



# Understanding the Community Tree Management Ordinance

Athens-Clarke County Community Tree Program

## Tree Management Plan Requirements

Whenever a property owner desires to do any kind of work which requires a land disturbance activity permit, a tree management plan should be submitted along with development plans for review by the Athens-Clarke County staff. Planning a new development, adding structural or site improvements to an existing development or creating a preliminary plat are just a few examples of property work which would require these submitted plans. Next, the tree management plan must be approved by either the Athens-Clarke County Arborist or the Community Forester for lots that appear on a preliminary plat approved after June 7, 2005. Once approved, a site review and land disturbance activity or building permit may be issued.

The tree management plan should show the trees currently existing on the property, trees that will be conserved, and trees that will be planted to meet the requirements of the ordinance. Each zoning district in Athens-Clarke County requires a specific amount of conserved and planted tree canopy cover. While all lots have a planted canopy requirement, only lots equal to or greater than 12,500 square feet in gross acreage also have a conserved canopy requirement. The amount of tree canopy covers is measured in percent of total gross acreage of the site. Tree management plans submitted with a Notice of Timber Harvesting Activity are only required to demonstrate that the tree canopy conservation standards will be met.

### Tree management plans are required to show:

- All existing and proposed utilities and easements.
- All existing forested areas, groupings of trees with overlapping canopies, individual, isolated trees greater than 18 inches in diameter, and landmark trees.
- All individual trees greater than two inches DBH (diameter at breast height), groupings of trees, and forested areas growing on the public right-of-way adjacent to the property being developed.
- An estimate of the amount of existing canopy cover on the property.
- For individual trees to be conserved the species common and Latin names, DBH, canopy cover, location of the trunk, extent of the crown, boundaries of the tree protection zone, and location of tree protection fencing.
- For groups and stands of trees: the square foot and percent canopy cover represented, the location of the groups or stands, boundaries of the tree protection zone, and location of tree protection fencing.
- Proposed forest regeneration areas or future forest areas.
- Each tree that will be planted to satisfy tree canopy cover requirements, including street trees and parking lot trees.
- Proposed structures and hardscape.
- Proposed grading.
- Environmental areas on site (stream buffers, floodplain, etc.).

Trees within forested areas, open space, landscape and riparian buffers, stormwater facilities, parks, passive recreation space, floodplains, wetlands and other such areas can count toward

the minimum conserved tree canopy cover requirement if they meet the definition of conservable trees. All tree conservation shall comply with the tree conservation standards set forth in the community tree management ordinance. For a tree to be eligible for tree canopy cover credit for a specific lot, its trunk must be growing wholly on that lot.

The remainder of the minimum total tree canopy cover requirement may be satisfied through the planting of trees after tree conservation requirements have been met. For trees to be eligible for canopy cover credit, the required amount of open soil surface area must be present and protected around the tree. In addition, tree planting must meet the tree establishment standards set forth in section 8-7-19(i). Trees then must be protected in accordance with the tree protection standards set forth in section 8-7-19(h). Individual trees planted in parking lots, along the street, in front, side, and rear yards, in village greens, in active recreation areas, or in any other unbuildable portion of the lot shall count for credit as planted trees and towards the overall tree canopy cover requirement.

An approved tree management plan is considered a binding document by which trees are selectively planted and conserved to meet local codes. Any conflicts that arise during construction must be discussed with Athens-Clarke County staff before any actions are taken that deviate from the approved plan.



*Parking lot trees.*



*Protected riparian buffer.*



*Installation of a forest regeneration area.*



*Subdivision with conserved trees and street trees.*

Submitted By:  
Melanie Graham  
Athens-Clarke County Arborist/Planner II