

A What strategies are in place today?

Urban forests are part of the City's green infrastructure. Decatur uses a variety of strategies to protect and replenish its tree canopy including development regulations, education, replanting programs and tree maintenance. The 2010 Decatur Strategic Plan Task 13A calls for an urban forest management plan that will assess the existing tree canopy and recommend revisions to the current tree ordinance.

Strategies in place today include:

- Designated a Tree City by the Arbor Day Foundation.
- A consulting City Arborist reviews site development plans and evaluates trees on public and private property.
- A completed a tree canopy cover analysis (2010) and a street tree inventory (2013).
- An urban forest management plan is substantially complete.
- A Tree Bank that is utilized for purchasing and planting trees throughout Decatur. Since 2004, it has been used to plant approximately 380 trees, and support restoration projects in the Woodlands Garden and Decatur Cemetery.
- Regular maintenance on City trees, primarily in downtown Decatur. This maintenance includes pruning and pest management. Trees are also removed as necessary when they are at risk for failure or are at the end of their life.
- Trees have been planted throughout the City over the last 10 years by the City, Trees Atlanta, and others. These trees are maintained through the establishment period (3 years of mulching, watering) by Trees Atlanta.
- Increased protection of trees in local historic districts.
- Removal of invasive plant species from parks.

B Today's Best Practices in Tree Management

- Use tree canopy cover as a measurement of tree density.
- Place trees where their functions are maximized.
- Calculate the environmental and economic benefits of trees.
- Focus on tree maintenance before, during and after construction.
- Use tree professionals to prepare plans.
- Remove trees that are at risk.
- Set a tree canopy cover goal for the community.
- Use new construction technologies, like bridging, to protect the roots of existing trees.
- Adopt standards and best management practices for all tree maintenance and protection activities.

FACT:



Decatur has **5,922** trees growing along public streets that:

- Account for an estimated 3% of the City's tree canopy cover.
- Have a replacement value of \$18,528,045 (\$3,129 per tree).
- Provide \$305,776 in total annual benefits (\$52 per tree).

Current Tree Ordinance Highlights:

HISTORY:

The City of Decatur Tree Preservation Ordinance and Administrative Guidelines were adopted December 4, 1989 and became effective March 19, 1990. Supplement No. 1 to the Administrative Guidelines was adopted September 20, 1999. A draft of a revised ordinance, the City of Decatur Tree Conservation Ordinance, was completed (but not adopted) on May 19, 2008, along with Administrative Standards and Best Management Practices.

CURRENT ORDINANCE HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of the tree ordinance is to facilitate the protection and replacement of trees as part of the land development process. It is not designed to stop development, but to mitigate the impacts of development.
- All building and soil erosion control permits must be accompanied by a tree protection and replacement plan with the following *exclusions*:
 - Renovation projects on single-family and two-family homes
 - Construction and maintenance of public streets by government authorities
 - Diseased or dangerous trees
- The City's tree consultant conducts plan review and inspection.
- All plans must be prepared by a certified arborist, forester or landscape architect.
- Tree density is measured by using trunk diameter to calculate basal area (cross sectional area of trunk).
- Projects must have 30 tree density units per acre (15 for single-family residential).
- A portion of the required tree density must be met on-site through protection of significant trees.
- If the tree consultant determines that a project cannot meet the tree density requirement, payments for the balance are accepted by the City for the tree bank.
- There is currently no protection for boundary trees.

FACT:



Since 2004 the **Tree Bank** has been used to:

- Plant approximately **380** trees.
- Support the Woodlands Garden.
- Provide for the landscaping and woodlands restoration improvements at the Decatur Cemetery.
- Maintain 260 downtown street trees.