



City of Cambridge

POR 2026-111
FIRST IN COUNCIL
June 1, 2026

COUNCILLOR ZUSY
COUNCILLOR NOLAN
COUNCILLOR AL-ZUBI
COUNCILLOR FLAHERTY

- WHEREAS: The City Council recognizes the vital role of tree canopy in supporting environmental health, public well-being, climate resilience, and natural beauty; and
- WHEREAS: Many trees on private and even public property are now being cut down (or having applications filed for removal) as an unintended consequence of the Multifamily Ordinance; and
- WHEREAS: This counters the City's stated intentions in its 2020 Urban Forest Master Plan which was developed to grow our tree canopy which provides shade, cooling, carbon sequestration, biodiversity while increasing community health; and
- WHEREAS The 2004 Tree Protection Ordinance, amended in 2019 and revised and expanded in 2021 to support the Urban Forest Master Plan, was drafted to regulate the protection and removal of private trees, requiring permits to remove trees of 6" diameter and greater; and
- WHEREAS The updated plans call for increasing canopy coverage from 30% to 35%, focusing most of all on neighborhoods with fewer trees. Accomplishing this will require adding more trees on private property and mitigating existing canopy loss, particularly from new development; and
- WHEREAS: On May 19, 2026, the Department of Public Works held a meeting at Millers River Apartments to update the community on progress towards the Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan 5-Year Update; and
- WHEREAS: It is now urgent to consider potential amendments to update the Tree Protection Ordinance, including:
- enhancing enforcement of requirement for property owners to apply for special permits to cut down Exceptional Trees.
 - requiring developers to have their building plans approved before receiving tree removal permits.
 - protecting street trees including those that are endangered due to developments.
 - ensuring that any excavations for developments do not compromise abutters' trees.
 - requiring developers to pay for tree removal and replacement of abutter's trees harmed by development within a reasonable time period.

- requiring property owners to submit a Tree Protection Plan by an Arborist and subject to the approval of the Forestry Division before submitting their building permit application if the building or any utility is within 3 times the DBH of a Significant Tree; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Manager, in collaboration with the Urban Forestry Division, DPW, CDD and Inspectional Services, be and hereby is requested to develop recommendations for updates to the Tree Protection Ordinance that will provide further protection to the City's significant public and private trees for the greater good of the City for initial review at the June 22 meeting of the Health and Environment Committee on this topic.

ORDERED: That the City Manager is directed to send this policy order to the Community Development Department for consideration in their annual Multi-Family Housing report and only put forward recommendations that do not negatively impact housing development.

In City Council June 1, 2026.

Adopted by Substitution by a ye and nay vote:-

Yeas 9; Nays 0; Absent 0.-

Attest:- Paula M. Crane, Interim City Clerk

A true copy;



ATTEST:-

Paula M. Crane
Interim City Clerk