

# City of Cambridge

## Executive Department

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City Manager

CMA 2025 #281  
**IN CITY COUNCIL**  
November 24, 2025

To the Honorable, the City Council:

I am writing in response to Awaiting Report #25-56, which requested that the Inspectional Services Department submit an update on Rodent Control in the City of Cambridge. The attached report outlines the Department's collaborative and holistic approach to rodent control efforts in the City.

Very truly yours,

Yi-An Huang  
City Manager





**CITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE**

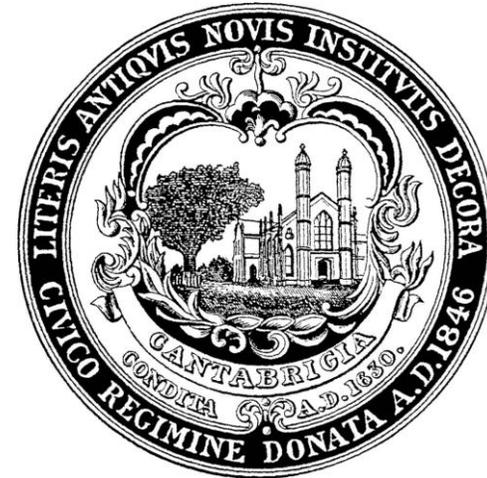
## **Rodent Control Updates**



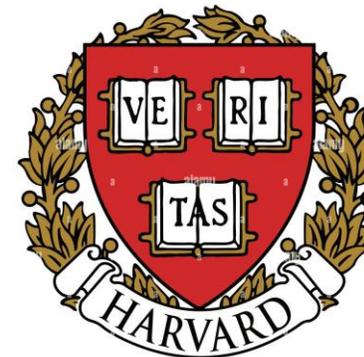
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# Rodent Control

- Rats are a complex community wide issue that can only be solved through a comprehensive strategy and community partnership.
- A community-based approach in coordination with a multi-departmental response is the best approach to try and limit the overall rodent activity in the city. ISD supports the zero-waste plan as it reduces access to food waste.
- The City utilizes the latest technologies and information available to provide the safest elimination strategy possible. We now require SGAR free rodenticides when rodenticides are used. Lastly, the city promotes Integrated Pest Management (IPM) through waste reduction and exclusion efforts.
- We are ready to assist any property to understand their role in rodent control and guide them towards a solution. We have increased efforts to reach individual property owners through the Private Property Program.
- Rodent Task Force comprised ISD, DPW, neighboring cities, Harvard, and Public Health



Cambridge  
Public Health  
Department



# The Problem with Rats

## Why we need to reduce rats

- Carry and spread disease
- Cause anxiety in many people
- Unsightly and can negatively impact a neighborhood

## Why are rats able to thrive?

- Constant food sources and protective harborage

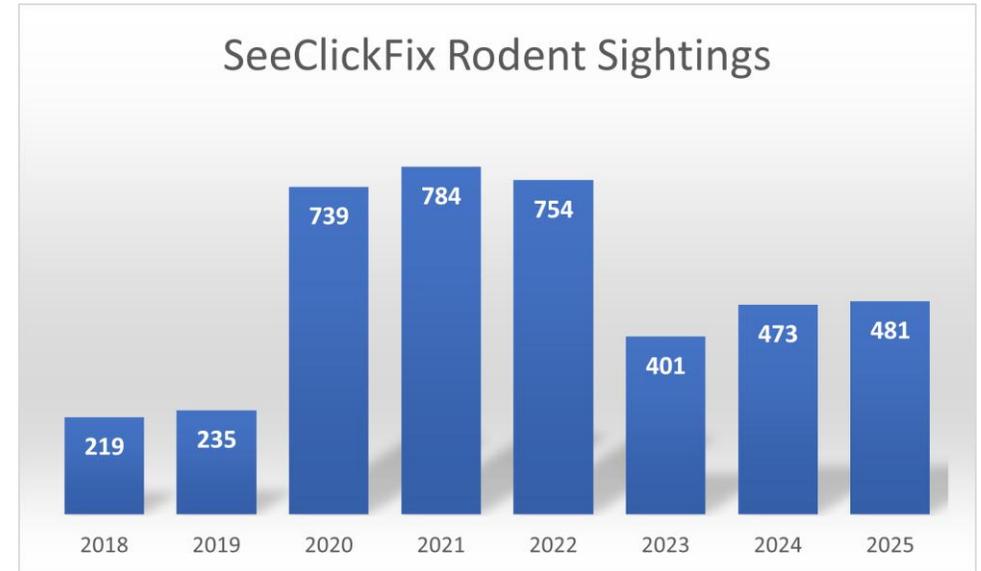


## What are challenges to address the issue?

- Overflowing trash
- Overgrowth promoting burrowing activity
- Rodent harborage accessibility
- Limited inspector access to private property
- Frequent turnover in residency
- Coordinating efforts in neighborhoods by fostering cooperation between neighbors

# Rodent Sightings

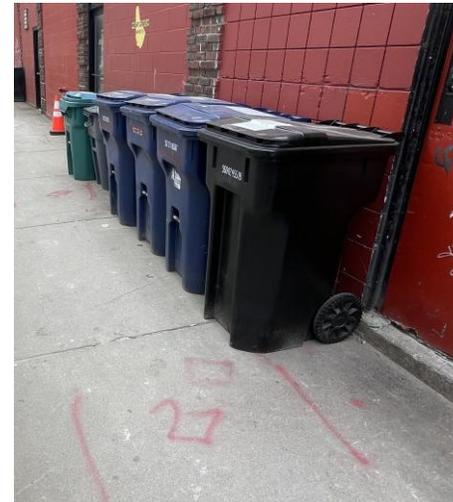
- Citizen reporting of rodent sightings is critical to initiating a control program.
- We are trending only slightly higher for this calendar year over last.
- 96% of all reports were inspected within 4 business days of the initial complaint compared to 88% last year.



\*2025 sightings projected as of 11/5/25

# Rodent Control Efforts on Public Property

- Extermination in Parks, Playgrounds and City Building exteriors is managed by Public Works.
- Installation complete on 200 new Big Belly units plus repairs & service to 286 existing Big Belly units. Once installation is completed, there will be 530 units. All wrought iron open top receptacles will be eliminated.
- 23,000 trash carts provided and in service for three years.
- Curbside food waste collection removes 9 tons of food waste per day.
- Ensuring proper storage and set out of residential trash and compost plays a key role in rodent reduction.



# Participatory Budget

- Installed 50 SMART Boxes at schools and Housing Authority locations.
- Chose these locations due to the high food waste in these locations.
- Additional boxes to be added in '26-'27.
- Residents can follow along on the number of rats caught by PB SMART Boxes on Open Data.



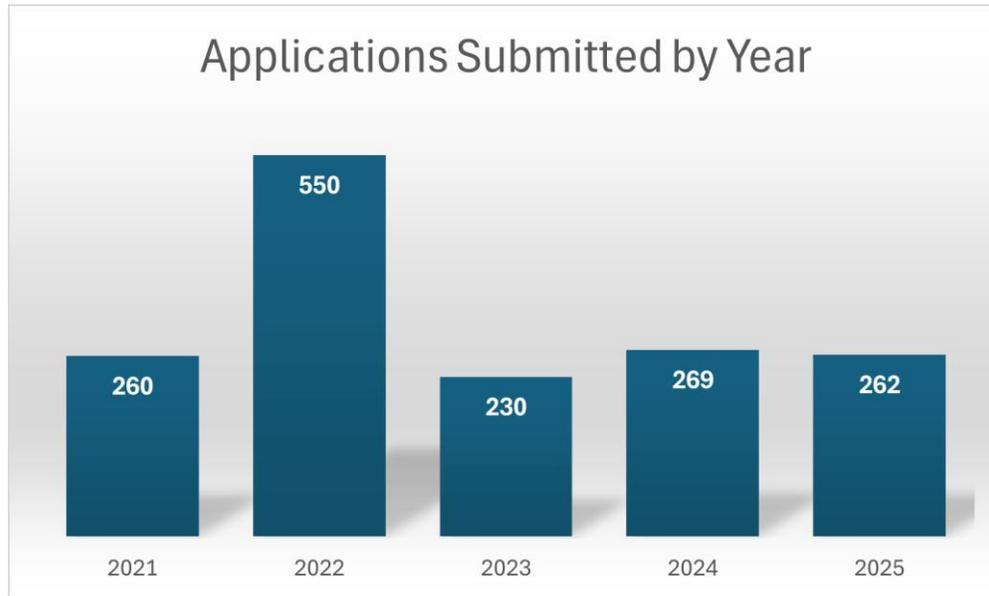
# Private Property

- Massachusetts State Sanitary Code requires extermination when rodent activity is present.
- ISD inspectors conduct inspections and cite property owners to correct rodent activity **AND** correct conducive conditions (IPM)
  - Provide tips to prevent rodent activity
  - Work with restaurants to ensure of proper trash disposal and overall sanitary conditions
  - Inspect construction sites for cleanliness
  - Inspect all licensed dumpster (food establishments, apartment buildings etc)



# Private Property Rodent Control Program

- Housing with 4-units or fewer can receive Free Rodent Control Services for up to 60 days.
- Over 1,500 applications since 2021.
- 74% of participating properties have been deemed resolved.
- Contractor can use non-rodenticide options if the resident prefers.



## PRIVATE PROPERTY RODENT CONTROL PROGRAM



# Construction Project Rodent Control

- Rodent control on Private and Public projects
  - Private property
    - Full demolition requires submission of an inspection and service plan for the duration of the demolition and rebuild.
    - Large projects or projects with partial demolition are also required to submit service plan.
    - All other private property projects especially ones that have a dumpster associated with it are inspected for cleanliness, proper dumpster use, evidence of rodents.
    - Any construction site that a rat was reported seen on or near is inspected and ordered to get rodent control service plan if deemed necessary.
  - Public projects
    - Rodent control required and must follow the restriction on SGAR's. Preferred method of rodent control on public project sites is trapping. Capital projects office shares reports from exterminator.



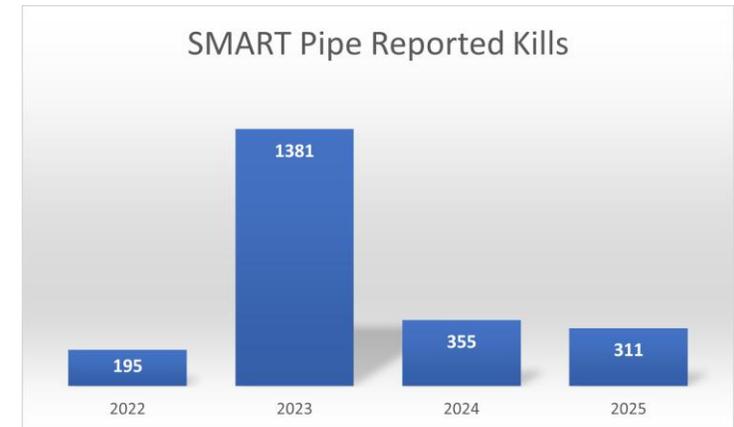
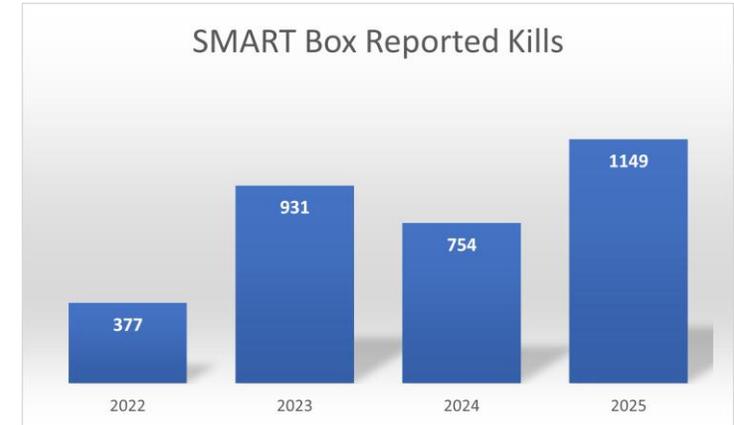
## Recent Initiatives

- Collaborate with Harvard Square Business Association and Harvard University to improve trash management and storage in Harvard Sq. area. Plan underway to develop and present “best practice” for trash management and expand to other neighborhood groups
- A Rodent Infertility trial is underway to study the efficacy of this treatment approach as a part of an overall plan to decrease the reliance on Second Generation Anti-Coagulants. We expect to have a report from Cambridge Public Health soon.
- As of June 2025, Second-Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides are prohibited on public property.
- Increase outreach through Communications office to increase Private Property Rodent Control participation.



# Smart Boxes and Smart Pipes Data

- Smart Box: Non-rodenticide electronic trap maintained by vendor.
- Smart Pipe: Electronic trap maintained by vendor and deployed in sewers.
- Vendor sends weekly reports of rodents caught. All data is uploaded to OpenData platform.
- Boxes provided by Participatory Budgeting in 2024 accounted for 28.7% of all SMART Box kills for the year.



Questions?