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Maryland's Historically Underserved Urban Communities Receive \$8.9 Million to Plant 22,000 New Trees

The Chesapeake Bay Trust (Bay Trust) continues to empower everyday people to restore nature, this time through local grants for community-led tree planting efforts. With funding from the State of Maryland and BGE, the Chesapeake Bay Trust announces over \$8,910,000 awarded to 31 community organizations to plant nearly 22,000 new trees in urban, historically underserved areas across Maryland. The Urban Trees Program was created by the Maryland General Assembly's Tree Solutions Now Act of 2021, which calls for five million trees to be planted across Maryland by 2031, 500,000 of them targeted to urban, underserved areas. The Bay Trust, the organization known for managing funds from the "Protect the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays" vehicle license plate program and other streams of revenue, has long empowered local communities through its grantmaking and was tapped in the Act to serve as the administrator of the urban component.

Urban trees provide various benefits to human health, climate, the economy, and the environment. Yet some urban communities are severely lacking in tree coverage, contributing to heat island effects, exacerbating asthma and other health issues, and reducing the overall quality of life. Providing resources through ground-up, community-based grants empowers people to own this piece of community improvement, leading to sustainability.

"With this investment, Maryland is showing that environmental resilience is economic resilience," said **Comptroller Brooke E. Lierman**. "Trees clean our air, manage stormwater, lower energy costs, and keep our communities cooler. They also make neighborhoods more attractive to families and businesses, which raises property values and brings in new investment. I was proud to vote for this funding from my seat on the Board of Public Works and to help expand the tree canopy across Maryland. Marylanders will feel the benefits of these trees for generations."

This is the fifth year of grants awarded through the Urban Trees Program. Funding over nine years will be distributed by the Bay Trust to communities, neighborhoods, civic groups, schools, and others who commit to planting trees in regions defined in the legislation. Awards are reserved for urban census tracts that have low median household incomes, high unemployment rates, were historically redlined, or were used for public housing projects.

In addition to thousands of new tree plantings, this year the Bay Trust is implementing the first round of a new pilot Nursery Program to increase the diversity and resilience of Maryland's urban tree canopy. The program will expand access to 36 less commonly available native tree species, helping communities

plant a broader range of trees better suited to urban environments. The Bay Trust partnered with the University of Maryland Extension to identify priority species and contracted three local nurseries to grow more than 7,000 trees for fall 2026 and spring 2027 plantings. These trees were matched with grant projects through the Urban Trees Program, expanding the diversity of species planted across Maryland's urban communities. Another 5,000 trees are currently being grown for the 2029 planting season.

"Studies show that trees planted in urban communities improve the physical and mental health of people within their proximity and the Urban Trees Program gets to the heart of the issue," said **Valencia McClure, senior vice president of Governmental, Regulatory and External Affairs at Exelon for BGE, Delmarva Power and Pepco**. "BGE is proud to support this innovative approach to expanding the urban tree canopy, giving resources to local organizations that are leading on-the-ground actions to improve their communities."

As part of this round of funding, communities will begin planting trees this fall, focusing on areas such as vacant lots and streets where native trees and tree canopy are scarce. These trees will help to reduce the urban heat island effect, filter polluted stormwater, mitigate the effect of carbon emissions, reduce energy consumption and therefore energy bills, and improve air quality. Increasing tree quantity and quality in urban areas is a cost-effective way to strengthen the health of the Chesapeake Bay, provide urban wildlife habitat, help mitigate flooding issues, and stimulate local green job opportunities, enabling families to work where they live and play.

"Every tree planted through the Urban Trees Program is improving hundreds of lives and our environment at the same time," said **Kacey Wetzel, president of the Chesapeake Bay Trust**. "This statewide planting effort is ensuring all Maryland communities have access to healthy natural resources for generations to come."

2026 Projects Supported Through the Urban Trees Program:

The 6th Branch, Baltimore City - \$200,533 to increase tree canopy in Oliver, Broadway East, Johnston Square, Darley Park, and Market Center, including the installation of a Miyawaki micro-forest.

Joe's Movement Emporium/World Arts Focus, Prince George's County - \$402,000 to support the CreativeWorks job training curriculum and plant trees across Capitol Heights, District Heights, Bladensburg, Mount Rainier, Cheverly, Cottage City, Colmar Manor, and Suitland.

Baltimore Tree Trust (BTT), Baltimore City - \$1,007,613 for the Neighborhood Forestry Initiative to plant and maintain trees throughout West and Southwest Baltimore City.

EcoLatinos, Inc., Prince George's County - \$199,999 to support tree planting and the Equitable Landscaping Training program.

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Howard County, and Prince George's County - \$193,084 to plant trees at faith-based institutions, schools and public spaces.

Prince George's County Department of Public Works & Transportation, Prince George's County - \$1,000,000 for tree plantings and road beautification through the Right Tree, Right Place program.

Prince George's County, Maryland, *Prince George's County* - \$1,582,000 to plant native trees on municipally owned, institutional, and residential properties.

Blue Water Baltimore, *Baltimore City* - \$200,000 to plant native street trees across four Baltimore neighborhoods: Belair-Edison, Howard Park, Morrell Park, and Johnston Square.

Harford County, Maryland, *Harford County* - \$117,339 to plant trees at schools and residences through the Aberdeen and Edgewood Tree Planting project.

City of Hagerstown, *Washington County* - \$50,000 to plant trees throughout the city.

Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, *Baltimore City* - \$1,503,125 to plant and maintain trees within the right-of-way citywide and on other properties.

Global Health and Education Projects, Inc., *Prince George's County* - \$202,286 to plant trees through their Family Tree Adoption Program.

Vietnamese American Services (VAS), *Montgomery County* - \$44,915 to plant trees across 20 residential properties in Silver Spring, Burtonsville, Germantown, Lanham, and Hyattsville.

Greater Remington Improvement Association, *Baltimore City* - \$200,000 to plant trees in Central Baltimore.

Montgomery County, Maryland, *Montgomery County* - \$722,150 to plant urban shade trees at schools, public properties, and residences.

Live Peace Tech Corporation, *Montgomery County and Prince George's County* - \$235,660 to support the Restoring Roots: A Native Tree Planting Initiative.

Howard EcoWorks, *Baltimore County and Howard County* - \$113,103 to plant native trees in the Baltimore region.

Pikesville Armory Foundation Inc., *Baltimore County* - \$50,000 to plant trees at the Pikesville Armory campus.

Let's Thrive Baltimore, *Baltimore City* - \$35,000 to support the Tree of Hope & Remembrance project (TOHR).

Defensores de la Cuenca, *Prince George's County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County, Talbot County, and Frederick County* - \$210,614 to plant and sustain climate-resilient trees across Maryland.

EcoLatinos Inc., - *Prince George's County* - \$37,250 to establish a Forestry Advisory Committee and plant native trees.

Vietnamese American Services, *Montgomery County* - \$30,000 to support a bilingual integrated community forestry project and tree plantings.

The 6th Branch, Baltimore City - \$140,000 to support tree plantings and the development of five community-based tree stewardship programs.

City of Gaithersburg, Montgomery County - \$204,420 to reforest Diamond Farms Park.

Baltimore Tree Trust, Baltimore City - \$18,000 to support tree plantings with a workforce development program and provide training in tree care and maintenance.

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, Statewide - \$72,000 to support trees planted through the Trees for Sacred Places program.

National Audubon Society, Baltimore City - \$44,143 to support reforestation to improve ecosystem health for migratory birds and adjacent neighborhoods.

Mobilize Frederick, Frederick County - \$32,500 to engage residents in urban forestry and tree plantings in the City of Frederick.

City of Takoma Park, Montgomery County - \$56,000 to plant trees through the Tree Takoma program in areas affected by traffic-related air pollution and extreme urban heat.

Blue Swallow Farm Foundation, Washington County - \$2,000 to support tree plantings, education and workforce development in urban and community forestry.

Banner Neighborhoods Community Corporation, Baltimore City - \$4,800 to plant trees in Collington Square's vacant lots.

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About the Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Chesapeake Bay Trust (www.cbtrust.org) envisions a restored and protected Chesapeake Bay watershed and other natural resources in our area, from the Coastal Bays to the Chesapeake to the Youghiogheny River. We empower local community-based groups on the ground with the resources they need to take on a meaningful and measurable role in restoring forests, streams, rivers, bays, wildlife, and more in their own communities. Every year, the Bay Trust empowers about 400 groups by providing grants and technical assistance to accomplish environmental education, community outreach, and local watershed restoration projects. The Bay Trust is supported by the sale of the Protect the Chesapeake & Coastal Bays license plate; donations to the Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species Fund on the Maryland State income tax form; donations made by hunters, fishers, and boaters in the Maryland online natural resource licensing system; donations from individuals and corporations; and partnerships with private foundations and federal, state, and local governments. The Bay Trust has received the highest rating from Charity Navigator for over two decades. On average, 92 cents of every dollar are directed to the Trust's restoration and education programs.