



**CITY OF CONCORD**  
*New Hampshire's Main Street™*  
***Community Development Department***

**FROM:** Tree Subcommittee of the Conservation Commission  
**DATE:** January 21, 2025  
**SUBJECT:** Resolution appropriating the sum of \$15,000 from the Urban Tree Trust Fund for tree planting on City property and within public rights-of-way under the Sustainable Tree Program; and, an annual update from the Tree Subcommittee.

**Recommendation**

Accept this report and approve the attached resolution for funding to plant trees on City property and within public rights-of-way under the Sustainable Tree Program.

**Background**

In 2015, City Council adopted the Street Tree Policy, which states: *“It shall be the policy of the City of Concord to promote planting, preserving, and the proper care and maintenance of street trees – especially shade trees, where appropriate – and plantings within the City limits, enhancing the attractiveness and environmental health of the City, thereby promoting the general and economic well-being of the City.”*

The Conservation Commission formed the Tree Subcommittee in December 2018 to assist with the implementation of the Street Tree Policy, improve the tree canopy in the city and to distribute funds from the Urban Tree Trust Fund. In addition to promoting the policy, the Subcommittee is carrying on the work started in 1999 with Groundworks Concord and the “2,000 trees for the year 2000” initiative that raised funds and planted 2,000 trees in the City. As part of this fundraising initiative, the Urban Tree Trust Fund was established for the purpose of utilizing donated funds for street tree planting in the right of way in urban areas of the City. Additional funds have been deposited into the Trust Fund since City Council approved a change to the Zoning Ordinance that allows property owners to provide in lieu payment to the Urban Tree Trust Fund for the cost of the required trees not installed, in accordance with the requirements of Article 28-9-4 (b).

Since its formation, the Tree subcommittee has focused on learning more about the condition of the urban tree canopy, raising awareness around the importance of street trees, and to recommend appropriations for the Trust Fund for planting initiatives. While Concord is blessed in many areas with natural areas and backyard tree cover, many of the more urbanized areas of the City have been losing tree canopy at a rapid rate. The threats to urban trees include conflicts with utilities, use of winter road salt, increasing summer temperatures, invasive plant competition and destructive invasive pests.

**Discussion**

Much of the work of the subcommittee focuses on outreach and education around street trees. These activities fall into a number of different projects and actions, discussed in more detail below.

*Sustainable Tree Program Promotion*

One of the initiatives of the Tree Subcommittee is to raise awareness of the City's Sustainable Tree Program (STP), which is operated through the General Services Department. Since 2013, the City has planted 438 trees throughout the city through this program. In 2021, at the recommendation of the Tree Subcommittee, City Council approved a cost sharing element to the STP utilizing funds from the Urban Tree Trust Fund. Since the cost-sharing was introduced, 59 residents have utilized the funding to plant 74 trees.

Given that the program is oriented towards those who have stated their desire to have a tree on their property, there is a much greater chance the trees will be cared for and survive; the funds will be a good investment in that regard. The cost of trees has also gone up significantly since the STP started in 2013: from \$225-250 per tree, now up to \$400-\$500 wholesale, making the cost sharing more important for those who want to participate. If approved by Council, the attached Resolution will appropriate additional funds from the Trust Fund to continue the cost sharing element of the STP.

The Subcommittee notes that the STP was so successful last year that it went from having extra capacity to plant trees, to now maintaining a waiting list for the upcoming year. This cost sharing program was rolled out in Spring 2022 and continued through 2024. This program is supported the hard work of the General Services staff and would not be possible without Ryan Rambeau, the City Arborist.

*Street Improvement Program*

For the past few years, the subcommittee has toured the areas that are part of the following year's paving program in order to identify potential properties where trees could be planted. Once the City Arborist provides comments on feasibility of those locations, subcommittee members reach out to those homeowners via phone calls or visits. This has resulted in a number of residents taking advantage of the STP. Also, the STP brochure is added to the neighborhood mailing that General Services sends out in advance of paving projects. While this activity is somewhat time intensive, it allows the subcommittee to better understand the opportunities and challenges to tree planting in different areas of the city, and is a way to reach out directly to residents. The subcommittee has identified 14 properties to reach out to prior to the Spring/Summer 2025 paving work begins.

*Farmers Market outreach.*

Subcommittee members created a display to show at the downtown summer farmer's market. This year, the theme of the display was "trees as air conditioning". The space for the subcommittee display was provided by the Merrimack County Conservation District (MCCD). In addition, MCCD "bare root stock" trees to hand out. These tiny saplings can survive quite well if planted correctly and maintained. Members staffed the display for four Saturdays in the Spring, which is the best time to plant trees.

### *Tree Champion Award*

In 2024, the tree subcommittee, in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, gave out its inaugural Tree Champion award. The purpose of the Tree Champion award is to engage the business community, raise the issue of street trees and to recognize businesses or individuals who are making a positive impact on the tree canopy in Concord. The first awardee was Jim Milliken from Modern Woodmen of America, who received his award at a Chamber function at Grappone Mazda. Mr. Milliken has been responsible for dozens of trees donation to be planted at City Parks and School properties during Arbor Day celebrations over the past 15 years. This partnership will continue in 2025, nominations applications will be available in February.

### **Other Tree Canopy Improvement Activities in the City**

- For the second year in a row, Unifl donated \$250 to support Tree Subcommittee activities and donated 10 trees through the Arbor Day Foundation, which resulted in several trees being planted in the city.
- This year marked the 27<sup>th</sup> year of Concord's recognition as a Tree City USA. This distinction was celebrated at an Arbor Day event at Garrison Park where 4 new trees were planted. Two trees were donated by the Modern Woodmen of America, as is they have done for over a decade.
- This was the second year of the School Tree Canopy Enhancement program operated by NH Division of Forest and Lands. Concord's participation in the program resulted in additional trees planted at Abbot Downing School. The trees are planted by students, and post planting care (watering) by partnership of school officials, community members and TSC members.
- While not a subcommittee activity, we congratulate two City projects that improved the City canopy: Merrimack River Greenway Trail project resulted in planting 50 trees and the Canal Street Riverfront Park project resulted in planting 86 trees.
- The subcommittee toured the State Nursery in Boscawen last Spring. This was the first step is a future potential partnership for additional trees to plant or donate to residents in the future.

### **Tree Subcommittee goals for 2025**

- The subcommittee is reaching out to housing entities in the City to identify potential community tree planting sites. The plantings would be done in partnership with those entities and other organizations and funded through grants and donations.
- Based on efforts in other cities, the subcommittee will be proposing to install "tree nutrition tags" on downtown trees. These tags will identify the type of tree and its benefits to the city. The installation would coincide with Arbor Day in 2025.
- City tree tours. Former Planning Division staffer Bob Pollock has researched many of the special trees around the city. The subcommittee hopes to bring some of that research together to create some tree tour maps on the Concord webpage. These maps could be used either as an organized tour or by individuals like a trail map.

- Invasive vines are an insidious threat to canopy trees. They tend to climb mature trees and either girdle the tree or weigh it down some much that it weakens and falls. Most of the effected trees are located on private property. The subcommittee will be creating some outreach materials and events to highlight this issue and to train landowners on what to do.

### **Conclusion**

The Tree Subcommittee had a great year in 2024 and is looking forward to continuing the serve the city in 2025. None of this work would be possible without the capable City staff. In particular, the subcommittee highlights the contributions of Ryan Rambeau, Jim Major and the General Services crew, Beth Fenstermacher, and Stefanie Breton.