



MUNICIPALITY OF PRINCETON

Planning Department

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MEMORANDUM

To: Princeton Mayor and Council
From: Nathan Foote, AICP, PP – Assistant Planning Director
Date: December 19th, 2025
Subject: **Ordinance #2025-19 Regarding Tree Removal Permit Requirements and Amending Chapters 22 and 10B of the “Code of the Township of Princeton, New Jersey, 1968”**

The Princeton Council referred Ordinance #2025-19 to the Planning Board for Master Plan consistency review pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:55D-26a. The Planning Board reviewed the ordinance in a regular meeting open to the public on December 18, 2025.

By a unanimous vote, the Board found Ordinance #2025-19 to be consistent with the Princeton Master Plan and recommended approval of the ordinance.

My memo to the Board is attached to this document.

Please reach out if there are any questions or concerns regarding the ordinance or the Planning Board's review.



MEMORANDUM

To: Princeton Planning Board
From: Nathan Foote, AICP, PP – Assistant Planning Director
Date: December 12th, 2025
Subject: **Ordinance #2025-19 Regarding Tree Removal Permit Requirements and Amending Chapters 22 and 10B of the “Code of the Township of Princeton, New Jersey, 1968”**
Council Introduction – November 24th, 2025

1. Introduction

The Princeton Council has referred Ordinance #2025-19 to the Planning Board for Master Plan consistency review pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:55D-26a. The ordinance was introduced on November 24th and is scheduled for a public hearing on December 22nd.

2. Ordinance Contents

The proposed ordinance makes the following changes to Chapter T22 Trees and Shrubs and Chapter T10B Land Use (the order below follows the order in the Ordinance). Additional details and rationales for the changes can be found in the November 14, 2025 Memorandum prepared by Deputy Administrator Deanna Stockton (“Stockton Memo”) and appended to this Memorandum.

1. **Section 22-2 Definitions:** Modifies some existing definitions and adds others, including for endangered species.
2. **Section 22-4 Powers and duties of the shade tree commission:** Slightly modifies the powers and duties of the shade tree commission so that they assist the enforcement officer in making annual reports.
3. **Section 22-11 Trees requiring permit before removal:**
 - a. Ensures that a tree removal permit is required before any person removes or destroys a tree for which such a permit is necessary.
 - b. Decreases the diameter at breast height (DBH) of trees requiring removal permits from 8 inches to 6 inches.
 - c. Adds endangered trees.
4. **Section 22-12 Exceptions:**
 - a. Waives the fee, tree replacement and notice requirements for excepted trees.
 - b. Modifies the exceptions to now require evidence be submitted to the enforcement officer demonstrating that a tree qualifies for an exception prior to its removal.
 - c. Removes exceptions for tree removals that are part of applications subject to review by the Planning Board, Zoning Board, or Historic Preservation Commission (or the preservation officer).

- d. Modifies the exception for infestation of Ash trees by the Emerald Ash Borer and provides an automatic nullification on October 24, 2026.

5. Section 22-13 Application for tree removal permit:

- a. Adds a statement that the requirements of Section 22-13 are in addition to other tree removal requirements including under Chapter T10B.
- b. Modifies the DBH ranges in the Tree Replacement Schedule.
- c. Adds a reference to the Princeton Shade Tree Trust Reserve and expands the projects for which the funds can be utilized based on Council resolution.
- d. Adds a statement that replacement trees shall be from the Princeton Recommended Species list and shall not be from a State Do Not Plant List.
- e. Increases the application fee from \$40 to \$100.

6. Section 22-14 Review of application for tree removal; decision on application; time requirements; expiration:

- a. Adds a tree's status as an endangered species to the list of factors to consider in granting or denying a tree removal application.
- b. Removes the automatic approval of the removal permit if the enforcement officer does not act within 20 business days of receipt of the application.

7. Section 22-16 Violations and penalties; informal resolution and formal complaint procedures: Clarifies and enhances the informal resolution process, including the timeline for the shade tree commission to review and make recommendations when a person does not agree with the enforcement officer's recommendation.

8. Section 22-17 Annual report: Modifies to indicate that the shade tree commission assists the enforcement officer in generating the annual report and includes the progress toward items in the Princeton Community Forestry Management Plan as a requirement element of the report.

9. Section 10B-227A Tree Preservation, protection and mitigation:

- a. Modifies to refer to relevant sections of Chapter T22 Trees and Shrubs.
- b. Adds endangered species/trees.
- c. Adds references to the municipal engineer's designee.
- d. Streamlines and clarifies monetary contribution section and refers to relevant section of Chapter T22.

3. Master Plan Consistency

Ordinance 2025-19 is substantially consistent with the 2023 Princeton Master Plan, including several goals across multiple Elements of the Plan. One of the key findings from community input in the Introduction section of the plan is that the “natural environment is a treasured asset” (pg. 9). Certainly, the existing trees that would be subject to the modified Chapters T22 and T10B are important elements of that natural environment. The Vision statement includes that Princeton will be “liveable, beautiful, healthy, and accessible” and “sustainable, resilient, and carbon neutral” (pg. 17). Ensuring that existing trees with a DBH of 6 inches and higher are maintained or replaced will enhance the livability and beauty of Princeton, and the effects of the canopy on reducing heat at ground level will help keep Princeton sustainable.

The Ordinance is substantially consistent with the following Goals identified in the Master Plan:

1. **Land Use Goal #8: Improve resiliency to climate change and natural hazards.** The Ordinance enhances tree protection and removal mitigation, which helps reduce heat-related problems at the ground level.
2. **Natural Resource Conservation Goal #52: Coordinate preservation and development to accommodate population growth while preserving and enhancing natural resources.** The Ordinance enhances preservation of a natural resource (trees) while still allowing for mitigation for impacts of permitted development.
3. **Natural Resource Conservation Goal #57: Manage nuisance and invasive species to protect native ecosystems and restore natural vegetation.** The Ordinance includes provisions for preventing invasive species (as identified by the New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team) from being used as replacement trees.
4. **Natural Resource Conservation Goal #59: Preserve and enhance existing visual resources such as scenic corridors, tree-lined streets, historic landscapes, open agricultural land, and woodlands.** Trees are important elements of the visual resources of the Municipality. The Ordinance enhances tree protection and removal mitigation, thus helping to preserve the visual landscape of corridors, streets, and woodlands.
5. **Open Space and Recreation Goal #69: Reduce the threats to the natural environment from pests, disease, and non-native invasive species.** The Ordinance includes provisions for preventing invasive species (as identified by the New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team) from being used as replacement trees.

The Board shall determine if they find the ordinance consistent with the Master Plan and provide any comments to Council.