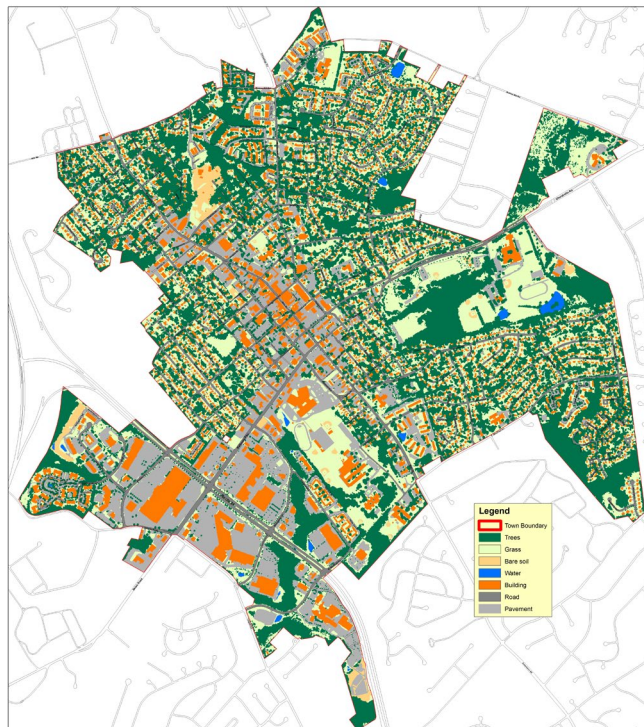


Town of Bel Air

Community Forestry Program

2023 Work Plan

Protecting Bel Air's Urban Tree Canopy



30 Years as a Tree City USA

Purpose of the Work Plan

The purpose of this annual Work Plan is to establish goals and prioritize budgetary items to assure continued Tree City USA recognition from the National Arbor Day Foundation, and to provide necessary guidance to maintain and enhance the Town’s urban tree canopy. Since its inception in 1992, the Town of Bel Air Tree Committee has worked to create a sustainable community forestry program that meets or exceeds the minimum requirements necessary to garner Tree City USA status. The Committee established a Tree Ordinance, created an annual Arbor Day observance, and has been tasked with the review, design, and implementation of public land and roadside tree planting projects.



2022 Community Forestry Program Highlights

The Town Tree Committee continued its efforts to both preserve and enhance the Town’s urban tree canopy. The Committee was proactive in promoting and coordinating residential street tree plantings, and designing and implementing commercial corridor street tree plans. The group was reactive to all requests for tree planting and maintenance education and appropriate species selection. The Committee maintained a full membership (five (5) appointed members and a liaison from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forest Service), and met eight times during the calendar year.

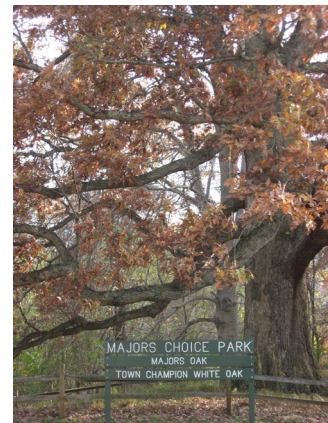


Along with Tree City USA recognition the Town received the PLANT Award from the Maryland Urban and Community Forest Committee. Although the requirements for this award have changed somewhat since its creation, the Town again received the highest level awarded – the Green Award – as a Tree City USA recipient. The Committee worked through most of 2017 to revise the

Tree Ordinance, and the document was enacted in April 2018. As part of its annual Arbor Day observation, Committee members provided tree seedlings at the first Farmers Market. Informational brochures on proper tree planting, mulching and maintenance were also provided.

Two decades ago the Committee established a Memorial Tree Grove to provide tree planting opportunities for those wishing to establish living memorials. The Grove was recently expanded, and the Town accepted several tree planting requests. A Residential Roadside Street Tree Program – established several years ago to provide free street tree plantings by request to repopulate available roadside tree planting areas in residential communities – resulted in multiple street tree plantings. The Program is sustainable (through forest conservation fee-in-lieu funds) and can fund all requests annually for the foreseeable future.

A number of years ago the Committee made special arrangements to preserve and protect the Major’s Oak, the Town’s champion White Oak tree located in the 300 block of North Shamrock Road. The tree was trimmed in 2022, and deadwood was removed.



The presence of the Emerald Ash Borer has made headlines throughout the State. The Committee utilized the street tree inventory to determine what impact the borer may pose on the Town’s street tree population. It was determined that any remedial action necessary will be minimal.



Objectives and Requirements for 2023

Arbor Day 2023

The Committee will provide trees donated by the Forest Conservancy District Board for Harford County at the first Saturday Farmers Market in April. This effort is coordinated with help from the Maryland DNR Forest Service and the Master Gardeners of Harford County. The Committee plans to have 400 seedlings of various native species available for area residents along with information on proper planting locations and planting techniques. The Committee will also provide proper tree care brochures and wildflower packets to assist interested residents in establishing their own backyard forest habitat.

Promotion of the Town's Urban Tree Canopy Sustainability Goal

The Committee has set a goal to maintain the Town's urban canopy percentage (~37%) by designing and implementing tree planting and protection projects. With a majority of the existing rights-of-way void of canopy coverage, the Committee will continue to promote the Residential Street Tree Planting Program. The Program provides free road-side tree planting to Town residents by request if a proper planting site exists. The Committee will investigate development of an app-based application for residents' use that will utilize GPS coordinates to inform the Planning Department when and where trees are planted on private property. This application will also be adapted for street tree planting requests. The Committee will also continue to investigate planting opportunities on public and private lands, and plantings associated with stormwater management projects.

Champion Tree List

In the mid-1990s the Committee promoted a program to recognize and record the largest tree of select species in Town. The Committee will use its resources to maintain the list this coming year. Additional tree species worthy of note will be added, and as applicable an updated list will be published on the Town's web site.

Budget Considerations

Tree City USA recognition requires minimum budget standards be met based on a community's population. Currently the annual minimum community forestry budget must meet or exceed \$2.00 per capita. The Department of Public Works provides for street and park tree maintenance and removal through a budgeted line item. In addition to this line item the Town currently provides in-kind tree maintenance support through two Town positions – Facilities Manager (DPW) and Senior Planner (Planning). Along with expenditures through the Forest Conservation fee-in-lieu fund the Town consistently provides more than \$4.00 per capita per year.

The Tree Committee was formed at a time when forest canopy requirements were being established state-wide. The creation of the State's Forest Conservation Act of 1991 mandated minimum forest canopy coverage requirements for redevelopment requests and provided a fee-in-lieu funding mechanism in cases where preservation or replacement of tree canopy was determined to be difficult or unwarranted. The Committee has been able to sustain a viable tree planting program since 1992 using funds collected through forest conservation fee-in-lieu. Approved development plans in commercial districts of Town have recently increased the size of the fund and should provide necessary funding for public tree planting plans for the foreseeable future. Although the fee-in-lieu fund may be used for street tree maintenance, the fund has been

used primarily to fund new plantings.

The Department of Public Works has a budget line item of \$35,000.00 per year for tree maintenance and removal requests. Monies are used almost exclusively for trimming and removal of trees located in public rights-of-way. Over the past several years the Town has contracted for the removal of more than 50 street trees for reasons ranging from hazardous conditions to infrastructure impacts. Although the Committee solicits requests for residential street tree planting, the Town has not been able to replace street tree removals on a one-to-one basis in residential areas. Often this is due to the proximity of underground or overhead utilities.

There are two (2) Town positions that either prefer or require Roadside Tree Expert Certification in the job description. Both positions have been filled with individuals holding Roadside Tree Expert Certification. By having a Roadside Tree Expert employed by the Town, all supervision of roadside tree maintenance (including trimming, removal and planting) can be performed by Town staff through the issuance of a Blanket Roadside Tree Permit by the Forest Service. Without a Certified Tree Expert on staff, every street tree maintenance project requires the issuance of a separate permit through the Forest Service's roadside tree permit process. The Town should continue to prioritize the need to train one or more current employees capable of obtaining and maintaining certification.

Continuing Partnerships

The Tree Committee maintains an excellent working relationship with the Maryland DNR Forest Service and has been partnering with the Harford County Forestry Board on the annual Arbor Day celebration and various tree planting projects. The Committee also enjoys the support of the Harford County Master Gardeners at the annual Arbor Day tree give-away during the first Farmers Market. The Committee will continue these partnerships in its efforts to meet urban tree canopy goals.

