



The New Atlanta Tree Ordinance: A 4-Step Plan

Preserving Our Roots to Protect Our Future.

Atlanta's Tree Canopy is a symbol of our City as much as the Statue of Liberty is a symbol of New York. We truly live in a City in the Forest. However, our current codes effectively do nothing to protect existing trees or our best trees. The current development boom is cutting trees at an unprecedented rate. The reality is that we will lose our unique urban forest if we continue to always choose larger buildings instead of trees. We must have a balance. It's time to shape the growth of our City in a way that sustainably embraces economy, community, trees and our urban forest

Because **95% of Atlanta's trees are on private property**, and nearly 80% of our canopy is located in single-family-residential zoning, the 4-Step Plan will focus on protecting trees on residential land.

1. PLAN FOR TREES FIRST

Plan for trees at the **beginning of the permitting process**. This is the only realistic way to save trees and greenspace on development sites.

2. SAVE THE BEST TREES

A **Tree Value Matrix** has been developed to prioritize which trees are the highest value based on size, health, species and location, a method that is easily incorporated into the existing survey process. A requirement to preserve "high" and "excellent" value trees, according to the matrix, would ensure our best trees are preserved given we will not be able to protect all trees.

3. REDUCE GRADING & IMPERVIOUS SURFACE

A **maximum sustainable footprint** will be determined for different zoning categories. The result will not only reduce tree loss and impervious surface, it will decrease crisis-level stormwater problems/costs and reduce the impact of gentrification, among other benefits.

4. EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT

Penalties must serve as **effective deterrents** to code violations on construction sites.

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