

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2023 SESSION

CHAPTER 427

An Act to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 5 of Chapter 9 of Title 15.2 a section numbered 15.2-977.1, relating to local incentives for urban green space.

[H 1510]

Approved March 23, 2023

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 5 of Chapter 9 of Title 15.2 a section numbered 15.2-977.1 as follows:

§ 15.2-977.1. Local incentives for urban green space.

A. For purposes of this section, "urban green space" means urban land, partly or completely covered with grass, trees, shrubs, or other vegetation, that is located in a densely populated area that has a high concentration of residential or commercial structures. "Urban green space" includes street trees, city parks, sports fields, gardens, and greenways. To qualify as urban green space, the use of such land must make a substantive impact on the reduction of the urban heat effect, the offsetting of greenhouse gas emissions, or the mitigation of stormwater. Rural areas and areas of low population density or development shall not be considered urban green space.

B. Any county, city, or town may, by ordinance, establish a program to provide regulatory flexibility to encourage the preservation, restoration, or development of urban green space in the locality. Any such regulatory flexibility provided shall be proportionate to the amount of urban green space that a business or development contains.

C. The regulatory flexibility may include (i) a reduction in permit fees or (ii) a streamlined process for the approval of permits.