

INTRODUCTION

The City of Greensboro has a diverse and abundant cover of trees and vegetation. This vegetation creates aesthetic, environmental, economic and social benefits in our community which contribute to the growth and economic prosperity of the City. However, the growth and development attracted to the City of Greensboro often requires the removal of trees and other plant material, thereby depleting a most valuable resource. The Landscaping and Tree Preservation Ordinance is designed to protect, preserve and restore this valuable asset. In 1992 the City adopted the Landscape Ordinance and, in October of 2000, the City Council adopted the Tree Preservation amendments added into the existing Landscape Ordinance text.

The purpose of this document is to facilitate the use of the Landscape and Tree Preservation Ordinance by providing illustrations of key text requirements. The illustrations and the explanations are intended to help the user understand the ordinance and to suggest possible design alternatives.

The original Landscape Ordinance was adopted on July 1, 1992. The Tree Preservation requirements were added and adopted on October 17, 2000 and the Tree Preservation and Landscape Ordinance was further amended and adopted on August 19, 2003 and June 18, 2008.

THE VALUE OF TREES TO A COMMUNITY

The following are some facts on just how important trees are in a community setting.

- "The net cooling effect of a young, healthy tree is equivalent to ten room-size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day." -U.S. Department of Agriculture
- "Trees can boost the market value of your home by an average of 6 or 7 percent." -Dr. Lowell Ponte
- "Landscaping, especially with trees, can increase property values as much as 20 percent." - Management Information Services/ICMA
- "One acre of forest absorbs six tons of carbon dioxide and puts out four tons of oxygen. This is enough to meet the annual needs of 18 people." -U.S. Department of Agriculture
- "There are about 60 to 200 million spaces along our city streets where trees could be planted. This translates to the potential to absorb 33 million more tons of CO₂ every year, and saving \$4 billion in energy costs." -National Wildlife Federation
- "Trees properly placed around buildings can reduce air conditioning needs by 30 percent and can save 20 - 50 percent in energy used for heating." -USDA Forest Service
- "Trees can be a stimulus to economic development, attracting new business and tourism. Commercial retail areas are more attractive to shoppers, apartments rent more quickly, tenants stay longer, and space in a wooded setting is more valuable to sell or rent." -The National Arbor Day Foundation
- "Shade from trees could save up to \$175 per year (per structure) in air conditioning costs." -Dr. Lowell Ponte
- "Healthy, mature trees add an average of 10 percent to a property's value." -USDA Forest Service
- "The planting of trees means improved water quality, resulting in less runoff and erosion. This allows more recharging of the ground water supply. Wooded areas help prevent the transport of sediment and chemicals into streams." -USDA Forest Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

VISIT OUR WEBSITES AT:

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. I DON'T NEED TO GET A GRADING PERMIT. DO I STILL NEED TO GET A TREE DISTURBANCE PERMIT?

Yes, if you are cutting trees on the property and the property is not exempt (see exemptions), you will need to get a tree disturbance permit. Single family residential is exempt and does not need a tree disturbance permit.

Q. I NEED TO GET A GRADING PERMIT. DO I NEED TO GET A TREE DISTURBANCE PERMIT TOO?

If you have an approved site plan, no. If you do not have an approved site plan, yes.

Q: WHAT IS A TREE DISTURBANCE PERMIT?

A tree disturbance permit allows a property owner to remove trees from their property that is not part of a development plan or a forest management plan. The property owner is required to keep a buffer of trees around the property line. The size of the buffer is based on the size of the property. Contact the Urban Forester for specific requirements.

Also note that a tree disturbance permit is not the same thing as a grading permit and a grading permit may also be required. Contact the Erosion Control Division of the Engineering and Inspections Department at 373-2030.

Q: WHAT IS A PLANTING YARD?

A planting yard is a strip of land (of various widths) provided along the perimeter of a site for the installation of plant material in a combination of canopy trees, and/or understory trees, and shrubs. To determine required width and the planting rate for trees and shrubs see Table 30-5-4-2 in the Development Ordinance.

Q: WHAT IS A "LAND USE CLASSIFICATION" OR "LUC"?

A Land Use Classification (LUC) is a numeric value between #1 and #5 that has been established for each type of land use permitted within the City of Greensboro. The number can be found in the last column in the permitted use table; the higher the number the more intense the use. For example, single family dwellings are a LUC #1, multifamily dwellings are a LUC #2, office and light retail uses are LUC #3, motor vehicle dependent retail/service light industrial uses are LUC #4, and heavy industrial uses are a LUC #5. The above list is only a general guide: to determine the exact LUC for each individual use you must use the number listed in the Land Use Code Chart on page A15 of this manual.

Q: THERE ARE EXISTING OVERHEAD UTILITY LINES ALONG THE FRONT PROPERTY LINE WHERE I AM INSTALLING A STREET PLANTING YARD. DO I STILL NEED TO PLANT TREES IN THE STREET YARD?

The City is aware of the potential conflicts between canopy trees and overhead utility lines and offers two options to eliminate these conflicts. First, it may be possible to shift the plant material away from the overhead utility lines and onto the site so they won't grow into the utility lines. The second option is a provision in the Development Ordinance that permits the Technical Review Committee to allow the installation of smaller understory trees when they determine that there is a major conflict with overhead utility lines. See page A2 for trees that can be planted under power lines.

Q: I HAVE PLANS TO ENLARGE MY BUSINESS IN THE FUTURE BY CONSTRUCTING A 2,000 SQUARE FOOT ADDITION TO THE BUILDING AND AN ADDITIONAL 2,000 SQUARE FOOT PARKING LOT. AM I GOING TO BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE ANY PLANTING YARDS?

Yes, the Development Ordinance requires the installation of planting yards for all expansions to buildings and parking areas that exceed 3,000 square feet. However, the planting yards are only required for the expansion of the building and the parking. It is important to note that as of June 30, 1992, expansions are cumulative. If, for the first time, you were to expand your business only 2,000 square feet, you would be exempt. If you were, at a later date, to expand another 2,000 square feet, you would not be exempt, because the cumulative expansion is over 3,000 square feet. NOTE: If the property is zoned Central Business (CB), planting yards are not required.

Q: WHAT IS A CRITICAL ROOT ZONE?

The critical root zone includes all the area within a radius equal to one foot for every one inch diameter of the tree trunk (as measured at breast height). The radius is measured outward from the root flare at ground level. NOTE: This is not the same as drip line.

Q: I AM IN THE PROCESS OF PREPARING A SITE PLAN TO CONSTRUCT AN OFFICE BUILDING ON A SMALL LOT (70 FEET WIDE) THAT WAS CREATED MORE THAN 20 YEARS AGO. THERE ARE EXISTING SINGLE FAMILY DWELLINGS ON THE ABUTTING PROPERTY TO THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT OF THE LOT. USING THE PLANTING YARD CHART, I WOULD BE REQUIRED TO INSTALL 30 FOOT WIDE TYPE "B" PLANTING YARDS ON BOTH SIDES OF MY PROPERTY. WOULD THE LANDSCAPE REGULATIONS REALLY ONLY LEAVE ME A 10 FOOT WIDE STRIP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LOT TO BUILD ON?

No. On lots that were created prior to July 1, 1992, and contain less than 55,000 square feet of land, no development is required to place the required landscaping on greater than 15% of the site. In cases like this, contact the Landscape Planner as early in the plan preparation process as possible. Discuss the options available to provide the most effective buffers for the abutting uses while using at least the required amount of land for vegetation.

Q: IN THE PROCESS OF PREPARING A SITE PLAN FOR A PROJECT THAT IS REQUIRED TO INSTALL PLANTING YARDS; IS A LANDSCAPE PLAN, WHICH DEPICTS THE LOCATION, NAME AND SIZE OF EVERY PLANT TO BE INSTALLED IN THE PLANTING YARDS, REQUIRED BEFORE THE SITE PLAN IS APPROVED FOR A BUILDING PERMIT?

No. The Development Ordinance allows the submission of a "conceptual landscape plan" for review and approval with the site plan. The formal landscape plan or "planting plan" must be submitted to the Planning Department for review and approval within 90 days after the issuance of a building permit or prior to the inspection for a Certificate of Occupancy, whichever occurs first.

Q: DO I NEED TO DO A TREE SURVEY?

If the site is heavily wooded and large areas are to be protected, individual trees do not need to be surveyed.

If the site is heavily wooded, but only the required planting yards are to be saved, survey all trees that are 4 inches or greater in diameter at breast height that are to be saved.

If the site is a park-like setting with individual trees located throughout the site, survey all trees 4 inches or greater in diameter at breast height, located in areas where they will be saved.

