

Trees Matter in Montgomery!

Over 1,000 county residents signing an online petition and some of the best environmental and civic organizations in the county can't be wrong! Join the fight. Speak up for the trees!



& WEST MONTGOMERY COUNTY CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

NORBECK MEADOWS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

CHEVY CHASE WEST NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

In bold below are the latest claims made by builders regarding the Urban Canopy Bill, Bill 35-12, sponsored by County Executive Isiah Leggett

Tree Canopy Bill 35-12 was introduced without including comments from the building industry so it is flawed beyond the ability to amend it.

This is absolutely untrue. There have been many meetings held between the building community and DEP as well as with members of the civic and environmental community dating back to the early writing of 35-12 in November of 2008. In July 2011, County Executive Ike Leggett heard presentations and comments on a draft of Bill 35-12 from members of the Maryland-National Capital Building Industry Association and Renewing Montgomery, as well as from civic representatives and members of the board of Conservation Montgomery. This was long before Bill 35-12 was introduced in the Montgomery County Council November of 2012. The Executive's calendar and records will reflect the July 2011 meeting where he deemed a proposal by the building community as an unacceptable replacement ratio for taking down large trees.

There has never been any study or data that demonstrates there is a problem that requires legislation. The most recent MNCPPC study shows our canopy is thriving by any standard.

Wrong. This is another myth generated by the building community. There have been many aerial studies over the years and most recently (2009), the Montgomery County Planning Department worked with the University of Vermont Spatial Analysis Laboratory to produce an Urban Canopy Assessment. This data is based on well-established USDA Forest Service tree canopy protocols and uses the state-of-the-art technology (used by many other counties and cities) to assess existing and potential tree canopy. The data shows that while the overall tree canopy in Montgomery County measures at 50%, there are sections of the county that are severely denuded and overbuilt. An example is the overdeveloped Montgomery Hills neighborhood in Silver Spring -- at an 8% canopy level. Another example is the densely developed Long Branch section of Silver Spring assessed at 13%. These urbanized areas should have a minimum tree canopy of 25%. Moreover, the Long Branch stream is a degraded tributary feeding into Sligo Creek and eventually to the Anacostia, Potomac and to the Chesapeake Bay. Adequate tree canopy is one of the best ways to manage polluted stormwater runoff. There are other areas at low canopy levels in the county. Bill 35-12 would allow for an aggressive and targeted planting plan to replace canopy lost in barren sections of the county.

Why rush to this far reaching legislation that is based on anecdotal evidence. Renewing Montgomery has a better proposal.

Bill 35-12 is not based on purely anecdotal evidence. See our response above. And Bill 35-12 has been anything but rushed. The bill has been discussed, drafted and revised over a period of almost 5 years. There have been many delays in introducing the legislation due to the opposition from the building industry. Montgomery County is long overdue for legislation that attempts to replace much of the canopy builders are demolishing. Renewing Montgomery had an opportunity to produce a proposal several years ago but reached a stalemate with the civic and environmental community when they refused to compromise. Despite public claims about being tree-friendly, a small group of infill builders has confirmed in recent years that they do not want any form of tree legislation in place that will hinder their ability to clear-cut lots instead of preserving existing trees on-site. Nor do they want legislation to require additional fees paid to replace canopy they will demolish.