

# GREENSPACE EQUITY PROGRAM

DNR Land Acquisition and Planning (LAP) Unit

Program Administrator: Stephanie Benavides

# Program Overview



- The Greenspace Equity Program is designed to provide and administer grants to eligible applicants for enhancing the public health and livability of overburdened communities and underserved communities by implementing projects to preserve, create, and enhance community greenspace.
  - Makes conservation more equitable
  - Meets community needs for greenspace
  - Supports on the ground partners
- Legislation outlining the program: HB0503  
<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2023RS/bills/hb/hb0503T.pdf>

# Eligibility



- Who is eligible to apply?
  - A land trust or nongovernmental organization located or working in an overburdened community or an underserved community where a project is proposed to be implemented
  - A county or municipality
  - Land acquisitions apply to counties, municipalities, and land trusts only
- Where can these projects occur?
  - In an overburdened community
  - In an underserved community
  - On a property owned by an eligible applicant, or for which the applicant holds a conservation easement, located in a census tract adjacent to an overburdened community or an underserved community
- Use the [MDEnviroScreen Tool](#) to determine whether a property is in an overburdened community or an underserved community.

[https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/e4148f01acf743bf8ac1d2aa2dc0947f/page/MarylandEJ3\\_0](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/e4148f01acf743bf8ac1d2aa2dc0947f/page/MarylandEJ3_0)

# Eligibility: Types of Projects



## ➤ **Acquisition Project**

- An eligible applicant may apply for funding to purchase property that will be used for an eligible purpose (Stewardship). The property must be held in fee-simple or with a perpetual conservation easement. If the lead applicant is a Land Trust, it is recommended that the property is co-owned by a government agency.

## ➤ **Stewardship (Development) Project**

- Develop a property for public use AND improve the conservation value of the property.
- Specific examples: Community garden, community gathering open space area, community woodland, a green network (a system of greenspaces that are interconnected by linear corridors that facilitate the movement of people and wildlife); a park; a trail; an urban farm.

# Overview of Selected Projects (FY 2025 Grant Round)



- 22 projects funded
- 25 if we include appraisals
- 14 counties covered
- Breakdown
  - 10 in underserved communities
  - 12 in both overburdened AND underserved communities
  - 1 Acquisitions

Type of Project	Number
Trails	8
Community Woodlands	4
Gathering Open Space	5
Community Garden	1
Urban Farm	2
Park	5
Green Network	1

# Considerations and Limitations



- Who owns the property?
  - Joint Use Agreement (JUA) to cover the 15-year maintenance period.
- Impervious Surfaces and Structures
  - Does the investment in non-green elements surpass the investment in the actual green areas?
  - For example, parking lot, stormwater drainage, sidewalk, turf/sports fields, passive vs. active recreation
- Accessibility
  - ADA access
  - Open to public during reasonable times (considerations of inclement weather, after school hours, emergency maintenance)

# Conclusion



## ➤ Greenspace Definition

- Statute (Natural Resources Article §. 5-9D)
  - Community Gardens
  - Urban farms
  - Trails
  - Parks
  - Green Networks
  - Community Gathering Open Spaces
  - Community Woodlands
  
- Program Support
  - Administrators within LAP
  - Advisory Boards
  - DNR Leadership
  - Legal Council

