


Lisa McNeilly

FROM	NAME & TITLE	LISA MCNEILLY, Director of Sustainability	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET, 8 th FLOOR		
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL #20-0546 – Natural Resources – Forest and Tree Conservation		

DATE:

TO

Members of the City Council
City Hall, Room 400
100 North Holliday Street

The Office of Sustainability is in receipt of City Council Bill #20-0546 for the purpose of amending the Forest and Tree Conservation provisions of Article 7 of the Baltimore City Code to comply with new State requirements, to coordinate with other City environmental requirements, and to align the Code with existing policy;..., etc.

The 2019 Sustainability Plan (formally adopted on April 22, 2019) addresses the importance of preserving the city's existing tree canopy, including trees and forests on public and private property. The plan recognizes three strategies and six actions that support the protection and long-term health of trees and forests. The development of so many related actions reflects the value that trees and forests provide in supporting physical and mental health, creating livable communities, contributing to the economy, and providing a healthy environment for both people and wildlife. The specific excerpts from the Plan are:

Nature for Nature's Sake

Strategy #3. Increase the acreage of maintained and protected land.

Action 2: Identify mechanisms to ensure protection and maintenance of habitat areas on public and private lands, in perpetuity.

Trees and Forests

Strategy #2. Assess and manage the city's tree canopy for long-term health.

Action 3: Develop unified, long-term strategies to increase support and funding for managing forests and forest patches, and for planting and caring for trees.

Strategy #3. Preserve the city's existing tree canopy.

Action 1: Classify trees and forests as public infrastructure, similar to (and as valued as) sidewalks and streetlights.

Action 2: Adopt a tree ordinance to preserve trees and forests on public and private property.

Action 3: Investigate the creation of a forest land-banking credit program and other methods for supporting and promoting forest preservation, such as land trusts and permanent easements.

Action 4: Investigate a mechanism for monitoring long-term forest protection on public and private property to preserve and improve the health of forests.

The Office of Sustainability supports the changes made in this bill to update the forest conservation code to incorporate existing policy, comply with new State requirements, and coordinate with other City environmental requirements. These changes provide increased clarity and transparency to the code and will help to ensure that forests and trees are an integral part of the site planning process.

To provide clarity of the intent of a few sections of the bill, the Office of Sustainability proposes the following amendments (in addition to amendments recommended by the Planning Commission):

- Under §41-4. 2. on page 5, line 24, add “subject to this Division IV” following “All subdivision or development plan approvals”.
- Under §41-4. 2. on page 5, lines 25 and 26, add “subject to this Division IV” following “All grading or building permits”.
- Under §44-8. A. 6. II on page 12, lines 21-25, replace the text with the following: A new forest conservation plan identifying the proposed easement modification(s); the plan must demonstrate that the proposed modifications enhance or have no adverse effect on public safety and the public benefit, and enhance or appropriately offset any adverse effect on the conservation attributes of the property.

The Office of Sustainability recommends approval of City Council Bill # 20-0546 with the above amendments.

cc: Mr. Nicholas Blendy, Mayor’s Office
Mr. Matthew Stegman, Mayor’s Office
Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor’s Office
Ms. Natawna Austin, Council Services
Mr. Dominic McAlily, Council Services
Mr. Chris Ryer, Department of Planning