



**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
CHARLES ALLEN, COUNCILMEMBER – WARD 6**

Tree Canopy Protection Amendment Act of 2015

Urban canopy improves our quality of life: Trees help clean the air, control stormwater runoff, lower energy costs, provide shade, and beautify our city.

The District has impressive tree cover, but it's currently at just 36%, down from the 50% its peak of the 1950s. Powerful storms, like the one we saw last week, often deliver devastating tree loss. The canopy has also declined as development has increased, in part because large trees often are removed as part of large construction projects.

The Tree Canopy Protection Amendment Act includes a number of actions designed to address tree loss and support tree replacement. Specifically:

- The bill protects our older, larger trees by reducing the size limit of special trees and increasing the fee for the removal permit -- if the tree is large enough that special equipment is necessary to remove it, we need to make sure removal isn't done in a cavalier manner. Higher fees and penalties provide a disincentive for unnecessary removals.
- The bill sets a floor for the fees, but allows the Mayor to increase by rulemaking when appropriate.
- The bill expands use of the Tree Fund -- where these fees go -- to tree planting beyond the public spaces onto District-owned property such as parks and schools.
- The bill also amends the Urban Forestry Administration's duties to give DDOT the responsibility to plant and maintain trees on all District property, which will ensure we plant more trees in more public spaces.
- Finally, the bill mandates survival checks of replacement trees to ensure successful canopy replacement and to help inform future planting decisions.

The Sustainable DC Plan has set a canopy goal of 40% by 2032 and UFA works diligently toward this goal, planting 6,000 - 7,000 street trees annually. The Tree Canopy Protection Amendment Act will provide DDOT with further support and the additional authority necessary to restore this essential element of our urban landscape.