

Dear members of City Council,

I am writing in support of the proposed code change to our Forestry Department that would place the responsibility of maintaining trees on private property onto the property owner, and allow the foresters to enforce the proposed code.

- Currently, our understaffed and underfunded Forestry Department employs thirteen field arborists to care for the entire urban canopy; each employee is responsible for 10,000 trees. When the trees on private property obstruct road signs, line of vision, and sidewalks, significant safety hazards occur, and, given that risk reduction is a primary municipal concern, our foresters must take staff time away from planting and maintaining the public canopy to maintaining trees and weeds on private property.
- Rather than expending resources to care for private property, our foresters request that taxpayer money be spent on the expansion and maintenance of our shared community resource: trees. Globally, a next wave of public investment involves the creation of lush urban canopies, the low-cost green infrastructure which cools and cleans the air and provides shade, which “can reduce daytime heat burden by roughly 30%, protecting vulnerable populations from extreme heat,”* dovetailing with the value of forestry to improve public safety.
- The public’s support for our tree canopy has enabled two organizations with which I’ve worked to thrive: North End Woodlands, Inc. and First Congregational Church’s Root for Justice. The first nonprofit planted hundreds of trees on our historic medians; the second organization is devoted to providing trees to low-resourced neighborhoods. The outpouring of community support collectively raised \$275,000 to provide beauty and shade to their own neighborhood and to neighborhoods across the city. The skilled support of our city foresters was essential to the success of both organizations. One hundred and fifty years after our tree-loving founder planted trees on the prairie, our citizens appreciate the canopy.

Thank you for your service to the place we all call “Home”.

Sincerely,

Siri Anna Everett

*Sam Bloch, *Shade: The Promise of a Forgotten Natural Resource*, 2025.