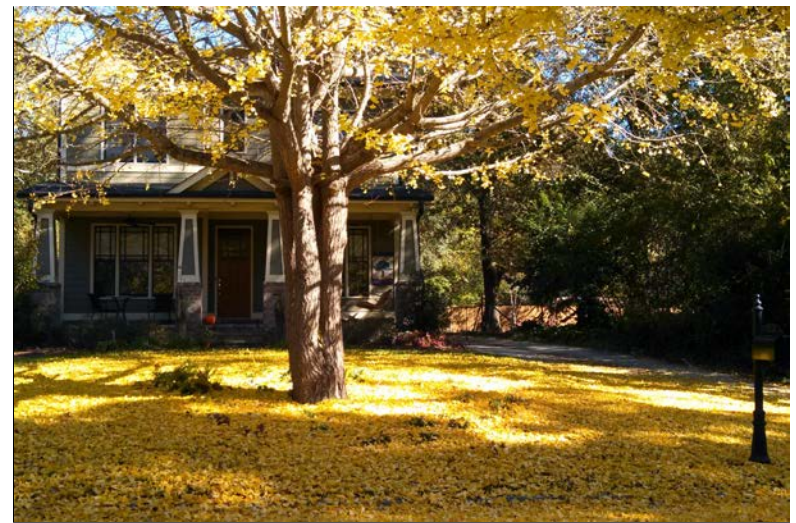


# Trees!

## *Crafting Decatur- Appropriate Regulations*

City Commission  
Work Session

May 5, 2014



# Tonight's Agenda

- Review Public Comments on the April 7, 2014 Revised Ordinance
- Confirm Timeline for Ordinance Consideration on May 19, 2014



# Background

Fall 2013

New tree ordinance developed and moratorium enacted

January 2014

Proposed ordinance tabled

March 2014

City Commission recommends ordinance revisions

April 2014

Amended ordinance prepared for review  
30 days of Public Comment



# Reasons for Updating the Tree Ordinance



- Goal 13A: Strategic Plan 2010
- Aging tree population
- Urban/human impacts to soil and trees
- Development pressures
- Majority of tree canopy is on private property
- New best management practices for tree conservation



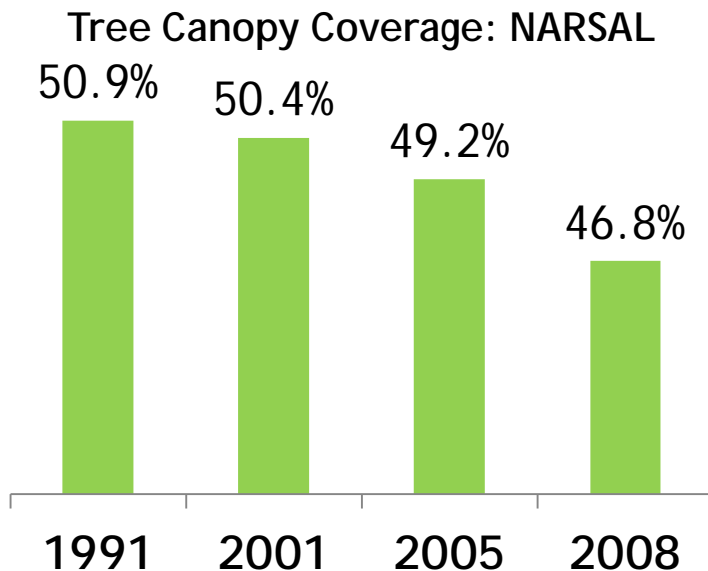
# Decatur's Trees by the Numbers

Current canopy cover = approx. 45%

Trend → declining canopy coverage

University of Georgia's *Natural Resource Spatial Analysis Laboratory* (NARSAL)

- Canopy decreased 4.1% in last 27 years
- Trend = 1% canopy loss ever 6-7 years







# Enhancing Our Tree Canopy in the past 6 months

## Public

- Posted position for Landscape Infrastructure Coordinator (City Arborist)
- Removed hazardous trees
- UDO Stormwater Workshop
- Active tree protection on construction sites

## Private

- Decatur Arbor Day Festival (tree sales and recycling)
- Strong community engagement on this topic
- Increased requests for tree care information



# Amendments presented in January 2014

- Moved HDSF to Residential
- Revised Violations and Appeals
- Added “intentional” damage
- Updated bond/escrow section
- Updated “moderate to high” risk of failure
- Fixed tree swing issue by adding “public tree”





# Amendments Requested in March 2014

- Canopy Coverage:
  1. Community Goal of 50% to be listed in Master Plan
  2. Residential Requirement of No Net Loss
  3. Commercial Requirement of 45%



# March 2014 Amendments Continued

## Residential:

1. Allow up to 3 tree removals every 18 months. Must file a Tree Information Permit.
2. Every project that requires a land disturbance permit triggers a no net loss requirement.



# March 2014 Amendments Continued

## Commercial:

1. Change canopy requirement to 45%.
2. Change trigger for replanting requirement to 15% increase in impervious cover or gross floor area.



# March 2014 Amendments Continued

1. Removed City Arborist salary as allowable expense for tree bank funds.
2. Clarified Tree Maintenance requirements to explain that they are for the establishment period of protected trees.



# Application of Ordinance

For all residential and commercial projects:

If the trees involved are not in protected class

**And/Or**

Less than 20% of critical root zone is impacted

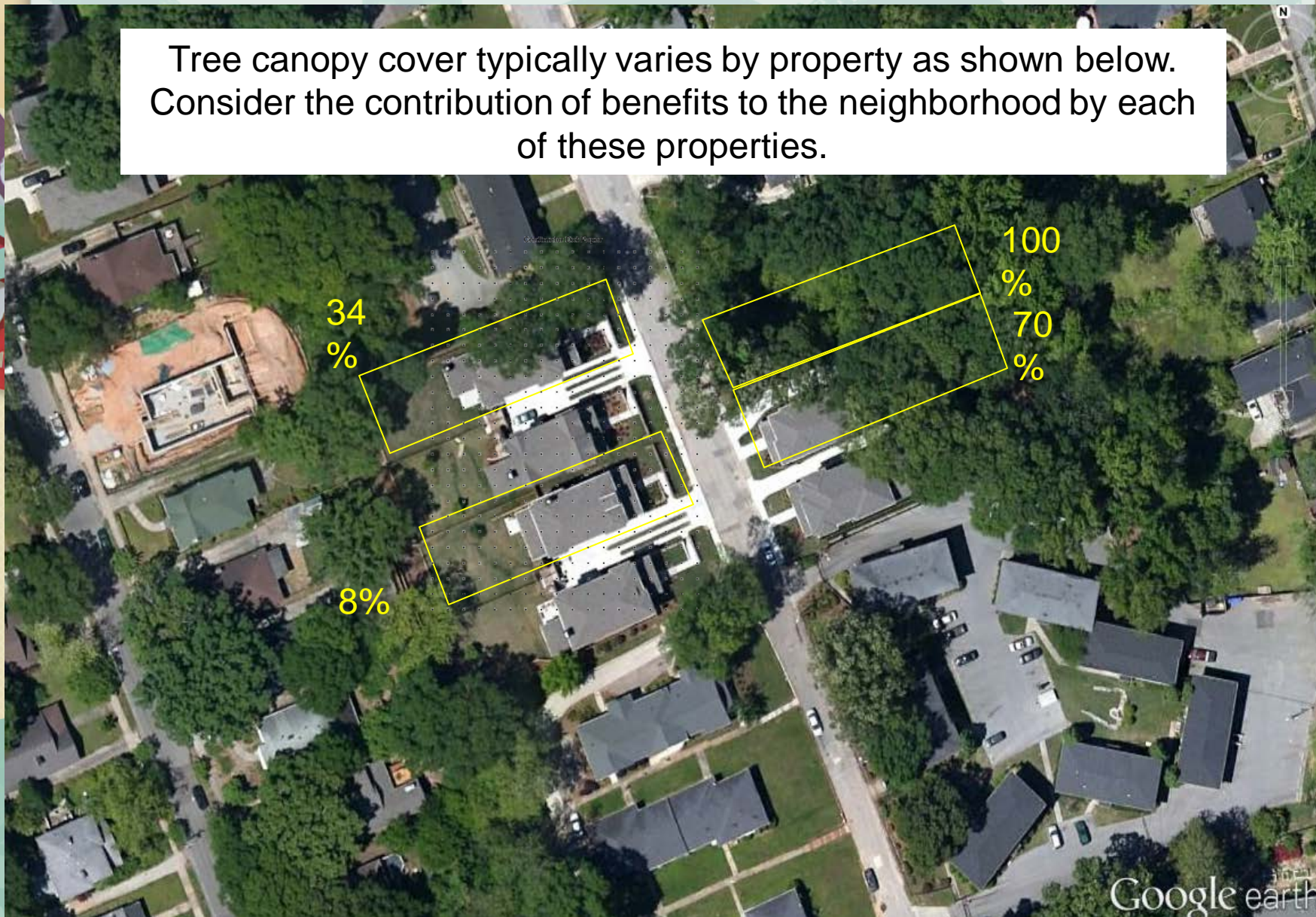
**then**

**No requirements for protection or replanting**





Tree canopy cover typically varies by property as shown below. Consider the contribution of benefits to the neighborhood by each of these properties.



# Public Input Since April 8th

## Outreach:

MailChimp, Open City Hall, DecaturNext, Decatur Minute, UDO Workshops (1,600 people)

## Responses:

Direct Emails to City Staff (2 emails)  
DecaturNext.com (2 comments)





# Open City Hall

## January 2014

237 On Forum Comments

51 - Support or Strongly Support (21%)

2-Neutral (.8%)

184-Oppose or Strongly Oppose (77%)

## April 2014

35 On Forum Comments

4 - Support or Strongly Support (11%)

3-Neutral (8%)

28-Oppose or Strongly Oppose (80%)\*

\*4 said the ordinance was not strong enough



# Top Comments

- Will increase expense for residential construction projects
- Unnecessary legislation and oversight
- Developers are the problem, not residents
- Will still will allow clear cutting
- Need better enforcement on existing construction sites
- Trees are part of the fabric of the community and need to be protected for the future



# Recommendations from Groups

- Environmental Sustainability Board  
Update Tree Canopy Study this year  
Allow residential lots to reduce canopy to 45% versus no net loss  
Support tree utility & City Arborist position
- Trees Decatur  
Define Specimen tree  
Require a variance to remove any portion of the remaining 25% tree canopy on a residential lot





# Outstanding Tasks:

- Make any additional ordinance changes
- Create permit forms
- Set fees
- Update Administrative Standards



# Implementation Timeline 2014

- April 8th: Ordinance Posted for Public Comment
- May 2nd: Public Comment closed
- May 5<sup>th</sup>: City Commission Work Session
- May 19<sup>th</sup>: City Commission Vote on Ordinance
- May 2014: Arborist Hired
- June/July: Coordination with UDO, Staff Training, Community Forest Plan presented
- July 7th: New Ordinance becomes effective
- September: UDO Adoption

