



**SYNOPSIS**

**Committee: Health, Environment, and Technology**

**City Council Resolution: 21-0070R**

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**Informational Hearing - Soil Conservation in Baltimore City**

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**Sponsor:** Councilmember McCray, et al

**Introduced:** October 4, 2021

**Purpose:**

For the purpose of inviting representatives from the Department of Planning, Department of Public Works, Department of Recreation and Parks, Office of Sustainability, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Control Board to address their current roles in soil conservation and urban agriculture and servicing Baltimore City's farmers.

**Effective:** Upon enactment

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**AGENCY REPORTS**

Office of Sustainability	
Environmental Control Board	Comments
Dept. of Recreation and Parks	Favorable with Amendment
Dept. of Public Works	
Dept. of Transportation	
Dept. of Planning	
Dept. of Housing and Community Development	
City Solicitor	Favorable

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## **ANALYSIS**

The resolution invites representatives from the Department of Planning, Department of Public Works, Department of Recreation and Parks, Office of Sustainability, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Control Board to discuss their current roles in soil conservation and urban agriculture and servicing Baltimore City's farmers.

Nation-wide efforts to conserve agriculturally productive soils began in the 1930s amid growing concern about the impacts of soil erosion and the Dust Bowl – a period of drought and severe dust storms in the Southern Plains region of the United States. Owners of agricultural land are encouraged, and in some instances required, to have Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans. The plans recommend best management practices, such as no-till planting and vegetated buffers along waterways, to address soil erosion and water quality problems. Farmers are generally not required to implement the recommended practices, but farmers who choose to do so are often eligible for significant technical and financial assistance from federal and state agencies.

Soil conservation efforts have largely focused on traditional agricultural land, but many of the practices and programs can be utilized in urban agriculture. Urban agriculture generally refers to the cultivation, processing, and distribution of agricultural products in urban and suburban settings. Urban agriculture includes community gardens and farms, aquaculture, hydroponics, and many other activities. The benefits of urban agriculture can include reusing vacant properties, increasing food access, and creating new opportunities for education and employment.

Maryland's soil conservation efforts also extend to protecting water bodies from sediment pollution resulting from non-agricultural clearing and grading. State law requires Erosion and Sediment Control (ESC) Plans for most grading and building permits. Developers are required to implement applicable ESC plans and violations can result in civil or criminal penalties.

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Fiscal Note:** None

**Information Source(s):** Natural Resources Conservation Service, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Maryland Department of the Environment, Reporting Agencies, Resolution 21-0070R

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