

Committee on Public Planting
November 9th, 2011

1. The minutes from last month were informal so were not approved until something more formal is produced.
2. Cynthia Smith and Bill Deignan gave an extensive presentation on the Harvard Square to Porter Square project, an unfunded, resident-initiated street improvement master plan. The various aspects of the project will be implemented as circumstances permit during the course of funded projects planned over the coming years. The general concept is:
 - a. Create improved streetscape and pedestrian safety, improve retail viability,
 - b. Reconstruct major intersections to respect current and expected traffic and pedestrian movements
 - c. Plant new trees using state of the art sustainable methods
 - d. Promote the "Harvard/Lesley/Porter" stretch of Mass Avenue, between Harvard and Porter Square, as one unified mixed use district
3. Linda Ciesielski presented a tree inventory update based on her work this past summer using GIS data and visiting the 14 neighborhoods of Cambridge. There are 12,993 street trees in the city – with park trees, the total is 17,449. The number of species planted throughout the city is 85, with an additional 15 species in the parks.

Many newly planted trees are smaller: 1 to 6 inches in diameter (roughly 43% of the total). In contrast, the largest tree in the city is a pin oak on Linnaean Street, 53 inches in diameter.

Linda did an analysis of the ratio of street trees to linear feet of street in each neighborhood; the range was from 10.3% of street length with 12.3% of trees (in East Cambridge) to 2.9% of street length with 1.5% of trees (in Cambridge Highlands).

She also discussed the proportion of street trees that are vulnerable to either Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) or Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), both insects highly destructive to trees and potentially devastating to the city's canopy. As much as 50% of the current street trees are vulnerable to one or the other pest (43% ALB, 6% EAB). A smaller proportion of new trees are host species.

4. Related to item 3 above, the city arborist will report next month on species which are less susceptible to attack by either ALB or EAB.
5. Next meeting is Wednesday 14 December 2011.