Dear Urban Tree Task Force,

I would like to share some points I've been thinking about.

Urban Forestry Task Force – measurable results?

To obtain the greatest value from this effort, it might be useful to start at the very beginning with the metric of "How will we know the task force has been successful?" What actions and policies will result in measurable improvement in resilient canopy coverage over the next ten to thirty years? This could be assessed regularly as the effort moves forward.

Canopy over major streets

There would be a huge benefit to the whole city if our major avenues were heavily canopied. Perhaps these major thoroughfares could be prioritized above other streets. There would be a major reduction in the urban heat island effect.

Value of Mature Trees

A mature tree thriving in its environment is worth many hypothetical young trees that may not survive on the site. Can organizations change their approach and design and construct without disturbing some of the existing mature trees? The citizens of Cambridge own these trees – they seem to be cut down too easily in order to accommodate new buildings. The real measure is ten or thirty years down the road, long after the designer has moved on.

ADA / Narrow Sidewalks

ADA regulations are such that trees growing in narrow sidewalks will not be replaced when they fail. It would be great to put something in motion soon. If a street is sufficiently small and quiet, see whether it can be considered for one of the following:

1. A Shared Street – pedestrians may safely use the whole street, vehicles proceed with caution, and the sidewalk becomes a planting strip.
2. Wide sidewalk with trees on one side, parking on the other.
3. Back of sidewalk planting.

4. Borrow one foot of width from the street if possible, maybe another foot from the abutter, to increase sidewalk width.

Number of Trees / Trees in New Public Spaces

Major effort should be directed toward finding *every conceivable* new street tree location and planting it immediately. Any public park could be assessed to see whether it could accommodate more trees. New public parks could have at least a 50% canopy coverage goal.

Equity

We should be certain that more trees are planted proportionally in lower income neighborhoods. These enhance comfort, beauty, and property value for the residents and those passing through.

What are the best practices for planting in heavily paved areas?

What are other successful large cities doing? What practices are being implemented in successful urban sites? What is the soil quality and well size – can this be tracked over time? Can improvements be made as new findings come to light?

How Can Trees and Canopy Acquire more Importance, Power, and Priority in our City?

Protect older trees and plant newer trees on public, institutional, and private land – can there be regulations or incentives? This has been implemented in other towns.

New buildings / follow up on recommendations / best practices

Can requirements be made of new buildings regarding number of tree wells per linear foot of frontage? Can some of the square footage be devoted to public green space? When a recommendation has been made to an architect / builder/ institution, how can we be sure it has been implemented? If it is necessary to replace canopy nearby, can we track when, where, and how much has been planted – accountability.

Future

When the Task Force has reached its end, who will be in charge of making sure trees succeed? Should the Committee for Public Planting have the power to require rather than its current power only to recommend?

Size of Trees

Can we stress the planting of shade trees whenever possible rather than ornamentals? Can large shade trees be planted even under wires? There are many successful instances in the city where large tree canopies co-exist compatibly with overhead wires.

Trees on the banks of the Charles

If the DCR is struggling financially, can Cambridge lend some help for trees shading Memorial Drive and trees in the parks along the river?

Shade for cyclists at intersections

Temperatures on the pavement can be much higher than surrounding areas. This detracts from the cycle commuter's experience in the summer. Can there be shade near each traffic light? (Maybe some of the shade might even be a shade sail, unrigged in winter.)

Thank you!

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