Borough of Ambler

Butler Ave Tree Survey & *Succession Plan*

Presented by the Ambler Environmental Advisory Council

Table of contents

01

Introduction

Our Charge

On August 19, 2025, Borough Council voted to authorize Borough staff, in conjunction with the Ambler Borough Environmental Advisory Council (EAC), to develop a succession plan for trees along Butler Avenue prior to year end. The goal of the study was to take stock of existing trees, analyze their health and anticipated longevity, and formulate a succession plan. This succession plan serves as a guidance document to assist the borough as it plants new trees to replace existing trees that are diseased, dying, or otherwise in need of removal due to their size or proximity to buildings or utilities.

About the Ambler Environmental Advisory Council

The Ambler Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) is made up of community residents, seven of whom are appointed by Ambler Borough Council to serve three-year terms. Members advise borough staff and officials in protecting the environment through conservation, management, promotion, and use of natural resources within the borough limits. The Ambler EAC also works to assist the borough in advancing sustainability and local climate initiatives, including meeting its goal to transition to 100% renewable energy by 2050.

For more information, visit https://boroughofambler.com/government/boards-committees/environmental-advisory-council/ or contact amblereac@gmail.com

02

Benefits

Trees perform remarkably well as an investment. **For every 1 dollar invested in a tree**, studies conducted in cities and towns across the United States show **returns of between 2 to 5 dollars in economic, environmental, and social benefits.**

"Imagine if there were one single action that city leaders and individuals could take to reduce obesity and depression, improve productivity, boost educational outcomes, and reduce incidence of asthma and heart disease. There is: Plant and invest in urban trees."

—Mindy Maslin, PHS Tree Tenders Program Manager

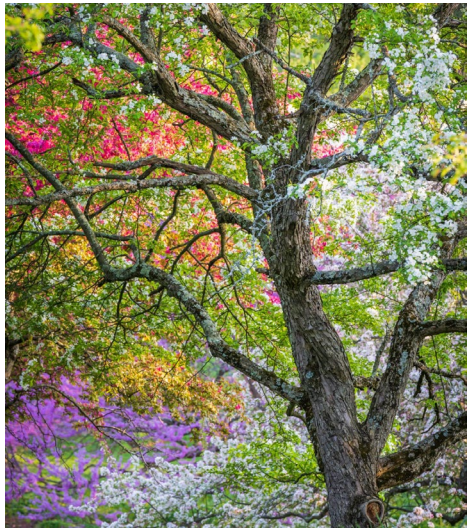
Benefits of Trees

Cool Urban Areas

Trees provide shade and can cool cities by up to 10 degrees, helping prevent heat-related deaths

Reduce Pollution

Trees remove pollutants from our air and water



Reduce Flooding

Trees intercept and infiltrate stormwater into the soil

Fight climate change

Trees are an affordable, natural solution to remove carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere

Benefits of Trees

Support Wild life

Trees provide food and shelter for birds, mammals, insects, and other wildlife

Enhance Wellbeing

Trees add beauty, lend a sense of place, and enhance physical and mental health

Increase Property Values

Trees reduce energy costs and enhance property values

Boost Business

Shoppers in one study were willing to pay 9 to 12% more in areas with large, mature trees (source)

03

Problems

Problems Facing Trees in Urban Settings

Soil

Quality, Volume, and Compaction due to small pits

Space

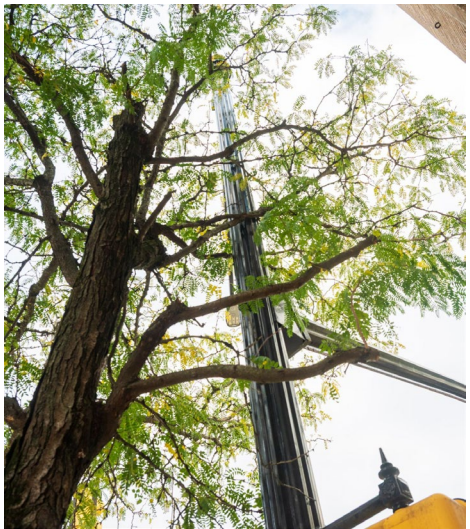
Limited Canopy Space due to proximity to buildings

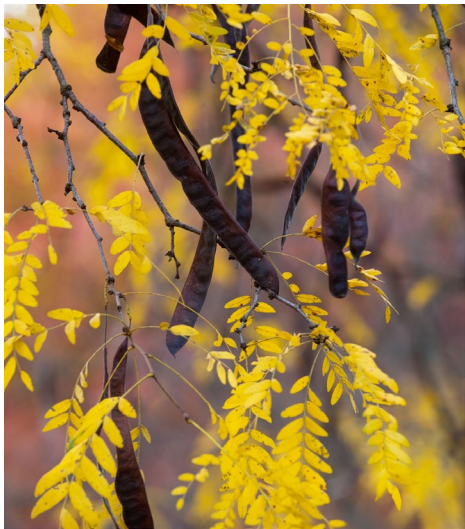
Pollution

Air and surface pollution from traffic

Lack of Diversity

Overplanting of few species leads to vulnerability





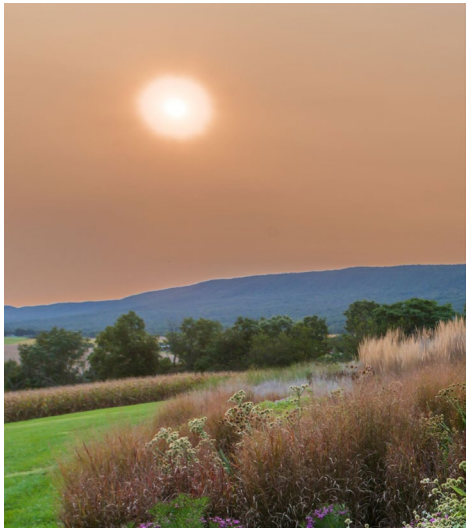
Problems Facing Trees in Urban Settings

Pests/Diseases

Threats from insects and diseases

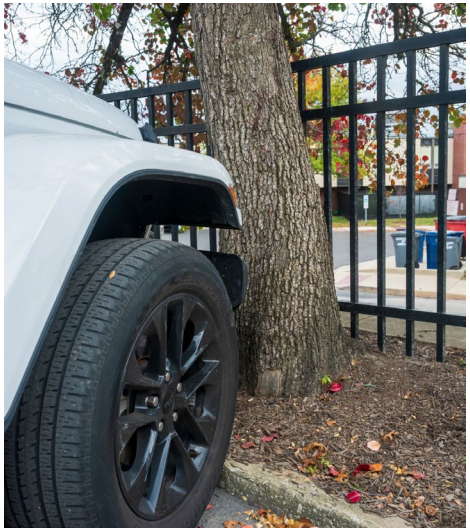
Climate

Increasing extremes of a changing climate



Accidents

Vandalism and accidents due to proximity to traffic



Improper Care

Poor pruning practices, strangling lights, etc.

04

Survey

Street Tree Survey

- Surveyed 76 existing trees along Butler Avenue
- From SEPTA's Ambler Station to the intersection of Butler and Woodland Avenues
- Included the three Borough parking lots (SEPTA, Cavalier, and behind Ambler Savings Bank)

A group of seven residents—including a professional arborist and a professional horticulturalist—examined each tree on two separate Sundays in September. In November, Orsoyla Lazar, Community Tree Specialist with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources visited the site and provided additional information on specific trees and how to make a better plan.

Survey Methodology

Method

Collect Data

Tree species, tree health, maintenance concerns, and planting area dimensions.

Add to TreeKeeper®

This data will be uploaded to the publicly accessible tree inventory software TreeKeeper® which the PA DCNR offers to all communities in the Commonwealth at no cost.

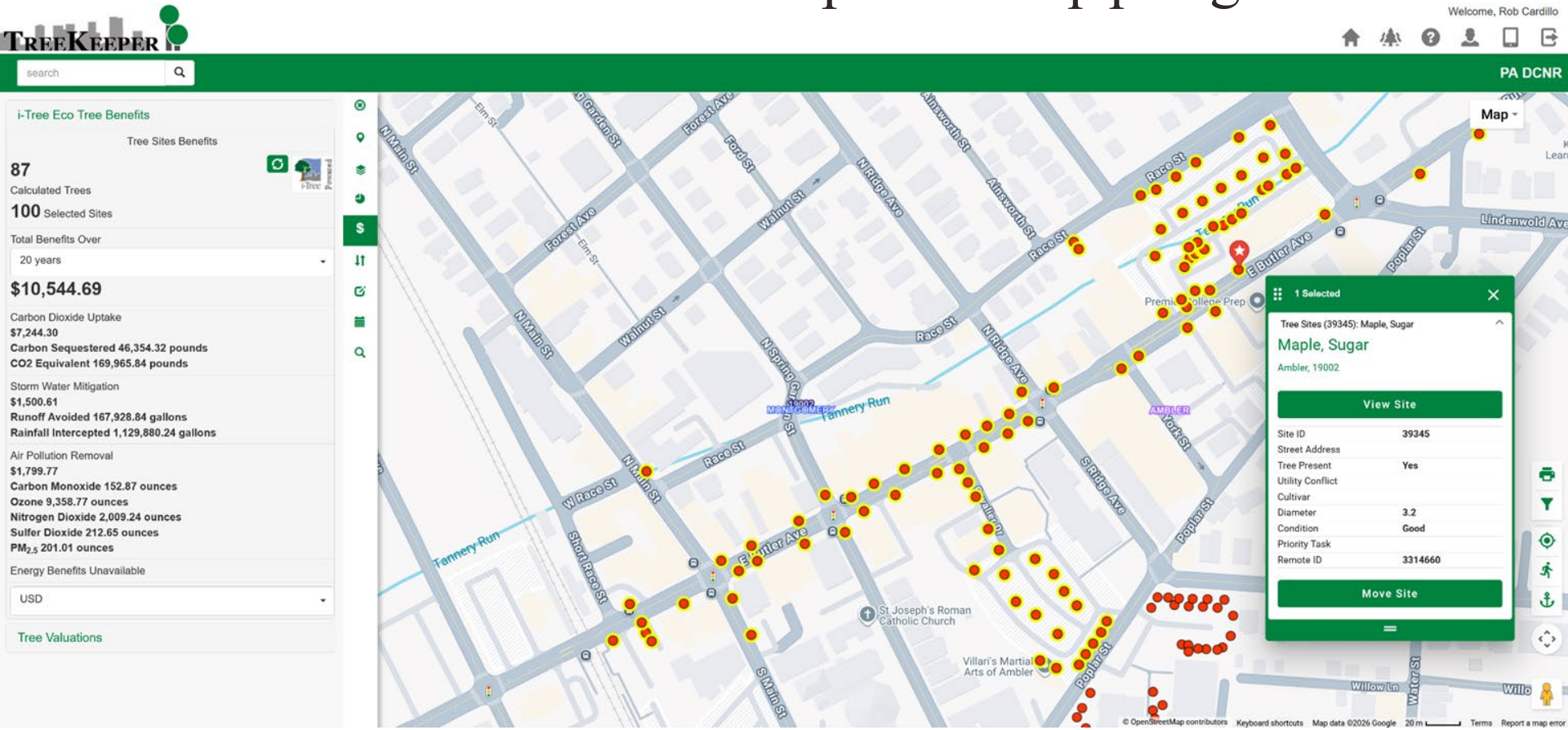
Recommendations

Advise Borough Council on short and long-term initiatives for succession.

Action

Implement initiatives in phase starting in 2026 as approved by Council.

Ambler TreeKeeper®Mapping



05

Recommendations

Actions Needed

5

Remove and Replace

Remove five dead trees and replace with appropriate species

3

Evaluate

Professionally evaluate three trees that are showing signs of failure

26

Prune

Schedule pruning of 26 trees for health and safety

19

Monitor

Monitor 19 trees that are stressed or are prone to splitting

Trees to be Removed and Replaced

Five trees from the survey are dead or dying. Fortunately, these are all small trees and can be removed from ground level.




Post-Removal Steps

- Thoroughly remove old roots from planting area. Grind stump if necessary
- Evaluate and improve tree pit size and soil quality
- Expand growing space when possible by removing concrete or cobblestones
- Leave remaining cobblestones unmortared or replace with permeable pavers

Post-Removal Steps (cont'd)

- Consider replacing concrete and cobblestone with low-growing, no-mow plants that tolerate foot traffic and allow water percolation
- Consider appropriately sized tree grates to preserve pedestrian space while providing water to soil below
- Consider tree guards (low fences) around the perimeter of tree pits to reduce soil compaction and shield trunks from physical damage. Tree guards can also provide a small, protected planting bed for gardening
- Consider raised planters at some sites to increase soil volume

Replacement

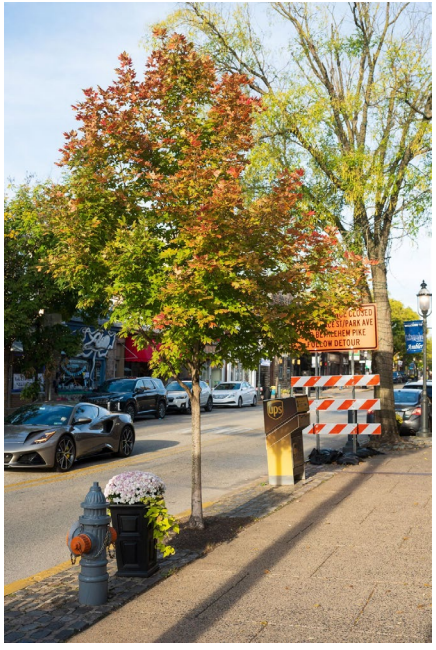
- Plant in fall if possible, to allow root establishment before summer stress
- Plant trees according to ISA Best Management Practices
- Select non-invasive species well-suited to street environments and site-specific conditions
- Prioritize species diversity for a more resilient canopy

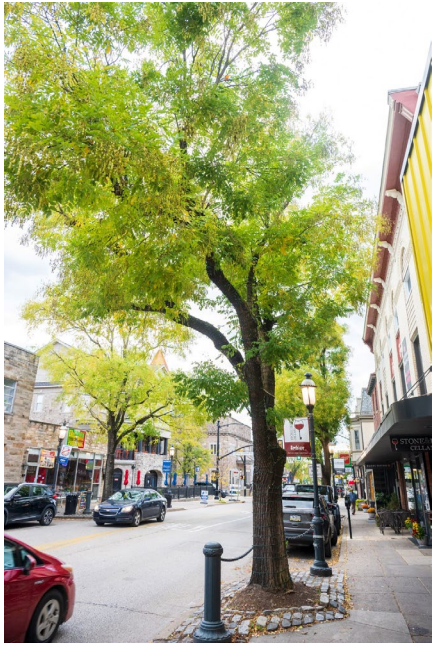
Aftercare

- Mulch newly planted trees according to new industry standards
- Schedule regular watering and monitoring until trees are established
- Partner with local businesses for tree adoption and care
- Organize volunteers for monitoring and minor maintenance
- Install attractive labels emphasizing each tree's importance and vulnerability

Trees Requiring Professional Assessment

Three trees should be evaluated by a professional arborist. These trees showed significant dieback and/or damage to the main trunk, limbs or roots





Trees Requiring Pruning

Twenty Six trees require major or minor pruning by a professional arborist. Priority should be given to larger trees that pose safety risks from falling limbs

Trees to be Monitored

Nineteen trees should be monitored. Most of these are Bradford Pear (an invasive species) that are prone to splitting

06

Planning for the Future

Street trees face greater stress than forest trees and require **thoughtful long-term planning**. The following general recommendations will help our community **maintain a healthy canopy** throughout the Borough.

Consult with an Independent Arborist

Refer major pruning to professionals

Provide training and guidebooks to staff

Select diverse and climate appropriate trees

Plant empty pits and find new sites

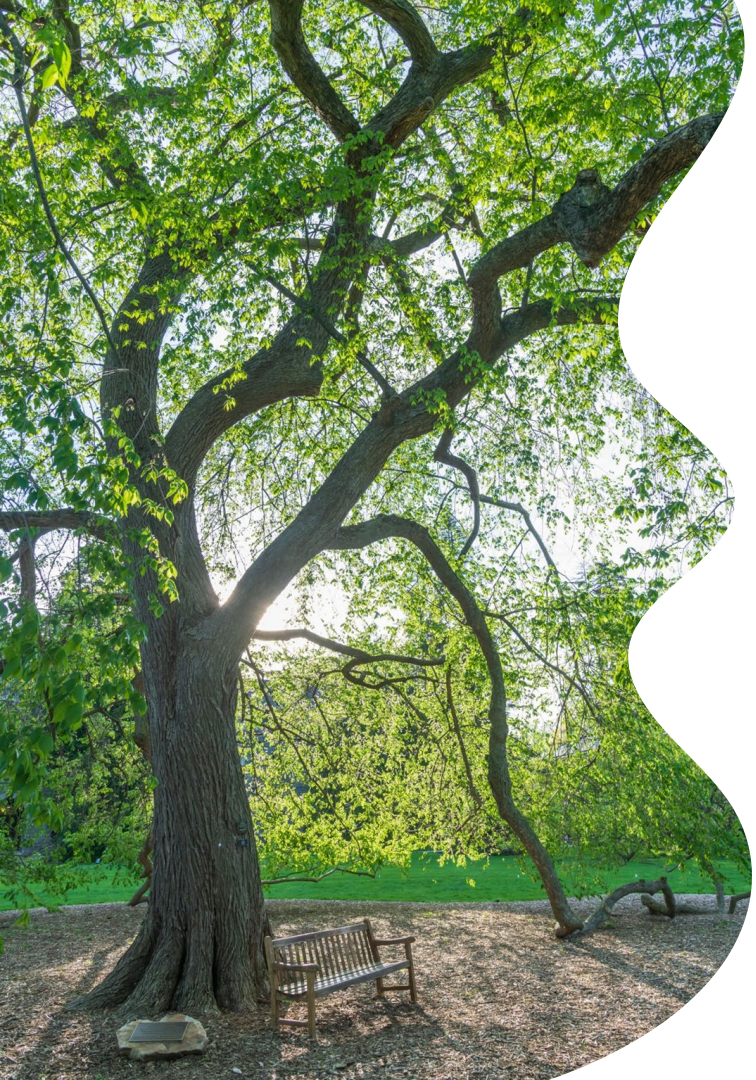
Expand growing areas for optimal tree health

Schedule regular watering in the growing season

Research safer decorating practices

Appoint a Tree Guardian

Develop an Implementation Timeline



Thanks!

Questions & Discussion

Acknowledgements

Current Ambler EAC members:

- Rob Cardillo (Tree Succession Plan Project Manager)
- WIll Nassau
- Mark Setman (Tree Committee Chair, Treasurer)
- Matt Walker (Chair)

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