



## Reforest Rockville Candidate Survey 2023

Below are the responses from candidates who completed the Reforest Rockville survey. Candidates' names appear in random order (via [www.random.org](http://www.random.org)). Note that one candidate provided a written statement which can be found at the end of this document.

Thank you!

The Reforest Rockville Team  
[www.ReforestRockville.org](http://www.ReforestRockville.org)

*1. We understand one of the primary impediments to increasing the green canopy is budgetary. Given the multiple challenges and needs in our city, do you support protecting and expanding tree canopy?*

**Izola Shaw**

Strongly support: I consider increasing the tree canopy a high priority, recognizing its environmental, social, and health benefits, and would prioritize it over other projects of similar cost.

**Barry Jackson**

Support: While I value the importance of tree canopy, my focus leans towards infrastructure and economic development over tree planting, due to more immediate demands.

**Anita Neal Powell**

Neutral: I acknowledge the potential benefits of tree canopy but believe that its initial costs and ongoing maintenance must be carefully weighed against benefits.

**Mark Pierzchala**

Undecided: I would like to further study the potential impacts and trade-offs.

**David Myles**

Strongly support: I consider increasing the tree canopy a high priority, recognizing its environmental, social, and health benefits, and would prioritize it over other projects of similar cost.

**Monique Ashton**

Strongly support: I consider increasing the tree canopy a high priority, recognizing its environmental, social, and health benefits, and would prioritize it over other projects of similar cost.

## Adam Van Grack

Strongly support: I consider increasing the tree canopy a high priority, recognizing its environmental, social, and health benefits, and would prioritize it over other projects of similar cost.

## Kate Fulton

Support: While I value the importance of tree canopy, my focus leans towards infrastructure and economic development over tree planting, due to more immediate demands.

## Valeri Marissa

Support: While I value the importance of tree canopy, my focus leans towards infrastructure and economic development over tree planting, due to more immediate demands.

### *2a. Is protecting existing trees in PUBLIC spaces in our city from unnecessary removal a priority, in particular mature trees?*

All candidates responded "Yes" to the question.

### *2b. Is protecting existing trees on PRIVATE PROPERTIES in our city from unnecessary removal a priority, in particular mature trees?*

Izola Shaw: Undecided

Barry Jackson: Yes

Anita Neal Powell: Yes

Mark Pierzchala: No

David Myles: Yes

Monique Ashton: Yes

Adam Van Grack: Yes

Kate Fulton: Yes

Valeri Marissa: Yes

*3. On a scale of one to ten (ten being highest), how strongly do you support prioritizing the planting of native tree species within our city over other priorities, such as new development, including our proposed goal of 85% of trees planted by the city being native to our area?*

Izola Shaw: 9

Barry Jackson: 8

Anita Neal Powell: 5

Mark Pierzchala: 5

David Myles: 8

Monique Ashton: 8

Adam Van Grack: 9

Kate Fulton: 6

Valeri Marissa: 9

*4. How strictly should code be enforced to ensure that for every tree removed during development, an equivalent or greater number of trees are planted and that these newly planted trees receive proper care until they are well-established?*

**Izola Shaw**

Our code should be enforced to ensure the growth, maturity and protection of our trees.

**Barry Jackson**

It is very important that our city prioritize ensuring that the same number of trees are planted or increased in new developments or re-developments and that they are receive proper care.

**Anita Neal Powell**

City guidelines must be followed.

**Mark Pierzchala**

This is well enforced and is part of every project plan. We exact the trees code requires.

**David Myles**

As a general rule, I believe that all Rockville's codes should be followed, to include those governing the removal and replanting of trees.

## Monique Ashton

We need to ensure that projects align with our code. Trees are important to supporting removal of green house gases and support our climate action plan.

## Adam Van Grack

I feel very strongly that we must preserve Rockville's tree canopy and green spaces. When development occurs in areas where sections of our city's tree canopy is removed, I strongly support ensuring that an equivalent or greater number of trees are planted and that these newly-planted trees receive proper care until they are well-established.

## Kate Fulton

We should strictly enforce code provisions that protect our environment, including tree canopy.

## Valeri Marissa

This is a complex issue. While I strongly support the planting of trees to offset trees removed during planting, I have noted some challenges to this requirement. As I understand it, there is no mandate that the trees planted by the developer be native trees. That needs to change. Additionally, I would not want a surplus of trees planted or left to wither somewhere so I do question if the City has enough professional staff to nurture saplings. I believe in this requirement wholeheartedly. I would make it a bit more defined so that it is a successful requirement.

*5. Describe any initiatives or organizations you have been involved with advocating and working for a healthy tree canopy, green spaces, and climate resilience. Describe your role in these initiatives, the outcomes achieved, and how your experience informs your approach to advancing urban forestry.*

## Izola Shaw

I am a member of the Montgomery County Environmental Protection Agency Community Justice Academy. This County program helped to create community gardens and works to strengthen relationships between communities and government agencies to build climate resilience.

## Barry Jackson

I have experience as president of the King Farm Citizens Assembly (KFCA). As well as nearly 20 years of being involved in the HOA. King Farm is nearly 430 acres which means there are many many trees - from city maintained to trees maintained by the HOA to trees that are maintained privately. The KFCA works with the city forester to give advice on when and how to maintain or remove and replant existing or new trees. One issue we have noticed is an infestation of emerald ash borer beetles that is simply decimating ash trees in King Farm. We have been working with our community to begin removing many of the dead or dying trees and replacing them with more hardy and native species. I am concerned about the coming years as homeowners do not realize that many of the trees around them are in fact their property and their responsibility. As trees need to be replaced there will be significant expense to the homeowners. We have moved to educate and talk about trees as best we can but a coordinated effort with outside groups and the city is needed to get the word out about why, how and when the trees will need to be replaced. King Farm is very much a planned mixed use urban community and that includes an extensive

tree canopy. The HOA has made it a priority that trees in the canopy are replaced or new ones planted in order to keep the canopy vibrant and whole. It is a very real priority for us and one that we put much time, money and effort to.

## Anita Neal Powell

N/A

## Mark Pierzchala

The Redgate people and those that want Redgate to be an arboretum. I have been feeding them information and perspective, especially how the Redgate master plan is over-baked and uses current grassy areas for parking. There should be no parking on grass and all these grassy areas should become meadow or forest.

## David Myles

In my four years serving on Rockville's City Council, I have worked to craft, edit, and implement the climate action plan which includes specific recommendations regarding the planting and maintaining of trees. At our home, we replaced a dying shrub and tree with a pollinator garden and a tree native to this area.

## Monique Ashton

I have accelerated the adoption of our Climate Action Plan, served on the liaison on to the Environment Commission, and as the Rockville elected official on the Climate Energy & Environment Policy Committee which is part of the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments. I worked closely with community leaders early on to advocate for making Red Gate a park. We look forward to supporting an arboretum with native trees through a recent grant secured from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

This is an important and expansive green space. I also successfully pushed for more accelerated green and climate mitigation features throughout City facilities as part of the work implement the City of Rockville's first Climate Action Plan as a flood mitigation program and better storm water long term planning. In collaboration with the Environment Commission, I proposed the implementation of Rockville's first pilot composting program; drafted the first ever Rockville EV Resolution to help convert Rockville's fleet to renewable energy; city-wide EV infrastructure plan, and advocated for more green building attributes as part of zoning, building codes, and new project development. I have also led on an initiative to do green no-permit fee holiday in the month of April to incentivize, reduce the fees for green features throughout the year, and pushed for what will be our first solar canopy project. In addition, I have advocated for mass transit options and alternatives in lieu of proposed expensive toll lanes on I-270 in Rockville. I have supported our tree program, and connecting neighbors to assistance on tree maintenance. I look forward to continuing my work in collaboration with organizations, colleagues, and leaders, to make Rockville a leader on climate resilience.

My family and I have also personally supported many environmental organizations, such as the Nature Conservancy, among others.

## Adam Van Grack

In addition to volunteering for many environmental organizations, I have served on the board of an

environmental non-profit (Waterkeepers Chesapeake) and worked on environmental and natural resources issues in the U.S. Senate (U.S. Senator Paul Sarbanes) as well as the White House (Vice President Al Gore's Domestic Policy Office). In these positions, I have been a consistent advocate for ensuring and preserving a healthy tree canopy, preserving and conserving green spaces, and working towards climate resilience. My work in these areas have shown me that (1) we are constantly facing resistance (often economic pressure) to preserving our natural spaces, and (2) it is important to be vigilant in our resolve while trying to help people understand that a healthy economy and environmental health/preserving green spaces are not mutually exclusive.

### Kate Fulton

I have not played a direct role in any such organization. I have advocated for individual steps to promote climate resiliency as well as investment in City programs and services that do the same.

### Valeri Marissa

As President of the Twinbrook Community Association, I had more opportunities than any other first-time candidate to protect our trees and our environment. I was actively engaged in efforts to try to save our champion crab apple tree on Twinbrook Parkway. While not in the City limits, it was still important to me to highlight its champion status and try to amend any proposed development proposal to protect it. The status of the tree has not had a final determination.

When the fatal flooding occurred after the remnants of Tropical Storm Ida, I worked with Councilmember Ashton to spread the word about a City program to provide rebates to homeowners who needed help repairing their homes from flood damage. As a resident of “the sump” here in Twinbrook, my own home experienced some of that flooding. It highlighted the danger to our community from ever-increasing violent storms.

During my tenure on the TCA board, we made steps toward advocating for a tree repair and maintenance fund that would assist homeowners in need with tree removal when necessary and overall maintenance as well. I still believe strongly in this policy proposal. The cost to remove a dead or sick tree, especially an older, mature tree, is prohibitively expensive for many folks. I would combine this program with educational efforts on things such as the destructive nature of English ivy on healthy trees, and continue the work of the Rockville Weed Warriors to educate residents across the City.

Saving mature trees and our overall tree canopy is close to my heart. Each mature tree we lose is the end of tens or hundreds of year of growth, and should not be taken lightly.

*6. What efforts would you support to remove invasive trees and vines from city parks? Would you support development of a forest survey to identify areas that need particular care in this regard?*

### Izola Shaw

I would support development of a forest service. Additionally there are interested community members already doing this work on a small scale. I would look into providing resources to expand their efforts.

## Barry Jackson

I very much support efforts to remove invasive trees and vines from city parks as well as elsewhere. Whether public/private partnerships, volunteer organizations, HOAs or other groups I think the city can use all the help it can get. I would support a forest survey to identify needs but not just in the area of invasive trees and vines - also to plan for disease and other items that can impact our overall tree canopy. We have done a similar type assessment in King Farm and find it very helpful in targeting trees that need immediate replanting or care and for overall planning purposes.

## Anita Neal Powell

I would recommend that a study be done to identify invasive trees and vines. removal from city parks. Yes.

## Mark Pierzchala

The biggest threat to the City's forest area is the deer population. The understory of our City forests is devastated, and this leads to invasive plant species ability to thrive. I worked very hard to find a way to cull the herds, but in the end, it is not practical.

## David Myles

Yes, I would support such a survey and funding to remove invasive species.

## Monique Ashton

I want to give a big shout out to the Rockville Weed Warriors for all of the work they do every day to help remove invasive species from parkland, open spaces. I do support a survey to identify the areas of greatest need to help remove invasive trees and vines. I would also work closely with the Rockville Weed Warriors to get input on this effort. I would then work with staff to create a prioritization plan, including a focus on the weeds and invasive trees that are the most serious. One such issue identified by residents is the spread of invasive knotwood. I have asked our City team to investigate these areas of concern.

## Adam Van Grack

I strongly support the removal of invasive trees and vines from city parks as well as from city conservation easements and city public right-of-ways. I have worked with certified arborists in my job as an attorney and learned how invasive trees and vines are extremely harmful to our city's ecosystem and potentially to our living spaces as well (these invasive trees and vines can cause tree failures which can destroy homes and cause harm). Rockville needs to (1) hire members of the City Forester's Office who have an expertise in Maryland Arboriculture, (2) develop a city forest survey to identify such areas, (3) devote funds to remove invasive trees and vines from city parks, city conservation easements, and city public right-of-ways, and (4) develop a Natural Tree/Plant Plan to repopulate many of our public areas with natural plants to encourage healthy ecosystems.

## Kate Fulton

A survey is a good place to start. We should establish clear processes and protocols to continuously evaluate and address invasive plants as part of routine park maintenance, as well as a strategy for eradication in the long term.

## Valeri Marissa

As I mentioned in Question 5, we need to support and expand the Rockville Weed Warrior program and provide more resources and support to their important work. They have a wealth of knowledge and expertise, in addition to a passion for protecting our native species, that warrants increased resources. The tremendous work that they do in our City parks and green spaces - at their own cost and time - should be compensated.

I would incentivize any new developments, or landscaping in existing developments and retail spaces, to only use native plant species in their landscaping. I would also find a mechanism to sanction any development that does not maintain green spaces by removing invasive vines.

I strongly support a forest survey and I believe it is a critical first step in the process.

## *Other Comments*

### Izola Shaw

Increasing and protecting our tree canopy is one of my key environmental sustainability priorities.

### Barry Jackson

Thank you for your questions and for the work that you do. I am familiar with issues surrounding trees as we have had to begin an extensive program of tree management within King Farm. I am very appreciative and aware of the tree canopy here in King Farm and Rockville. If elected I will work to ensure we work to include considerations for how best to maintain and grow our tree canopy.

I answered #3 lower than a 10 only because there may be other priorities that need addressing more immediately (public safety comes to mind) but in general trees are a lasting legacy that we can give to future generations. If we manage the tree canopy thoughtfully and well our Rockville trees can be a gift to future generations. If we don't - it will be a burden to them.

### Anita Neal Powell

N/A

### Mark Pierzchala

Rockville has actually gone a long ways towards the goals of this group. We have ordinances and policies in place that promote tree canopy. Also, 2 large farms were converted to development and resulted in a marked increase in canopy. You should not be dismissive of development if it is redevelopment. When asphalt is replaced by modern development, nature wins.

The premise of question 1 is in error. The impediments to tree canopy are not primarily budgetary.

The questionnaire did not cover Pepco's treatment of trees, where we get Vs, not trees.

### David Myles

Thank you all for your work and advocacy.



## Monique Ashton

Thank you for the opportunity to serve. As your next Mayor, I will continue to make Rockville a model City. Visit [www.Monique4Rockville.com](http://www.Monique4Rockville.com) to learn more.

In addition, please find a few resources to help your readers:

Rockville Tree Resources: <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/1015/Forestry>

Rockville Forestry Preservation: <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/1066/Forest-and-Tree-Preservation>

Tree Giveaway (Fall): <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/2331/Fall-Tree-Giveaway>

Rainscapes: <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/827/RainScapes-Rebates>

Flood Mitigation Program: <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/2431/Flood-Mitigation-Assistance-Program>

## Adam Van Grack

I strongly support the initiatives of Reforest Rockville, and I look forward to working with Reforest Rockville in the future.

## Kate Fulton

As I engage with residents across Rockville, I hear stories of newly-planted trees that die in a short time because they are not suitable for the environment (ex: along Gude drive) and lapsed efforts to reforest (ex: "Growing, Not Mowing" signs in King Farm). We need to ensure that conservation efforts are thoughtful and effective, and that we maintain focus on them over time.

## Valeri Marissa

Thank you for this opportunity to share my perspective. I became a native plan convert shortly before COVID-19 hit our community. I learned so much about the benefits of converting non-native grass lawns to native plant gardens from the Weed Warriors active in Twinbrook. I am proud to say that I have almost entirely limited the lawn in our front yard, and I continue to remove the lawn and plant native plants and trees instead. I am the proud gardener of a paw paw tree that is well on its way to maturity!

I am still earning so much. I believe strongly that elected officials must also "walk the walk" when it comes to supporting policy. My home is proof positive of this commitment.

## Richard Gottfried (written statement provided by candidate)

Thank you for the opportunity to address your team's concerns with regard to the above-six questions.

In the Rockville's 2040 Comprehensive Master Plan there are three policies that will assist residents with tree care and promote a vigorous canopy citywide:

### Policy 9

Preserve and enhance tracts of contiguous forest areas and tree canopy along stream valley buffers, wildlife corridors, and adjacent to existing forest networks.

Policy 10

Continue to assess tree canopy coverage, the health and condition of city forests and landscaped areas, and maintain a robust urban tree canopy.

Policy 11

Update the Forest and Tree Preservation Ordinance to incorporate flexibility in decision-making when there are two or more environmental goals in conflict.

I understand what your team is trying to accomplish, and my recommendation would be to postpone this issue until after the new Mayor and Council are inaugurated. If elected, I would advocate for your team by reaching out to all stakeholders including, the city manager, the budget director, the City's arborist and residents to address your team's concerns and issues.

Regards,

Richard Gottfried

Candidate for Rockville City Council