



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Quinton Y. Zondervan
City Councillor

To the Honorable, the City Council of Newton:

As you consider updating your tree protection ordinance, I offer you some of my thoughts, having helped successfully lead such an effort in Cambridge, in the hope that you find this information helpful.

Starting in 2016, community members determined that our tree canopy in Cambridge was shrinking. Street trees, particularly newly planted saplings, were being visibly impacted by what was then a severe drought. At the same time, people were noticing lots of trees being cut down on private properties. Cambridge already had a tree protection ordinance in place at that time, which regulated large projects, but it did not prevent any trees from being cut down. It only required developers of large projects to replace trees that were removed, or pay into a tree replacement fund.

In early 2019 the problem became so dire that the Council amended the ordinance to require a permit for the removal of any tree over 8" in diameter (outside of large projects) and that no such permits would be issued, except in emergency situations, for the next year, to give the Council time to make permanent modifications to the ordinance. A key consideration in creating this so-called temporary "moratorium" on tree cutting is that we did not want to create a situation where people would start cutting down trees in anticipation of future restrictions.

The regulations for large projects remained in effect, and so the moratorium did not interfere with approved or planned large developments in the city. Of course in 2020 the COVID pandemic hit and we ended up extending the moratorium twice, and adopting more permanent amendments to the ordinance in 2021. During that time the Urban Forest Master Plan was completed, which also helped inform the final ordinance, as well as tree planting and management practices overall.

Trees are essential infrastructure and I wish you much success in your efforts to protect them for the health and safety of your residents.

Sincerely,

Quinton Zondervan
Cambridge City Councillor