

DAILY-NEWS RECORD ONLINE**City, Local Church To Receive Environmental Grants**

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Official: Tree Cover In Harrisonburg 'Sparse'By [A.J. Kornblith](#)

HARRISONBURG - The Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council has announced the recipients of its urban and community forestry mini-grants.

Harrisonburg and the Harrisonburg Mennonite Church both received grants, as did Winchester and the town of Woodstock.

"We wanted to increase commitment to investing in and taking care of our urban forest resources," said Joan Comanor, chairwoman of the Council's Forestry Committee, which awarded the grants. "As cities develop, sometimes we don't pay enough attention to ensuring we have attractive green spaces."

The \$500 grants will match funds already pledged by the recipients for their projects.

Tree Cover 'Sparse'

Harrisonburg's Public Works and Parks & Recreation departments plan to use their grants to encourage the planting of trees along Blacks Run and in other locations throughout the city, said Stream Health Coordinator Jared Stoltzfus.

"We want to find businesses in the city interested in planting trees on their property," he said. "We'll help them by paying half the cost of the planting," he said, adding that the city also received \$300 from another local nonprofit, Friends of Blacks Run Greenway.

Stoltzfus indicated that while Harrisonburg's tree cover remains "sparse" compared to cities such as Richmond, the up to 16 extra trees would constitute a good start and also help mitigate the storm-water runoff that pollutes the stream. He said he hoped to have the project completed by summer's end.

Church: Neighbors Welcome

Ann Nielson, a member of the Harrisonburg Mennonite Church's Creation Care Group who led the church's quest for the grant, said the money would be used to plant native trees and flowers on the 12 acres surrounding the church.

"Lots of neighbors use the property, and they are welcome," she said. The project is part of an ongoing effort by the group to help the wider community, and especially its children, appreciate nature's gifts.

"You don't bond with the natural world without being in it, and you don't care for it either," Nielson said.

Comanor said this was the first year the council had made grants available in this particular area but added they would offer them again, probably early next year.

"We're definitely in it for the long haul," she said.

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