June 30, 2026

POLICY ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

TO: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee (PHED)

THRU: Rana Hightower
Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee, Director

FROM: Shalene Miller-Whye
Legislative Budget and Policy Analyst

Alex Hirtle
Legislative Budget and Policy Analyst

RE: Policy Analysis and Fiscal Impact Statement
CB-064-2026 Weeds and Conservation Landscaping

CB-064-2026 (*proposed by*: Council Member Dernoga)

Assigned to the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee (PHED)

AN ACT CONCERNING WEEDS AND CONSERVATION LANDSCAPING, for the purpose of amending the Housing Code of Prince George's County regarding the definition of weeds and Conservation Landscaping; amending the property standards and maintenance Code provisions regarding the definition of weeds and Conservation Landscaping; amending the antilitter and weed ordinance regarding the definition of weeds and Conservation Landscaping; providing for certain abandoned vehicles in a certain definition; and generally regarding weeds and Conservation Landscaping.

Fiscal Summary

Direct Impact:

Expenditures: Nominal expenditures likely.

Revenues: No revenue foreseen.

Indirect Impact:
Potentially favorable.

Legislative Summary:

CB-064-2026[1] was introduced on June 9, 2026, and referred to the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee. It amends the Housing and Property Standards Code, including the anti-litter and weed ordinance, updating the definition of weeds, conservation landscaping and vacant vehicles.

Current Law/Background:

Division 9 of Subtitle 13, known as the Anti-Litter and Weed Ordinance[2], regulates the accumulation of litter, garbage, rubbish, refuse, and excessive weeds on both improved and unimproved properties in the unincorporated areas of Prince George's County. The ordinance declares excessive litter and overgrown vegetation to be public nuisances because they may create health and safety hazards, attract rodents and vermin, increase fire risks, and negatively affect surrounding properties.

The law requires property owners, occupants, lessees, and responsible parties to maintain their property by preventing litter accumulation and keeping weeds below twelve inches in height in applicable areas. When a violation is identified, the Department of Permitting, Inspections, and Enforcement (DPIE) must provide notice to the property owner or responsible party, who is then given ten calendar days to correct the violation. If compliance is not achieved, DPIE may issue civil monetary fines, remove the litter or weeds, and recover associated abatement costs from the property owner.

Unpaid abatement costs may be placed on the property as a lien and collected through the County tax bill. Property owners are afforded administrative appeal rights through the Administrative Hearing Unit and may seek judicial review of final administrative decisions.

Under current law, violations are subject to a civil fine of $1,000 per violation, with each day of continued noncompliance constituting a separate offense. Commercial properties are subject to escalating fines for repeat violations, beginning at $2,000 for a first offense and increasing to $5,000 for third and subsequent offenses. Following a fourth noncompliance action within one year, the County may undertake recurring abatement measures and recover all associated costs from the property owner.

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[1] Prince George's County Council - Reference No. CB-064-2026
[2] DIVISION 9. - ANTILITTER AND WEED ORDINANCE. | Code of Ordinances | Prince George's County, MD | Municode Library

The amendments this legislation proposes is necessary due to the Department of the Environment's (DoE) undertaking of rain gardens and alternative lawn landscape recommendations to residents and others for purposes of pollinator enhancement, stormwater management integration on residential and commercial properties, and the understanding that a grass lawn manicured through mowing, fertilization, and use of herbicides, pesticides, and other pest inhibitors are often not sustainable practices.

According to the bill sponsor, there has been uncertainty regarding the enforcement of property maintenance standards by the Department of Permitting, Inspections, and Enforcement (DPIE), particularly with respect to citations involving weeds and vegetation height. The sponsor indicates that some enforcement actions have not reflected more recent environmental landscaping initiatives promoted by the Department of the Environment (DoE). This legislation seeks to clarify the County's property maintenance standards to improve consistency in enforcement and reduce potential confusion regarding lawn maintenance and conservation landscaping.

Resource Personnel:

- Kathy Canning, Legislative Attorney
- Andrea Crooms, Policy Director, District 1

Discussion/Policy Analysis:

CB-064-2026 proposes to repeal and reenact with amendments, Subtitle 13, Housing and Property Standards, Sec. 13-118, 13-231, and 13-261.

The proposed amendments would:

- Add Sec. 302.3.2 with definitions of Low Impact Landscaping, also known as Conservation Landscaping. Low Impact Landscaping shall mean, intentional landscaping that looks either manicured or wild and conserves water, lowers maintenance costs, provides pollution prevention or creates habit for wildlife. This may but is not limited to habitat gardens, pollinator gardens, Maryland native plant meadows, and rain gardens.
- In Sec. 302.4, add turf grass within the code to be maintained and not grow beyond 12 inches. It would also remove the prohibition of noxious weeds.
- In Sec. 302.4, define noxious weeds consistently with the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), including invasive plant species prohibited according to the 2024 Maryland Invasive Plant law.
- In Sec. 302.4, remove grasses, annual plants, vegetation, other trees or shrubs, within the definition of weeds and further emphasis that weeds shall not include: cultivated plants such as flowers, ferns, ornamental grasses, shrubs and trees, Maryland native plants, low-impact and conservation landscaping, vegetable gardens and cultivated crops, native

vegetation growing in wetlands or woodlands including associated native underbrush that are planned, intentional and well maintained.
- In Sec. 13-261 add watercraft and semitrailer to the definition of abandoned vehicle.

CB-064-2026 updates County property maintenance standards by establishing protections for low-impact and conservation landscaping, aligning weed and invasive species definitions with State law, clarifying vegetation exempt from enforcement, maintaining height requirements for turf grass, and expanding the definition of abandoned vehicles to include watercraft and semitrailers.

Questions for Committee Consideration:

1. Do DPIE inspectors have the capability of distinguishing nonnative plants from invasive species?
2. What resources does the enforcing agency require to enforce the provisions included within this bill?
3. Has the enforcing agency identified any anticipated enforcement challenges or training needs resulting from the new definitions?
4. How does the Administration plan to ensure continuity in the enforcement of this legislation as Property Enforcement transitions to the Office of Homeland Security (OHS), particularly given that Property Standards Inspectors will report to a new agency and director?
5. How can the County engage DoE, OHS, and stakeholder organizations such as the Maryland Native Plant Coalition to promote consistent interpretation and enforcement of the revised property maintenance standards?

Policy Implementation Resource/Timeline:

Based on this analysis, OHS may need to develop and implement training for Property Standards Inspectors following the transfer of Property Enforcement to ensure consistent interpretation and enforcement of the revised property maintenance standards. Additionally, OHS, DoE and local nonprofit organizations with expertise in conservation landscaping should convene to develop implementation guidance, establish consistent enforcement expectations, and coordinate public outreach prior to the legislation's effective date.

Fiscal Impact:

- *Direct Impact*

Adoption of CB-064-2026 may have an adverse fiscal impact with nominal expenditures due to additional training and possible increased engagement and interaction with other agencies and parties.

- *Indirect Impact*

Adoption of CB-064-2026 could have favorable indirect environmental impacts by encouraging conservation landscaping practices that may increase on-site stormwater retention, reduce lawn mowing and associated hydrocarbon emissions, support pollinator habitats, and decrease the use of fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, and other lawn care chemicals.

- *Appropriated in the Current Fiscal Year Budget*

N/A.

Effective Date of Proposed Legislation:

This Act shall take effect forty-five (45) calendar days after it becomes law.

If you require additional information or have questions about this fiscal impact statement, please call or email me.