

Conservation Montgomery

April 7, 2026 - Hearing - Operating Budget - Fiscal Year 2027 - Montgomery County Council

DEP Grant Program - It has been estimated that 80% of our county tree cover is located on private property. We have been offering Home Tree Care 101 since 2012. A well-received, practical approach and one of Conservation Montgomery's signature programs for the public. The average satisfaction rate among class participants is 93%. The program is consistent with the county's climate change goals and for sustaining tree canopy. It is cost-effective as there is an exponential effect. One homeowner who takes the class will easily turn around and tell 10 other county residents how helpful the program is. Often residents in civic associations and HOA's will contact us to have second and even third classes held in their communities.

We made our program inclusive as it takes into account the county's second largest non-native English speaking population. We produced a tree care guide with some of the county's best experts on trees and forests. It has been widely distributed in areas of the county where tree canopy is at the lowest percentages. With additional grant support, we can distribute the guide to more of the county. And, through grant support, we have been able to translate the Home Tree Care 101 website into the Spanish language. We were able to translate our home tree care guide into Spanish. Future funding for this program will allow us to address other non-native English speaking residents with vital information about caring for mature and newly planted trees on their home properties. We would like to translate the guide to Mandarin Chinese.

Our budget for Home Tree Care 101 is quite small — under \$10,000 annually — compared to other County grant requests. We hope you will continue to support this program. Home Tree Care 101 offers homeowners a chance to take sustainability into their own hands.

Parks Funding - When the County Executive released the recommended budget for Fiscal Year 2027 it contained only a 4.1% increase. Montgomery Parks **requested a 6.3% increase simply to maintain current services**. This leaves a **\$3.1 million gap**. With **416 parks across 37,891 acres**, our County offers residents one of the finest park systems in the Country. Access to our varied parklands and the nature experiences they hold are an invaluable amenity to our communities in health benefits, outdoor activities and a chance to experience the wonders of our natural world. This shortfall will make it difficult for Montgomery Parks to deliver the everyday services residents rely on - Stewardship is a

sacred obligation. Our forests, streams, nature centers, historic sites and outdoor education programs are all at risk without funding to care for them. There is no better long term investment.

respectfully submitted,

Ginny Barnes, *Advocacy Committee*

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