



FISCAL IMPACT NOTE

Ordinance: O-16-26

Title: Forest Conservation – Comprehensive Amendments to Chapter 21.71

Meeting: City Council Meeting - First Reader - June 22, 2026

Background

O-16-26 comprehensively revises the City's Forest Conservation chapter (21.71) to conform with recent Maryland legislation (SB 526 / Chapter 542 of 2023, updating the Forest Conservation Act) and to add City-specific provisions.

Fiscal Impact on O-16-26 as Introduced

The primary budget impact is departmental workload/capacity rather than General Fund revenue or expense as of **June 22, 2026**. Specific dollar amounts cannot be quantified at introduction because the actual **fee and fine schedules are set by separate City Council resolution** (with a 20% surcharge for projects outside a priority funding area); this ordinance does not itself set or change those schedules. Revenue will depend on application volume.

Special Considerations

- **Costs (administrative/staffing):** New and expanded duties fall on the Department of Planning and Zoning — public meetings, enhanced pre-clearing notice and written findings/justifications, plan review within statutory deadlines, and GIS/CAD-based annual and biennial reporting. These duties are expected to be absorbed by existing staff initially but may require additional staff time, licensed forester/consultant support, or GIS tools as application volume grows.
- **Revenue (restricted):** Fee-in-lieu payments, noncompliance fees (minimum \$10 per square foot), and municipal-infraction fines. Fee-in-lieu and noncompliance revenue must be deposited in the dedicated Forest Conservation Fund and **may not revert to the General Fund**. The City also recovers cost when it engages a professional to complete a deficient forest stand delineation (at the applicant's expense).

Prepared by Sean Doyle, Finance Consultant