



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

FROM: Tree Subcommittee of the Conservation Commission
DATE: February 18, 2026
SUBJECT: Resolution appropriating the sum of \$5,000 in the Community Development Miscellaneous Grants and Donations Project for tree planting on City property and within public rights-of-way under the Sustainable Tree Program and authorizing a transfer in the sum of \$5,000 from the from the Urban Tree Trust Fund for this purpose; 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 28-7-10 (d) of the Zoning Ordinance.

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 476 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, 86 residents have utilized the funding to plant 106 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 2025. 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. While this has resulted in a number of residents taking advantage of the STP, it has not been as successful as hoped. Subcommittee members have spent significant time reaching out to residents with good planting sites but visits and calls have yielded few positive results. The STP information will continue to be added to the neighborhood mailing that General Services sends out in advance of paving projects. The subcommittee will continue to track future paving projects but focus outreach in other ways to reach residents.

Farmers Market Outreach

Subcommittee members created a display to show at the downtown summer farmer's market. The space for the subcommittee display was provided by the Merrimack County Conservation

District (MCCD). This year, the theme of the display revolved around two items. In the early spring, the focus was on the tree “nutrition labels” that were placed on trees on Main Street. In addition, MCCD “bare root stock” trees to hand out. These tiny saplings can survive quite well if planted correctly and maintained. In the Fall, the focus of the display and outreach was on controlling invasive vines that can kill trees. In all, subcommittee members staffed the display on six Saturdays in the Spring.

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. In 2025, the initiative continued and was awarded to Havenwood-Heritage Heights. They made notable efforts to add trees to their Havenwood and Heritage Heights campuses during an event on Earth Day as well as throughout the year. CEO Mike Palmieri noted that the trees not only beautify their properties, but also make environmental contributions and are meaningful to their residents. Some residents lent their expertise in selecting sites and donated money for trees. An event was held at HHH on October 29th. This partnership with the Chamber will continue in 2025, nomination applications will be available in February.

Other Tree Canopy Improvement Activities in the City

For the second year in a row, Unitol donated \$250 to support Tree Subcommittee activities. Based on efforts in other cities, the subcommittee worked with Staff to create and installed “tree nutrition tags” on eight downtown trees. These tags identify the type of tree and its benefits to the city. The installation coincided with Arbor Day in 2025.

This year marked the 29th year of Concord’s recognition as a Tree City USA. This distinction was celebrated at an Arbor Day event at Blossom Hill Cemetery where two 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 third 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 Concord High School. The trees are planted by students, and post planting care (watering) by partnership of school officials, community members and TSC members.

Tree Subcommittee Goals for 2026

- 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. This will a significant focus in 2026.
- Building on previous experience, the TSC will solicit 10 trees from Unitol. However, this year, the TSC will use other outreach efforts to identify 10 locations for plantings. Given

that these trees are smaller than those in the sustainable tree program, TSC members will work directly with recipients to plant those trees in the most survivable locations.

- Farmer's Market to focus on outreach on vines. This will also be key opportunity to promote the sustainable tree program.
- Tree Champion – continue to build on the partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and select meritorious nominees for this award.

Conclusion

The Tree Subcommittee had a great year in 2025 and is looking forward to continuing to serve the city in 2026. None of this work would be possible without the capable City staff. In particular, the subcommittee highlights the contributions of Beth Fenstermacher, Ryan Rambeau, Kevin Demers and the General Services crew, Stephanie McKim and Stefanie Breton.