

Summary Guide: 2026 Amendments to the Forest and Tree Preservation Ordinance (FTPO)

Disclaimer: The following are a list of key changes made to the FTPO meant to serve as a quick guide for future applicants. This is not an exhaustive list of amendments made to the FTPO, nor does it use the precise language of the FTPO. Therefore, applicants should still refer to the complete and amended FTPO document for guidance.

- **Off-Site Planting:** Sec. 10.5-23(a)(4). Offsite planting is now a mitigation option for applicants who are required to meet afforestation, reforestation, and/or tree replacement requirements. “Offsite” has been defined as properties not on the application site that sit within Rockville city limits.
- **Native Species Requirement:** Sec. 10.5-22(g). Plantings required for a Forest Conservation Plan must include a minimum of 80% native tree species. An approved list of native tree species is forthcoming in 2026 and will be available through the city’s Forest Conservation Manual. Prior to the publication of this list, staff will work with applicants to ensure compliance with approved species for planting.
- **Biodiversity:** Sec. 10.5-22(g). In recognizing the importance of biodiversity for improving ecosystem services and resilience, the amended FTPO mandates that applicants must, “to the extent possible,” plant a diversity of tree species to meet their Forest Conservation Plan requirements. This is a discretionary standard rather than one with an explicit metric.
- **Notice of Removal for Priority Retention Forests:** Sec. 10.5-14(c)(6). Public notice has been extended from 20 to 30 days when priority retention forests or parts thereof are to be removed.
- **Lot Tree Requirements:** Sec. 10.5-11(b)(1)(d). The amended FTPO mandates the planting or preservation of three lot trees for the construction of a new single dwelling unit or the demolition, repair, or renovation of more than 50 percent of the floor area of an existing single dwelling unit.
- **Significant Tree Replacement:** Sec. 10.5-22(a)(1). Requirements for significant tree replacement have been altered. Most notably, landscape trees (i.e., trees not located in a forest) are now deemed significant once they reach 6 inches in diameter at 4.5 feet above ground level (whereas the former minimum standard was 12 inches).
- **Reforestation Rates:** Sec. 10.5-22(a)(2). Reforestation requirements have been altered for (1) the removal of priority retention areas and (2) the removal of non-priority retention areas above the conservation threshold.