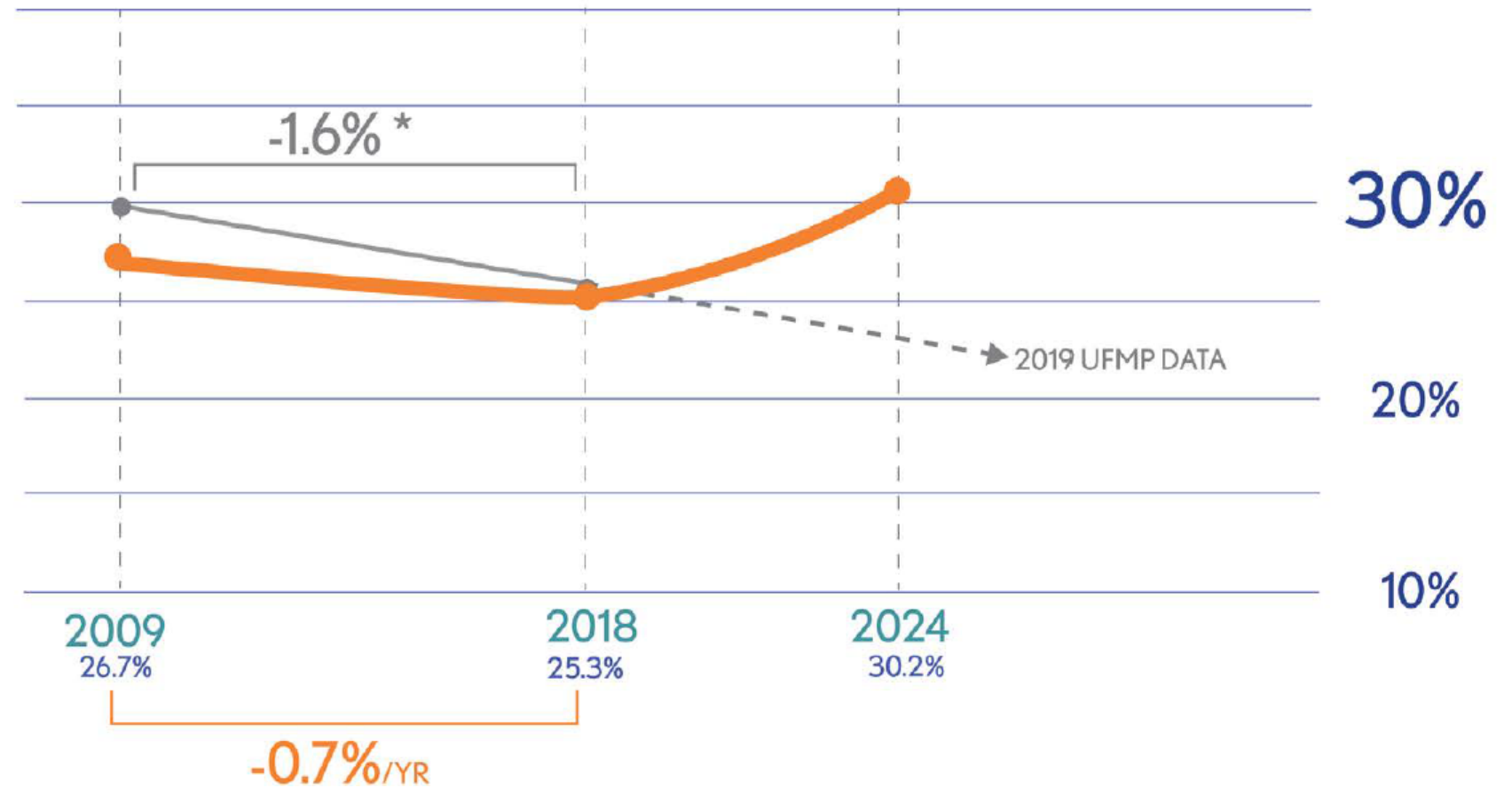

Low Resolution — A, B, C

High Resolution — A, B, C

Tree / Not Tree

Figure 4. Illustration of how accuracy improvements can result in updates to tree canopy estimates. Both example maps represent the same 15m by 15m area, the left one has a resolution of 3m by 3m while the right has a resolution of 1m by 1m. The map on the right more accurately captures actual tree canopy area.
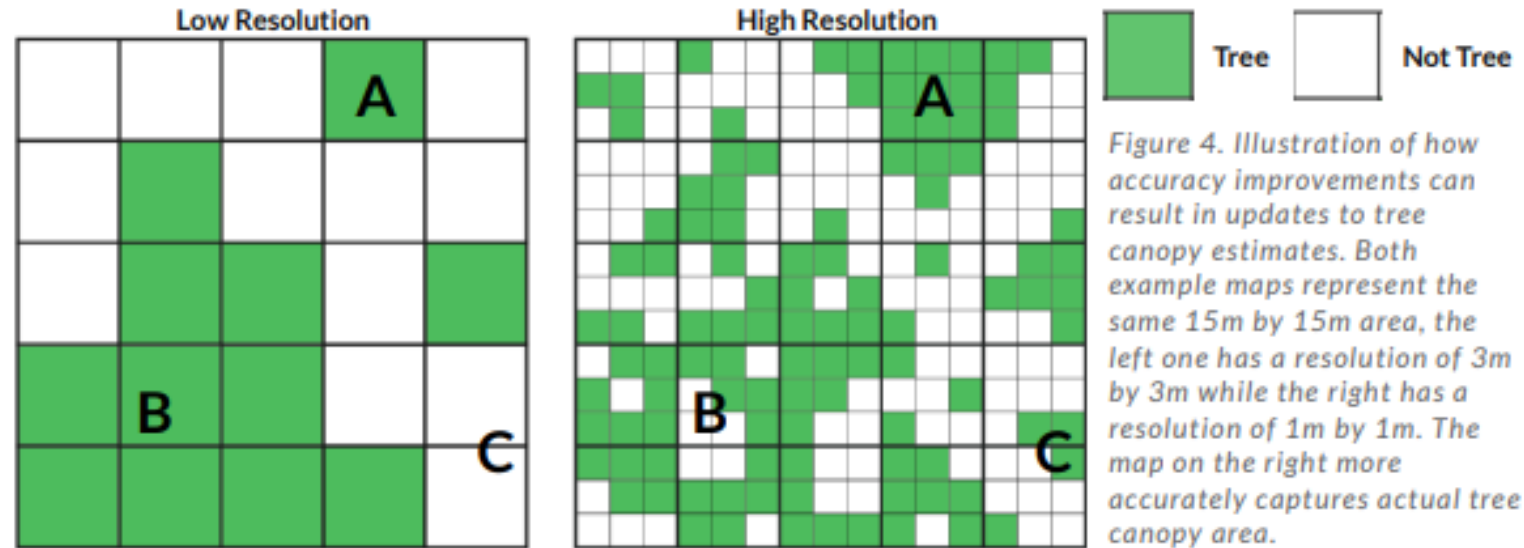
New techniques better capture:

A Edge Growth. Better detection of edge growth may add tree cover that was not previously mapped.

B Forest Gaps. Previous assessments may include overestimates of tree cover where tree canopy gaps were not detected.

C Small Patches. Tree patches that were previously too small for detection can now be mapped.
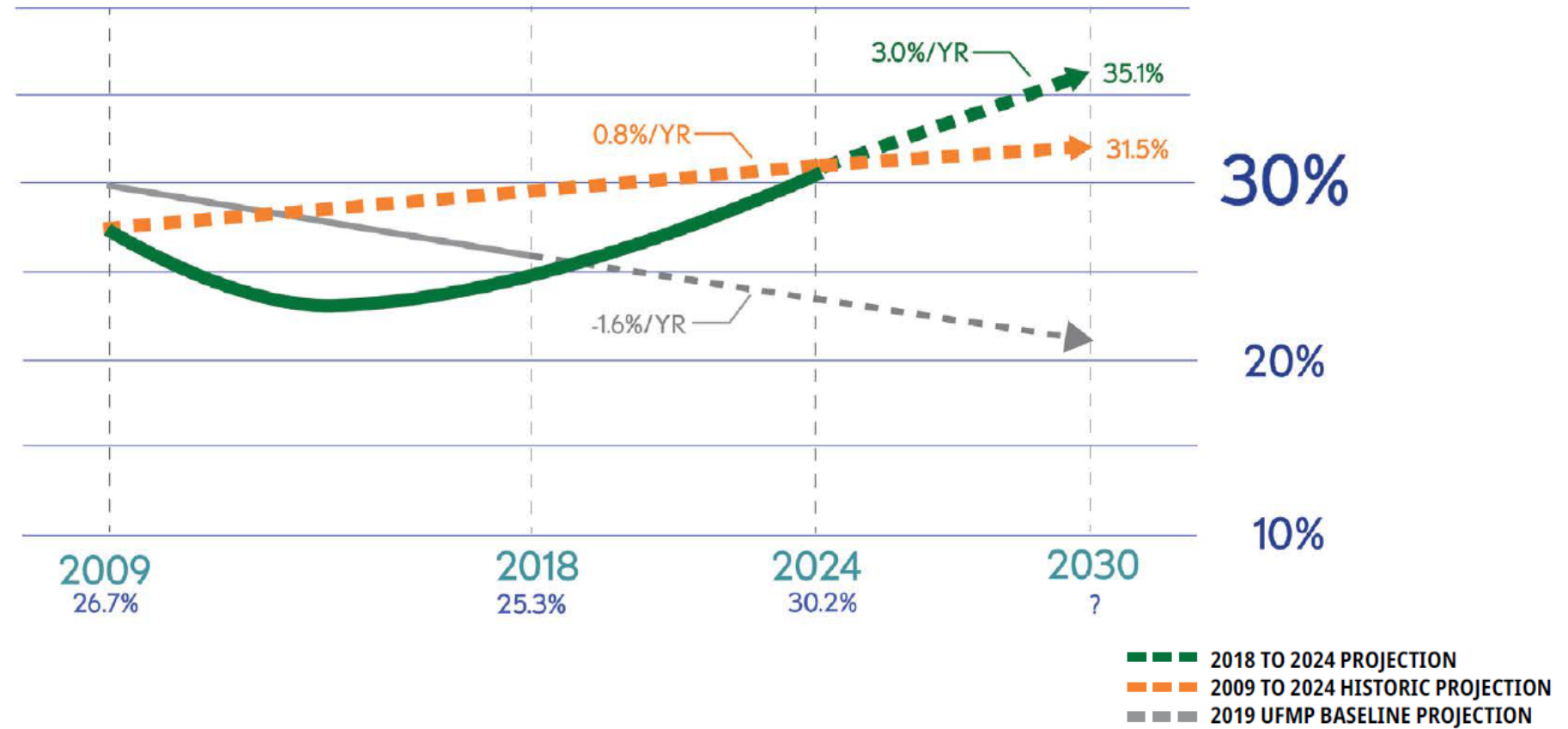
2019 UFMP PROJECTION

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

-1.6% *

2019 UFMP DATA

30%

20%

10%

| 2009 | 2018 | 2024 |
| 26.7% | 25.3% | 30.2% |

-0.7%/YR

2030 PROJECTIONS

Urban Forest Master Plan

Goals & Strategy Matrix

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

±30% CANOPY COVER CITYWIDE

1	Enhance and Expand the Tree Protection Ordinance	Policy
2	Formalize Practices for Planting and Inspection	
3	Leverage Land Use Requirements	
4	Leverage Public-Private Partnerships	
5	Institutionalize Tree Priorities	
6	Plant Resilient Species	Design
7	Street Tree Planting Strategies	
8	Site New Parks and Open Space Strategically	
9	Improve Monitoring	Practices
10	Expand Maintenance	
11	Expand Planting Practices	
12	Invest in Educational Programs	Outreach
13	Build Community Partnerships	
14	Seek Alternative Green Strategies	Other
15	Integrate UFMP into Complementary Planning Studies	

THE CAMBRIDGE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Update the Tree Protection Ordinance

Mitigation paid into Tree Fund since the TPO amendment in 2019 to July 1^{st,} 2025: $2,416,244.11

Permit Type	Total	
Mitigate completely with money	50	6%
Mitigate completely with trees	86	11%
Mitigate with combination of tree planting and n	54	7%
Tree(s) meet the requirement of one of the special circumstances and do not require mitigation.	599	76%
Grand Total	789	100%

More residential trees replanted through the Tree Protection Ordinance

POLICY RECOMMENDATION NEEDING IMPROVEMENT: Establish a Tree Trust

DESIGN SUCCESS:
Diversify species and planting strategies

**Diversifying planting strategies:
Densifying planting**

**Diversifying planting strategies:
Miyawaki forests**

DESIGN RECOMMENDATION NEEDING IMPROVEMENT:
Reduce the roadway to increase tree planting locations

PRACTICE SUCCESS
Expand Planting Practices

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

CITY TREE DATABASE - PLANTING PRACTICES:

After two years, ball and burlapped trees on average had a survival rate of 89% (n= 2763).
Bareroot trees had a survival rate of 80% (n=1175).

	Column 1	Park Tree Total...	% Survival	Street Tree Total	% Survival
11	2019	174	64%	603	60%
12	2020	156	74%	386	69%
13	2021	378	77%	819	67%
14	2022	504	93%	837	76%
	2023	151	84%	783	90%
16	2024	445	86%	820	86%

PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NEEDING IMPROVEMENT:
Treat private trees for Emerald Ash Borer

OUTREACH SUCCESS
Create Newsletter

The Forest Friends monthly
newsletter was recommended at
the 2023 Health & Environment
Subcommittee.

Currently 1,167 subscribers

OUTREACH RECOMMENDATION
NEEDING IMPROVEMENT:
Support citizen science projects

Health and Environment Committee

Agenda:

- 2024 Canopy Report

2024 CANOPY COVER

**CANOPY COVER CITYWIDE
INCREASED BY 5% FROM 2018**

Cambridge	26.7% (2009)	25.3% (2018)
Boston	27.0% (2017)	22.3% (2019)
Baltimore	28.5% (2013)	21.0% (2019)
Hartford	25.0% (2013)	25.9% (2019)
New York City	20.9% (2013)	21.0% (2019)
Philadelphia	20.3% (2013)	15.7% (2019)
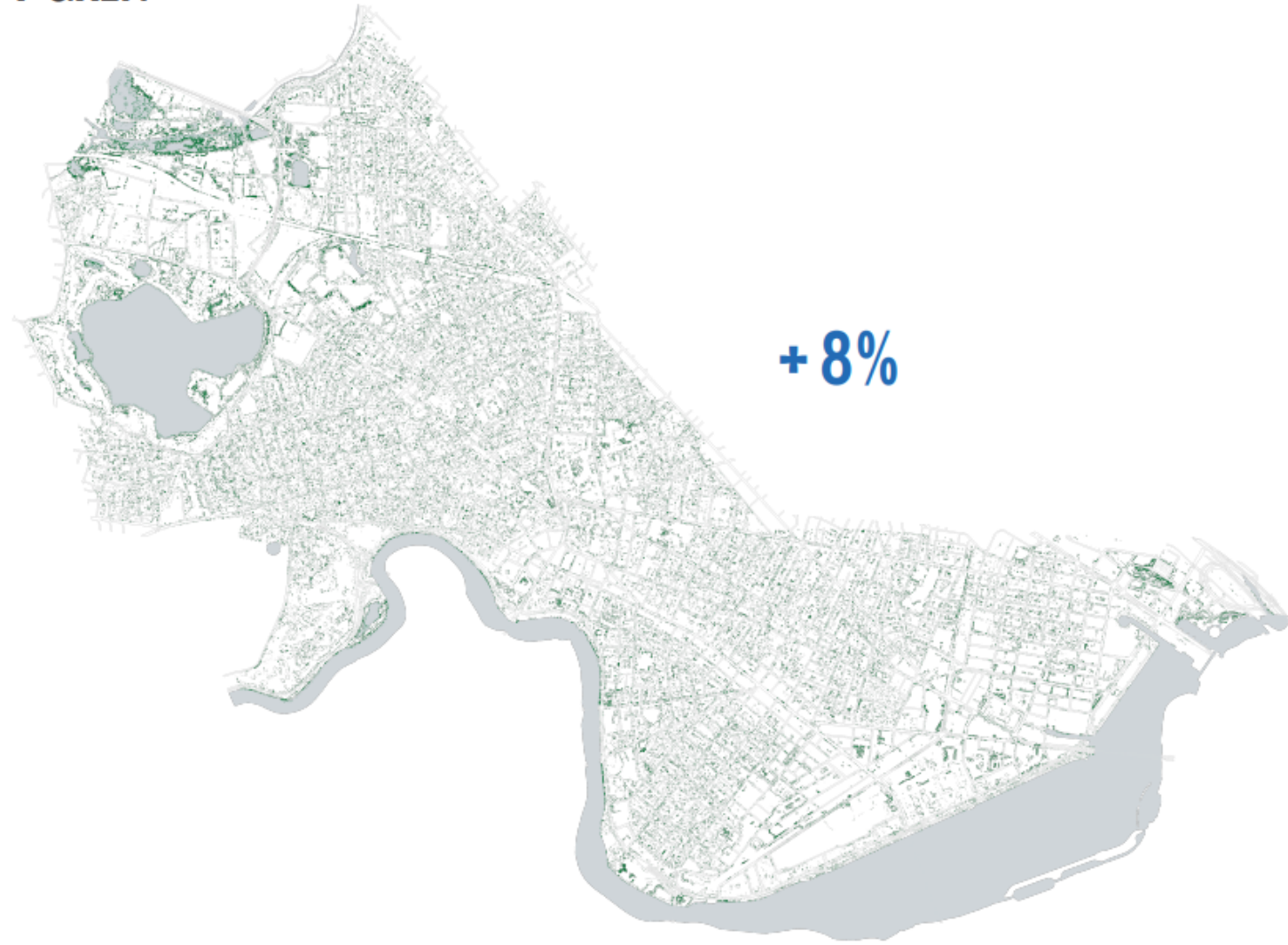
30.3%
CANOPY COVER

2018 – 2024 CANOPY GAIN

+ 8%

2018 – 2024 CANOPY LOSS

-3%
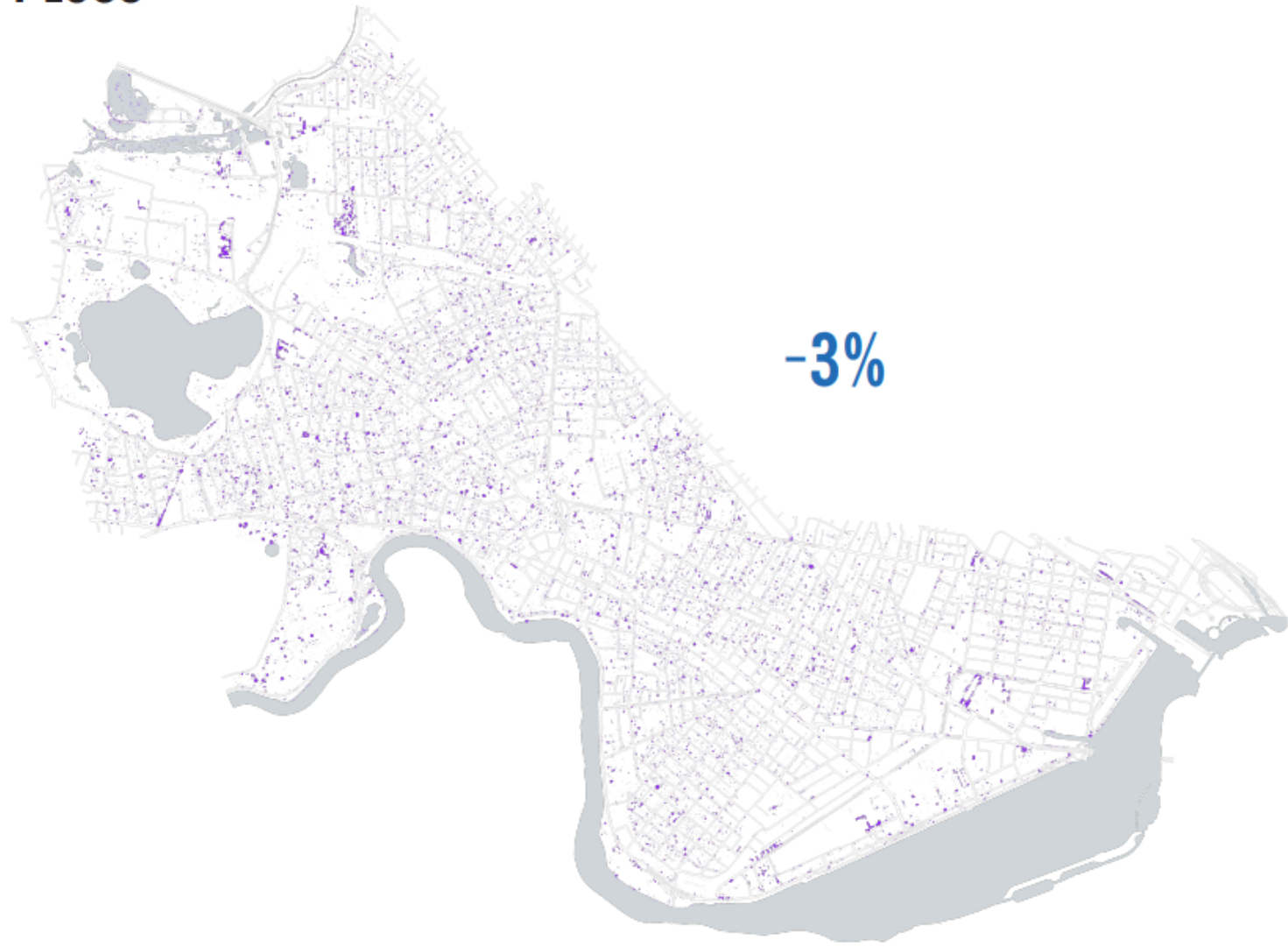
2018 TO 2024 CANOPY CHANGE
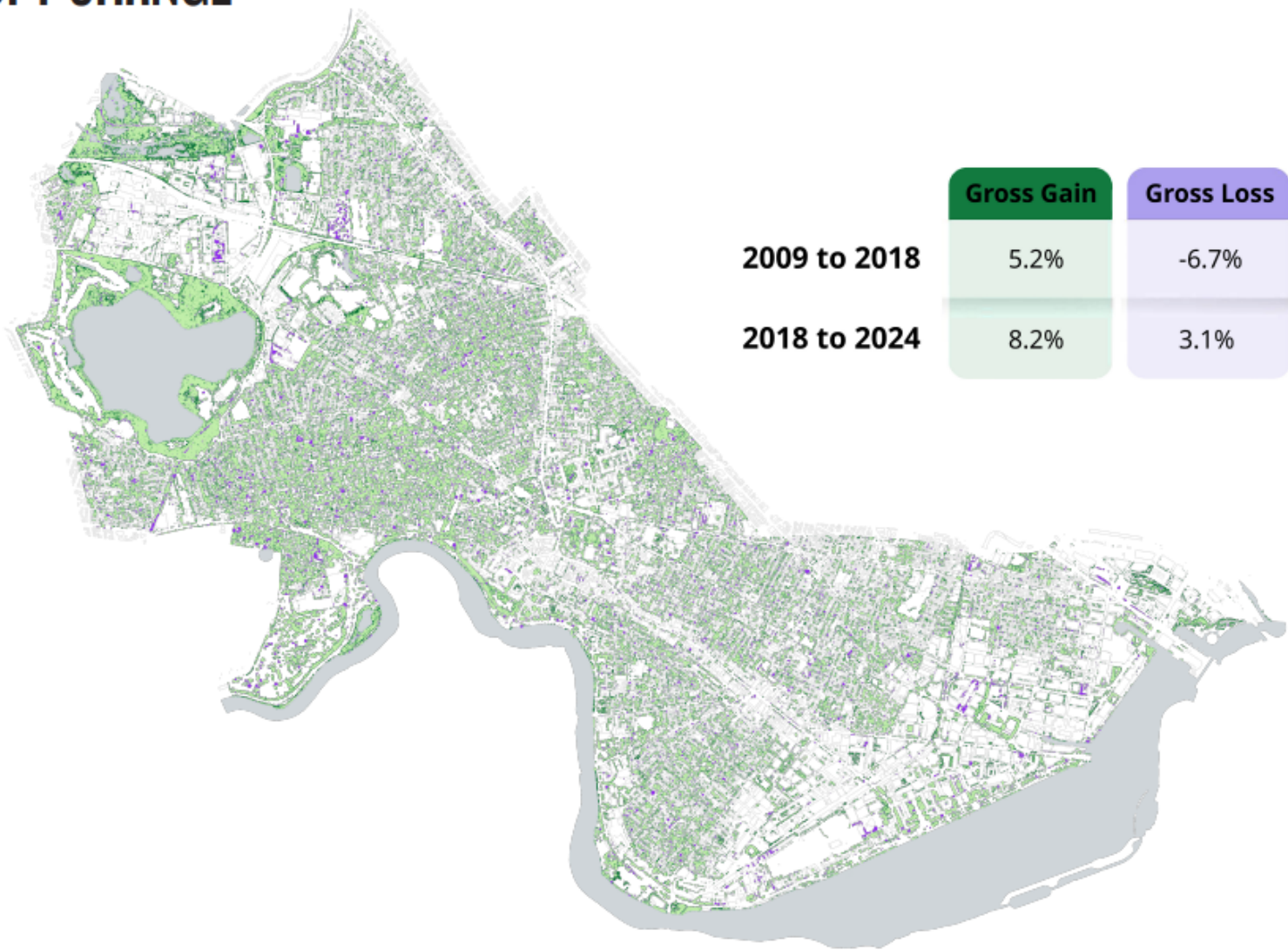
	Gross Gain	Gross Loss	Net Change
2009 to 2018	5.2%	-6.7%	-1.5%
2018 to 2024	8.2%	3.1%	5.1%

- NO CHANGE
- GAIN
- LOSS

EQUITY: 2024 CANOPY COVER BY NEIGHBORHOOD
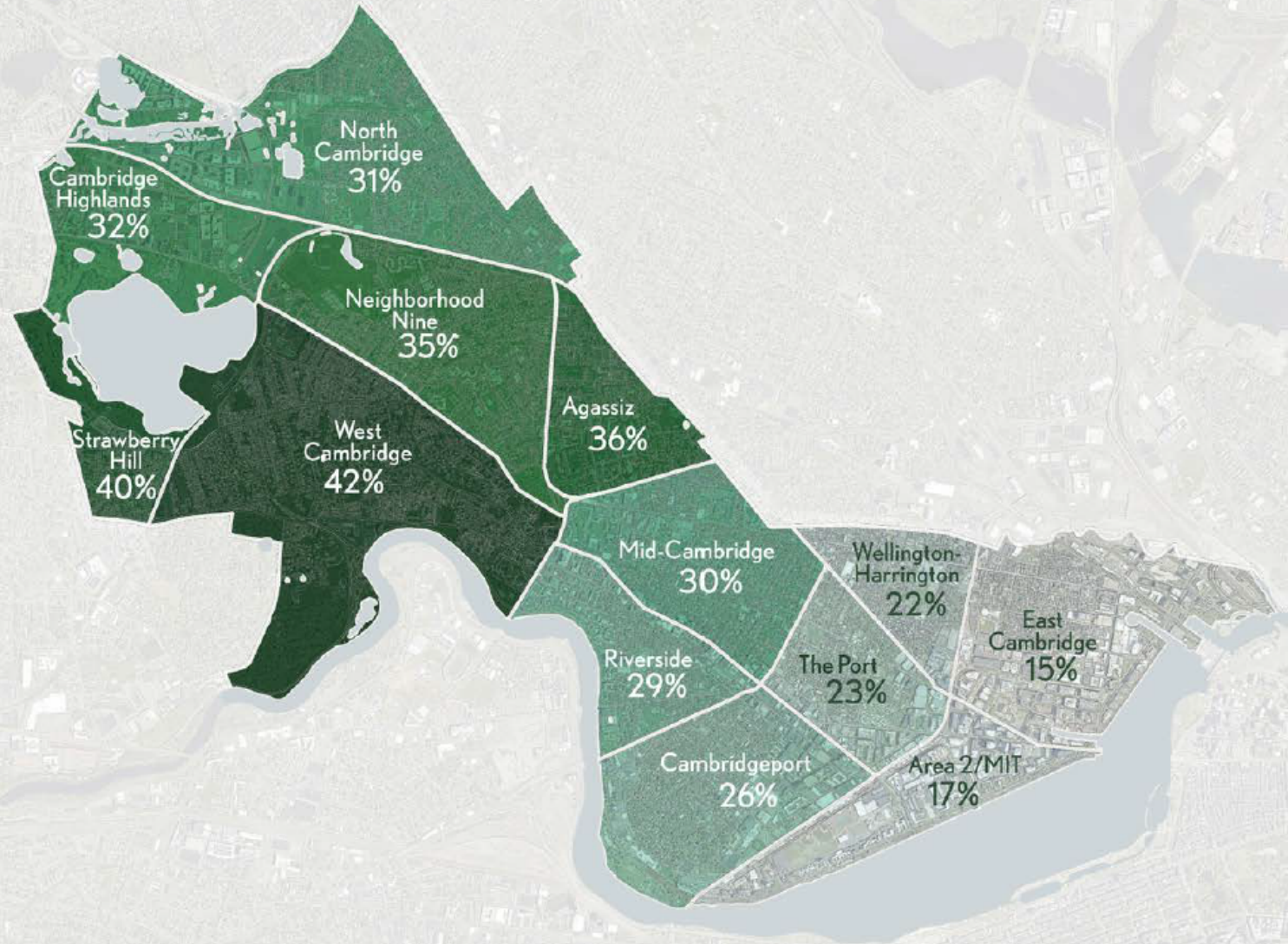
EQUITY: 2018 TO 2024 CANOPY COVER CHANGE BY NEIGHBORHOOD

North Cambridge +7%

Cambridge Highlands +5%

Neighborhood Nine +5%

+ 5% PTS
AVERAGE

Agassiz +5%

Strawberry Hill +5%

West Cambridge +5%

Mid-Cambridge +6%

Wellington-Harrington +5%

East Cambridge +3%

Riverside +5%

The Port +4%

Cambridgeport +5%

Area 2/MIT +4%
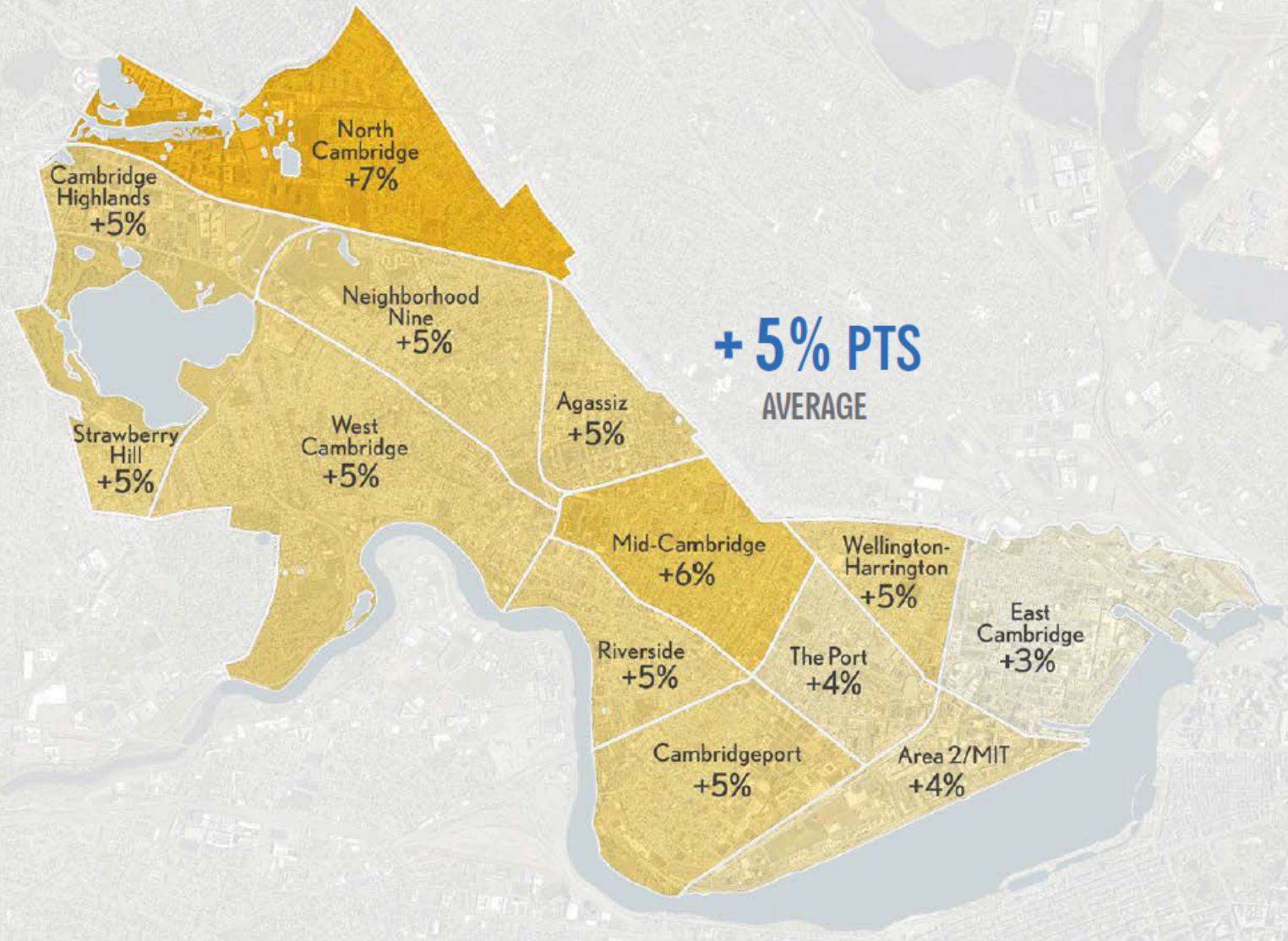
EQUITY: CANOPY COVER CHANGE BY NEIGHBORHOOD
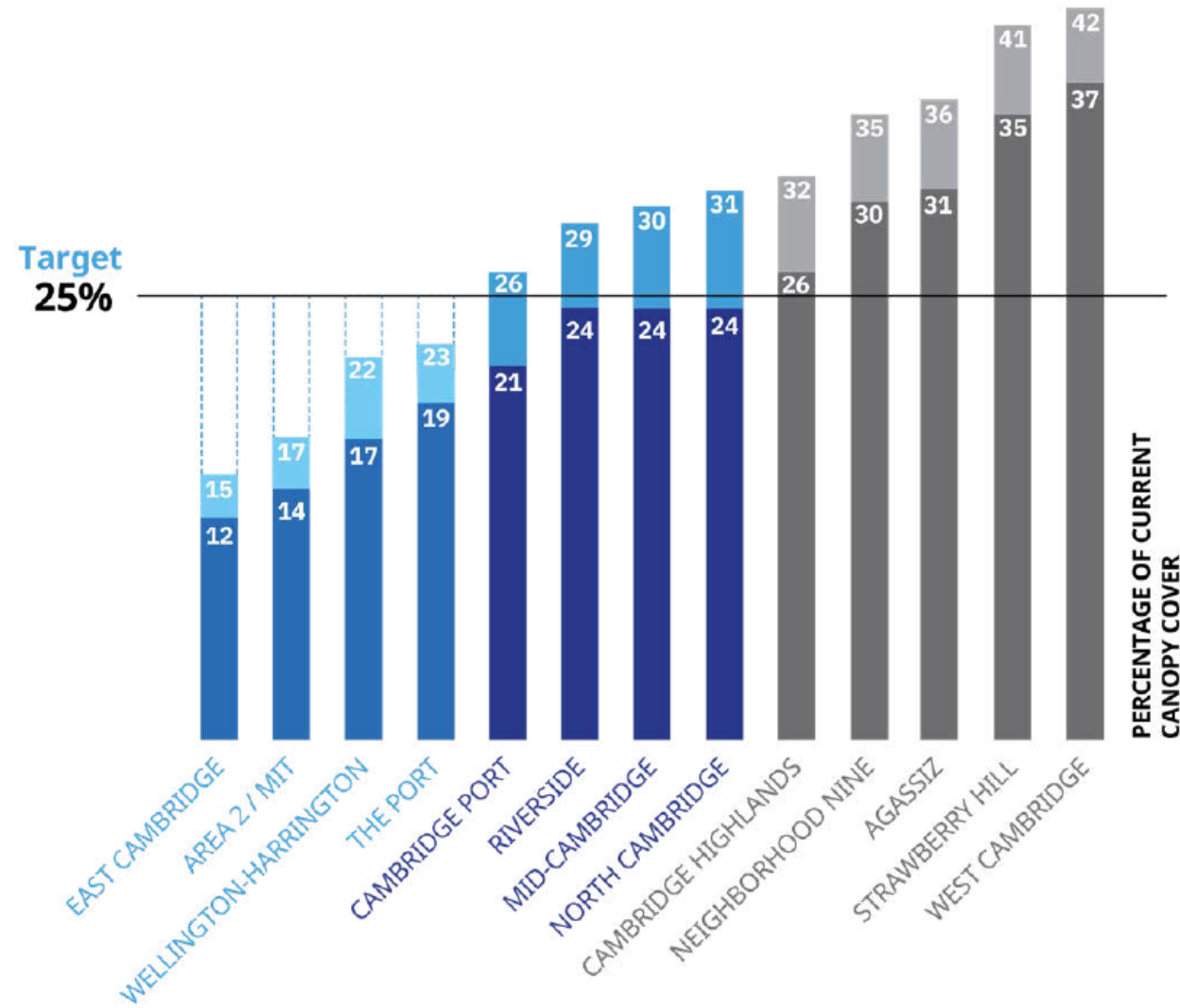
4 NEIGHBORHOODS REACHED TARGET

4 NEIGHBORHOODS MADE PROGRESS

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: STAKEHOLDER GOALS

Great progress on increasing canopy cover by stakeholder

Health and Environment Committee

Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan 5 Year Update

October 22th, 2025

Questions / Comments?