

Timber Harvesting in Athens-Clarke County

Every parcel of land in Athens-Clarke County is designated a particular zone. The type of zone determines how many trees are required to be saved on a piece of property if the owner intends to make improvements to that property. Section 8-7-18 of the Athens-Clarke County Community Tree Management Ordinance outlines the process property owners should use to remove trees from a site. For most properties, the ordinance requires the submittal of the State of Georgia's Notice of Timber Harvesting Activity form prior to the removal of trees. The Notice should be accompanied by a tree management plan and a bond or letter of credit for \$5,000. Once submitted, the Athens-Clarke County Arborist reviews the forms and ensures that enough canopy is being saved on each site to meet conserved canopy requirements for future development. If the applicant chooses to remove more trees than the ordinance permits, a development limitation is placed on the property for a period of five years.

Unless the property is already under review at the Planning Department for a proposed development or site improvement, the requirements of the tree management plan submitted with the notice are simpler but must include:

- The site location
- Adjacent public roads
- The entrance & exit for trucks onto public roads
- Environmental areas (streams, floodplains, riparian buffers)
- The locations of existing trees, trees to be removed and trees to be conserved
- ACC trees in the right-of-way (these trees may not be removed without permission from the Community Forester 706-613-3561)

There are several cases where tree removal is permitted outright and is exempt from the Notice requirement:

- The harvesting of five or fewer trees on a site within a calendar year (unless there is an approved tree management plan on file with the Planning Department).
- The removal of any tree which has become a danger to human life or property.
- The removal of trees found to be diseased or insect infested by a certified arborist, registered forester or the County Extension Service.
- Tree removal on sites one acre or smaller on single-family residentially zoned sites.

Other important information:

- The Notice of Timber Harvesting is valid until harvesting is completed as stated by the submitted site plan. Notify the Planning Director if work cannot be completed as shown.
- Removal of stumps, road construction, culvert construction or any other structure construction may constitute as a Land Disturbance Activity. LDA Permits are obtained through the Public Works Department 706-613-3440
- All Forest Management Activities must conform to GA's Best Management Practices for Forestry published by the Georgia Forestry Commission.



Tree protection fencing and silt fencing properly installed at a timber harvesting site.



Gravel entrance to timber harvesting site – helps prevent tracking mud onto public roads.



Tracking due to improper site preparation.



The effects of improper tree protection during tree removal and land disturbance.

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