

TREE ADVISORY BOARD

ADVISORY TO THE GAINESVILLE CITY COMMISSION

To: Gainesville City Commission
From: Tree Advisory Board

December 18, 2008

Subject: Recommended Changes to the Gainesville Land Development Code

Our overarching goal in undertaking this review was to deliver a set of guide-lines for development that will assure a sustainable tree canopy for our community. Our objectives:

***Provide real protection for Heritage trees in all zoning classes.* We think the City Commission should have the authority to recommend financial mitigation under very specific circumstances for very valuable trees proposed for destruction.

***Assure sufficient space is set aside for young shade trees on development sites so that as they can grow, infrastructure damage will not occur.* At least 10' should separate shade trees from buildings and 3' from pavement, with no interference either above-ground (balconies) or below-ground (utilities) within an area equal to the average 20-year tree canopy diameter (e.g. Southern Magnolia 25'; Bluff Oak 30'; Live Oak 45';)

***Achieve streets lined with shade trees following "right tree, right place"* by requiring that development proposals meet Gainesville Regional Utilities line separation requirements and Public Works clear zone safety requirements.

***Protect property owners from the effects of Southern Pine Beetle epidemics* like those in 1994-1996 and 2000-2002 by making the urban forest less vulnerable through required post-development spacing of pines at 25' to diminish the insects' capacity for rapid and relentless population increase.

***Require tree protection, planting, and invasive exotic control practices that reflect the best practices* based on scientific research in arboriculture, much of which has been pioneered locally by University of Florida professor Ed Gilman who has shared his expertise with the Tree Advisory Board.

***Update the Gainesville Approved Tree List to create a separate category to identify "high quality shade" species* appropriate for financial mitigation and favored for planting in the urban environment.

***Clarify roles for the Tree Advisory Board and the Tree Appeals Board,* especially with respect to potential financial mitigation associated with the destruction of Heritage trees of high quality shade species.

During the past two years, various drafts of this proposal have been provided to Gainesville Regional Utilities, Public Works, Planning and Development, Community Redevelopment Agency, the Gainesville Builders. We considered all suggestions for improvement. We solicited input from the public at-large at a symposium on January 31, 2008 at the Civic Design Center. The audience included representatives Women for Wise Growth, the League of Women Voters,

Sustainable Alachua County, the Sierra Club, the Florida Native Plant Society, the local chapter of the Audubon Society, as well as commercial arborists, developers, engineers, landscape architects and planners, and concerned citizens. With information and feedback provided by the audience, the Board fine-tuned our recommendations and then presented them once again for comment by City staff.

We believe implementation of these changes is crucial given the canopy loss sustained thus far and new exotic pathogens causing the demise of important tree species. We request you direct the attention of the Plan Board to our recommendations. Their meetings will be a forum for additional public discussion, which we welcome. We have tried to do the best for Gainesville from the standpoint of creating a sustainable urban forest, and we understand adjustments will be necessary. Our expectation is that within a few months, the proposal will be brought back before you in the most appropriate form for adoption.

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