


FROM	NAME & TITLE	AVA RICHARDSON, DIRECTOR	CITY of BALTIMORE <b>MEMO</b>	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY 8 <sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET		
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL #23-0465/ Tree Removal on City Property – Permits and Procedure		

DATE:

TO

The Honorable President and  
 Members of the City Council  
 City Hall, Room 400  
 100 North Holliday Street  
**Position: Support**

January 17, 2024

The Office of Sustainability is in receipt of City Council Bill #23-0465 – Tree Removal on City Property – Permit and Procedure. CCB#23-0465 advances goals of preserving Baltimore City’s urban tree canopy by setting more standards for the removal of trees on city-owned property, providing greater protections for our existing trees. More specifically, this bill establishes clearer requirements for authorized tree removal along certain rights-of-way, ensuring greater protection of Baltimore’s existing tree canopy, and codifies existing Department of Recreation and Parks review practices for development that are not yet reflected in City Code.

**The Office of Sustainability recommends approval of CCB#23-0465**

Maryland’s Forest Conservation Act, and Baltimore City’s local legislation in compliance with the state law, protects individual trees and forests associated with development projects occurring within Baltimore City outside of public rights-of-way. However, no specific legislative protections currently exist for individual trees that are not located within these areas.

Article 7, Division V, Subtitle 53 of the Baltimore City Code authorizes the Department of Recreation and Parks to initiate and maintain programs of “planting and caring for trees along streets, alleys, lanes, and other public ways and in parks, squares, and other public places.” This ordinance relies on that authority to establish protections of City-owned trees. For years, the Department has required inch-for-inch replacement of trees removed on park land and within the right-of-way and has accepted a fee-in-lieu of planting when planting is not possible on a given site. However, neither of these practices are reflected in the City Code. In addition to codifying these practices, this bill further specifies the procedure for tree removal mitigation on land operated by the Department of Recreation and Parks.

Trees, especially those located along streets, are essential to healthy, vibrant communities in Baltimore City - they buffer noise, soften hard edges, provide shade in the summer and a buffer against wind in the winter, filter the air to improve air quality, slow and absorb storm water serving a nature-based flood mitigation infrastructure and even reduce incidences of crime. Despite the many benefits trees, and especially older, more mature trees provide, the city’s tree canopy is perennially threatened. Trees located on City Property are City assets providing community and citywide benefits to Baltimore and they should be treated as such. This bill

codifies additional protections of these City trees, further protecting them for years to come and contributing to the City's overall tree canopy.

Baltimore's tree canopy currently stands at 28% coverage, with a citywide goal to reach a 40% tree canopy coverage by 2037. The 2019 Sustainability Plan (formally adopted by the Planning Commission on April 22, 2019) addresses urban trees in multiple chapters, including one dedicated to "Trees and Forests." Specifically, the Plan includes two actions related to this bill:

- 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 street lights.
- Strategy #3. Preserve the city's existing tree canopy.
  - Action 2: Adopt a tree ordinance to preserve trees and forests on public and private property in support of the preservation of the city's existing tree canopy.

The Office of Sustainability recommends **approval** of City Council Bill #23-0465, as it aligns with actions outlined in the Sustainability Plan to preserve the city's existing tree canopy.

Please contact Ava Richardson, Sustainability Director, at 410-396-8630 or [ava.richardson@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:ava.richardson@baltimorecity.gov) with questions regarding this bill report.

cc: Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office  
The Honorable Mark Conway, Councilmember, District 4  
The Honorable Phylicia Porter, Council Representative to the Commission on Sustainability  
The Honorable Danielle McCray, Chair of the Health, Environment, and Technology Committee  
Ms. Jenny Morgan, BCRP  
Ms. Natawna Austin, Council Services