



NEWS RELEASE

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Town Council Adopts Code Changes to Conserve Trees

Developers will soon have to make tree conservation a priority in their plans for new construction in the Town of Vienna. That's because the Vienna Town Council adopted amendments to the Town Code that shift the ordinance's approach from tree replacement to tree conservation during land development. The tree ordinance changes were adopted during the Council's regular meeting on Monday, April 29, 2024, and include requirements and incentives for developers to conserve existing trees rather than replace them. The Town Council also created a Tree Advocacy Committee that will report to both the Town's Conservation and Sustainability Commission and to the Town Council.

The Code changes are the result of a years-long process to address the harmful environmental effects of Vienna's dwindling tree canopy. A 2022 tree study determined that the Town's tree canopy declined by 13 percent between 2011 and 2021. Vienna's tree canopy coverage is currently at about 38.7 percent, which is lower than that of the City of Falls Church (46 percent) and ahead of other neighboring jurisdictions such as Arlington (38 percent) and Alexandria (32.5 percent).

Since 2014, developers have been required to meet the Town's minimum tree coverage requirement, providing a minimum tree canopy 20 years after development according to zoning districts. Under the new ordinance, developers will continue to be required to submit a site plan to the Town that details a tree inventory, tree preservation measures and tree replacement as necessary, as part of the construction permitting process. The ordinance changes take effect July 29, 2024.

For the past 23 years, the Town of Vienna has been recognized as a "Tree City USA" by the Arbor Day Foundation. The program was established in 1976 to celebrate towns and cities committed to growing their tree canopy and contributing to the environmental health of the community.

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