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SENATE BILL NO. 589  
AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE  
(Proposed by the Joint Conference Committee  
on March 13, 2026)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Salim)

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 15.2-961 and 15.2-961.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to conservation and replacement of trees during development process; work group; report.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 15.2-961 and 15.2-961.1 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 15.2-961. Replacement of trees during development process.

A. For purposes of this section, "tree canopy" or "tree cover" includes all areas of coverage by plant material exceeding five feet in height and the extent of planted tree canopy at 10 years maturity. Planted canopy at 10 years maturity shall be based on published reference texts generally accepted by landscape architects, nurserymen, and arborists in the community, and the texts shall be specified in the ordinance.

B. Any locality with a population density of at least 75 persons per square mile or any locality within the Chesapeake Bay watershed may adopt an ordinance providing for the planting and replacement of trees during the development process pursuant to the provisions of this section. Population density shall be based upon the latest population estimates of the Cooper Center for Public Service of the University of Virginia.

~~B-~~ C. The ordinance shall require that the site plan for any subdivision or development include the planting preservation or replacement of trees on the site to the extent that, at 20 10 years, minimum tree canopies or covers will be provided in areas to be designated in the ordinance, as follows:

- 1. Ten percent tree canopy for a site zoned business, commercial, or industrial;
- 2. Ten percent tree canopy for a residential site zoned more than 20 or more units per acre;
- 3. Fifteen percent tree canopy for a residential site zoned more than 40 eight but less not more than 20 units per acre; and
- 4. Twenty percent tree canopy for a residential site zoned 40 more than four but not more than eight units or less per acre;
- 5. Twenty-five percent tree canopy for a residential site zoned more than two but not more than four units per acre; or
- 6. Thirty-five percent tree canopy for a residential site zoned two or fewer units per acre.

However, the City of Williamsburg may require at 10 years the minimum tree canopies or covers set out above.

~~C.~~ The ordinance shall require that the site plan for any subdivision or development include, at 20 years, that a minimum 10 percent tree canopy will be provided on the site of any cemetery as defined in § 54.1-2310, notwithstanding any other provision of this section. In no event shall any local tree replacement or planting ordinance adopted pursuant to this section exceed the requirements of this subsection.

The tree canopy requirements for a mixed-use development shall be either the percentage applicable to the predominant use of the development as clearly delineated on its site plan or general development plan or the average of the percentage applicable to each use of the development, as provided in the ordinance adopted pursuant to this section. For the purposes of this subsection, "predominant use" means the use within the development that constitutes the largest percentage of gross land area or, in the case of a building with mixed uses, the largest percentage of the total floor area.

In meeting these percentages, (i) the ordinance shall first emphasize the preservation of existing tree canopy where that canopy meets local standards for health and structural condition, and where it is feasible to do so within the framework of design standards and densities allowed by the local zoning and other development ordinances and (ii) where it is not feasible in whole or in part to preserve existing canopy in the required percentages listed in this subsection, the ordinance shall second provide for the planting of new trees on the site to meet the required percentages.

For purposes of this subsection, the ordinance shall further require that any residential site plan proposing an increase in the number of units per acre through development or subdivision of existing units shall meet the tree canopy percentage applicable to the site in its pre-development state.

A locality shall consider establishing provisions to assess the health of the trees that are planted and preserved at five and 10 years.

D. The ordinance shall provide for reasonable provisions for reducing the tree canopy requirements or granting tree cover credit in consideration of the locality deems essential for the preservation of existing tree cover or for preservation of trees of outstanding age, size, or physical characteristics.

E. Existing trees which are to be preserved may be included to meet all or part of the canopy requirements, and may include wooded preserves, if the site plan identifies such trees and the trees meet standards of desirability and life-year expectancy, which the locality may establish.

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60 F. The ordinance shall provide for reasonable exceptions to or deviations from these requirements to  
 61 allow for the reasonable development of farm land or other areas devoid of healthy or suitable woody  
 62 materials, for the preservation of wetlands, or otherwise when the *developer requests, and the locality*  
 63 *concur, that the strict application of the requirements would result in unnecessary or unreasonable hardship*  
 64 *to the developer or prevent the development of uses and densities otherwise allowed by the locality's zoning*  
 65 *or development ordinance, or would result in severe unintended environmental consequences that outweigh*  
 66 *the anticipated benefits of tree canopy preservation or restoration.* In such instances, the ordinance may  
 67 provide for a tree canopy bank or fund, which bank or fund shall be consistent with subdivisions G 1 and 2 of  
 68 § 15.2-961.1 whereby a portion of a development's tree canopy requirement may be met from off-site  
 69 planting or replacement of trees at the direction of the locality. The following shall be exempt from the  
 70 requirements of any tree replacement or planting ordinance promulgated under this section: dedicated school  
 71 sites, playing fields and other nonwooded recreation areas, and other facilities and uses of a similar nature.

72 F. G. The ordinance may designate tree species that cannot be planted to meet minimum tree canopy  
 73 requirements due to tendencies of such species to (i) negatively impact native plant communities, (ii) cause  
 74 damage to nearby structures and infrastructure, or (iii) possess inherent physiological traits that cause such  
 75 trees to structurally fail. ~~All trees to be planted shall meet the specifications of the American Hort.~~ The  
 76 planting of trees shall be done in accordance with either the standardized landscape specifications jointly  
 77 adopted by the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association, the Virginia Society of Landscape Designers  
 78 and the Virginia Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, or the road and bridge  
 79 specifications of the Virginia Department of Transportation.

80 G. Existing trees which are to be preserved may be included to meet all or part of the canopy  
 81 requirements, and may include wooded preserves, if the site plan identifies such trees and the trees meet  
 82 standards of desirability and life-year expectancy which the locality may establish.

83 H. For purposes of this section:

84 "Tree canopy" or "tree cover" includes all areas of coverage by plant material exceeding five feet in  
 85 height, and the extent of planted tree canopy at 10 or 20 years maturity. Planted canopy at 10 or 20 years  
 86 maturity shall be based on published reference texts generally accepted by landscape architects, nurserymen,  
 87 and arborists in the community, and the texts shall be specified in the ordinance.

88 F. Penalties for violations of ordinances adopted pursuant to this section shall be the same as those  
 89 applicable to violations of zoning ordinances of the locality. *However, a locality may adopt increased penalty*  
 90 *amounts not to exceed \$2,500 per violation.*

91 J. I. In no event shall any local tree replacement or planting ordinance adopted pursuant to this section  
 92 *exceed be less than* the requirements set forth herein. *Notwithstanding subsection C, localities may establish*  
 93 *higher tree canopy replacement percentages, based on density per acre, lot size, or any other measurement*  
 94 *relevant to the practices of the locality to achieve MS4 stormwater nutrient reductions, mitigate urban heat*  
 95 *islands, increase resilience to climate change, including reducing coastal and inland flooding, and mitigate*  
 96 *air pollution.*

97 K. J. Nothing in this section shall invalidate any local ordinance adopted pursuant to the provisions of this  
 98 section prior to July 1, 1990, which imposes standards for tree replacement or planting during the  
 99 development process.

100 L. ~~Nothing in this section shall invalidate any local ordinance adopted by the City of Williamsburg that~~  
 101 ~~imposes standards for 10-year minimum tree cover replacement or planting during the development process.~~

102 M. ~~Nothing in this section shall invalidate any local ordinance adopted pursuant to the provisions of this~~  
 103 ~~section after July 1, 1990, which imposes standards for 20-year minimum tree cover replacement or planting~~  
 104 ~~during the development process.~~

105 N. K. Nothing in this section shall prohibit or unreasonably limit silvicultural practices in accordance with  
 106 § 10.1-1126.1.

107 **§ 15.2-961.1. Conservation of trees during land development process.**

108 A. For purposes of this section, "tree canopy" or "tree cover" includes all areas of canopy coverage by  
 109 self-supporting and healthy woody plant material exceeding five feet in height, and the extent of planted tree  
 110 canopy at ~~20 years~~ 10-years maturity.

111 B. Any locality ~~within Planning District 8 that meets the population density criteria of subsection A of~~  
 112 ~~§ 15.2-961 and is classified as an eight-hour nonattainment area for ozone under the federal Clean Air Act~~  
 113 ~~and Amendments of 1990, in effect as of July 1, 2008, may adopt an ordinance providing for the conservation~~  
 114 ~~of trees during the land development process pursuant to the provisions of this section. In no event shall any~~  
 115 ~~local tree conservation ordinance adopted pursuant to this section also impose the tree replacement provisions~~  
 116 ~~of § 15.2-961.~~

117 C. The ordinance shall require that the site plan for any subdivision or development provide for the  
 118 preservation or replacement of trees on the development site such that the minimum tree canopy or tree cover  
 119 percentage ~~20~~ 10 years after development is projected to be as follows:

- 120 1. Ten percent tree canopy for a site zoned business, commercial, or industrial;
- 121 2. Ten percent tree canopy for a residential site zoned *more than 20 or more* units per acre;

- 122 3. Fifteen percent tree canopy for a residential site zoned more than eight but less than 20 units per acre;
- 123 4. Twenty percent tree canopy for a residential site zoned more than four but not more than eight units per
- 124 acre;
- 125 5. Twenty-five percent tree canopy for a residential site zoned more than two but not more than four units
- 126 per acre; and
- 127 6. ~~Thirty~~ *Thirty-five* percent tree canopy for a residential site zoned two or fewer units per acre.

128 In meeting these percentages, (i) the ordinance shall first emphasize the preservation of existing tree  
 129 canopy where that canopy meets local standards for health and structural condition, and where it is feasible to  
 130 do so within the framework of design standards and densities allowed by the local zoning and other  
 131 development ordinances; and (ii) second, where it is not feasible in whole or in part for any of the  
 132 justifications listed in subsection E to preserve existing canopy in the required percentages listed above, the  
 133 ordinance shall provide for the planting of new trees, *or at the locality's discretion, payment into the tree fund*  
 134 to meet the required percentages.

135 D. Except as provided in subsection E, the percentage of the site covered by tree canopy at the time of  
 136 plan submission shall equate to the minimum portion of the requirements identified in subsection C that shall  
 137 be provided through tree preservation. This portion of the canopy requirements shall be identified as the "tree  
 138 preservation target" and shall be included in site plan calculations or narratives demonstrating how the overall  
 139 requirements of subsection C have been met.

140 E. The ordinance shall provide deviations, in whole or in part, from the tree preservation target defined in  
 141 subsection D under the following conditions:

- 142 1. Meeting the preservation target would prevent the development of uses and densities otherwise allowed
- 143 by the locality's zoning or development ordinance.
- 144 2. The predevelopment condition of vegetation does not meet the locality's standards for health and
- 145 structural condition.

146 3. Construction activities could be reasonably expected to impact existing trees to the extent that they  
 147 would not likely survive in a healthy and structurally sound manner. This includes activities that would cause  
 148 direct physical damage to the trees, including root systems, or cause environmental changes that could result  
 149 in or predispose the trees to structural and health problems.

150 If, in the opinion of the developer, the project cannot meet the tree preservation target due to the  
 151 conditions described in subdivision 1, 2, or 3, the developer may request a deviation from the preservation  
 152 requirement in subsection D. In the request for deviation, the developer shall provide a letter to the locality  
 153 that provides justification for the deviation, describes how the deviation is the minimum necessary to afford  
 154 relief, and describes how the requirements of subsection C will be met through tree planting or a tree canopy  
 155 bank or fund established by the locality. Proposed deviations shall be reviewed by the locality's urban  
 156 forester, arborist, or equivalent in consultation with the locality's land development or licensed professional  
 157 civil engineering review staff. The locality may propose an alternative site design based upon adopted land  
 158 development practices and sound vegetation management practices that take into account the relationship  
 159 between the cost of conservation and the benefits of the trees to be preserved as described in ANSI A300  
 160 (Part 5) — 2005 Management: Tree, Shrub, and Other Woody Plant Maintenance — Standard Practices,  
 161 Management of Trees and Shrubs During Site Planning, Site Development, and Construction, Annex A,  
 162 A-1.5, Cost Benefits Analysis (or the latest version of this standard). The developer shall consider the  
 163 alternative and redesign the plan accordingly, or elect to satisfy the unmet portion of the preservation  
 164 threshold through on-site tree planting or through the off-site planting mechanisms identified in subsection G,  
 165 so long as the developer provides the locality with an explanation of why the alternative design  
 166 recommendations were rejected. Letters of explanation from the developer shall be prepared and certified by  
 167 a licensed professional engineer as defined in § 54.1-400. If arboricultural issues are part of explanation then  
 168 the letter shall be signed by a Certified Arborist who has taken and passed the certification examination  
 169 sponsored by the International Society of Arboriculture and who maintains a valid certification status or by a  
 170 Registered Consulting Arborist as designated by the American Society of Consulting Arborists. If  
 171 arboricultural issues are the sole subject of the letter of explanation then certification by a licensed  
 172 professional engineer shall not be required.

173 F. The ordinance shall provide for deviations of the overall canopy requirements set forth in subsection C  
 174 to allow for the preservation of wetlands, the development of farm land or other areas previously devoid of  
 175 healthy and/or suitable tree canopy, or where the *developer requests and the locality concurs that the* strict  
 176 application of the requirements would ~~result in unnecessary or unreasonable hardship to the developer be~~  
 177 *unreasonable in a specific instance.*

178 G. The ordinance shall provide for the establishment of a tree canopy bank or fund whereby any portion  
 179 of the tree canopy requirement that cannot be met on-site may be met through off-site tree preservation or tree  
 180 planting efforts. Such provisions may be offered where ~~it can be demonstrated~~ *the locality determines* that  
 181 application of the requirements of subsection C would cause irresolvable conflicts with other local site  
 182 development requirements, standards, or comprehensive planning goals, where sites or portions of sites lack  
 183 sufficient space for future tree growth, where planting spaces will not provide adequate space for healthy root

184 development, where trees will cause unavoidable conflicts with underground or overhead utilities, or where it  
185 can be demonstrated that trees are likely to cause damage to public infrastructure. The ordinance may utilize  
186 any of the following off-site canopy establishment mechanisms:

187 1. A tree canopy bank may be established in order for the locality to facilitate off-site tree preservation,  
188 tree planting, stream bank, and riparian restoration projects. Banking efforts shall provide tree canopy that is  
189 preserved in perpetuity through conservation easements, deed restrictions, or similar protective mechanisms  
190 acceptable to the locality. Projects used in off-site banking will meet the same ordinance standards  
191 established for on-site tree canopy; however, the locality may also require the submission of five-year  
192 management plans and funds to ensure the execution of maintenance and management obligations identified  
193 in those plans. Any such bank shall occur within the same nonattainment area in which the locality approving  
194 the tree banking is situated.

195 2. A tree canopy fund may be established to act as a fiscal mechanism to collect, manage, and disburse  
196 fees collected from developers that cannot provide full canopy requirements on-site. The locality may use this  
197 fund directly to plant and maintain trees on public or private property, or the locality may elect to disburse  
198 this fund to community-based organizations exempt from taxation under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue  
199 Code with tree planting, stewardship, or community beautification missions that benefit the community at  
200 large. For purposes of establishing consistent and predictable fees, the ordinance shall establish cost units that  
201 are based on average costs of two-inch caliper nursery stock trees. Any funds collected by localities for these  
202 purposes shall be spent within a five-year period established by the collection date.

203 H. The following uses shall be exempt from the requirements of any ordinance promulgated under this  
204 section: bona fide silvicultural activity as defined by § 10.1-1181.1 and the areas of sites included in lakes,  
205 ponds, and the normal water elevation area of stormwater retention facilities. The ordinance shall modify the  
206 canopy requirements of dedicated school sites, playing fields, and other nonwooded active recreation areas by  
207 allowing these and other facilities and uses of a similar nature to provide 10 percent tree canopy 20 years  
208 after development.

209 I. 1. In recognition of the added benefits of tree preservation, the ordinance shall provide for ~~an additional~~  
210 a tree canopy credit of up to one and one-quarter times the canopy area at the time of plan submission for  
211 individual trees or the coalesced canopy of forested areas preserved from the predevelopment tree canopy.

212 2. The following additional credits may be provided in the ordinance in connection with tree preservation:

213 a. The ordinance may provide canopy credits of up to (i) one and one-half times the actual canopy area for  
214 the preservation of forest communities that achieve environmental, ecological, and wildlife conservation  
215 objectives set by the locality and (ii) two times the actual canopy credits if a site developer provides a stand  
216 assessment before development plans are created, for review by the local jurisdiction, and protects identified  
217 trees for conservation on the submitted site plans. The ordinance may establish minimal area, dimensional  
218 and viability standards as prerequisites for the application of credits. Forest communities shall be identified  
219 using the nomenclature of either the federal National Vegetation Classification System (FGDC-STD-005, or  
220 latest version) or the Natural Communities of Virginia Classification of Ecological Community Groups,  
221 Second Approximation (Version 2.2, or latest version).

222 b. The ordinance may provide canopy credits of up to three times the actual canopy area of trees that are  
223 officially designated for preservation in conjunction with local tree conservation ordinances based on the  
224 authority granted by § 10.1-1127.1.

225 J. The following additional credits shall be provided in the ordinance in connection with tree planting:

226 1. The ordinance shall provide canopy credits of one and one-half the area normally projected for trees  
227 planted to absorb or intercept air pollutants, tree species that produce lower levels of reactive volatile organic  
228 compounds, or trees that act to reduce air pollution or greenhouse gas emissions by conserving the energy  
229 used to cool and heat buildings.

230 2. The ordinance shall provide canopy credits of one and one-quarter the area normally projected for trees  
231 planted for water quality-related reforestation or afforestation projects, and for trees planted in low-impact  
232 development and bioretention water quality facilities. The low-impact development practices and designs  
233 shall conform to local standards in order for these supplemental credits to apply.

234 3. The ordinance shall provide canopy credits of one and one-half the area normally projected for native  
235 tree species planted to provide food, nesting, habitat, and migration opportunities for wildlife. These canopy  
236 credits may also apply to cultivars of native species if the locality determines that such a cultivar is capable of  
237 providing the same type and extent of wildlife benefit as the species it is derived from.

238 4. The ordinance shall provide canopy credits of one and one-half the area normally projected for use of  
239 native tree species that are propagated from seed or tissue collected within the mid-Atlantic region.

240 5. The ordinance shall provide canopy credits of one and one-quarter the area normally projected for the  
241 use of cultivars or varieties that develop desirable growth and structural patterns, resist decay organisms and  
242 the development of cavities, show high levels of resistance to disease or insect infestations, or exhibit high  
243 survival rates in harsh urban environments.

244 K. Tree preservation areas and individual trees may not receive more than one application of additional  
245 canopy credits provided in subsection I. Individual trees planted to meet these requirements may not receive

246 more than two categories of additional canopy credits provided in subsection J. Canopy credits will only be  
247 given to trees with trunks that are fully located on the development site, or in the case of tree banking projects  
248 only to trees with trunks located fully within easements or other areas protected by deed restrictions listed in  
249 subsection G.

250 L. All trees planted for tree cover credits shall meet the specifications of the American Association of  
251 Nurserymen and shall be planted in accordance with the publication entitled "Tree and Shrub Planting  
252 Guidelines," published by the Virginia Cooperative Extension.

253 M. In order to provide higher levels of biodiversity and to minimize the spread of pests and diseases, or to  
254 limit the use of species that cause negative impacts to native plant communities, cause damage to nearby  
255 structures, or possess inherent physiological traits that prone trees to structural failure, the ordinance may  
256 designate species that cannot be used to meet tree canopy requirements or designate species that will only  
257 receive partial 20-year tree canopy credits.

258 N. The locality may allow the use of tree seedlings for meeting tree canopy requirements in large open  
259 spaces, low-density residential settings, or in low-impact development reforestation/afforestation projects. In  
260 these cases, the ordinance shall allow the ground surface area of seedling planting areas to equate to a 20-year  
261 canopy credit area. Tree seedling plantings will be comprised of native species and will be planted in  
262 densities that equate to 400 seedlings per acre, or in densities specified by low-impact development designs  
263 approved by the locality. The locality may set standards for seedling mortality rates and replacement  
264 procedures if unacceptable rates of mortality occur. The locality may elect to allow native woody shrubs or  
265 native woody seed mix to substitute for tree species as long as these treatments do not exceed 33 percent of  
266 the overall seedling planting area. The number of a single species may not exceed 10 percent of the overall  
267 number of trees or shrubs planted to meet the provisions of this subsection.

268 O. The following process shall be used to demonstrate achievement of the required percentage of tree  
269 canopy listed in subsection C:

270 1. The site plan shall graphically delineate the edges of predevelopment tree canopy, the proposed limits  
271 of disturbance on grading or erosion and sedimentation control plans, and the location of tree protective  
272 fencing or other tree protective devices allowed in the Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook.

273 2. Site plans proposing modification to tree canopy requirements or claiming supplemental tree canopy  
274 credits will require a text narrative.

275 3. The site plan shall include the ~~20-year~~ 10-year tree canopy calculations on a worksheet provided by the  
276 locality.

277 4. Site plans requiring tree planting shall provide a planting schedule that provides botanical and common  
278 names of trees, the number of trees being planted, the total of tree canopy area given to each species, variety  
279 or cultivars planted, total of tree canopy area that will be provided by all trees, planting sizes, and associated  
280 planting specifications. The site plan will also provide a landscape plan that delineates where the trees shall  
281 be planted.

282 P. The ordinance shall provide a list of commercially available tree species, varieties, and cultivars that  
283 are capable of thriving in the locality's climate and ranges of planting environments. The ordinance will also  
284 provide a ~~20-year~~ 10-year tree canopy area credit for each tree. The amount of tree canopy area credited to  
285 individual tree species, varieties, and cultivars ~~20~~ 10 years after they are planted shall be based on references  
286 published or endorsed by Virginia academic institutions such as the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State  
287 University and accepted by urban foresters, arborists, and horticulturalists as being accurate for the growing  
288 conditions and climate of the locality.

289 Q. The ordinance shall establish standards of health and structural condition of existing trees and  
290 associated plant communities to be preserved. The ordinance may also identify standards for removal of trees  
291 or portions of trees that are dead, dying, or hazardous due to construction impacts. Such removal standards  
292 may allow for the retention of trunk snags where the locality determines that these may provide habitat or  
293 other wildlife benefits and do not represent a hazardous condition. In the event that existing tree canopy  
294 proposed to be preserved for tree canopy credits dies or must be removed because it represents a hazard, the  
295 locality may require the developer to remove the tree, or a portion of the tree and to replace the missing  
296 canopy area by the planting of nursery stock trees, or if a viable alternative, by tree seedlings. Existing trees  
297 that have been granted credits will be replaced with canopy area determined using the same supplemental  
298 credit multipliers as originally granted for that canopy area.

299 R. Penalties for violation of ordinances adopted pursuant to this section shall be the same as those  
300 applicable to violations of zoning ordinances of the locality.

301 S. In no event shall any local tree conservation ordinance adopted pursuant to this section ~~exceed~~ be less  
302 than the requirements set forth herein; ~~however, any~~. *Notwithstanding subsection C, localities may establish*  
303 *higher tree canopy conservation percentages, based on density per acre, lot size, or any other measurement*  
304 *relevant to the practices of the locality to achieve MS4 stormwater nutrient reductions, mitigate urban heat*  
305 *islands, increase resilience to climate change, including reducing coastal and inland flooding, and mitigate*  
306 *air pollution. Any local ordinance adopted pursuant to the provisions of § 15.2-961 prior to July 1, 1990, may*  
307 *adopt the tree conservation provisions of this section based on 10-year minimum tree canopy requirements.*

308 T. Nothing in this section shall invalidate any local ordinance adopted pursuant to § 15.2-961.

309 U. Nothing in this section shall prohibit or unreasonably limit silvicultural practices in accordance with  
310 § 10.1-1126.1.

311 **2. That the Institute for Coastal Adaption and Resilience (the Institute) shall convene a work group to**  
312 **conduct a comprehensive review of §§ 15.2-961 and 15.2-961.1 of the Code of Virginia, as amended by**  
313 **this act, and § 15.2-961.3 of the Code of Virginia and all applicable state agency regulations and**  
314 **guidance memorandums related to the conservation and replacement of tree canopy. The work group**  
315 **shall consist of land planners; urban foresters; land use attorneys; engineers; environmental**  
316 **consultants; transportation consultants; representatives from the Virginia Association for Commercial**  
317 **Real Estate, Virginia Municipal League, Virginia Association of Counties, Home Builders Association**  
318 **of Virginia, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Green Infrastructure Center, Southside ReLeaf, Department**  
319 **of Forestry, Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association, and Virginia Chapter of the**  
320 **Urban Land Institute; and any other relevant stakeholders. In conducting its review, the work group**  
321 **shall (i) evaluate policies to increase tree canopy in the Commonwealth in a manner that balances state**  
322 **and local environmental and economic development objectives; (ii) identify incentives to preserve**  
323 **healthy mature trees; (iii) analyze and identify methods in which parity can be created for tree canopy**  
324 **requirements across local governments; and (iv) develop recommendations to provide regulatory**  
325 **assurance and cost-effective methods for tree canopy conservation and replacement for developers.**  
326 **The Institute shall report the findings and recommendations of the work group to the Chairs of the**  
327 **House Committee on Counties, Cities and Towns and Senate Committee on Local Government by**  
328 **November 1, 2026.**