

Protect Newton Trees

2025 Candidate Questionnaire



Candidate: Brittany Hume Charm
Office Running for: At-Large Councilor, Ward 5

Questions 1–8 asked Candidates to rate their responses to the statement using the following scale:

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree

1. *It is important to support the Newton Tree Preservation Ordinance because it preserves and protects existing trees and provides for planting replacement trees.*

Response: 4 = Agree

2. *Newton needs both housing and trees. It is important to develop policies that promote low-impact development to protect our shared green infrastructure (trees, waterways, and wetlands).*

Response: 4 = Agree

3. *Properly sited trees block winter winds and provide shade from summer sun, reducing energy use for both heating and cooling, thus saving families money and reducing carbon emissions. (For example, when the City of Worcester cut down about 30,000 trees because of the Asian Longhorned Beetle, temperatures on tree-bare streets increased nearly 10 degrees F and increased the average family's cooling costs.) Newton needs a strong ordinance to preserve trees, especially in our environmental justice neighborhoods and wherever there are heat islands from lack of trees.*

Response: 4 = Agree

4. *Newton needs to maintain the Ordinance's existing protections for trees on an entire property and resist efforts to limit tree protections to setback areas (the strips around the border of a property).*

Response: 3 = Neutral

5. *Newton needs to apply the Ordinance's tree protection requirements in the same way to all properties, including 1- and 2-family residences, which are 80% of Newton's residential property and 53% of all City land.*

Response: 3 = Neutral

6. *The Tree Warden has reported that the number #1 complaint to the City's Urban Forestry Department for the past 20 years is when work on one lot causes damage to trees on neighboring lots. Newton residents have also reported that knowing in advance about a plan to cut trees on a neighboring property has allowed friendly conversations about preservation of trees. Therefore the requirement to notify neighbors of an application to cut trees should be extended to include all permits on all properties.*

Response: 2 = Disagree

7. *The tree canopy and biodiversity are both important. All mature trees provide significant climate benefits, so the Newton Tree Preservation Ordinance should continue to avoid any blanket exemption for invasive species, but allow for weighing the harm versus benefit of removing non-native trees in a specific permit location.*

Response: 3 = Neutral

8. *The City needs to evaluate our progress on preserving and expanding Newton's tree canopy. We need better data collection about trees preserved and cut down.*

Response: 4 = Agree

Questions 9–10 were open-ended:

9. *Do you have any thoughts about tree preservation or a [personal tree story](#) that you would like to share?*

Response: I treasure Newton's trees. Whether walking shaded neighborhood streets with my kids or enjoying a quiet moment under a backyard oak, I'm reminded how much they enrich our lives. Trees make our city more beautiful and resilient: they cool our homes, protect us from storms, and improve our physical and mental health.

That's why I support the new tree ordinance's goal of making property owners and developers give greater consideration to the removal of mature trees, particularly the large, mature trees that are irreplaceable. At the same time, I believe good policy must balance tree protection with other priorities—like

creating more housing options, supporting residents with financial constraints, and managing invasive species. For example, we may want to reduce penalties when an accessory dwelling unit requires tree removal, or when an invasive tree threatens to overtake healthy native growth. Likewise, abutters deserve notification when removal could affect their property, but not when the tree is deep in the middle of a lot.

As your councilor, I'll ensure Newton continues to protect its canopy while also applying common sense and compassion. Once we have more feedback on how the ordinance is working, I'll advocate for practical tweaks—tightening where needed, loosening where fairness requires. Newton's trees are part of what makes this city special, and I'm committed to preserving them in a way that keeps our community both green and livable.

10. If a section of your campaign website addresses tree preservation, please provide a link here.

Response: no response