# Tree Conservation Plan Check List

## Design, Environment & Construction

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### SUMMARY OF THIS CHECKLIST

The purpose of this checklist is to provide an outline of how a property owner can complete a Tree Conservation Plan for the City of Decatur (Unified Development Ordinance). The checklist consists of: Procedures, Rules of Interpretation, and Additional Resources.

\* A pre-application meeting is required with the City Arborist prior to submitting for any Demolition, building or Site development permit where there may be disturbance to any protected tree 6" diameter and larger (measured at 4.5 ' up trunk from ground).

#### **RULES OF INTERPRETATION**

#### **Ordinance Basis**

No more than 20% of the critical root zone of a protected tree may be disturbed during any project without prior approval of a certified arborist's tree prescription by the City Arborist.

#### **Key Rules**

- A canopy loss fee will be assessed for removal of protected trees. The fee is based on the annual amount of tree benefit lost for removal of each protected tree in fair or better-rated condition. To calculate the canopy loss fee:
- 1) Visit the National Tree Benefit calculator at: <a href="https://www.arborday.org/calculator/">https://www.arborday.org/calculator/</a> to determine the annual benefit amount for each tree to be removed.
- If using rooftop solar voltaic panels or green infrastructure practices to apply for a 50% reduction in canopy loss fee, indicate how such methods will be implemented so that no additional trees are removed (Administrative Standards Section VIII. 3).
- No Land Disturbance or Building Permit shall be issued without an approved Tree Conservation
   Plan unless the City Arborist has approved a No Tree Impact Statement.
- o Tree ratings shall be determined by a certified arborist or registered forester.
- All existing trees in fair or better condition greater than 4 inches Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) are eligible for tree canopy cover credit. Invasive and poor-rated trees are not be eligible for tree canopy cover credit. Trees adversely impacted by invasive plants (e.g., English ivy, wisteria, kudzu and similar plants) will not receive tree canopy cover credit until such vines are removed or remediated. The crowns of existing understory trees as defined in the Tree Species List may be credited at half their combined crown area and included in the tree canopy cover measurement.
- For properties zoned R-85, R-60 and R-50 that require a land disturbance permit or where impervious area is increased, a minimum amount of 60% tree canopy cover from trees in fair or better-rated condition shall be required and no less than 75% of the existing tree canopy cover from trees in fair or better-rated condition shall be conserved.

- o For properties zoned RS-17, RM-18, RM-22, RM-43, PO, C-1,C-2, C-3, MU, NMU, and I, a minimum of 45% tree canopy cover from trees in fair or better-rated condition shall be required on public and private properties. Where such properties require a land disturbance permit or where impervious area is increased, a minimum of 50% of the existing tree canopy cover from trees in fair or better-rated condition shall be conserved.
- o All tree canopy from Landmark trees (Sec. 9.1.15) shall be conserved.
- Planting of replacement trees is required to maintain no net loss of tree canopy, including at least one tree planted in the front yard of a single-family dwelling property or in an adjacent public right-of-way. Exceptions may be considered for a front yard of an R-85, R-60 or R-50 zoned property with trees present.
- Land disturbance and grading on single-family residential zoned properties (R-85, R-60, R-50) shall be limited to no more than 125% of the total lot coverage permitted by zoning regulations. Limits of grading and land disturbance that shall be shown on plans. Require tree fence, silt fence or other barrier to protect no disturbance area?
- o Show Diameter at Breast Height -DBH diameter of tree trunk measured 4.5' feet above ground level
- Tree trunks having more than one trunk at 4.5' feet must be measured individually and added together. The total DBH is to be used to label the tree on the Tree Conservation Plan. Example: 1
   White Oak with DBH trunks of 12" DBH and 16" DBH would be labeled 12"/16" White Oak.
- Show Critical Root Zone- CRZ (circle having a radius of 1.25' for each one inch of tree DBH).
   Diameter is twice the size of radius.
- o Show Net Critical Root Zone (area of the critical root zone that has been obstructed with barriers from the urban environment, e.g., streets, walls, building foundations, etc). To evaluate the feasibility of tree preservation, the area of canopy coverage shall be reduced by the area of the net critical root zone canopy area that overlaps the obstruction.

#### STRUCTURAL ROOT PLATE TABLE:

DBH (inches)	8″	16″	32"	48 "
Root Plate (feet) radius	5.5	8	10.5	12

- o Provide (3) copies of the drawings or upload to Community Core permit system.
- Survey of all trees on the property whose CRZ is impacted by demolition or new structures. Tree
  locations must be accurately shown and identified by species and DBH. All trees 4" DBH or greater
  must be shown on the drawing.
- Tree protection fences must be located at the edge of CRZ or work limits, whichever provides greater tree protection. A tree protection fence can be a 4' orange construction fence and staked hay bales. Chain link fence may be required.
- Signs in English and Spanish stating "KEEP OUT TREE PROTECTION AREA"

#### Plan Requirements

- o Show existing structures, driveways, and parking areas to be removed
- o Show existing drainage and water detention structures to be removed, installed, or modified
- Show existing underground utilities, i.e. water, gas, electric, sewerage, etc. that will be removed and/or replaced on the site, including irrigation lines.
- o Dumpster location/Material staging area
- o Limits of disturbance including proposed landscape improvements
- o All protected trees and their net critical root zones
- o Boundaries of contiguous stands of protected trees
- o Limits of land disturbance and site development, including demolition, clearing, grading, tilling, and trenching. Erosion control silt fencing cannot be trenched across a trees critical root zone.
- o Equipment and vehicle ingress and egress corridors
- o Soil and materials storage areas
- o Construction trailer, portable toilet and other temporary structures
  - o Pre-construction hand removal of weeds and invasive vines in the tree protection area
  - Adding 2" wood mulch or 6" depth of pine straw to tree protection area (keep mulch 3" away from tree trunk)

#### **PROCEDURES**

- \* A pre-application conference with the City Arborist is required before any plan, project or permit submittal. Contact <a href="mailto:treepermits@decaturga.com">treepermits@decaturga.com</a> to schedule a conference.
   Conferences are held weekly on Wednesdays and Thursdays between 9:00am and 4:00pm.
   Preliminary drawings or surveys with the location of trees and photos are recommended for the conference.
- A Tree Conservation Plan must be prepared and certified by a registered forester, registered landscape architect, or certified arborist.
- A Tree Conservation Plan must be submitted with all Site Development, Land Disturbance and Building, Demolition or Utility Permit applications for any proposed improvement or project that that impacts or alters soils within the critical root zone of any protected tree 19.5% or greater. Structures can't be closer than 10ft to the trunk of a protected tree. If the project proposes removal of a protected tree, the following are required in addition to the Tree Conservation Plan:
  - 1) Tree removal permit
  - 2) Tree ratings sheet
  - 3) Tree canopy loss fee payment to tree bank.
  - 4) Certified Arborist Tree Risk Assessment form (for dead, diseased, moderate or higher risk trees with target present)

#### ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

#### **Boundary Trees**

- Boundary trees with CRZs and/or structural root plates that extend across the property line must be located on the site plan and limits of disturbance. The CRZ of a boundary tree's percentage of construction impact must be shown.
- If the CRZ of a boundary tree is impacted 20% or more, then a boundary tree agreement- BTA signed by the boundary tree owner must be submitted to the City Arborist before preliminary approval can be given. (Administrative Standards, Section XIII.)
- o The BTA must include a list of the trees that are impacted, a description of the impact and that full permission is granted for the trees' removal. If tree is to remain a prescription that includes a statement that a private arborist has permission to enter their property to preform treatments. A copy of the Arborists prescription must be submitted as well. Use the tree ratings guide found in section VIII. 3 of the Administrative Standards to rate boundary tree condition prior to construction Example BTA form available at Decaturga.com/trees

#### **New or Replacement Trees**

Tree Canopy Cover Credit by Mature Canopy Size			
Mature Canopy Size Category Amount of Tree Canopy Cover			
Large	1,600 square feet (SF) $x$ 50% = 800 SF		
Medium	900 SF x 65% ::::: 585 SF		
Small	400 SF x 80% = 320 SF		
Very Small	150 SF x 80% = 120 SF		

- o Show replacement trees of similar size and quality for no net loss of canopy.
- o Show new trees to establish 60% canopy in residential zones, 45% in commercial zones
- o New and replacement trees must be minimum 2.5" caliper.
- o Use root barriers between trees and infrastructure (sidewalks, driveways, curbs, utilities)
- o Show type of structural soil cells
- o Show how soil volumes will be achieved:

Mature Canopy Size	Minimum Open Soil Area	Minimum Soil Volume	Minimum Planting Area Width for Landscape Strips
Large	400 square feet	1,200 cubic feet	5 feet
Medium	225 square feet	675 cubic feet	4 feet
Small	100 square feet	300 cubic feet	3 feet
Very Small	36 square feet	108 cubic feet	3 feet

#### Documents available online at decaturga.com/trees:

- Tree Canopy Conservation Ordinance
- Administrative Standards
- Definitions
- Decatur Tree Species List and Legend
- Tree Ratings sheet
- Boundary tree agreement sample form
- Tree maintenance agreement sample form
- Legacy tree application form
- Tree Maintenance Bond
- No Tree Impact Statement
- Tree regulations for construction sites in Spanish
- Administrative Tree Setback Adjustment form

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