



# Understanding the Community Tree Management Ordinance

## Athens-Clarke County Community Tree Program

### Removing Trees

Tree removal is a necessary part of community tree management. Over time, changes in tree age or vigor, site conditions, or urban land uses may result in the need to remove trees. Athens-Clarke County regulates the removal of protected trees and some privately held trees, but in no case will the Community Tree Management Ordinance ever require that a hazardous tree be retained on an urban site.



*Tree removal is a necessary part of community forest management.*

### Protected Trees

Athens-Clarke County trees, Landmark trees, and trees planted or conserved to meet the requirements of the Community Tree Management Ordinance are classified as protected trees and may not be removed without just cause. If the protected tree's removal results in a property falling below its total canopy requirement or if the tree received credit as a parking lot or street tree, the protected tree must be replaced.

### Protected Trees May Be Removed If a Certified Arborist, Registered Forester, or Athens-Clarke County Agent Determines ....

- they are dead or in an unhealthy condition
- they have greater than 50% dieback of the crown
- they have wounds that are  $> 1/3$  the circumference of the trunk
- they have wounds that are  $> 2/3$  the diameter of the trunk
- they have limb defects that would require more than 50% of the canopy to be removed if corrective pruning was used
- they have an irresolvable conflict with infrastructure that poses a hazard to public health
- they have an insect or disease problem that is not easily cured and has a high probability of spreading to other trees

## Privately Owned Trees

Aside from the Milledge Avenue Overlay District, the Community Tree Management Ordinance does not regulate trees on privately held lots that have not been developed since 2005. Non-protected private trees may be removed at any time for any reason. However, the ordinance does regulate timber harvest in order to ensure adequate canopy is conserved for future development projects. Non-exempt properties that remove trees may be subject to a five year timeout on development. For more information, please refer to the timber harvesting regulations.

### Non-protected Private Trees May Be Removed Without Notification If ....

- they are located on a lot less than one acre in a single-family residentially zoned district
- five or fewer healthy trees are removed in a healthy year
- they are determined by a Certified Arborist, Registered Forester, or County Agent to be diseased, insect infested, or a danger to human life or property



*The ordinance regulates timber harvesting to ensure that all sites will have enough canopy available for conservation if they are developed.*

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For more information, contact the Athens-Clarke County Community Forestry Coordinator at (706)613-3561 voice, (706)613-3566 fax, or by e-mail at [forester@co.clarke.ga.us](mailto:forester@co.clarke.ga.us).