

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION

**c/o Department of Environmental Services
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 705
Arlington, VA 22201**

March 3, 2025

Honorable Takis Karantonis, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Secure Funding for the Tree Canopy Fund

Dear Chair Karantonis:

The Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission greatly appreciates and supports the County Board's decision to allocate \$240,000 in the FY26 budget to support the Tree Canopy Fund (TCF) despite a tight budget with considerable uncertainty. These funds will compensate for dwindling contributions from developers and ensure the continuation of the program in FY26. The TCF has been among the most successful local programs in Northern Virginia in getting trees planted on private property. Since its launch in 2007, more than 3,800 trees have been planted on Arlington properties where the County cannot require such planting. Even more impressive is the Tree Canopy Equity Fund (TCEF) started in 2023 to plant trees and shrubs in historically under-resourced neighborhoods with low tree canopy cover. This lack of greenery contributes to a cascade of challenges, including poorer health outcomes, higher utility bills, and a reduced quality of life. The TCEF has combined funds from the TCF with contributions and grants to develop a dynamic program that is building community in these neighborhoods around trees. Maintaining this momentum is key to achieving the goals of the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan for equitable distribution of tree canopy coverage.

These funds will maintain the program, especially the momentum of the TCEF, and serve as a bridge to moving to more secure funding sources while limiting the need for direct budget funding. Over the next year we would expect that County staff would work with EcoAction Arlington, relevant County commissions, and other local organizations to revamp the program as needed to ensure long-term financial stability. Options to consider include raising the developer fee, which has not been changed since the program started; establishing fees for more affluent participants, who benefit from the expertise and convenience of getting trees planted at their homes; opting for smaller trees; and identifying alternative funding sources such as private philanthropy.

Protecting and expanding our tree canopy coverage is a priority for many Arlingtonians, as shown in the recent Vision 2050 exercise, and an essential component of making our

community more resilient in the face of the unfolding climate crisis. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cindy Lewin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cindy Lewin

Chair, Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission