



APPENDIX A. RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR A TREE ORDINANCE

I. Goal of Ordinance

- Establish a policy of no net loss to the present tree canopy cover
- Regulate the conservation, protection, establishment and maintenance of trees
- Preserve community forest health, which includes preserving and/or enhancing species diversity
- Work in tandem with other Ordinances to enhance the health of our County's soil, water and air quality

II. General Recommendations

The Tree Ordinance should be written as a stand-alone document in a separate ordinance section, with the sections pertaining to trees removed from the existing Development Code. This will provide

- One location to find relevant code information
- More flexibility to embed graphics, charts and tables for better education and comprehension

The document should

- Further government and community interests
- Address public property tree issues
- Be clearly written with all general terms defined by specific terms, and a glossary of terms included
- Contribute to an effort to streamline the development application process, while being effective
- Facilitate implementation and enforcement in a uniform and consistent manner
- Improve the process of permitting and implementation that currently exists
- Improve the process of enforcement that currently exists
- Repeal conflicting provisions of established Code
- Provide clear incentives for compliance beyond the letter of the law
- Provide clear penalties for non-compliance and
- Create performance measurements so that the results can be easily evaluated.

III. Specific Recommendations

A. Tree Canopy Cover Requirement on Zoning Classes

- All new single family site development should be required to have a minimum amount of healthy canopy cover.
- Exemptions to this would be activities on residential lots by the resident homeowner.

B. Tree Conservation

- For any new land disturbing activities, a minimum of the canopy cover required shall originate from conservation of existing trees of acceptable quality.
- To accommodate the County's policy allowing flexibility of lot size, this required canopy would be accommodated over the entire parcel, not lot by lot.
- Trees harvested for timber or cut for development should retain the required canopy cover. If a site is totally cleared, or unacceptable tree quality is remaining, no additional development related permits shall be issued for a specified amount of time.
- A Champion Tree Map shall be updated using the standards set by the Georgia Forestry Commission Champion Tree Program. All trees on this map shall be conserved, unless the tree is of poor health as determined by a trained county official.
- Efforts should be made to preserve large trees on the new development sites.

C. Street Trees

- Healthy, existing street trees of appropriate species located along the roadside rights-of-ways should be provided protection from trimming, utility construction, etc.
- The goal of utilities being placed behind businesses or underground should be addressed to allow medium to large canopy street trees to mature along roadsides.

D. Parking Lot Trees

- Increase amount of open soil surface area for large and medium trees in landscape islands in interior and perimeter of parking lots.
- Permit use of large trees in interior of parking lots if appropriate amount of open soil surface area is available.
- Require minimum distances between trees planting in parking lot interiors to facilitate future crown closure over pavement.

- Provide guidelines and incentives to use new technology in permeable pavements, rainwater retention and detention basins, and other systems that would integrate storm water collection with healthy tree growth.

E. Buffer Areas

- Provide incentives for the use of native species in vegetative buffers.

F. Tree Protection During Construction

- Require semi-permanent protection systems that would provide better protection of the tree root zone during construction.
- Require a tree protection bond, with the amount based upon the square footage of tree canopy being protected.

G. Landscape/Tree Planting

- Provide comprehensive Best Management Practices within the Tree Ordinance document to show standards expected in plant installation.

H. Tree and Landscape Maintenance

- Provide incentives for good maintenance.
- Provide standards for public tree maintenance so that improper pruning by power company representatives along road rights-of-way can be diminished.
- Initiate a bond system for landscape plantings to insure that dead or declining plantings will be re-established.

I. Developer Education

- Code or procedural changes should be made readily available to the citizenry and development community through postings on the County web site, and through handouts.
- Materials regarding the new Tree Ordinance should be made available at all times in the appropriate county offices.
- Yearly seminars should be held to allow the development community and general Athens citizenry an opportunity to bring questions and suggestions to local officials specifically on Ordinance issues.

J. Tree Canopy Cover Measurements

- Measurements using aerial photography should be made on a regular basis to track changes to tree canopy over time.

L. Enforcement

- Knowledgeable staff involvement is critical in both the early planning stage, during plan review, after implementation, and years later to insure efficient and effective enforcement and successful plant establishment.
- Appropriate tools that provide the enforcement community with the “teeth” to make this Tree Ordinance effective should be appropriately adopted.

M. Suggested Implementation Tools

- Provide developer incentives such as density bonuses, lower planting density etc., for tree conservation or replanting beyond requirements
- Require bonds to insure proper protection, installation and maintenance
- Establish a Tree Bank system that allows a mechanism for exemption where warranted
- Allow mitigation sites procured through conservation easements or other legal mechanisms

IV. Research Conducted for These Recommendations

A. Sources of Information

- Analysis of existing A-CC Code
- Analysis and direct input of other GA county ordinances
- Data collected from A-CC Community Forester through the Development Assessment Program
- Data collected from 3 year A-CC Community Forest Information System Canopy Cover Study conducted by forester Bob Barker
- Ideas generated from Community Tree Council members
- Input from the Athens-Clarke County citizenry through personal conversations, phone calls, email messages, letters, and survey responses
- Input from Athens Area Homebuilders Association representatives, Mr. Sean Hogan and Jon Williams.

V. Acknowledgements

- Mr. Sean Hogan, representing the Athens Area Homebuilders Associations, graciously donated his time in regularly attending CTC Information and Design Committee meetings to provide feedback from the development community.
- Considerable help was given to the CTC by Connie Head and Roger Cauthen of Landscape Management Services; Dick Field, the A-CC Environmental Coordinator; and Brad Griffin, Bruce Lonnee, Paul Stutz, and Rick Cowick of the A-CC Planning Dept.
- This document was created by the CTC Information and Design Committee members John Huie, Ed Robinson, and Maureen O'Brien, Chair; with assistance from Bob Barker, CTC Program Coordinator and David Kidd, CTC President. The general membership of the Community Tree Council voted in favor of these recommendations on May 10, 2004.
- We appreciate the efforts of all the people who have contributed their time, information, opinions and ideas towards this project.

Submitted to Mayor Heidi Davison by the *Athens-Clarke Community Tree Council*, May 11, 2004