

January 26, 2026

Subject: Tree Warden Decision on the Removal of Trees on LaSalle Road and South Main Street

Dear Residents and Stakeholders,

Following the public hearing held on January 21, 2026, at West Hartford Town Hall, and after thorough consideration of all public comments and a review of the documents submitted by residents, I have decided on the proposed removal of thirty-seven (37) trees along Farmington Ave as part of the West Hartford Center Infrastructure Improvement Project. After careful evaluation and consideration, **I have determined that removal of these trees is necessary** to support the overall scope of the improvement project, which aims to enhance the infrastructure, accessibility, and environmental sustainability of the West Hartford Center. This decision is based on the following considerations:

1. **Project Necessity:** The improvements require modifications to sidewalks, streetscapes, and utility infrastructure that cannot be completed without removing the identified trees.
2. **Long-Term Sustainability:** The project includes a comprehensive replanting initiative that will establish a more extensive, diverse, and superior-growing tree canopy. This approach ensures a resilient and vibrant urban forest for future generations.
3. **Public Safety and Urban Health:** The selected trees for removal have been evaluated for their long-term viability, and this decision aligns with best practices for urban forestry management and the public's safety.

As the Tree Warden for the Town of West Hartford, I remain committed to preserving and enhancing our urban forest. While tree removal is never taken lightly, the plan presented by the Town's Engineering Division is a strategic effort to balance development and sustainability. The Town will plant a variety of tree species better suited to the evolving urban environment, providing greater ecological benefits and aesthetic appeal.

This decision is made in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes § 23-59. Any party aggrieved by this decision, may, within ten (10) days file an appeal to the superior court for the judicial district of Hartford.

I appreciate the community's engagement in this process and look forward to working together to ensure a greener and more vibrant future for West Hartford.

Sincerely,

John Phillips,

Director of Public Works
Tree Warden, Town of West Hartford

Town of West Hartford Department of Public Works

Public Hearing Minutes

Wednesday, January 21, 2026 at 12:30 pm

West Hartford Town Hall, Room 217

I. Meeting Opening – Call to Order

Director of Public Works John Phillips called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm.

II. Explanation of Hearing Guidelines

Director of Public Works, John Phillips outlined the structure of the hearing.

Director Phillips introduced Town Engineer Greg Sommers, who provided a presentation regarding the proposed removal of 37 trees along Farmington Avenue as part of the West Hartford Center infrastructure improvement project. Mr. Sommers explained that the proposed tree removal is based on the condition of the existing trees, many of which are at or near the end of their life cycle. He noted concerns related to declining health, limb dieback, root gridlock, poor overall appearance, and safety risks associated with falling limbs and sidewalk disruption. Mr. Sommers stated that the project is intended to address safety concerns and support the long-term revitalization of West Hartford Center.

Mr. Sommers explained that while 37 trees are proposed for removal, the plan includes the installation of 47 new trees representing five different species to promote diversity and resilience within the streetscape. He noted that the proposed design incorporates native species and follows the principle of placing the right tree in the right location.

The presentation also outlined planned infrastructure improvements, including widened sidewalks to enhance pedestrian space, slow traffic, and provide additional amenities. Mr. Sommers further noted that the project will utilize engineered tree pits with Silva Cells technology to support healthier tree growth in constrained urban conditions. Additional information regarding the project can be found at www.westhartfordct.gov/WHCenter. A case study done on the trees can be found at <https://www.westhartfordct.gov/town-departments/engineering/whcenter/infrastructure-master-plan/project-documents>.

III. Comments from Interest Parties

Ron Lavoie, 1235 Blvd, thanked Town staff for the information provided to date and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to comment. He stated that he relocated to Connecticut during covid after living abroad for several years and values the urban landscape and character of West Hartford.

Mr. Lavoie explained that he works as an urban planner and mixed-use retail developer and expressed concern regarding the potential impact of the proposed tree removal on the urban environment. He emphasized the importance of conserving existing mature trees rather than replacing them, stating that preservation provides greater long-term value to the community.

Mr. Lavoie submitted a study titled “The Economic Value of Conservation vs. Replacement” into the public record. He stated that mature trees contribute positively to property values, home sales,

and overall aesthetics, and expressed concern that removal of the trees could negatively impact retail businesses and restaurants that benefit from the current streetscape.

Mr. Ron questioned whether replacement trees had already been purchased and inquired about the possibility of installing larger or more mature replacement trees.

Christine and George Van Drasek, 16 Spruce Ln, came to the hearing with questions. Christine asked whether the trees would be removed if the current project were not moving forward. The Tree Warden responded that the trees would eventually be removed regardless of the project stating they are a safety risk.

George asked questions regarding the anticipated timeline for the project, including when construction would begin and how long it would take to complete. He referenced the duration of the LaSalle Road project and expressed interest in understanding whether a similar timeframe should be expected.

Ken Graham, 107 Clifton Ave, stated that large, mature trees are an important component of the Town's aesthetic and overall character. He questioned whether the Town could invest in larger replacement trees.

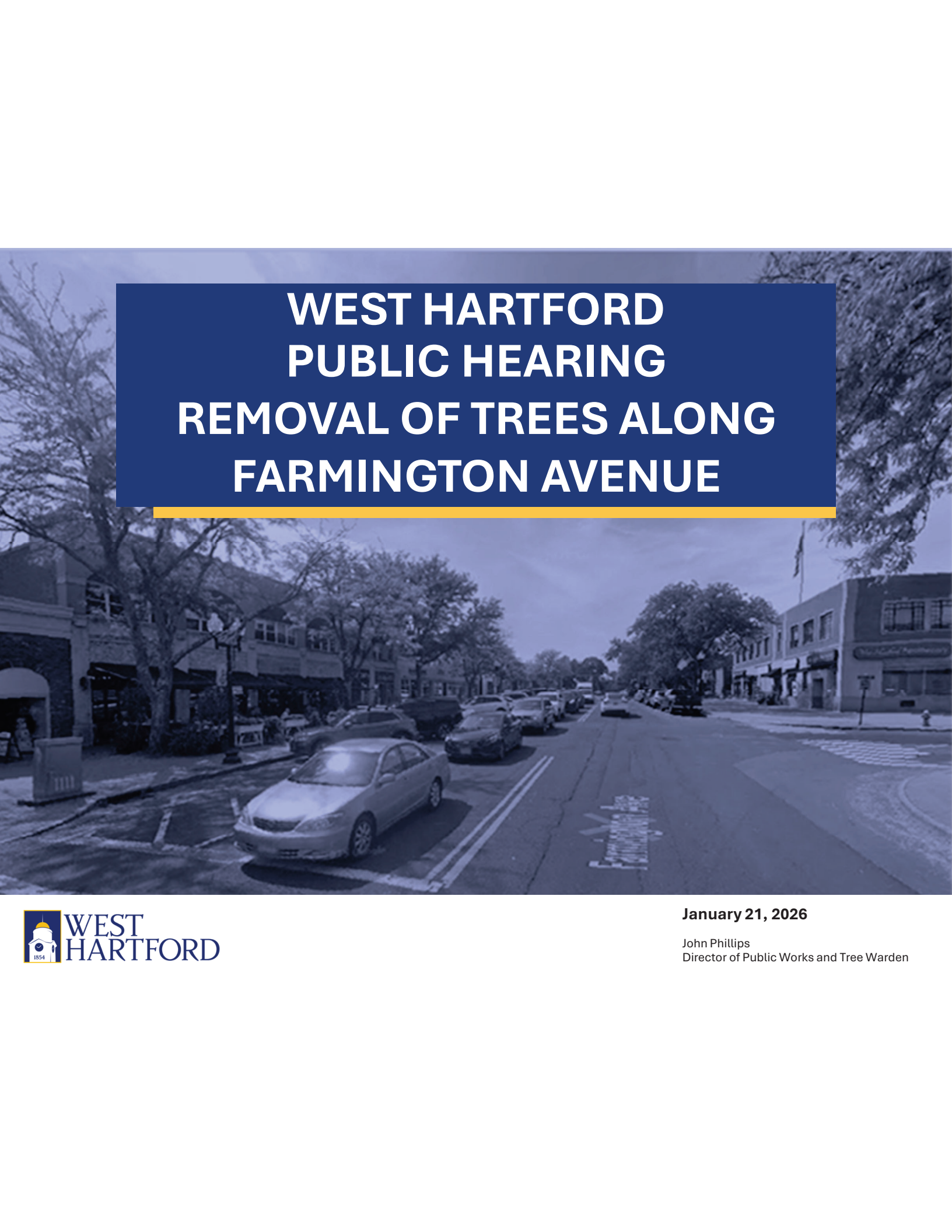
Mr. Graham also referenced concerns regarding smaller trees planted along LaSalle Road, noting that some branches have snapped and that the trees appear vulnerable due to their size. While he expressed appreciation for the seating and design elements near the Max Burger area, he reiterated the importance of installing larger trees where possible.

Jen Bowman, 28 Hilltop Dr, thanked Town staff for their work and stated that West Hartford Center is a destination for restaurants and retail, noting that the presence of mature trees is a significant contributing factor. She expressed concern that the removal of the proposed 37 trees would significantly alter the character of the area.

Ms. Bowman asked whether it would be possible to remove a smaller percentage of the trees, such as 30–40%, in order to preserve some of the larger, mature trees. She stated that while she appreciates the diversity of the proposed replacement tree species, she believes the overall change may be too drastic and asked whether the impact could be limited.

IV. Adjournment

Mr. Philips closed the hearing at the conclusion of public comment. The meeting adjourned at 1:01 pm.



WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC HEARING REMOVAL OF TREES ALONG FARMINGTON AVENUE



January 21, 2026

John Phillips
Director of Public Works and Tree Warden

WHY ARE WE HERE?

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Tree Warden of the Town of West Hartford will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday January 21, 2026 at 12:30 pm in Town Hall, 50 South Main Street, Room 217, West Hartford, CT, 06107** for the purposes of affording all persons known to be interested therein, an opportunity to be heard concerning the proposed removal of trees on Farmington Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06107.

At this hearing, interested person(s) are invited to attend and be heard. Any written communications should be sent to the Tree Warden, John Phillips, at 17 Brixton Street, West Hartford, CT 06110. Written communications will be received and read into the record.

This notice is being published pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §23-59.

By Order of John Phillips

Tree Warden, Town of West Hartford

***37 trees planned for removal
along Farmington Avenue***

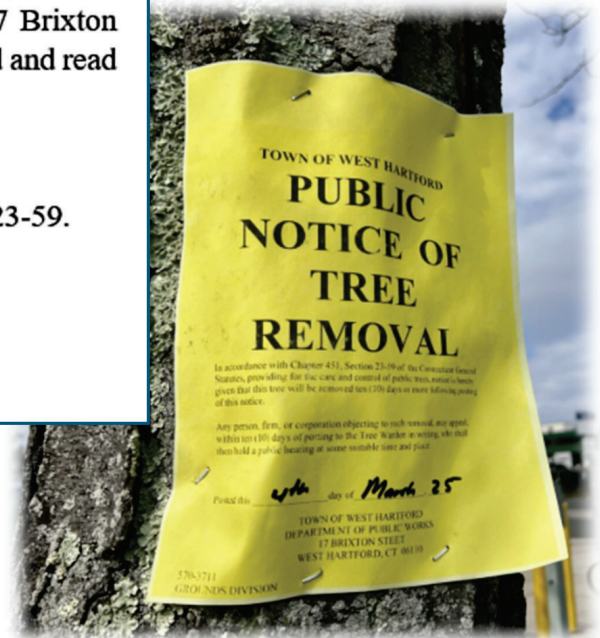


Photo credit: Ronni Newton, www.we-ha.com

WHY ARE TREES BEING REMOVED?

Condition

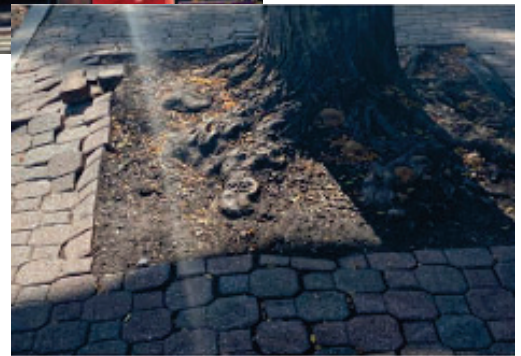
- *Nearing the end of their life cycle*
- *Limb die back*
- *Roots are girdled*
- *Declining health*
- *Poor overall appearance*

Safety Risk

- *Outgrown their environment*
- *Trip hazards*
 - *exposed roots*
 - *displaced sidewalk pavers*
- *Unpredictable falling limbs*

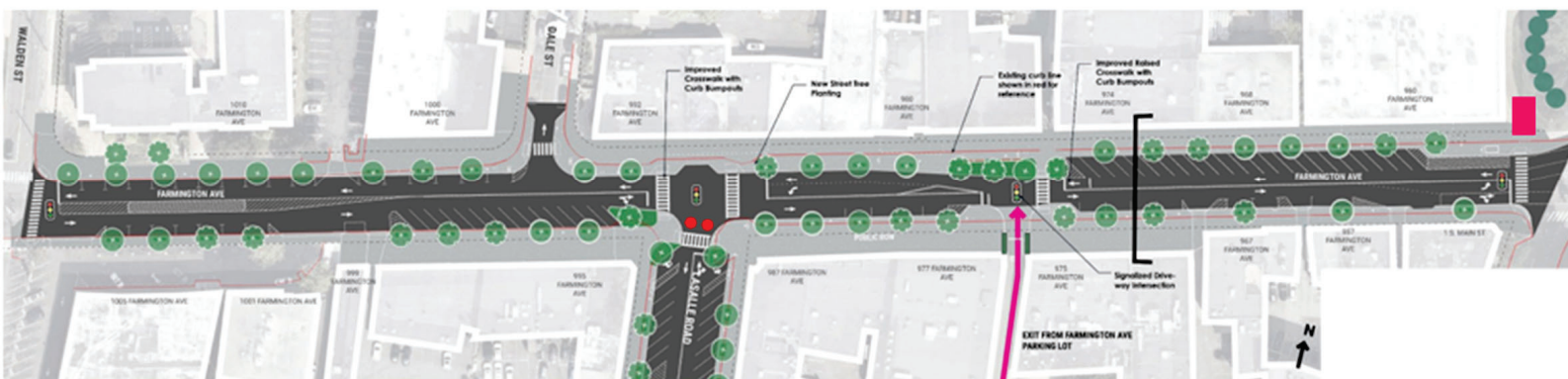
Revitalization

- *Proposed Roadway/Sidewalk Improvements*
- *WH Center Infrastructure Master Plan*



WH CENTER INFRASTRUCTURE RECONSTRUCTION

Farmington Ave: Design Direction Summary



KEY FEATURES

- Wider sidewalks (Avg 5')
- Expanded outdoor dining
- New & more street trees (38 existing to 47 proposed)

- Angled parking (67 pre-pandemic to 70 proposed spaces)
- Some loading zones
- Reduced crossing distances
- Traffic Calming – Raised Crosswalks
- Farmington Parking Lot exit signalized

Street Trees + Landscape Area

Existing 38 Street Trees	➔	Proposed 47 Native Street Trees
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Sidewalk Walking Space

Existing North = 4'-6" to 10' South = 5'-6" to 9'-2"	➔	Proposed North = 10' to 20' South = 9' to 10'
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Public Parking Areas

Existing - Pre-Pandemic = 67 - Current w/ Outdoor Dining = 85 - Current No Outdoor Dining = 95	➔	Proposed 70 On Street Spaces
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Programmable Space

Existing North = Avg. 7'-8" South = Varies to avg 20"	➔	Proposed North = Avg. 7'-8" South = Varies to avg 20"
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Project website:

www.westhartfordct.gov/WHCenter

Proposed Replanting

**47 trees planned for
planting along
Farmington Avenue**

- ***Right Tree, Right Place***
- ***Diversity of species***
- ***Native trees (when feasible)***
- ***Engineered tree pits (Silva Cells)***



Detail of Silva Cells



American Hophornbeam



Wildfire Tupelo



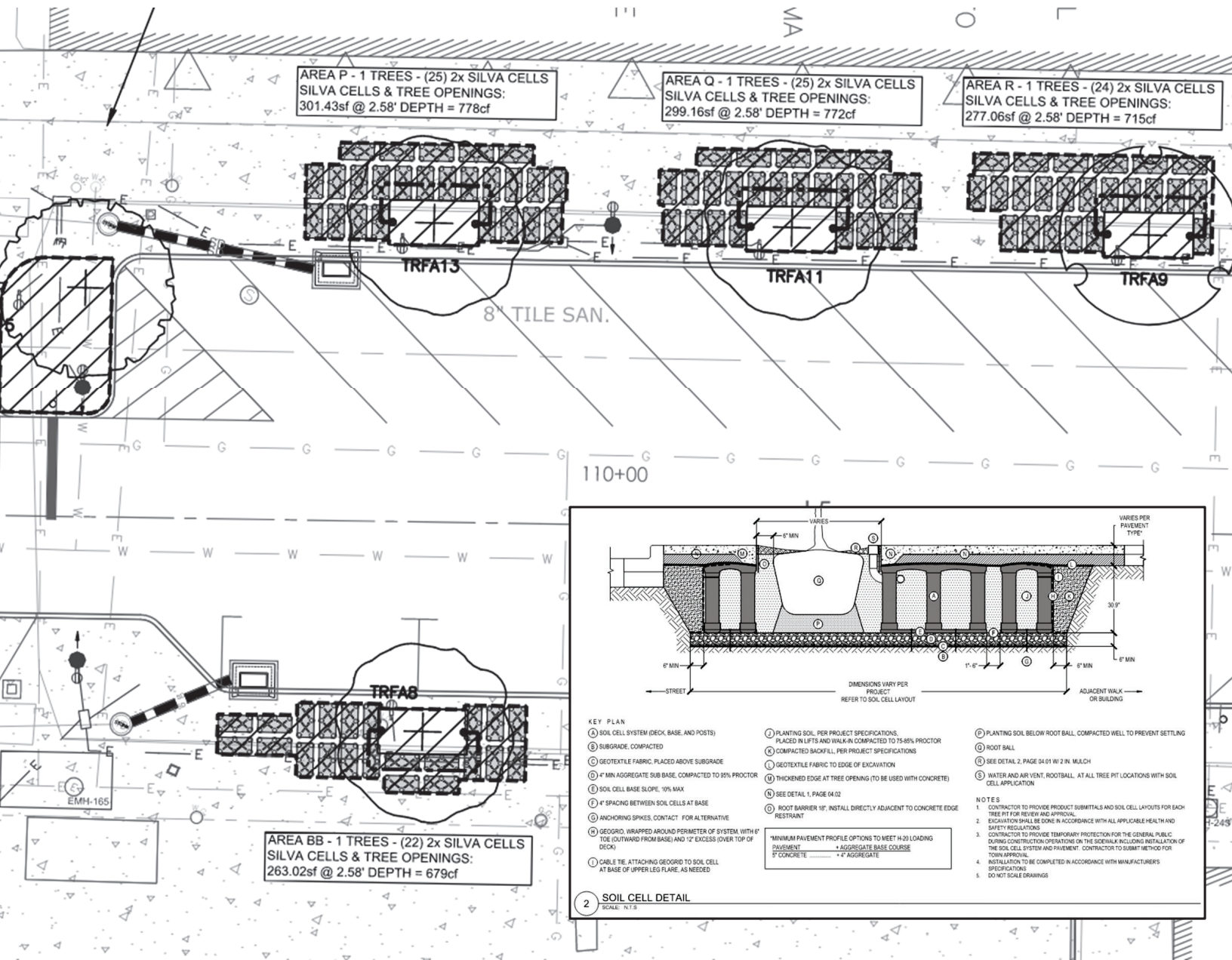
Red Pointe Maple



Accolade Elm



Skyline Honey Locust





PUBLIC COMMENT

ECONOMIC VALUE OF CONSERVATION VS. REPLACEMENT

FOR PUBLIC RECORD

Findings and Case Studies
Submitted by Ronald E. LaVoie
Public Hearing, Town of West Hartford, CT
12:30pm; January 21, 2026

Members of the Council and members of the public:

Based on my professional experience as an urban planner, a real estate financier, and a developer of luxury residences, as well as my review and synthesis of relevant literature and government research cited herein, it is my professional conclusion that the mature trees along Farming Avenue constitute as measurable economic assets. Their removal is likely to produce immediate loss in residential property values that is not offset by replacement planting. And this loss can last for decades until the new trees are mature. This conclusion is supported by evidence and national meta-analyses that I have outlined herein, and is stated to my reasonable degree of professional certainty. I would urge the council to reconsider its choice to replace the trees along Farmington Avenue, and/or at initiate an impact study to assess the best options to mitigate their loss to this community.

Key Points

1. *Property Value Premiums from Mature Trees...* Across peer-reviewed hedonic studies, both communities and adjacent residences with mature trees or established canopies show that homes sell for approximately 3%–15% more than comparable homes without trees.¹²³
2. *Dollar Value of Individual Mature Street Trees...* In dense urban environments, a single large street tree contributes approximately \$7,000–\$8,800 per tree to the sale price of adjacent homes.⁴
3. *National Meta-Analysis Findings...* U.S. Forest Service meta-analysis of 21 studies (157 estimates) confirms a statistically significant correlation between tree canopy and residential property values, with stronger effects for mature canopy than for recent plantings.⁵
4. *Replacement Trees... Are Not Economically Equivalent.* Value-loss occurs immediately upon removal of mature trees, while replacement trees require 20–40 years to approach comparable functional and economic benefits.⁶

ECONOMIC VALUE OF CONSERVATION VS. REPLACEMENT

FOR PUBLIC RECORD

Sources and their Findings...

Decades of research show that mature trees are not merely aesthetic features; they are economic assets that measurably increase property values and stabilize municipal tax bases.¹

National meta-analyses synthesizing dozens of real estate studies consistently find that homes with mature tree canopy sell for more—often 3 to 15 percent more—than comparable properties without such canopy.² In dense urban and downtown environments, the value of street trees is even higher.³

Critically, the research distinguishes between mature trees and newly planted replacements. Small trees do not provide equivalent economic value for decades.⁴ Property value losses occur immediately when mature trees are removed, while replacement benefits are deferred far into the future.

This means that tree replacement policies are not economically equivalent to tree preservation. When mature trees are removed without accounting for their economic value, communities absorb real and lasting financial losses—through reduced property values, weaker tax bases, and higher long-term public costs.⁵

The evidence before you is consistent, replicated, and well established. Protecting mature trees is not just an environmental choice; it is a fiscally responsible decision that protects homeowners, neighborhoods, and the long-term financial health of the town.

Study	Context	Key Finding	Source / Pages
Siriwardena et al. (2016)	U.S. national meta-analysis	Tree canopy consistently capitalized into prices	Ecological Economics 128:68–76
Kovacs et al. (2022)	U.S. national meta-analysis	Mature canopy yields stronger value than young trees	USFS NRS-RP-30
Anderson & Cordell (1988)	Urban residential	3.5–4.5% price premium	LUP 15:153–164
Donovan & Butry (2010)	Urban street trees	\$7,000–\$8,800 per large tree	LUP 94:77–83
Morales (1980)	Connecticut case study	~6% premium from mature canopy	Journal of Arboriculture 6(11)

1. Anderson, L. M., & Cordell, H. K. (1988). Landscape and Urban Planning, 15, 153–164.

2. Morales, D. J. (1980). Journal of Arboriculture, 6(11).

3. Siriwardena, S., Boyle, K. J., Holmes, T. P., & Wiseman, P. E. (2016). Ecological Economics, 128, 68–76.

4. Donovan, G. H., & Butry, D. T. (2010). Landscape and Urban Planning, 94, 77–83.

5. Kovacs, K. F., Haight, R. G., Mercader, R. J., & Sander, H. A. (2022). U.S. Forest Service Research Paper NRS-RP-30.

6. Wolf, K. L. (2007). Arborist News, 16(4), 34–36.

ECONOMIC VALUE OF CONSERVATION VS. REPLACEMENT

FOR PUBLIC RECORD

Comparative Municipal Case Studies

The following municipal examples illustrate how mature tree preservation or loss correlates with property values, community perception, and fiscal outcomes. These cases are illustrative and complement the peer-reviewed economic literature summarized above.

1. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – Philadelphia Green

University of Pennsylvania research found that street trees increased adjacent home values by approximately 10%, while greened vacant lots produced value increases exceeding 30%. These findings are frequently cited as among the strongest real-world demonstrations of urban greening's economic impact.

- Wachter, S. M., & Gillen, K. C. (2006). *Public Investment Strategies: How They Matter for Neighborhoods in Philadelphia*. Penn Institute for Urban Research. Chapter 4, pp. 82–94
- Heckert, M., & Mennis, J. (2012). "The Economic Impact of Greening Urban Vacant Land." *Environment and Planning A*, 44(2), pp. 110–118
- Branas, C. C., et al. (2011). *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 174(11). Discussion, pp. 1061–1065

2. Seattle, Washington – Canopy Loss and Policy Response

Seattle documented a net loss of mature tree canopy between 2016 and 2021, prompting strengthened tree protection ordinances. Public debate explicitly linked canopy loss to declining neighborhood character and livability, factors closely tied to real estate value.

- City of Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment (OSE). *Tree Canopy Cover Assessment* (2016). Executive Summary, pp. 1–6
- City of Seattle OSE. *Urban Tree Canopy Update* (2021). pp. 12–18
- Seattle City Council Tree Protection Ordinance Review Staff Reports. Public testimony synthesis, pp. 27–34

3. Detroit, Michigan – Community Trust Implications

Research on urban tree programs in Detroit shows that prior large-scale tree removals without sustained maintenance commitments eroded community trust. While largely qualitative, these findings highlight how tree policy missteps can negatively affect neighborhood desirability.

- Carmichael, C. E., & McDonough, M. H. (2019). "Community Stories: Explaining Resistance to Street Tree-Planting Programs in Detroit." *Society & Natural Resources*, 32(2). Results and discussion, pp. 228–235

ECONOMIC VALUE OF CONSERVATION VS. REPLACEMENT

FOR PUBLIC RECORD

4. Quebec City, Canada – Mature Street Trees and Land Value

Historical studies suggest that high densities of mature street trees were associated with approximately 17% higher land values, particularly in higher-income neighborhoods. One of the strongest early demonstrations of mature street tree capitalization effects in a cold-climate city comparable to New England.

- Des Rosiers, F., Thériault, M., Kestens, Y., & Villeneuve, P. (2002). "Land Value and Urban Tree Cover." *Urban Studies*, 39(5–6). Model results and interpretation, pp. 154–162
- Thériault, M., et al. (2003). Follow-up spatial econometric analysis. Results section, pp. 89–97

5. Manchester, CT – Mature Trees capitalize Housing Prices

Connecticut-based hedonic analysis found that residential properties with mature tree canopy sold for approximately 6% more than otherwise comparable homes without such canopy. The study demonstrates that established trees are capitalized into housing prices as economic assets, rather than treated as neutral or cosmetic features.

- Morales, D. J. (1980). "The Contribution of Trees to Residential Property Value." *Journal of Arboriculture*, 6(11). Results and valuation estimates, pp. 305–308

6. Portland, Oregon

Empirical analysis by Donovan and Butry shows that large street trees in dense urban environments contribute approximately \$7,000–\$8,800 per tree to adjacent residential property values. Boston's Urban Forest Plan corroborates these findings, recognizing mature street trees as contributors to both private property value and municipal fiscal stability.

- Donovan, G. H., & Butry, D. T. (2010). *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 94. pp. 41–47

7. Portland, Maine

Municipal valuation analysis in Portland, Maine indicates that neighborhoods with established tree canopy exhibit greater long-term residential assessment stability than areas with recent replacement plantings. The findings show that newly planted trees do not offset the fiscal and valuation losses associated with mature tree removal within standard municipal planning horizons.

- Maine Forest Service & University of Maine Cooperative Extension (2019). Municipal valuation analysis, pp. 18–26

ECONOMIC VALUE OF CONSERVATION VS. REPLACEMENT

FOR PUBLIC RECORD

Summary of Footnoted Articles (See page 2)

1. **Anderson, L. M., & Cordell, H. K. (1988) - *Landscape and Urban Planning*:** This study of 844 single-family properties in Athens, Georgia, found that landscaping with trees was associated with a 3.5% to 4.5% increase in sales prices. The value increase was primarily driven by trees in the intermediate and large size classes, regardless of species. The presence of trees was estimated to add \$1,700 to \$2,100 to the average sales price (in 1978-1980 dollars).
2. **Morales, D. J. (1980) - *Journal of Arboriculture*:** Analysis of homes in Manchester, Connecticut, showed that "good" tree cover added 6% to 9% of the total sales price to the property value. A separate study referenced by Morales (1983) found that houses in a new subdivision with good tree cover sold for an average of \$9,500 more than those with little to no tree cover.
3. **Siriwardena, S., Boyle, K. J., Holmes, T. P., & Wiseman, P. E. (2016) - *Ecological Economics*:** This meta-analysis of hedonic property value studies across the U.S. found that 30% property-level tree cover and 38% county-level tree cover maximize the implicit price of trees in property values. The study suggests that homeowners often value tree cover located on neighboring properties more than on their own, highlighting a potential for under-investment in trees on private land.
4. **Donovan, G. H., & Butry, D. T. (2010) - *Landscape and Urban Planning*:** In a study of Portland, Oregon, street trees were found to add an average of \$7,130 to the sale price of the house they fronted. These trees also created "spillover" benefits, adding a total of \$12,828 to the value of nearby houses within 100 feet. Street trees were found to increase the speed of sales (reduced time on market by 1.7 days).
5. **Kovacs, K. F., Haight, R. G., Mercader, R. J., & Sander, H. A. (2022) - *U.S. Forest Service Research Paper*:** This study indicates that tree canopy has a significant positive effect on home values, with an average increase of \$561 per 1% increase in tree cover. In the 600 sites studied, the average value of tree canopy was 8.4% of the sale price of the home (\$13,913).
6. **Wolf, K. L. (2007) - *Arborist News*:** This work highlights that urban trees and forests increase property values and, in a study of Seattle, that shoppers were willing to pay 11% higher prices for goods in well-landscaped business districts. Trees enhance the economic vitality of a city, neighborhood, or subdivision.