

Community Comments Received by the Tree Preservation Planning Committee

Last Updated 7/3/25

#	Questions and Comments Received
1	I was looking at the member list. There needs to be an arborist on the board. Thoughts? I also think it may be helpful to have a landscaper on the board. I would like to suggest inviting Hartney Greymont to join the board.
2	I live on Stevens Road and grew up on Coulton Park. The tree-lined streets of my youth, with shaded sidewalks, are more and more a thing of the past. I walk the "ladder streets" and it's depressing how few areas of sidewalk are shaded. The problem is not only aesthetic; summer weather is hotter than ever and pushing a carriage or walking a dog is uncomfortable. (1) The rule about planting trees on only the non-wired side is ruining the look and comfort level in town. Why are we letting the Eversource/Cable companies make our decisions for us? (2) I understand the need for good visibility but the other rule about distance from driveways and curb cuts is problematic – especially when combined with the rule about tree height on the wire sides. As it was explained to me by the dedicated-but-overwhelmed Needham tree guys, there are very few places where shade trees can be planted. Again, the regulations are making tree-lined streets impossible to retain or achieve.
3	I'm worried about the Pollard expansion and the possibility of taking down all the trees that line the parking lot and bring nature into the school. We need areas of town that aren't concrete and we need more trees for so many reasons. This may not be still on the table, but I think it's a bad idea.
4	PLANT TREES SO WE ALL CAN BREATHE! Perhaps some of the Community Preservation Funds could include \$7/year per household for tree planting - in addition to persons having the obligation to replace any trees cut down during development.
5	A law should be passed requiring residents to obtain a permit from the town before cutting down a tree of a certain thickness on their property, with a severe penalty for failure to do so. It is ironic that you need a permit to build any kind of structure or remodel your house, yet not to remove mature trees. Your town taxes should be reduced if you plant a tree that provides shade for your house, especially during the summer months, as this contributes to lower air conditioning usage. Developers who tear down old homes and construct new ones should not be allowed to cut down trees merely to increase the house's footprint.
6	Does the town do any tree plantings in neighborhoods. Would love to have one or 2 planted in berm
7	I am writing about the hollow or bog area behind Nehoiden Street between Great Plain Avenue and May Street. It is now the responsibility of the Conservation Committee of the town. Unfortunately, there has been no clearing in this forested area for some 40 years and many tree stumps are decaying in the area and other trees are beginning to suffocate and are now dead but standing

	without room to fall naturally. However, occasionally huge limbs fall off and are a danger especially to kids playing in the area. In addition, some of the dead trees are dangerously close to houses lining the edge of the hollow. I would also add that the area could be actually made to be not only presentable but picturesque if properly taken care of. It is my understanding that the hollow was indeed quite beautiful at an earlier time. But for now, it just needs clearing and cutting for safety reasons. I thank you for any attention and, hopefully, some action in this matter to prevent a possible future tragedy.
8	The most important thing I'd like to see discussed is how the incentives of residential builders in Needham are not aligned with preserving trees. For example, the case of 239 Manning Street: https://needhamobserver.com/manning-street-shade-tree-to-come-down/ I'd like to see some changes so that the incentives of builders like Petrini are aligned with preserving mature shade trees in Needham. For example, a hefty fine -- perhaps \$250,000 or 15% of the sale price of the home -- might help builders like Petrini take the matter seriously. I'm sure you have other ideas, but right now, Needham builders are running roughshod over trees, water drainage, and many other community problems -- and they have no incentive to slow down.
9	Our downtown business center (especially Great Plain Ave, at and around its intersection with Chestnut, Chapel, and Highland, — as well as extending along Great Plain Ave) needs trees and plenty of them. We are blessed to have a wide open space, not hemmed in by a highway or industry — why not beautify the downtown? I am well aware of the ongoing study to reinvent the streetscape in the center— a worthy effort to bring benefits to “pedestrians over cars”, as well as safety and beautification. I am also aware of the outcry by merchants and others who wish to retain the parking spots. I have no problem with their arguments. What I question is the need to run hundreds of feet of new asphalt biking lanes as part of any plan. I see few bicyclists riding there, no evidence of growing or future demand, and would much prefer to see wider sidewalks and many more trees— using the areas currently set aside in the plans as new biking lanes. If the idea of a set-aside for the construction of new biking lanes is dropped, the downtown should be able to retain its parking, renovate the current brick sidewalks, and plant new trees all along Great Plain....
10	We live at x Cranberry Lane and moved here in 2004. Over the years, we have watched our beautiful neighborhood change dramatically. When the first houses were taken down to make way for larger homes to be built, we felt that care was taken to preserve as many of the old trees as possible. Over the past 5-6 years; however, it seems that a new theme of clear-cutting lots of all or almost all of the old trees has become the norm. As a result of the larger basement spaces along with the lack of tree roots to manage drainage, we had water in our basement for the

	first time ever and had to spend \$10k for a French drain and sump pump to ensure that it doesn't happen again. We are hopeful that the Tree Preservation Planning Committee can work toward some regulation that will mitigate drainage concerns while also preserving important habitats for animals and most importantly, pollinators.
11	I have the customary enthusiasm for preserving trees, but permit me to gush about a related town effort. My street, Mellen, was the site last summer of the planting of a dozen or so of decorative trees, largely plum and cherry. It is wonderful to behold. Thanks, Needham, for your good taste and competent work (All have survived the winter.) I hope in thirty years they are old trees, worthy of protection.
12	Don't think of anything to be done as a 5 year plan, it takes 10, 15, 35 years to get a beautiful tree, Think of Needham's Famous Blue Tree at Christmas time. That took time, not 5 years, or 10. I live on South Street near the Dover side of town, in the Charles River Village. Yes there is such a place. I cringe when I hear a Tree Chipper chewing up our trees, 40 years to grow, 2 minutes it's mulch. Our trees are wonderful sources of fresh air, beauty, shade, as well homes for wildlife. I cannot understand the reasoning used by builders who purchase a beautiful piece of property and cut and remove every single living thing on that property, everything including the dirt. Trees that could cost hundreds if not thousands to replace, why. Needham should require builders to leave anything growing with 10-15 feet of the property line untouched. NO - Clean sweep. I've seen absolutely beautiful trees all cut and chipped within 1 - day all gone. WHY Tree lined streets are a beautiful thing. I bet it took a while before you found the street shown in the picture for this meeting. The shade offers a reduced exposure to the blistering sun during the summer. The calming effect of the wind blowing down along on such a street, is kinda nice. The folks within the Town's administration looking for ideas need go no further than Wellesley. Just go and look. Don't form a committee with permission just go for a walk. Living close to Wellesley I/we have always seen Wellesley as a Town that "does it right", they take a great deal of pride and effort to enhance the Visual/Mental good feelings for their towns people. Try it. We pay very good money as does Wellesley into the town in Taxes.
13	I have lived in Needham since July, 1950. And I welcome the opportunity to help ensure Needham experiences safe and healthy growth. The Town's newly created Tree Preservation Planning Committee offers us all a chance to make progress toward those goals. This is all well and good and I support it based on present constraints; but I have several concerns as we all work to reduce our carbon footprint, be much more energy efficient, and strive to be low-emission focused. First, let me state that old-growth forests, with their larger, older trees, are crucial for carbon storage and play a significant role in mitigating climate change by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere; and they have a higher carbon density. While young forests grow rapidly, their carbon sequestration rates are lower than those of mature and old-growth forests; in fact, for the first ten

years of their life, new tree plantings may release more carbon than they absorb. Also, deforestation, including logging old-growth forests, releases large amounts of stored carbon back into the atmosphere, hindering climate change mitigation efforts. However, this committee is not charged, I think, with preserving trees located in forests; there's the Town Forest but that is public land that local government is already free to manage.

For certain, preserving trees in suburban areas offers benefits. These include improved air quality, reduced energy costs, enhanced mental and physical health, and support for wildlife. Trees also reduce storm water runoff, provide shade, and enhance property values. And yet, I still have concerns.

CLEAN ENERGY

* Increase in solar system installations:

Having solar as I have doesn't make me a grid-free, green guy. In winter my solar does not generate enough electricity to offset the electric usage of my air-source heat pump system. Peak electric usage is wintertime while peak solar electric generation is summertime. And this problem we can't control. The power grid electric generation sources need to be green as well. This means increasing the grid's use of renewables but, unfortunately, the largest electric power generation fuels continue to be oil and gas.

* Increasing or maintaining tree canopy coverage:

This goal contradicts the Town's goal of increasing solar system installations. Trees cast shade on solar panels and decrease the kWh of electricity generated. I have a Bradford Pear tree, a Massachusetts invasive species, in my front yard which shades my solar panels during the afternoon and has grown at an alarming rate. This is a problem. It is unlikely that my residence will ever be a net zero building unless the Bradford Pear tree is removed. I think an Eastern Red Bud tree would have been a better choice.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND TREE CANOPY

* Hardening residential properties:

"Hardening" refers to the process of making a home more resistant to fire by using fire-resistant building materials, creating defensible space, and implementing preventative measures. Here, embers are the real hazard. I have family in Colorado and Oklahoma where wildfires have threatened property and lives; we know what happened in Los Angeles County. It can happen anywhere. "Defensible Space" is a clear zone created around a house within which all flammable vegetation and debris, including leaves, pine needles, and mulch has been removed. And part of this is removing ladder fuels (vegetation under trees) to prevent fires from reaching the crown of trees. It also involves spacing trees to allow for fire breaks and prevent fires from spreading. An additional thought here is every time there is a "1 in 1,000 year" storm, the TV news reports stories of trees falling on cars, houses, and utility infrastructure. Perhaps large, tall trees shouldn't be planted near occupied buildings.

LOCAL TREE ORDINANCES VS PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

* Introduction:

Local tree ordinances affect property rights by regulating trees on private land, particularly regarding removal, protection, and planting. These ordinances often prioritize public safety, environmental benefits, and urban forestry goals. However, they can be perceived as infringing on property owners' rights to manage their land as they see fit. If this committee is focusing on "tree protection ordinance" proposals, which is unclear to me, than those rules would cover only the areas of protecting specific tree species, trees of a certain size, or trees with historical significance, often requiring permits for removal, pruning, or encroachment. But will the rules regulate both commercial and residential properties, often during development/construction? Will the rules regulate trees within public rights-of-way, streets and sidewalks? How will tree ordinances balance private property rights with the public interest in protecting trees and their benefits?

* Constitutional issue:

Local tree ordinances—especially those requiring replacement, maintenance, or tree removal at the property owner's sole expense—can be challenged under the Fifth Amendment's Taking Clause. This clause, which applies to state and local governments through the Fourteenth Amendment, prohibits the government from taking private property for public use without just compensation. In essence, it means the government can't force a property owner to give up their property (including trees) or pay for it without ensuring the property owner is fairly compensated for the loss. Now, it is beyond the scope of these public comments and my own personal training in legal affairs to go into a more detailed explanation. Suffice to say that the Courts have heard many cases regarding tree ordinance constitutionality, all the way up to the United States Supreme Court. I will simply say that all tree ordinances must be carefully crafted to avoid violating the Fifth Amendment. Town Counsel should be consulted as the committee works through its proposals. Requirements imposed on property owners must be reasonable related to the legitimate public purpose of the ordinance. Requirements must be roughly proportionate to the impact of the property owner's actions. An ordinance must consider the unique circumstance of each property. And the ordinance cannot eliminate all economically beneficial uses of the property. Lastly, if an ordinance mandates a property owner solely pay an expense related to a tree on his or her property which has been deemed to be preserved for public purposes, will the Town compensate the property owner in some manner or will the Town's Forestry division maintain the tree? I do not think a single property owner should be asked to solely financially support a so-called "public" tree's continued existence; this should be a public expense, paid for by local government.

When I first heard about the convening of a new Tree Preservation Planning Committee my impression was that I didn't want Town government to tell me what I can or cannot do with the trees on my private land, nor do I think taking private land (including trees) by eminent domain is something the Town should do. It subjects the Town to possible legal challenges. And Needham already has an over-abundance of park land and conservation space, such as the Town Forest, where the tree canopy is capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

I think proposing Tree Preservation Ordinances is the Town government saying, "We do not trust our citizens to do the right thing on

	their private property in regards to climate action and atmospheric carbon dioxide mitigation.” It would be better if the Town offered private property owners incentives or rebates instead of imposing new mandates and regulations.
14	Thank you for sharing this email so that we can opine about trees. This will not be much in the minds of the committee -- I share love of trees in general and love of the town forest with many people. My comment is just about Marked Tree Road. We have been told that Marked Tree Road is slated for various improvements for flow and safety and (I desperately hope) water management, as we continually get flooded by the giant houses uphill. Tree help somewhat in slowing down all the water, help with percolation, help with their transpiration. None of that should be new to you. One of the Marked Tree proposals is to put sidewalks on both sides of the street. This would require the removal of 17 or 19 or so very large trees. Please ask them not to do this. Those trees provide shade (in addition to all the help they give with those terrible water runoff problems). The people who presided at the community meeting kept saying they would replace all the trees removed for the road improvements... but a sapling is just NOT the same as a 100 plus year old tree.
15	The various green areas around town provide much needed avenues for rest, reflection and, of course, fun. Trees, especially mature trees, are a vital part of this experience, so I would ask that preserving trees becomes a top priority as opposed to leveling green areas and starting anew, which, imho, should only be considered as a last resort. Additionally, Needham is blessed with the presence of precious little songbirds who live in symbiosis with our trees and gardens. They provide a delightful experience for bird watchers and others, including this 77 year old who has, over the past five decades, enjoyed so much time with these sweet, innocent, joyful fellow residents. Over decades, these little birds have come to depend, at least in part, upon bird feeders for sustenance, especially during winter months. During the last few years, I have been working with both the Park and Rec Department and the Health Department, and I have secured authorization for a single feeder for small birds only. I am mindful and respectful of all issues around health, and I believe a balance has been achieved with regard to helping our little friends and maintaining a safe environment. I can only afford to maintain and stock this one feeder, however, and I would now ask this committee to consider the possibility of allowing one or two more feeders around town which could hopefully be maintained by other volunteers.
16	I cannot attend this hearing on Wednesday evening, but I have previously communicated with the Town about tree pruning on the corner of Broadmeadow and Great Plain Ave. As the Committee discusses keeping as many trees as is reasonably possible in Needham, I would suggest that they also determine

	where in Town the Forestry Department needs to work with other landowners (e.g. the MBTA) to maintain / prune trees not only for safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers, but for the health of the trees. (The trees at the corner of Broadmeadow and Great Plain will likely need pruning again in another 2-3 years.)
17	I have been closely involved in environmental matters for 15 years mostly dealing with preservation of the coastal banks and vegetation on the Cape in the Town of Mashpee. I continue to do this work as the President of the oceanfront development in New Seabury. Based on my experience and also personal approach I believe that preservation of the nature, which of course includes vegetation and especially trees is very important not only for the environment, but also for current and future generations. We all need to learn to coexist harmoniously with what surround us in nature and what can not be easily restored once it is gone and destroyed. I also used to develop properties residential and commercial, so it is hard for me to see how some developers abused lack of tree policies in our Town. As I mentioned previously in my communications with the members of Needham Select Board it is necessary and advisable to include in tree policies in Needham not only commercial properties, but residential as well. There are certain provisions in MGL which allow towns to do so. One can look at surrounding towns like Newton for example and see what they require developers to do to preserve trees as much as possible. May be Needham tree policies do not need to go that far, but I strongly believe that developers in Needham prior to any development of the land need to present to the Town for review and approval detailed plan how they can minimize effect of their development to nature and how they plan to preserve valuable trees as much as possible. After all these trees produce oxygen and which we all breath. I think committee needs to look at preservation of the trees based on their diameter, age ,value, appearance. Rare species definitely require more attention. I think it shall be a crime to cut down 200-250 year valuable, rare tree for no reason without justification only because a developer decides to do so. These type of trees can not be re[placed during the lifetime of any developer. Developer is gone after construction, but if old, valuable, beautiful tree is preserved it stays in the community. And some developers are simply have wrong vision of the projects and the project's impact on the community and neighbors. Old, rare trees can not be destroyed only because a developer wants a bigger lawn, a pool, a gazebo, etc.,. There is always a solution how to develop and at the same time minimize impact on the environment. Elimination of big, old, rare and healthy trees needs to be justified. The enforcement mechanism needs to be discussed and established as well. And participation of a developer in the Tree Committee shall be considered as conflict of interests and shall not be allowed.

18	I would like to let you know that during my tables breakout session there were several of us in the group that do not want any significant changes made to the existing zoning at this time, without presenting hard data, and concrete examples detailing the specific issues. We also recommend that the three groups tree committee, water mitigation committee, and large house review committee merge and form one group to review large houses as a whole, going forward. Data and facts should be provided, as to what exactly the issues are that this group is trying to resolve. Specific examples of the complaints will help define the committees mission.
19	I am sending my comments, concerns and information by mail. I will not attend the listening session in person or virtually because I expect that many people will be upset and exasperated. The following stands as my feedback. It is unfortunate that the Town has dragged its feet on this issue for so many years. Even the name chosen for the committee is telling. The time for "tree preservation planning" and "beginning work" is long overdue. "Discouraging" the removal of private trees will fail to address the issue. The time for talking is over. Inaction has resulted in a steady rate of deforestation. Reforestation is not the solution. Halting the cutting down of mature trees is. The Committee's highest priority should be to focus on protection, preservation and conservation of trees and to do so as a matter of urgency. Hundreds upon hundreds of mature trees have been cut down. It is a tragedy that could have easily been prevented and a legacy for future generations lost forever. Recently, neighbors told us that they were planning to move. When I asked where they planned to go, their reply stunned me, "to a town where they're not cutting down their trees." Town Arborist and Tree Warden Mr. Olsen should be commended for his efforts to save mature trees and educate the public. But development has served to override education. Greed drives profits over people's right to environmental protections and this has led some to recognize that tree protection and conservation is closely linked to mitigating the damages wrought by extreme weather events. Yet, Town leaders take no action. This statement by Moder of the Charles River Watershed Association should serve as an alarming wake-up call: "Needham's canopy is 50%, down 5.4% in the last 15 years." However:, his following statement, "Our goal is to slow down tree loss and increase tree growth" is misguided. To make any real difference, bylaws should be passed to halt, not slow, the steady rate of tree loss. This Committee should look to the Town of Cambridge as a working how-to model for preserving and protecting trees. Developers should be prohibited from removing trees - period. Rather than rely on outdated, easy and unsustainable practices such as clear-cutting, constraints will give them an incentive to innovate. Their practices concerning trees in general are based on short-term gain

at the expense of long-term ecology. What's more, at a time when the state is experiencing an affordable housing crisis, development in the Town of Needham focuses on building the largest houses possible. The resulting multi-million dollar homes, affordable for only a select few, have contributed to the housing crisis.

I regret that I must withhold my name, but the current political climate of anger and constraints on freedom of speech makes it necessary.

1. Protecting and preserving mature trees is as important as planting new ones for restoration. That's because mature trees are part of an established ecosystem that holds massive amounts of carbon and houses irreplaceable biodiversity and wildlife species. Mature trees can withstand storms, natural disasters, and pests. Sadly, we are losing countless mature trees to deforestation.

Is tree planting really the best way of fighting climate change?

Would you trust a young child to deliver critical results that future generations depend on - even if the child has tons of potential? Probably not. Because she wouldn't even know where to begin.

A young tree is exactly like that child. It has the potential to help stop climate change once it grows up, but that takes decades. And in the meantime, there's a lot working against it.

- It's small, which means it doesn't hold much carbon, even combined with thousands of other small trees.
- It's weak, which means it's at higher risk of dying from storms, pests, or other stresses. If that happens, its future climate benefits are suddenly gone.
- It's young, so it can't support biodiversity or wildlife habitats.
- It's new, so it won't have much cultural importance for communities. Nor will it provide them any useful resources.
- And it needs nurturing. You can't just 'plant it and leave it'. How many trees survive is more important than how many trees are planted.

Now, how often do you see reforestation projects talk about their impacts like that? Most often, you'll see impressive statistics about the number of trees planted. Or you'll see attention grabbing headlines like 'One dollar, one tree' or 'For every T-shirt, we plant a tree'.

It's great that these organizations are making it easy to plant a tree. But planting new trees doesn't make up for the trees we're losing. That's because the ones we're losing are decades and centuries old. They're tall and fully grown. They hold massive amounts of carbon right now - not twenty years in the future. Which, in turn, also makes the trees stronger and more resilient. If we lose them, we lose all of that today.

That's why we must work to protect existing trees and ecosystems.

It takes 10 years for trees to really store any carbon. A new tree will take at least ten years, and probably more, to really start making a difference to the climate. Which is understandable - young trees are pretty small.

An old tree holds a massive amount of carbon in its trunk, branches, leaves, and roots. It's built that store up over decades, by absorbing a little more carbon and growing a little more every year. Then there are the soils: in some forests, there's more carbon in the soils than in the trees!

Trees need decades, sometimes even centuries, before they reach maturity. And they store half of all the carbon. If we lose them, they take hundreds of years to come back, if they ever do.

2. Which means that it's even more important to protect what we have. As they say, prevention is better than the cure.

Tree planting is a great thing to do, but it will not make much of a difference in the next two or three decades because little trees just don't store much carbon. Letting existing natural trees grow is essential. And since climate change is expected to worsen droughts, replanted trees will be even worse off.

Trees and forests restored through natural regeneration still take years to regenerate. And saplings store much less carbon along the way than existing trees do today and when they reach maturity, they still hold less carbon. Some estimates have suggested that even after 85 years, replanted trees stored only around 83% of the carbon as an undisturbed trees, and their roots stored only about 50-75%. Even though that's fairly close, reaching 100% could take a lot longer.

What's more, although that particular study found that soil carbon recovered quite quickly, others have found that it can take at least 50 years before it gets close to original levels.

In other words, protection is still our best option.

Can planting trees support biodiversity and wildlife?

Many birds and animals are adapted to their original ecosystems and need very specific features (often called 'critical habitat'). They might live in those unique trees. Or they might eat fruits or leaves that are only found in some of the special species in old-growth trees or live in physical structures that only appear after many decades, like large fallen trees. Often, they need large areas of untouched trees - which by definition doesn't really exist when humans are walking around, planting trees. And that means that secondary tree planting can't support the same birds and other wildlife, as the old trees did.

Benefits for people

Trees also provide a lot of other benefits. Some of these are probably more relevant to an urban forest, but they're still worth mentioning. They can improve air quality, create shade, decrease soil erosion and even improve water quality. The only problem is... they need to be big to do any of this.

Think about a shade tree that you might want to sit under. It's probably large, and leafy, and has a nice thick trunk that you can lean back on. Now how much of that are you going to get from a tiny little sapling? Probably not much.

Resilience and resistance

Trees and forests suffer all sorts of stresses in their lifetimes (which can be multiple centuries long). There are natural disasters like fires, droughts, or floods, plus other disturbances like pests, diseases, or animals eating branches or leaves.

3. Resilience is the ability to recover from a major disturbance (think forest fire), and resistance is the ability to stay healthy with minor, long-term disturbances (think animals eating leaves). Healthy trees can do both, thanks to their strength. Old trees have huge trunks, their roots extend deep into the ground, and they can't be pushed around very easily.

On the other hand, small, young trees - like recently planted ones - aren't very strong. They're light, thin, and short, and they can be moved easily. (Else, you wouldn't be able to plant them in the first place!) Unfortunately, this also means they're much weaker than old ones. Young trees have fewer leaves and branches, they are thinner, and their root systems are much shallower.

What does that mean?

First, they have a higher risk of dying, whether from pests or diseases or natural disasters. Young trees are less resistant to stress they simply haven't developed the ability to cope. Older trees' roots go deeper, which lets them access more soil moisture. So, they can keep growing during droughts will probably become worse and more frequent with climate change.

Why we need biodiversity to be resilient

Old, natural trees and forests are also more resilient because of the different species that live in them. Each of these species might do something different: one animal spreads leaves and seeds, a species of bird controls insects and pests, one plant provides shade to another, which in turn provides some needed substance to the first one, and so forth. In these trees and forests, there's enough variety in each species to maintain a healthy population.

If one individual tree gets sick, another healthy tree can help it out. And worst case, there are enough species that if one disappears, another one can take its place.

	That's why more biodiversity means more resilience and especially more resilience to climate change, which will stress everything. So, the lower biodiversity in young, newly planted trees means lower resilience overall. For all these reasons, immediate action is needed to protect and preserve trees, especially mature trees, in the Town of Needham. <i>[Image of book cover for The Nature of Oaks by Douglas W. Tallamy]</i> This book should be required reading for all members of the Tree Preservation Planning Committee <i>[Image of Trees for a Public Good Network pamphlet]</i>
20	I recently came across this very interesting in-depth discussion of Seattle's approach to increasing housing, while also addressing concerns regarding the existing tree canopy, which is essential to moderate increasingly high temperatures. While Needham is not building multi-family housing at the rate Seattle is, there are many valuable lessons to be learned by reading this article and the sources cited in it. https://www.npr.org/2025/06/11/nx-s1-5340711/climate-urban-housing-trees I am sending this to both working groups as I believe the tree preservation and large house issues are inextricably linked. Please be sure that this information is forwarded to all members of both Committees. Thank you for your consideration.
21	I appreciated the opportunity to reflect on the discussions from the June 4th Public Listening Session. I commend the Committee's efforts to engage the community in shaping a thoughtful and sustainable approach to tree preservation in Needham. As a resident, I'd like to share the following comments and suggestions: 1. Expand Tree Coverage Town-Wide Expanding tree coverage in both public and private spaces should be a long-term priority. Trees provide critical shade in the summer, improve air quality, reduce urban heat, help manage stormwater, and contribute to the overall character and livability of our neighborhoods. 2. Permit Requirements for Tree Removal A permitting process for tree removal—especially for healthy, mature trees—could help preserve the town's tree canopy and encourage more thoughtful decision-making. 3. Community Education on Tree Selection and Safety

Residents would benefit from more education on:

- The differences between hardwood and softwood trees, and how to select species suited for our New England climate.
- How to assess tree health and when to seek maintenance or removal.
- Risks related to falling limbs or unstable trees, particularly in areas with heavy snow, strong winds, or summer droughts, and what can be done to minimize these hazards.

4. Managing Trees Near Utilities

Clear, proactive guidance is needed for managing trees that grow close to overhead wires, especially given the increased frequency of intense storms that can cause outages or damage.

5. Root Management and Sidewalk Repair

The town should explore solutions to prevent and address sidewalk damage caused by tree roots. Species selection, root barriers, and thoughtful planting practices can help minimize conflict. Additionally, I encourage greater investment in sidewalk repairs across all neighborhoods—not just high-traffic areas—to support safe year-round mobility and a stronger sense of community.

6. Equity in Tree and Infrastructure Planning

All neighborhoods should benefit equitably from tree planting, sidewalk maintenance, and environmental investments—particularly areas that may have been underserved in the past.

7. Short-Term Actions to Address Immediate Environmental Needs

Since newly planted trees may take 20–30 years to fully deliver their benefits, the town should also consider short-term strategies to address current climate and livability concerns. These could include:

- Seasonal shade structures (e.g., temporary canopies, pergolas, or sail shades) in parks, schoolyards, and along walking routes to reduce heat exposure.
- Planting native shrubs and understory vegetation that can provide erosion control, seasonal interest, and wildlife habitat.
- Promoting light-colored or reflective surfaces to reduce the urban heat island effect.
- Adding greenery to public spaces, such as container gardens or climbing plants on fences and bus stops, to improve air quality and aesthetics.
- Using evergreen and climate-resilient plantings to serve as windbreaks, improve year-round appeal, and buffer properties from winter storms.

8. Preparing for Climate Change

As the region continues to experience the effects of climate change—hotter summers, more frequent droughts, heavier rainfall, and stronger storms—it is essential that tree preservation efforts align with broader climate resilience goals. This includes:

- Selecting tree species that are drought-tolerant, storm-resilient, and adaptable to future climate conditions.

	○ Designing planting plans with soil health, stormwater management, and long-term maintenance in mind. ○ Coordinating tree strategies with other municipal plans focused on sustainability, equity, and infrastructure. Thank you again for your leadership on this important initiative. I hope these comments are helpful as the Committee continues its planning and community engagement.
22	I live on Wilshire Pk and over the past year several years, trees. have been removed for new building or expanded renovation. The trees were not replaced elsewhere on our street and likely not anywhere else. It seems it would be helpful to require developers, who make buckets of money, and already do landscaping, to plant as many trees as are taken down when they renovate or build a new house. Of course, there are large house issues connected to the loss of trees. When only the minimum space is kept around a large house, typically, trees get taken down. Some areas in Needham look like 'tree deserts'. Thank you for considering this comment and suggestion.
23	I attended the meeting earlier in the month about planting more trees in Needham. Over the weekend I was in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood helping my daughter move during a scorching heatwave. Most of the apartments are 3 stories tall. The amazing tree canopy did a great job of providing some relief from the heat and was inspiring. Attached are a few pictures. <i>[Images of tree lined street]</i>