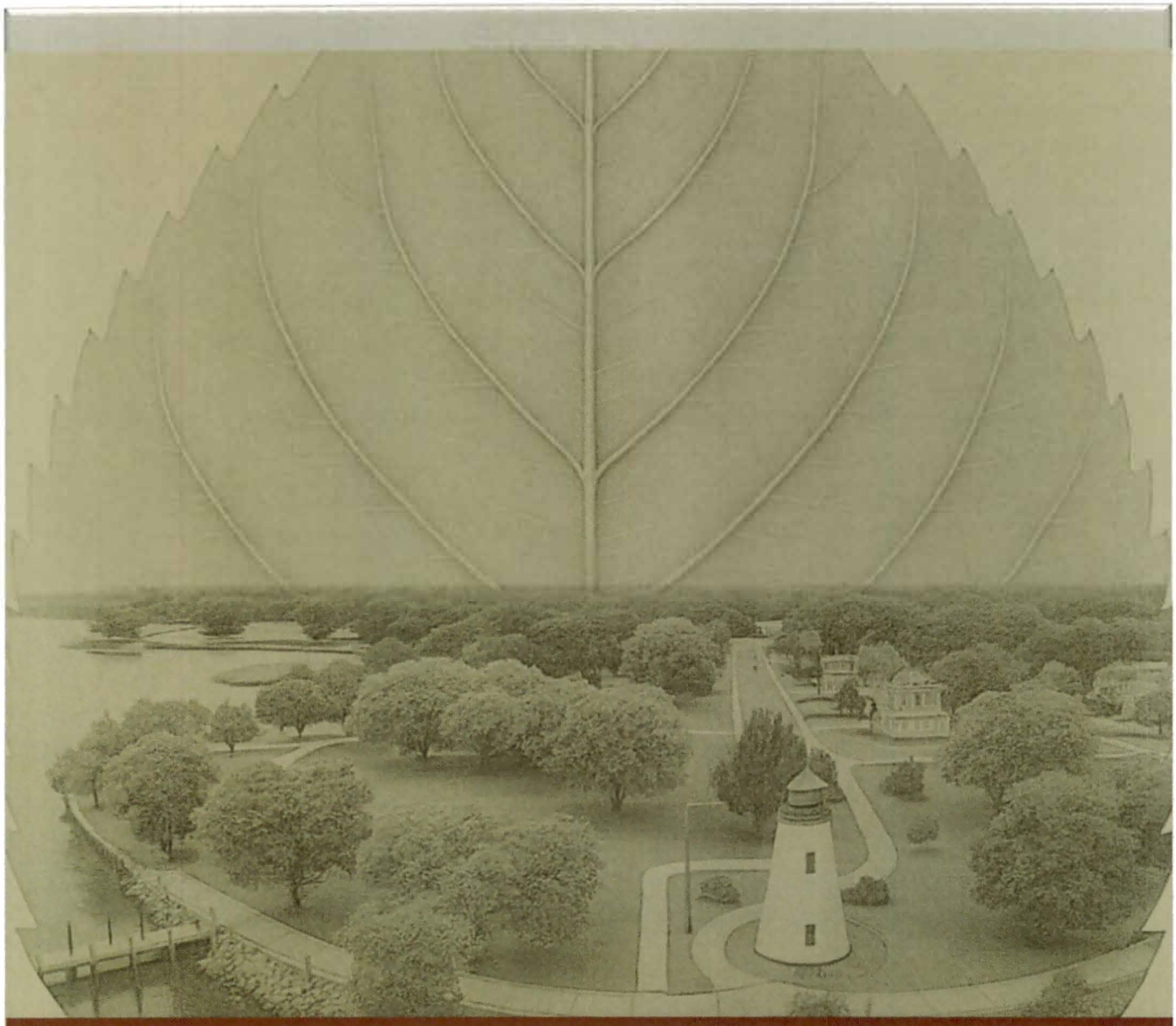

2026 Annual Tree Care Plan for the City of Havre de Grace

City of Havre de Grace Department of Public Works

4/6/26

1 Contents

2 Document Control

2.1 Document Information

	INFORMATION
Document Title	2026 Annual Tree Care Plan
Document Owner	City of Havre de Grace
Issue Date	4/6/2026

2.2 Document History

VERSION	ISSUE DATE	CHANGES
1.0	04/06/2026	Document Submitted

3 Purpose & Vision

The purpose of the City of Havre de Grace Annual Tree Care Plan is to proactively preserve and enhance the health, safety, and visual character of the City's urban forest across rights-of-way, parks, and public properties. Through strategic, ongoing maintenance, this plan reduces risk, strengthens canopy resilience, and maximizes the environmental, social, and economic benefits trees provide. This effort reflects Havre de Grace's commitment to a safe, vibrant, and sustainable landscape for years to come.

4 Roles and Responsibilities

Effective implementation of this plan relies on coordination between City departments, contractors, and advisory groups.

Director of Public Works – Joe Conaway: Develops, implements, and oversees the Annual Tree Care Plan. Provides overall program direction, ensures alignment with City goals and regulations, and coordinates resources, staff, and contracted services to successfully execute planned activities.

The Department of Public Works (DPW): Supports the execution of the Annual Tree Care Plan through routine operations, field coordination, and ongoing maintenance activities. The DPW team assists with scheduling, monitoring work progress, and maintaining City tree assets.

Licensed Tree Care Contractors: Perform specialized and technical tree care services that require professional expertise and equipment. This includes high-access pruning, crown reduction, tree removal, stump grinding, and tree health evaluations. Contractors are responsible for completing work in accordance with industry standards (ANSI A300), ensuring safety, efficiency, and quality of workmanship.

Havre de Grace Tree Commission: Advises and supports DPW in the planning and management of public trees. Responsibilities include studying, investigating, and developing tree-related programs. The commission may provide guidance on the planting, maintenance, and removal of trees within public rights-of-way, parks, and other public spaces.

Members of the Commission include:

- Kirk Smith
- Donald W. Horton
- Kathleen O'Brien
- Jim McFarland
- Morgan Jones
- Pamela Pape-Lindstrom
- Joe Conaway, Chair
- Matthew Ellis, Council Liaison

5 Scope of Work

This plan defines the extent and types of tree maintenance activities to be performed during the 2026 calendar year. The annual plan encompasses mature trees located within the rights-of-way along Union Avenue, Washington Street, Ontario Street, and Congress Avenue, as well as trees within City parks and public properties. Pruning of all trees planted within the last five years is also included.

Planned maintenance activities include, but are not limited to, crown raising to improve clearance around streetlights, roadways, and sidewalks; crown cleaning to remove deadwood and improve overall tree health; and crown thinning to reduce canopy density and improve light penetration and air circulation. Additional work may include select tree removals based on age, condition, and public safety considerations. All work will be performed in accordance with ANSI A300 standards.

6 Goals & Objectives

The following objectives guide the City's approach to managing and maintaining its urban forest. These focus areas establish a framework for delivering safe, effective, and sustainable tree care practices while supporting the long-term health and value of the City's tree assets.

Tree Health

Promote the long-term vitality and structural integrity of the City's tree population through proper pruning, maintenance, and care practices that reduce stress, prevent disease, and support healthy growth.

Public Safety

Reduce potential hazards by proactively identifying and addressing structural defects, deadwood, and clearance issues to ensure safe conditions for pedestrians, vehicles, and surrounding infrastructure.

Sustainability

Support the continued growth and resilience of the urban forest by maintaining a healthy canopy, encouraging appropriate species selection, and preserving trees that provide long-term environmental and community benefits.

7 Existing Conditions

7.1 Land Use / Land Cover

The City of Havre de Grace's urban forest is a significant environmental and community asset, with current tree canopy coverage estimated at approximately 32% of total land area, or roughly 1,215 acres of tree cover. This data is derived from the Chesapeake Tree Canopy Network using 2021 high-resolution imagery analysis.

Tree canopy represents a significant portion of the City's land cover and is comparable in extent to other dominant surface types, including impervious areas (29%) and turf grass (20%). This balance highlights the importance of continued maintenance and preservation efforts to sustain and enhance the environmental and community benefits provided by the urban forest. Recent analysis also indicates a net gain of approximately 14 acres of tree cover between 2013 and 2021, reflecting positive trends in canopy growth and management across developed areas.

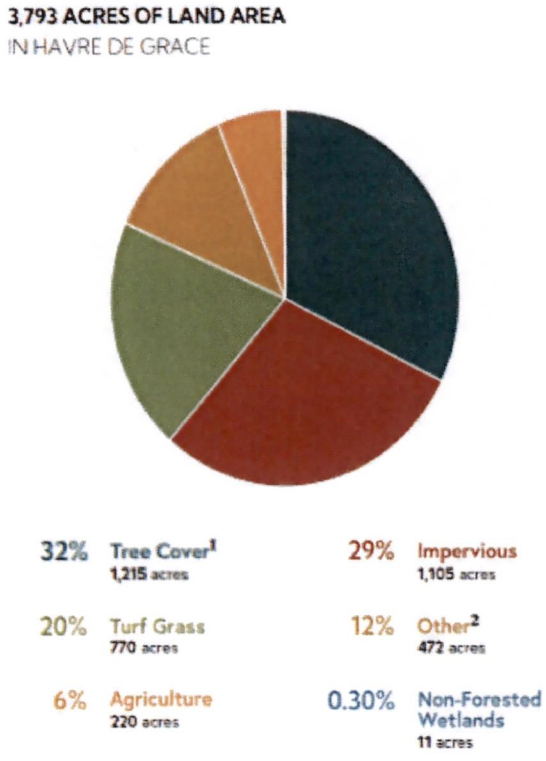

Figure 1: Chesapeake Bay Tree Canopy Network Chart of Land Coverage in Havre de Grace

7.2 Tree Cover Change 2013 - 2021

This analysis, provided by the Chesapeake Tree Canopy Network, illustrates changes in tree canopy across Havre de Grace between 2013 and 2021 within developed and developing areas of the City. The map uses a hexagon grid to represent localized canopy trends, with green areas indicating net canopy gain, red areas indicating net loss, and orange areas reflecting minimal change.

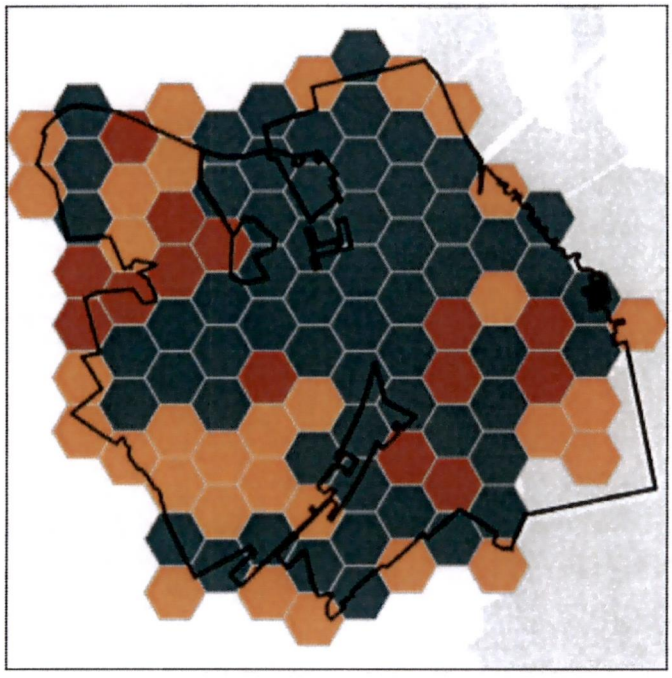

Figure 2: Chesapeake Bay Tree Canopy Network Tree Cover Change from 2013 – 2021

Overall, the City experienced a net increase in tree canopy during this period, reflecting positive trends in urban forest growth and management. Gains are typically associated with tree planting efforts and natural regrowth, while losses may be attributed to development, infrastructure improvements, or storm-related impacts.

It is important to note that this dataset reflects conditions through 2021, and more recent changes have occurred due to ongoing development and continued planting efforts. As such, this analysis provides a valuable baseline for understanding canopy trends while reinforcing the need for continued monitoring and updates to reflect current conditions.

More information about the data can be found here: https://chesapeaketrees.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Chesapeake-Bay-TC-User-Guide_03-13-2023_Revised_2025_KMB_CIC2a_small.pdf

7.3 Current Tree Inventory Status

The most recent detailed tree inventory for the City was completed in 2018 within the Historic Downtown District, providing valuable insight into tree species, conditions, and maintenance needs.

The current inventory also offers insight into species composition within the inventoried areas. The chart below illustrates the distribution of tree species within downtown Havre de Grace. Percentages reflect only trees included in the inventory and may not represent the full citywide tree population. A relatively small number of species account for a large portion of the inventoried trees, indicating where maintenance efforts are likely to be concentrated, while a broader range of low-frequency species contributes to overall diversity within the urban forest. This information serves as a strong foundation for planning purposes. By understanding species distribution, DPW can make informed estimations regarding maintenance needs, as different species require varying levels and frequencies of care. This data was instrumental in guiding and supporting the development of the current annual maintenance plan.

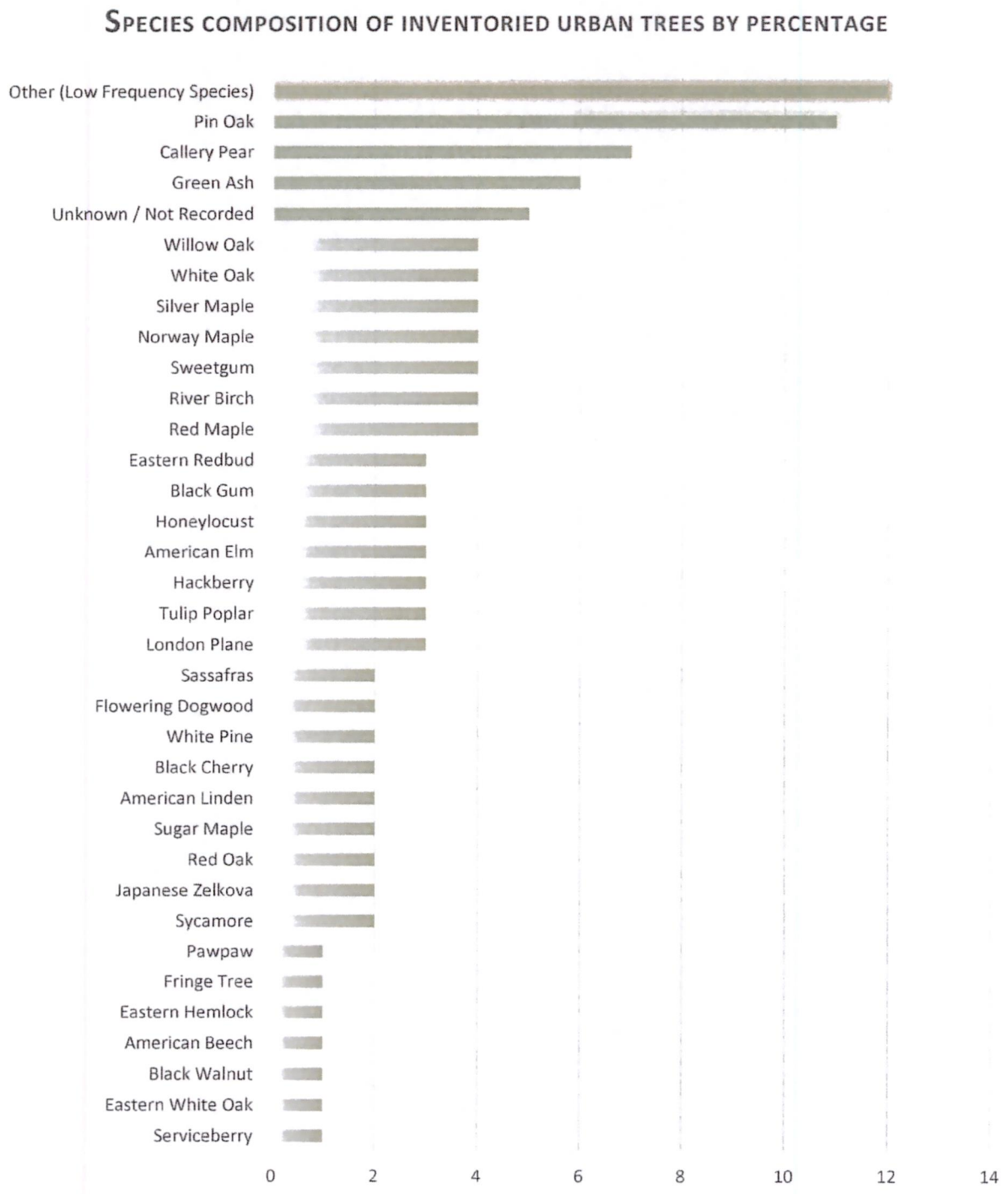

Figure 3: Species Composition of Urban Trees in Havre de Grace, MD

8 Maintenance Plan - 2026

The following maintenance activities are planned for 2026 and will focus on trees located along Union Avenue, Washington Street, Ontario Street, Congress Avenue, as well as additional priority areas throughout the City.

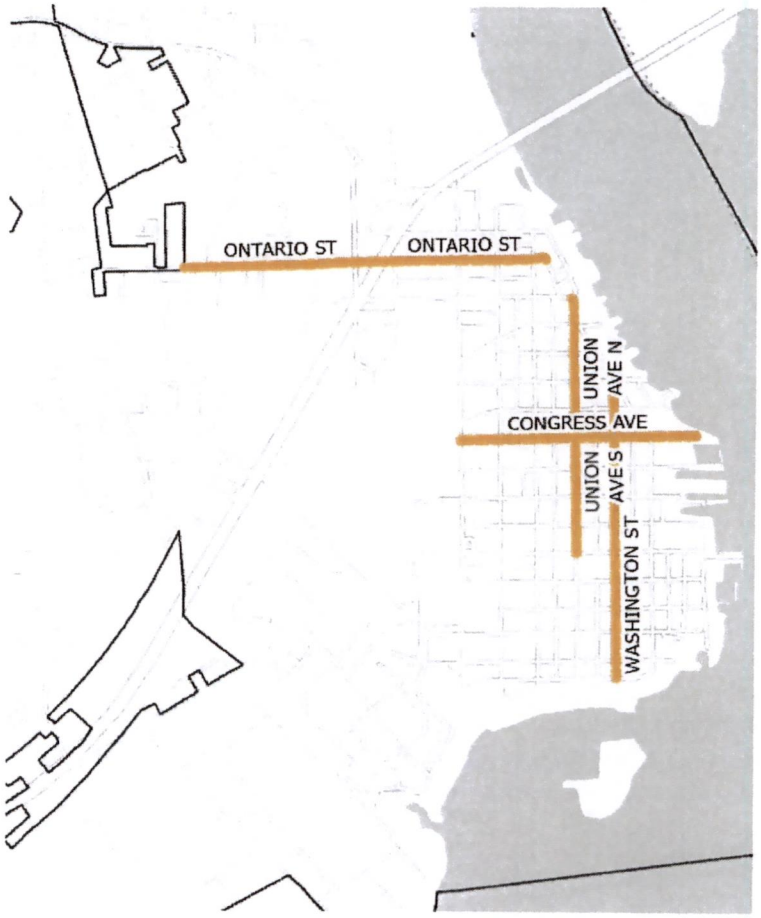

Figure 4: Proposed Maintenance Areas FY26

8.1 Crown Raising (20%)

Crown raising will be performed to improve vertical clearance around streetlights, roadways, and public sidewalks. This work enhances visibility, pedestrian safety, and accessibility while maintaining proper tree structure.

8.2 Crown Cleaning (25%)

Crown cleaning will involve the removal of dead, diseased, or damaged branches to improve overall tree health and reduce potential hazards. This practice also supports long-term structural integrity and canopy vitality.

8.3 Crown Reduction (35 – 40 Trees)

Targeted crown reduction will be conducted on select trees to manage size, reduce structural stress, and minimize conflicts with nearby infrastructure. This work will focus on trees where reduction is necessary to maintain safety and long-term viability.

8.4 Tree Planting (50 Trees)

The City will plant 50 native trees, each approximately 2.5-inch caliper, to support canopy expansion and replacement of aging or removed trees. Planting will occur in two phases: 25 trees in May 2026 and 25 trees in late October 2026. Priority planting locations include in-fill areas along South Adams Street, South Stokes Street, and Revolution Street.

8.5 Tree Inventory Updates

The City will continue efforts to update and expand its tree inventory to improve data accuracy and support future planning and maintenance activities. This work will help ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the urban forest over time.

9 Budget Overview

The City of Havre de Grace's annual tree budget was originally established to support reactive tree care needs and maintain its designation as a Tree City USA community. Since that time, the budget has grown significantly from approximately $30,000 annually in FY 2015 to over $100,000 in FY 2027. This increase reflects the City's commitment, particularly by the current administration, to advancing a more proactive and comprehensive tree care program aligned with the vision of the Municipal Tree Commission.

Sustained investment in the City's urban forest is critical. Continued funding supports public safety through proactive maintenance and risk reduction while also ensuring the preservation and expansion of the many benefits trees provide, including stormwater management, energy savings, and improved air quality. Maintaining Havre de Grace's identity and recognition as a Tree City USA community is directly tied to this ongoing commitment, reinforcing the importance of consistent funding to support long term success.

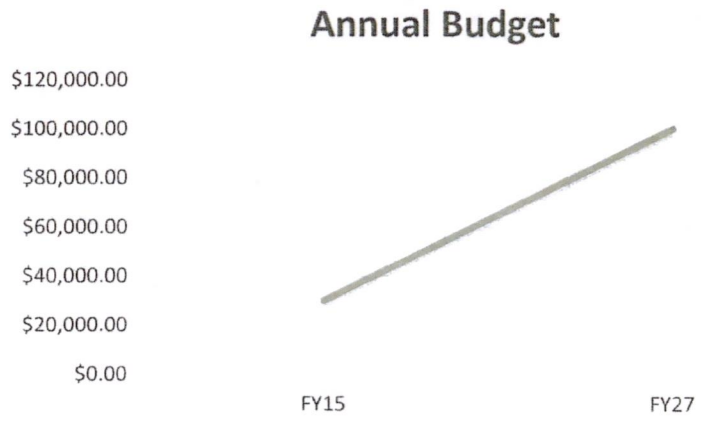

Figure 5: Increasing Trend in Annual Funding for Tree Maintenance

10 Benefits of Trees

The benefits that trees provide to a community can be grouped into four primary categories: social, community, environmental, and economic. Together, these benefits contribute to the overall quality of life, sustainability, and long-term resilience of Havre de Grace.

10.1 Social Benefits:

Trees enhance the overall livability of a community by contributing to a sense of beauty, comfort, and well-being. They create more inviting public spaces and provide a sense of tranquility, while also symbolizing strength, longevity, and stability within the landscape. For most of us trees make life more pleasant. They add beauty, serenity, peacefulness, restfulness, and tranquility to our lives.

10.2 Community Benefits:

City trees serve several functions with respect to architecture, engineering and public space. They create privacy and emphasize selected views while screening objectionable ones. Trees reduce glare and reflection. They provide background to and soften, complement, or enhance architecture. Street trees increase the comfort of the pedestrian environment, help direct pedestrian traffic, provide unity to our public spaces and create a sense of place in our communities. When planted along streets they reduce pavement temperatures and lower the maintenance costs of city infrastructure, and act as a form of traffic calming.

10.3 Environmental Benefits:

Moderation of climate, improvement of air quality, conservation of water and the creation of wildlife habitat are a few of the environmental benefits of trees. Trees are able to modify area microclimates by reducing temperatures. Wind patterns, humidity, and evaporation rates are also altered by trees.

10.4 Economic Benefits:

The economic benefits of trees can be both direct and indirect. Direct economic benefits are usually associated with energy costs. Shaded buildings require less air conditioning in the summer and reduce heating costs in the winter by acting as wind breaks. Indirect economic benefits of trees can be even greater. A community benefits by lower utility bills, fewer new facilities are needed to meet energy and stormwater demands, and reduced amounts of fossil fuel are required with fewer measures needed to control air pollution.

10.5 Direct Benefits in Havre de Grace

Based on analysis from the Chesapeake Tree Canopy Network using 2021 imagery, the City of Havre de Grace's tree canopy provides measurable, annual economic and environmental benefits:

- 77,000 pounds of air pollutants removed annually
  Resulting in approximately $117,000 in annual savings
- 4.3 million gallons of stormwater runoff reduced annually
  Resulting in approximately $39,000 in annual savings
- 2,000 tons of carbon sequestered annually
  Resulting in approximately $797,000 in annual savings

These quantified benefits highlight the significant return on investment provided by the City's urban forest and reinforce the importance of continued maintenance, preservation, and expansion efforts.

11 Constraints & Considerations

While trees provide numerous benefits in urban environments, several factors must be carefully considered when determining appropriate planting locations. Selecting the right tree based on site-specific conditions can help minimize conflicts and reduce long-term maintenance costs.

Proper species and size selection is especially important in areas with overhead utilities, nearby buildings, roadways, sidewalks, curbs, and underground infrastructure such as water, sewer, gas, and electric lines. This approach, commonly referred to as the Right Tree, Right Place philosophy, ensures that trees can thrive without negatively impacting surrounding infrastructure.

The City of Havre de Grace has successfully followed this philosophy for the past 17 years and remains committed to continuing this practice to support sustainable and effective urban forest management.

12 Conclusion

This plan is a road map for City action to maintain and improve its street and park trees of the City of Havre de Grace and to encourage residents to do the same on their respective properties. This plan aims to be ambitious in the goal of sustaining and improving the City's trees while establishing achievable

targets and a reasonable scope of work given staff and budgetary constraints. It is also important to continue to incorporate short term and long-term goals in all future annual tree plans.

The City's goal is to attain 40% canopy by 2035. While this is an aggressive task, it can be obtained with the help of property owners. The Municipal Tree Commission whole-heartedly encourages all efforts to expand social awareness of the value and benefits of trees and their canopies.

Together, we will continue to work towards a healthy, functional, safe, and beautiful "urban forest" that serves the entire community.

"A SOCIETY GROWS GREAT WHEN OLD MEN PLANT TREES WHOSE SHADE THEY KNOW THEY WILL NEVER SIT IN"

~ Greek Proverb