



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

October 17, 2023

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #24-18
Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) Urban Trees Grant Award

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds *Supplemental Appropriation #24-18 Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) Urban Trees Grant Award* is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in the County, as eligibility criteria related to these grant dollars require the planting and care of shade trees in ‘underserved areas’ (as defined by the State of Maryland). In Montgomery County, these areas are more likely, because of structural inequities, to be where Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income residents and students live and go to school. This supplemental appropriation, therefore, could reduce racial disparities in tree canopy coverage (and increase equitable distribution of tree-related health benefits). ORESJ suggests further targeting during site selection to maximize the impact of grant dollars on existing student health and educational gaps¹ in the county.

¹ Racial disparities in child poverty: <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/8538-child-poverty-status-by-race?loc=22&loct=5#detailed/5/3315/false/2048/4406,3303,3304,2161,3305,3306,3307,3301,4551/17225,17226>; racial disparities in percent of uninsured children by race: <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/8538-child-poverty-status-by-race?loc=22&loct=5#detailed/5/3315/false/2048/4406,3303,3304,2161,3305,3306,3307,3301,4551/17225,17226>; racial disparities in kindergarten readiness: <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/8843-disparity-in-kindergarten-readiness-2014-2018?loc=22&loct=5#detailed/5/3315/false/1648/any/17718>

- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #24-18 Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) Urban Trees Grant Award is to appropriate Chesapeake Bay Trust Urban Tree Grant #22209, in the amount of \$813,710, for planting and providing aftercare for shade trees. The grant will enable the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to use the existing Tree Montgomery Program and collaborate with Montgomery County Public Schools to plant and provide aftercare for shade trees on MCPS school sites located in areas that meet the grant’s eligibility criteria. ORESJ conducted a Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) of a grant award, under the same program, in January 2023. In that REIA, ORESJ examined Supplemental Appropriation #23-26 Chesapeake Bay Trust Urban Trees Grant and found that utilization of these grant dollars is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in the County.

Supplemental Appropriation #24-18 pertains to the same program but is targeted towards MCPS school sites. The specifics of site selection were not available at the time of this analysis. The grant eligibility criteria require utilization of funds in ‘urban areas with high unemployment or low income’. To have the greatest effect on health and education inequities, site selection should use the grant criteria as a starting point and prioritize schools with higher than the County’s overall percentages of students of color, those who qualify for the Free and Reduced-Priced Meals Program (FARMS), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and students receiving special education services. Further targeting resources towards schools with these student subpopulations increases the likelihood that the health and education benefits associated with shade tree coverage can help to reduce existing gaps in health and education outcomes.

For additional information about tree equity, please see ORESJ’s REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #23-26, copied below for convenience.

-
- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that supplemental appropriation #23-26 Chesapeake Bay Trust Urban Trees Grant is likely to advance racial equity and social justice as related grant funds must be targeted—based on the State of Maryland criteria—to underserved areas. In Montgomery County, these areas are more likely, because of structural inequities, to be where Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income residents live. This supplemental appropriation, therefore, could reduce racial disparities in tree canopy coverage (and increase equitable distribution of tree-related health benefits) however, there should be clearer (and publicly available) goals, outreach plans, and metrics for tracking progress.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #23-26 Chesapeake Bay Trust – Urban Trees Grant award is to allocate the first installment of funds from the Chesapeake Bay Trust which awarded the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) a grant of \$362,740 to plant 1,200 trees over the course of

FY23 through FY25. The Urban Trees Grant states that tree planting proposed must “occur in urban areas with low median household income levels, high unemployment, and neighborhoods with housing projects or that were historically redlined at any time”². Based on available information, the location of the street tree planting will take place within Montgomery County’s equity focus areas and will adhere to the County’s right-of-way planting standards while maximizing canopy cover.

The ORESJ commented on the importance of equitable tree preservation in its REIA of SA #22-29 Tree Replacement³. This REIA highlighted the role redlining has played in the inequitable distribution of tree canopy and its health benefits. Therefore, efforts to preserve and protect trees on public roads (such as those described in SA #23-26) could help reduce disproportionate burdens on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and low-income communities. As previously mentioned, areas designated as equity focus areas (EFAs)⁴ are where tree planting is set to take place. EFAs are one of many tools for identifying and targeting inequities; however, they do not readily offer underlying data to better understand the kinds of inequities residents in those areas may be experiencing. Further, a side-by-side comparison of “Underserved Areas” as defined by the 2021 Tree Solutions Now Act and HB991’s Urban Trees Program⁵ includes areas, not currently included in the EFA designation. For example, large portions of East County qualify as underserved based on low-income status and higher unemployment rates using the Urban Trees designation. These areas are not entirely covered by the EFA designation. A full comparative analysis is beyond the scope of this REIA, but a close comparison of these two designations—along with tools like the tree equity score—could reveal priority areas for tree planting that most effectively consider racial disparities and inequitable access to tree canopy and its health benefits.

In terms of process, available information states that the “planning phase will be conducted by professional arborists with MCDOT to determine optimal planting sites within the designated underserved areas in the County”⁶. To the extent possible, the planning phase should include community engagement and outreach in areas where tree planting is likely to take place to let community members know about the opportunity, hear any concerns, and devise plans to address concerns and mitigate any unintended consequences. Further, the finalized process or result of the planning phase should be

² <https://cbtrust.org/grants/urban-trees/>

³ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-29.pdf>

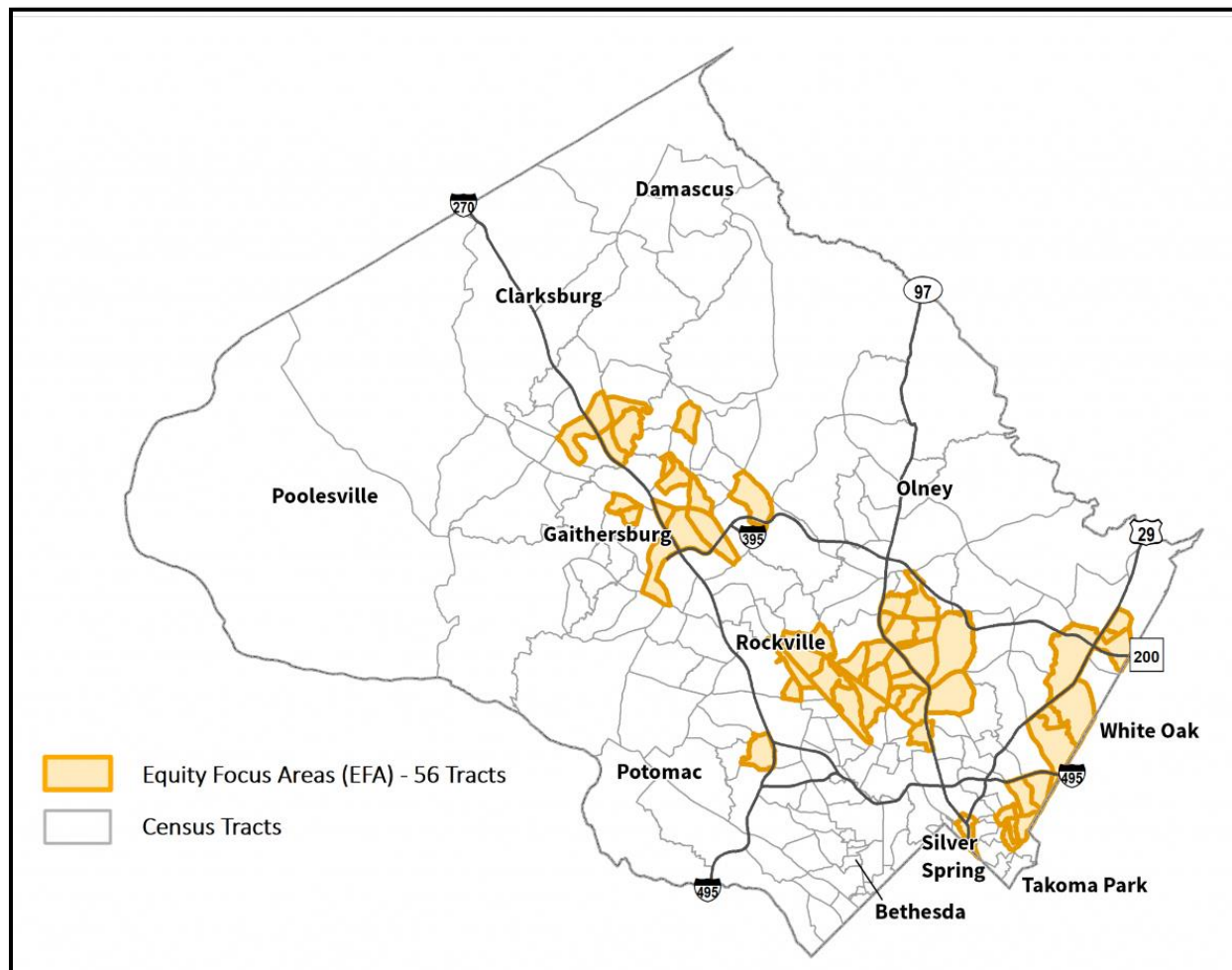
⁴ <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/equity-agenda-for-planning/the-equity-focus-areas-analysis/>

⁵ <https://maryland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4258d3e39f6a47fca146b854c0f01e31>

⁶ Memo from County Executive Marc Elrich to Council President Gabe Alborno. Subject: Supplemental Appropriation #23-26 to the FY23 Operating Budget Montgomery County Government Department of Transportation. The Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT)- Urban Trees Grant award \$148,233
November 2022.

transparent so all are able to access information about the grant program its goals, and any other tree-planting resources available in the County.

DATA ANALYSIS:

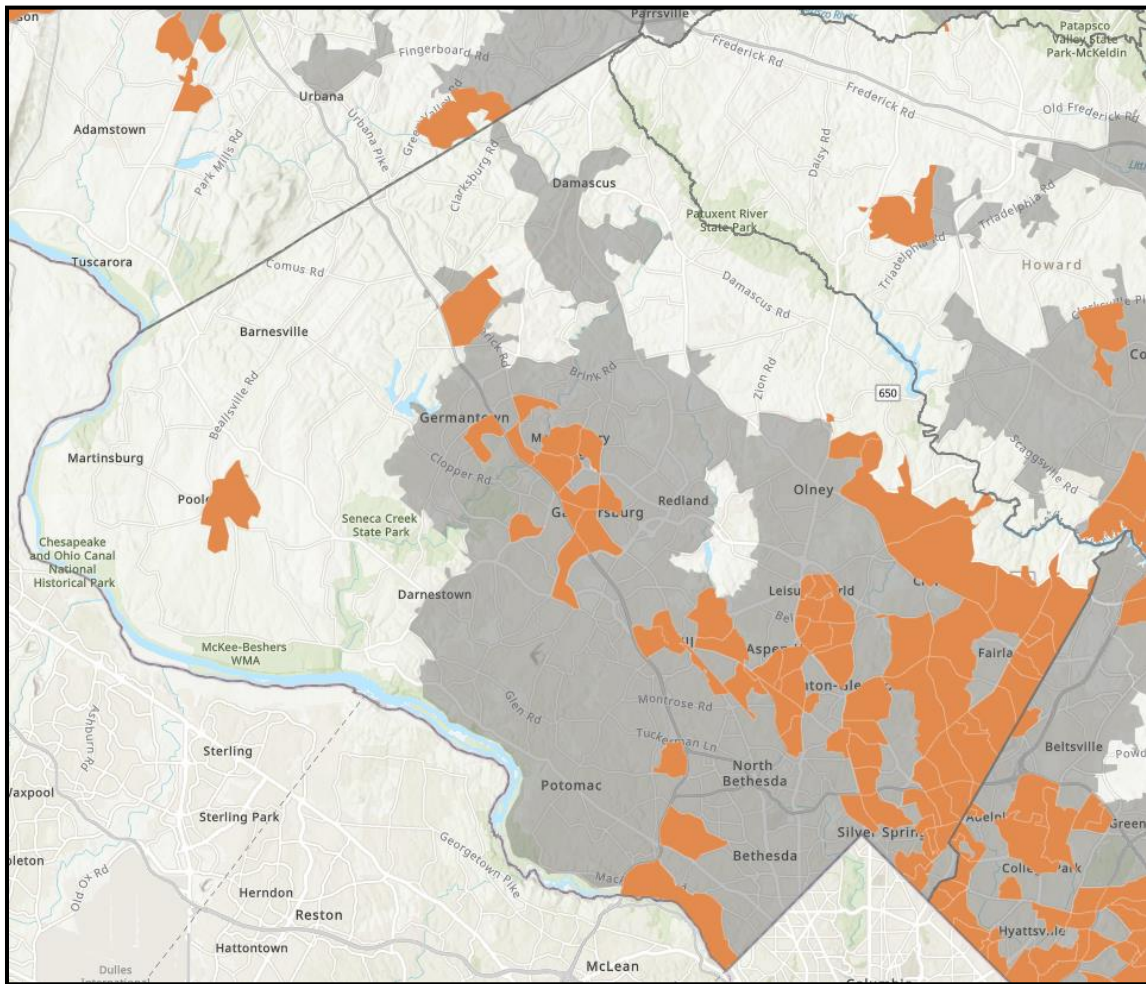


Equity Focus Areas designation. Source: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/equity-agenda-for-planning/the-equity-focus-areas-analysis/>

Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #24-18 Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) Urban Trees Grant Award

October 17, 2023

Page 5 of 5



Underserved Areas as Defined by the 2021 Tree Solutions Now Act. Source:

<https://maryland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4258d3e39f6a47fca146b854c0f01e31>

cc: Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive
Chris Conklin, Director, Department of Transportation