



# GREENBELT HOMES, INC.

HAMILTON PLACE, GREENBELT, MARYLAND 20770

Area Code (301) 474-4161 Fax (301) 474-4006



## MANAGER'S MEMORANDUM

TO: GHI Board of Directors  
FROM: James Claggett, General Manager  
DATE: September 20, 2023  
SUBJECT: Addendum for the **GHI OPEN** Board Meeting on September 21, 2023

### GHI Open Meeting

6g. Approval to Plant Trees Received as a Result of a Tree Canopy Grant Obtained for GHI Outside of Standard Board Procedures (Attachment #6)

Please see the "Short History of the Project" in Attachment #6. It explains the initiative Ms. Catherine Plaisant, the member \_\_\_\_\_ has led to obtain a Grant for planting trees within GHI. The Woodlands Committee and GHI Management supported this project when presented and still do. Adding trees to the canopy within GHI will add to the community's character and provide environmental benefits.

Ms. Plaisant's actions were in good faith, but communication about the specific processes should have been clarified more concisely. Because of the communication breakdown, the Woodlands Committee put forth no formal motion for the Board to consider the Grant, nor did Management review or sign off on the application before it was submitted to the City of Greenbelt.

To avoid setting a precedent for bypassing GHI policy processes, Management requests that the Board consider a motion to accept the Tree Canopy Grant and authorize planting the trees that were delivered to GHI on September 13, 2023.

**Suggested Motion: I move that the Board of Directors (accept/deny) the Tree Canopy Grant awarded to GHI by the City of Greenbelt. I further move that the trees be planted in locations as approved through the collaborated efforts of the Woodlands Committee and Management.**

## **Planting schedule and help materials GHI Tree Canopy Grant**

*2st draft Sunday Sept 10  
I will only add materials, not change anything  
without alerting the lead volunteers*

### **Questions:**

Catherine

[Tree location info](#) - grant work document, with maps and photos, updated with final plan, name of volunteer leads

### **Short history of the project**

- When the city of Greenbelt announced the Tree Canopy RFP early in 2023 Catherine contacted the Woodland Committee and volunteered to draft a proposal to plant trees to renew our iconic open spaces. It included a detailed plan describing each area to be planted, with photos, and requested the maximum \$7,000 of grant (reimbursable to GHI after a post-planting inspection by Greenbelt). After review and revision, it was approved by the committee.
- The draft proposal was then shared with Stefan Brodd, asking for guidance. On April 18 I received an email from Mr. Eldon Ralph stating "*GHI's Board President Stefan Brodd, Vice President Deborah McKinley and I discussed your proposal to apply for a Greenbelt Tree Canopy grant. We support your initiative and encourage you to apply for the grant. GHI staff is willing to verify the appropriateness of the application and locations for planting the trees. The point of contact is Jim Morris, Director of Maintenance Operations.*"
- Since then I have informed or worked with Mr. Morris at every step of the project. The proposal was refined to satisfy GHI rules and meet all the demands of the grant, from tree size and selection, maintenance plan, to cost share requirements (for us mostly volunteer hours). GHI submitted the grant proposal in June (to Debi Sandlin of the city of Greenbelt), and received the thumbs up on Aug. 29th . Since the proposal was quite detailed and volunteer leads had already been identified for planting areas we could proceed quickly and order the trees.

### **SCHEDULE:**

**In blue = done/past**

- **Sept 6: All proposed planting locations have been flagged**  
**Lesson learned:** painting the grass may be better than a flag (or paint and a flag?) because kids/people may move the flags. If paint is used we need a convention for how to mark adjusted locations .e.g. cross out the prior location?
- **Monday 11 and Tues sept 12: GHI finally checked all locations for hidden utilities and pipes and adjusted the flags as needed. Lesson learned:** it would be preferable to include Catherine in the review, so more parameters (like size of the tree) could be taken into consideration. For example, one tree was adjusted by GHI to be under a power line.  
**Group texts to all volunteer leads were tested**
- **Wed. Sept 13: Patuxent Nursery delivered all the trees to their planting locations (except for one tree - which is being re-ordered)**  
One big **lesson learned** is that the pots dry super quickly in less than a day. Their bottom is rounded from being in mulch, so they tip over easily when dry. Retrospectively we made a mistake to leave the tree in the field for a day or more before planting. Next time we bring the trees: keep each tree in the shade, tied loosely to a tree trunk, and make sure volunteers keep it watered until planted.  
Other lesson: some trees had to be carried by hand because the moffett was very large and could not access some locations, so plan to have people.
- **This week: Volunteers leads review planting instructions prepared by Catherine (see below) and coordinate local volunteers (including parents and children who will help plant near playgrounds)**
- **Thursday Sept 14:**  
**GHI staff starts digging the planting holes** with a small backhoe.  
Partially done - On hold: 45 Ct Ridge, 5 Ridge and Hillside  
The Yellowwood should be delivered to 5 ridge [Not yet]  
  
**PROJECT HALTED BY GHI MANAGER - TREE RETURNED TO HAMILTON RD.**  
**I am told that the project should be reviewed by the board**  
**All volunteers leads have been alerted**  
**Volunteer planting weekend canceled**  
  
**A sweetbay magnolia was left in the field at 5 Ridge. It is under a tree.**  
**Neighbors are taking turns to water it.**
- **Friday Sept 15: 5:30pm (optional) Demo of tree planting**
  - Allowed by GHI at Parkway appt
- **When ????? Restart process**

- Reassess volunteers availability  
We most likely will have to do each area individually when people are available and the planting is authorized in that area.  
Also may have to adjust plans depending on weather and recent rainfall data  
I ADDED NOTES ABOUT VOLUNTEER AVAILABILITY IN THE [TREE LOCATION doc](#)
- If needed ????
  - *[may not be needed if current rain and coolness continues]*  
Because it has been so dry, Bill Phelan has been authorized to drive his pick up truck to the planting locations and **drop water from the truck into the holes** to wet the soil prior to the planting. This will also tell us how well the water drains.
- When??? When trees are brought back and holes have been dug  
We will somehow deliver to you for each tree :
  - 2 black tubes (now Bill Phelan has them at hs garden)And if for each tree that needs stakes:
  - 2 stakes (now in front of Catherine's at 8G LH)
  - 2 pieces of tube to protect the trunk (now in Catherine's Subaru at 8G LH)
  - Lanyard for the stakes
- **???? Volunteers will [POSTPONED]**
  - **Plant their trees** on their own, water immediately, and install the provided tree stakes.
  - Spread mulch (Wood chip mulch can be collected from GHI or be delivered by GHI depending on your needs, think of what you need)
  - Catherine will be on call for questions
  - Take at least one photo of your volunteers and tree(s) and share them with me please.
  - Tell Catherine when you are done planting.

During the **initial period of watering:**

  - **[NOT NEEDED since heat is gone]** Bill will water from his trunk to the sites every 3 days for 2 weeks max - unless it rains heavily  
FYI: this is authorized by Jim Morris.
  - Bring 5 gallons per tree per our average tree once a week unless it rains very heavily that week.

After that: it hopefully will **start raining** enough (one inch a week), **otherwise volunteers continue to water on their own**. Typically the fall and winter is wet enough for watering to be a light chore, but **watering is crucial**. Watering once a week may still be needed.

- Next year by summer 2024:
  - if you need to water, you can still water the top as usual, but also **water through the tubes** to reach bottom of the root ball
- A year after planting i.e. Oct 2024: **remove all the stakes**
- For 2-3 years: Volunteers monitor the health of the trees and report problems, water in periods of drought

### **Just FYI: Materials from the Grant Application**

- Info on the [Greenbelt Tree Canopy Grants](#). The funds come from the [ARPA \(American Rescue Plan Act\) money](#) the city received.
- [Answers to the application form](#) we submitted - with our answers to questions about needs, plan of work, choice of locations and tree species, survivability plan, etc.
- [Tree locations](#)- this is the original work document, with maps and photos, updated with final plan

### **Planting instructions (2nd draft - may add more tips)**

The majority of our trees come in a plastic container (i.e. “container or container grown”), except for the 3 white cedars for Parcel I (Bryan) which will come “balled and burlapped”

#### **We'll provide**

For each tree:

- some black tube, and you will cut the 2 pieces for a tree
- 2 big stakes (for single trunk trees only)
- About 2x8 feet of lanyard per tree - to tie the tree to the stakes (we have 250 feet / 32 stakes so 2x7.8 feet of lanyard per tree.
- 2 pieces of hose - to protect the tree trunk from the lanyard

#### **You will need:**

- a shovel (or two)

- Pruning shears (to cut the roots, the stake lanyards - and if needed the plastic container)
- a sledge hammer or something heavy to drive the stakes down (your shovel is probably not enough because the stakes are huge - and long, in fact you need a tall enough person to pound them down)  
If you cannot find a sledge hammer, ask me and I will give you access to one.
- Mulch (about 2 blue Ikea bags was good)
- If you have old roots in there you might need a loper or small saw
- a measuring stick/tape is nice but not necessary
- 10 gallons of water per tree for the 1st watering

*Note about the mulch: it does not have to be applied immediately, but ideally within a few days from planting.*

*if you only have 2 or 3 trees I have the feeling that it may be easier for you to go get mulch with bags or buckets from the mulch pile at the end of Northway - or wood chips from the GHI yard when it is open during the week (stop by the main office and they can show you where it is.)*

*For the areas with many trees (e.g. Damien or Bryan), you can order one (or more) front loader bucket worth of mulch from GHI by emailing Ronnie Sookram <[rsookram@ghi.coop](mailto:rsookram@ghi.coop)> (mention that it is for trees that are part of the tree canopy grant and cc: me). Describe where you want the mulch dropped. Putting a sign indicating exactly where you want the mulch dropped is very helpful. Sending a photo as well.*

*If you do not hear back after 3 days, follow up by email - or call.*

*My guess is that one front loader bucket of mulch is plenty for 4 trees but it is hard for me to guess.*

*The drawback of getting a load of mulch is that it may not be enough, or too much and you will have to find a way to eliminate the rest of the mulch. You will still have to carry the mulch to the trees, probably with a wheelbarrow. Hint: if you have one, a pitch fork is a lot easier to use to load mulch in a wheelbarrow, but a shovel or broom is still useful and best to clean-up the drop area at the end.*

#### **Summary of planting instructions:**

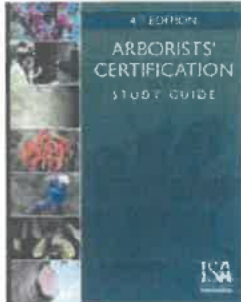
- Remove the container (you can tap or squish the pot all around to dislodge it. Cut the plastic pot if needed. It is supposed to be best not to yank the tree out by the trunk or bend the trunk, as it can break the roots, but delivery people do it all the time anyway...)

- Find the tree flare (and remove some dirt from the top of the root ball if needed - see detailed instructions in the manual). If not clear where the flare is, do what you can and move on.
- Measure the height of the root ball
- Make 4 cuts with shears along the root ball to cut roots that might circle the tree. Loosen the outside of the root ball to free little roots
- Place the tree so that the top of the **root ball is 2 inches above ground level** (or more if the hole created by the backhoe was too deep and you had to add backfill at the bottom of the hole. That backfill will settle!!) Bill in his demo placed the tree at ground level and then he grabbed the trunk and vigorously shook the tree up and down to bring it up to 2-3 inches above ground level.
- Place a black tube vertically on each side of the tree (for use for watering)
- Fill the hole with the soil. Chopping and loosening if needed.
- Make sure the tree is straight
- Water and press the soil down as you go to avoid pockets of air
- Create a small dam around the tree to stop the water from running away during watering
- Stake the tree.
  - Some species do NOT get staked: cypress, holly, white cedar, and sweetbay magnolia
  - Remove any temporary staking materials from the nursery such as plastic tape or bamboo stakes.
  - Drive the two stakes at least 1.5 feet into the soil - outside the root ball. Stakes should be leaning away from the tree, with the 2 trees and the trunk aligned.
  - Slide the flat lanyard in the hose section. Need about 2x8 feet of lanyard per tree.
  - Attach the tree to the stakes. Circle around the stake multiple times so that it doesn't slide down.
  - [not for big trees like ours which barely stand up on their own] The **ties should remain loose** to allow the tree to move. When attached too rigidly the trunk and roots grow weaker.
- **Water (10 gallons at planting.)** When the tree is just planted, it is important to water right on the root ball (i.e. near the trunk). Make sure water doesn't run off, by creating a little dam.
- Add 2 to 4 inches of mulch to at least the same width as the branches, but mulch should not touch the trunk.  
The mulch does not have to be added immediately - but soon
- With our current cooler weather you are good for a week without watering.

- **Then give 5 gallons of water per week,** unless we get really heavy sustained rain. Do not rely on a little rain... Water is critical, and still you do not want to drown the tree.

**I highly recommend reading this:**

**>>> [Detailed Instructions from the International Arborist Association with annotations for our particular situation](#) <<<<**



### **FAQ about watering**

- **Are we getting watering bags?**

Those bags let the water infiltrate in the soil more slowly than just dumping buckets on top of the root ball, which is good but they are only useful if you can bring a hose to the trees to fill the bags through a small opening. GHI has several which they can loan to you if you can use them (let me know.)

Bill Phelan has suggested an alternative technique which we will use: 2 black perforated drainage tubes are placed vertically next to the root ball. You fill the tubes with water, which then slowly seeps into the soil. (*how many times? I'll add that later after asking Bill... but to get 5 gallons it would mean 2 or 3 times*)

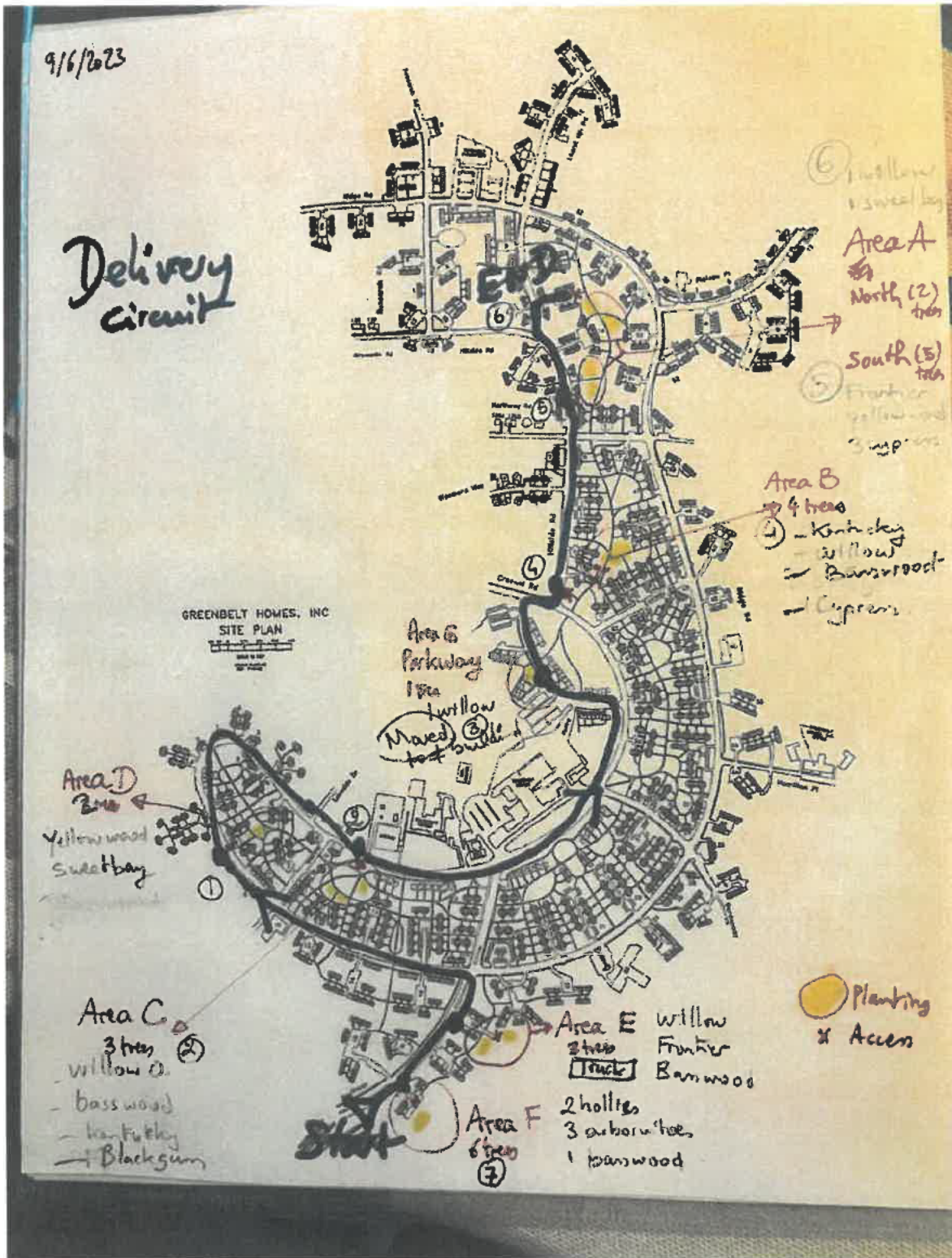
The tubes also bring a bit oxygen to the bottom of the hole.
- **How do I get water to the trees?**
  - Maybe a hose will work if you are close enough. Jim Morris says that GHI may have hose you can borrow. I have not seen them, but let me know if you think you can use one, and how long it should be.



- You may be able to get water from a neighbor living right next to the trees. (Friendly neighbors will accept to give you water, but if the neighbor asks that someone else pay for the water, we may have to raise a few dollars of donations. Let me know... We'll find a way) Make sure you always attend to the hose, so as not to waste any water - or even just give the impression that you are wasting water.
- Carrying 2 medium size watering cans is best for me to carry water comfortably. Or for shorter distances I use this [5 gallon jug](#) from our camping supplies (but 2 smaller ones might be easier?). GHI says that they can lend us some jugs if needed (I have not seen them).
- You might be able to borrow a small cart from a neighbor or friend. A dolly is also good for a more rigid water container. Try a bicycle with large panniers? Bring your car to a closer access point? Thank you for figuring out a way that works for you and your location.
- **How do I know WHEN to water?**
  - The goal is to water a LOT at the beginning (e.g. Bill says to water every 3 days for 2 weeks after planting - unless it rains heavily) then watering can be spaced out to weekly for 2 months, unless it rains at least 1" per week. Hopefully the heat will go away soon, and it will rain, but most likely we cannot rely on rain alone.
  - In the past I used data from online rain gauges next to me in the North part of GHI, i.e., [Boxwood Village Wunderground](#) OR [Ambient weather LHXRidge](#) I found the data from the default iPhone IOS Weather app to be pretty inaccurate, and with storms it can be dry in one part of town and not the other, so please monitor rainfall locally. Getting a physical [rain gauge](#) might help?
  - In the early months: if you stick a finger in the dirt and it is dry: water for sure!
  - Have other suggestions? Let me know and I'll add stuff here (or you can edit it directly)
  - Ideally we will help each other decide when to water...

- This is what I know... Bill Phelan may have more tips and suggestions, and we will keep in touch by email in the future to adapt our strategy to the weather. Thank you.

FINAL delivery plan Sept 12



Tree Delivery



Winston digs the holes





Planting demo:













**TREE CANOPY GRANT DRAFT APPLICATION**

*Version 5 - Final*

*by Catherine Plaisant (with Joyce Campbell)*

*This is the text that was used in the online application form submitted May 31st 2023*

Applicant organization: Greenbelt Homes, Inc.

Address: One Hamilton Place, Greenbelt MD 20770

Website: <https://www.ghi.coop/>

Type of Organization: Housing Cooperative

Contact Person & Title: Jim Morris, Director of Maintenance

Phone Number: 301-474-6011 x1132

Email Address: [jmorris@ghi.coop](mailto:jmorris@ghi.coop)

Summary of Project: Planting of 23 (now 27 in final plan) trees (minimum 1 ½ caliper) in 5 (now 7) areas within the common spaces of Greenbelt Homes Inc..

**Total Project Cost:** \$10500 (Funding Requested: \$7000; Match: \$3500 of staff time and supplies, plus 165+ volunteer hours)

**Statement of Need:** Due to storms, aging of trees, and removal of weakened trees that are threatening houses, we estimate that GHI has lost more than 100 mature trees in the last year. Walking on the paths through GHI, one sees their stumps remaining. Many of our iconic open spaces only include aging trees. We need to actively plant trees to rejuvenate our aging urban forest and preserve the historic landscape of our cooperative.

We propose to plant twenty three trees (now 27) in the common green spaces of GHI. The trees will be planted, staked, mulched and watered by volunteers, with the help of a crew of GHI staff who will dig the holes and bring the trees to their planting location. In order to facilitate the work and the maintenance of the trees we have identified five areas where multiple trees can be planted in proximity to each other.

**Desired Planting Date and Time:** Early September 2023.

### **Project Location Maps and Photos:**

Working document:  Proposed locations of trees for Canopy Grant

*Final uploaded PDF for the proposal was*

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/oakn64v6hhmztqr/FINAL%20Proposed%20locations%20of%20trees%20for%20Canopy%20Grant.pdf?dl=0>

### **Maintenance and Survivability Plan:**

Each of the five (**now 7**) areas will have a volunteer lead, who will recruit and manage one or more additional volunteers among neighbors, as needed. They will water the trees during the first 3 years of growth. We will purchase watering bags for them and - when needed - locate or purchase roller carts to help volunteers carry water to the trees in the common areas. Volunteers will receive training in taking care of their adopted trees. They will be responsible for watering on a regular schedule during the 1st year and as needed during the following 2 years (based on the recommended 1" per week guideline), and for making sure the trees are doing well. They will be asked to report problems or damage to the project coordinator, who will contact GHI staff for guidance as needed.

GHI will provide additional mulch as needed.

GHI's contracted landscaping service will also be alerted to watch out for the health of the new trees and to inform GHI if a tree is not being cared for.

All trees are inspected by the arborist of GHI once a year.

### **Who will carry out the plan?**

1. A volunteer (Catherine Plaisant) coordinated the proposal preparation and will coordinate the planting with GHI crew and a volunteer lead for each of the five areas. The coordinator will select the trees from a local nursery (most likely Patuxent Nursery), mark exact planting locations, work with the five areas' volunteer leads and assist with the planting as needed to ensure that the correct species is planted at the correct location, and that the trees are correctly planted, staked, mulched and watered.  
Volunteer hours: 60.
2. Jim Morris, director of the GHI Maintenance Department, will be the point of contact for the grant at GHI. He will manage the crew who will dig the tree holes and bring the trees to the planting location.  
Total time: (2 day + 8h of a two person crew for planting + mulch delivery as needed in following years.)
3. Five (**now 6**) GHI homeowners/members will serve as volunteer lead, and recruit additional volunteer neighbors as needed. They reside near the

planted trees, and will provide a source of water and check the health of the trees in their area on a regular basis.

Estimated volunteer hours: 100.

4. GHI's Woodlands Committee, headed by Ben Fischler, will provide guidance and act as liaison to GHI staff and report to the GHI board. Volunteer hours: 5.

**1- What other funds are available within the applicant's organization for this project?**

GHI will provide:

Staff time worth \$3000

Mulch: \$500

and a large number of volunteer hours

**2- Please describe the area you will be planting and why you have selected this area:**

The five (now 7) planting areas have also been selected to be:

- In the common green spaces of GHI (not in homeowners' yards - or in the greenspaces owns by the city of Greenbelt)
- Respectful of the GHI tree planting rules, i.e., trees will be planted at least twenty feet away from the houses, ten feet from sidewalks and swales, and avoid overhead power lines.
- Spread as fairly as possible within GHI
- With appropriate access.
- One area is strategically located to try to reconnect two separate "Potential Forested Interior Dwelling Species" zones (based on data provided by DNR through PGAtlas)
- The plan was reviewed by the Woodland Committee.
- Utility maps have been consulted.

**3- Briefly describe the planting scope and include the size and scope of the project and how many trees you intend to plant.**

We intend to plant 23 (now 27) trees in 5 (now 7) areas of the GHI common spaces. See map of the proposed location and photos in the attached PDF file for more details. The new trees will be planted near existing trees or between existing wooded areas, to extend and reconnect the canopy.

**4- List the type of tree(s) you have selected from one of the three approved list of trees (this is required).**

The species were selected from the city-approved list of trees recommended for parks. We favored large trees when possible.

**5- Urban tree canopy and outcomes and explain any innovative factors that will contribute to the growth of a healthy tree canopy.**

The July 2022 storm brought down about 100 trees within GHI. In addition, GHI regularly has to pro-actively take down trees that are threatening houses based on the recommendations of a professional arborist. The trees to be planted will help GHI replace trees that have been lost recently,

We originally envisioned hiring a contractor to handle everything, but quotes suggested that we would only be able to plant 9 or 10 trees, even without watering service. Instead members volunteered to recruit and coordinate volunteers to plant the trees and to take care of them in years to come. This approach greatly increased the number of trees we could plant, up to the estimated 23 trees (now 27).

**6- Risks:**

The main risk is for the trees to fail to thrive, either because of impaired root system or by neglect. We mitigate the risk of failure by selecting species that transplant well. We will mitigate the risk of neglect by having the coordinator make sure the volunteer leads are trained to plant the trees and take care of them properly. The coordinator will also remind volunteers to be faithful in caring for their trees (especially in times of drought) and informing the coordinators of problems.

An additional risk is that the price of trees may go up with growing demand. Some of the species selected may not be available. In such cases we will select less expensive trees, or other species from the approved list of "trees from parks".

**7- List the type of tree(s) you have selected from one of the three approved list of trees (this is required).**

We prepared a list of desired species, which is a subset of the list of authorized species of "trees for parks" provided in the grant guidelines. Our goal was to

- 1) add diversity to the existing canopy which is dominated by white and red oaks and maples, and
- 2) avoid species that are less tolerant of transplanting as larger specimens which might be provided as balled & burlapped stock.
- 3) favor Maryland Native trees (and only trees from the list of authorized species for parks)

This list was prepared with the help of Bill Phelan, a licensed MD tree arborist working at the National Arboretum - and GHI member. The final choice of species for each individual location will depend on availability and cost of the trees in the fall.

Quercus bicolor (Swamp Oak) **Not available from nursery at time of planting so used Willow Oak**  
Quercus phellos (Willow Oak)  
Taxodium distichum (Bald Cypress)  
Tilia americana (Basswood)  
Ulmus americana (American Elm) - Disease resistant 'NewHarmony' and 'Valley Forge'  
**Not available at time of planting so selected "Frontier"**  
Magnolia acuminata (Cucumbertree Magnolia) **Not available at time of planting so replaced by:**  
Sweetbay Magnolia  
Gymnocladus dioicus (Kentucky Coffeetree)  
Cladrastis lutea (American Yellowwood) or Cladrastis kentuckea  
Oxydendrum arboreum (Sourwood) **Not available at time of planting so replaced by:**  
Nissa silvatica (Blackgum)

Gleditsia triacanthos (Honeylocust) **Not used**  
Betula nigra (River Birch) **Not used**

### **8. Community benefits expected from this planting**

Better air quality, more beauty, more shade, noise reduction, contribution to carbon offset which reduces global warming, reduction in water runoff. Involving volunteers to plant and maintain the trees will improve the sense of community, and increase GHI members' knowledge of the benefits of trees and the need to rejuvenate our historic urban forest.

### **When do you need to plant**

The goal is to plant during the September 7 to September 10 window (i.e., Thursday or Friday for GHI's crew to prepare the holes and bring the trees next to the holes, and Saturday and Sunday for volunteers who need the weekend to finish planting). Sept 14-17 is the rain date window.  
We need to avoid driving equipment on soggy grass.