

Baltimore Green Space News

preserving neighborhoods' treasured open spaces



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Land Security for Green Spaces

There are about 17,000 vacant lots in Baltimore City, of which 6,650 are owned by City government. With so much vacant land, it's not surprising that residents transform vacant land into community gardens, pocket parks, and much more. Some of these urban oases are on City-owned land, some are on abandoned property, and some are created with permission from the owner.

Understandably, it's hard for City government to keep track of which "vacant" lots are actually community assets. For example, while about 750 lots have been adopted by residents, not all of the projects work out. Some projects are meant as temporary uses. And some are on abandoned properties.

That's where Baltimore Green Space comes in. We collect information about Baltimore's community-managed open spaces. When we tell the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) about these lots, the land is not offered for sale – at least not without investigation and thought. Why? Because community-managed open spaces make neighborhoods more attractive to prospective residents.

We also like to learn about community-managed open spaces for other reasons: to connect the residents who care for the sites with services they may need; to inform studies about how community greening is improving Baltimore; and to connect new volunteers with green spaces.

Unfortunately, we don't know about all the green spaces – and in the past year, there have been some sad cases. For example, about 20 years ago public funds were used to landscape a lot across from Pimlico Race Track so that it could be a buffer. Now those investments will most likely be lost. This could have been avoided had Baltimore Green Space reported the lot to HCD.

A second site has had a happier resolution. A lot from Sunflower Village, a lovely garden in Poppleton, was included in a sales contract. Fortunately, HCD was able to substitute another parcel, as Poppleton has no lack of other vacant land.

On Tuesday, June 19, 6 to 8 pm, Baltimore Green Space will present a workshop, **Land Security for Community Open Spaces**. We will cover the basics of land preservation (for the greatest

Community Space Spotlight: **Govans Urban Forest**



The Govans Urban Forest is approximately one third of an acre in the 5200 block of York Road. Baltimore City required that it be preserved when a business was built on the same parcel of land. Yet while it had been officially preserved, it received very little care and had become trashy and overrun with invasive vines.

In 2012, the York Road Partnership started to manage the forest, with help from neighborhood volunteers, the Loyola University rugby team, and the Friends School. Volunteers have removed trash and invasive plants, planted trees where needed, and created a lovely sign.

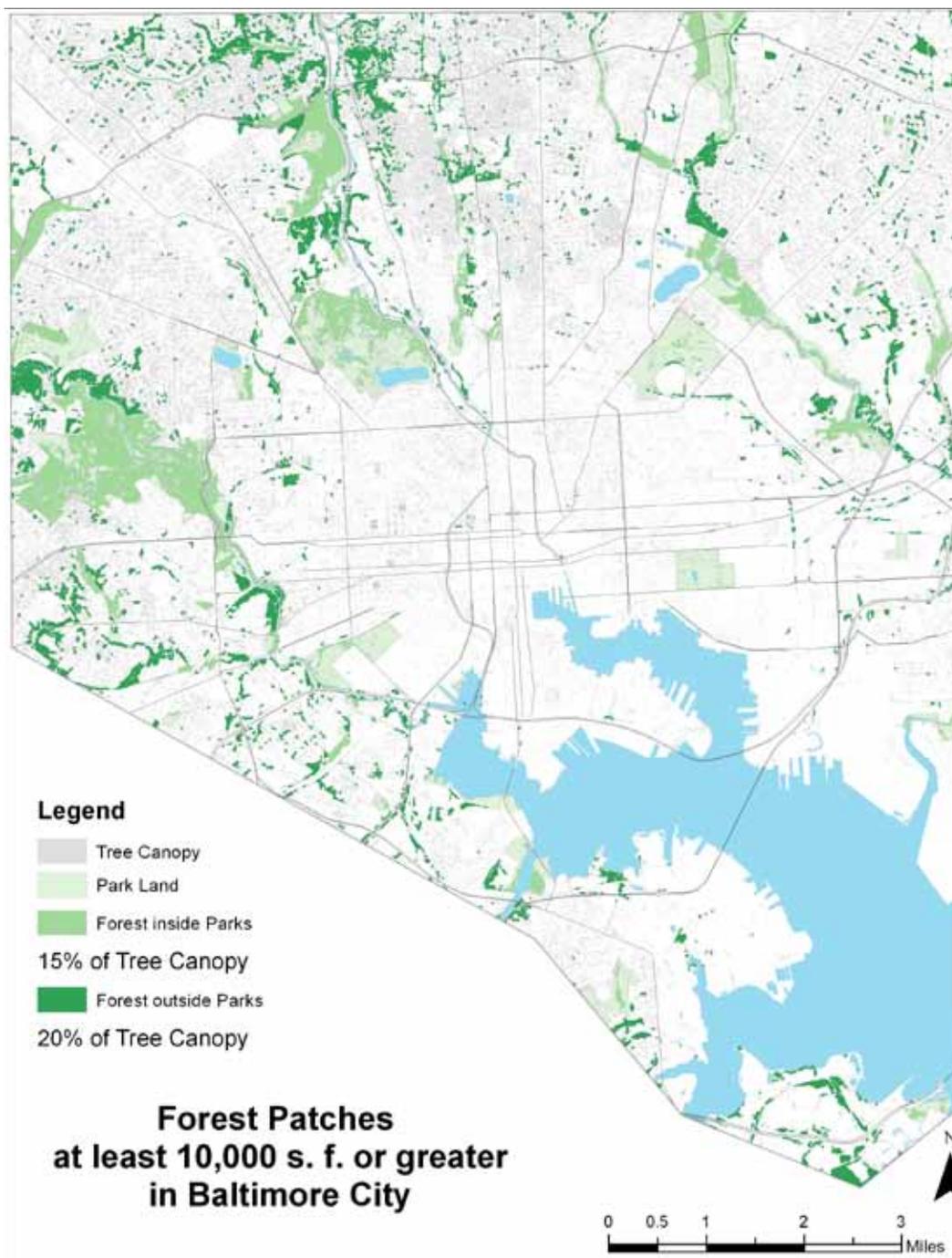
degree of land security). In addition, we invite residents to bring information about their community-managed open spaces, so we can be sure we have the best possible information to give the City. Please join us at the Greater Homewood Community Corporation, 3503 N. Charles Street, 21218. To RSVP or to learn more, please e-mail us at office@baltimoregreenspace.org, or call 443-996-3811.

Forest Patches are 34% of Baltimore's Tree Canopy

Watch for Baltimore Green Space's soon-to-be-published white paper on forest patches. But here's the spoiler – 34 percent of Baltimore's tree canopy is in forest patches that are at least 10,000 square feet. Twenty percent of our tree canopy is in such forest patches outside parks. Yet these forest patches have very little protection.

Why do forest patches matter? The trees help us in many ways: they cool and clean the air. They filter storm water. They provide homes, food, and shelter for migratory birds. And they give people a place to connect with an entire natural community – from tiny organisms such as lichen to towering trees.

The map below shows Baltimore's forest patches (as identified from the sky). We did our best to exclude street trees. What remains are areas with forest "understory" of smaller plants, as well as areas of tree canopy that might be more manicured on the ground. In the map, tree canopy is shown in gray; forest patches in parks are shown in light green, and forest patches outside parks are shown in dark green.



Our White Paper will provide more details about the benefits of forest patches, their vulnerability to development, and recommendations for how to preserve these important assets.

We are also working with residents who care for neighborhood forest patches. Come join us!

Learn more about Baltimore Green Space, or make a tax-deductible donation, by visiting baltimoregreenspace.org

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