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Cc: Maggie Booz; Chantal Eide ; Cynthia Smith ; Paula Cortes ; Nancy E. Phillips ; Michael Hanlon ; Sophia Emperador ; Seanna Berry ; Joan Krizack; Nancy Jordalen ; Ann MacAdam

Subject: Committee on Public Planting Comments on UFMP Technical Report

Committee on Public Planting

January 9, 2020

Dear City Staff, Reed Hilderbrand Consultant Team, City Manager, and City Council Members:

As a result of the work presented in the Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan Technical Report released in November 2019, we are poised to make a big difference in tree canopy coverage in the City of Cambridge. We appreciate the thoughtful and comprehensive scope of the report, the expertise of the consultants and task force, and the City's commitment.

Our urban forest and its trees must be valued for what they are: as important as our gas, electric, water, and communications lines, our streets, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes. Our trees are living infrastructure that are essential to Cambridge's livability and resilience in the face of accelerating climate change. As the Technical Report states, trees mitigate flooding, reduce energy consumption, cool urban heat islands, improve public mental and physical health, boost property values, and increase tax revenue. The trees clean the air and help to stabilize the climate by sequestering carbon above and below ground.

Page 29 of the Technical Report states: "...there is no single department or individual who speaks for the urban forest". The Committee on Public Planting recommends that the UFMP include in its Master Plan a city position to implement an *Accelerated Action Plan* (described below). This person would integrate horticulture, ecology, and design; would be responsible for the urban forest; and would ensure compliance. He or she would coordinate with DPW, CDD, Public Health, TPT, Water Department, and the

School Department. Staffing would be hired and/or assigned in those departments to implement initiatives suggested in the report.

In addition, the Committee strongly recommends an *Accelerated Action Plan* that includes all of the Policy, Design, Practice, and Outreach Strategies detailed in the Technical Report.

We would like to emphasize:

- Establishing zoning regulations requiring shade trees with adequate space and suitable soil for them to grow.
- Ensuring that all neighborhoods and housing types are equitably planted with trees.
- Conducting compliance inspections for tree planting before obtaining certificates of occupancy.
- Implementing cool-corridor tree planting at closest appropriate intervals on all major corridors.
- Redesigning streets within the City's ongoing Five-Year Street and Sidewalk reconstruction program with tree, bike, and pedestrian infrastructure given priority.
- Increasing canopy planting, using diverse species, in parks, schools, the riverfront, and cemeteries.
- Acquiring land for parks by the city in areas identified as heat island—a critical goal.
- Achieving a canopy goal of 40% (National Academy of Sciences states that 40% is the minimum adequate to achieve cooling).
- Enhancing protection for existing trees on public and private property. For developers, increasing calculations of payments to the tree fund, that reflect the true value of our urban forest.
- Working with large property owners (Harvard, MIT, DCR, DOT) to increase the tree canopy on their land.

We believe that the climate crisis demands accelerated and decisive action to expand and enhance our urban forest; therefore, we recommend launching these initiatives immediately.

Trees are not decorative landscape elements; they are our environmental

infrastructure. They are critical to urban survival and quality of life. Our trees are meaningful and beloved by citizens. They provide a habitat for birds and pollinators, and a connection to the natural world for urban dwellers. Cambridge residents recognize the value of trees and have voted for planting more trees as a top priority in Participatory Budgeting again this year.

We look forward to continuing to support and work with the city on our shared goals, and to a “brighter, more shaded future”.

Respectfully,

The Cambridge Committee on Public Planting

Florrie Wescoat and Maggie Booz (Co-chairs), Chantal Eide, Nancy Phillips, Seanna Berry, Michael Hanlon, Paula Cortes, Joan Krizack, Sophia Emperardor, Nancy Jordalen, Cynthia Smith, Ann MacAdam