

February 1, 2007

Members of the City Council and Mayor Galambos;

The Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods urges you to accept and ratify the tree ordinance proposed by the Citizens Advisory Committee after seven months of intense work. It will preserve and protect Sandy Springs' character as an urban forest, its beauty and property values for all its residents for years to come.

Specifically, we ask you to support the following provisions proposed by the CAC after extensive and detailed debate among representatives of homeowners, builders and professional arborists, and numerous public meetings.

- The tree ordinance should apply to single family homeowners to ensure closing the loophole allowing clear-cutting of lots in collusion with developers and builders planning to buy the lot once cleared. A 20% canopy exemption was included to give homeowners ample freedom to manage the property without unfairly burdening neighbors by destroying their landscaping from lost shade and increased runoff. A simplified alternative based on a number of trees (perhaps 3) that could be harvested annually might also work for homeowners. They still can create sunny areas for play, build a swimming pool, or remove trees for safety or aesthetic reasons if they wish.
- Native pine trees should be protected the same way as hardwoods for the high quality, year-round shade they provide. Trees that are unsafe, damaged, diseased or too close to buildings can be removed under the ordinance.
- "Landmark" trees should continue to be defined as those with diameter of 27 inches or more for hardwoods and 30 inches for native pines.
- A Citizens Tree Board could continue the work of the CAC, remove the tree variance workload from the BZA and provide advice to the Council on future ordinance modifications if the BZA workload is excessive.

While aspects of the proposal as applied to single family homeowners may need clarification, removing these provisions will vastly weaken the ordinance at a time when clear-cutting abuse for redevelopment is accelerating.

The CAC was appointed with the guidance from the Mayor and Council to assist the Council, to provide expertise and allow broad citizen participation. We created this City to promote such citizen involvement after years of being ignored. Don't discourage future citizen participation by ignoring their counsel. Please support the work of your CAC. Thank you for your consideration of these concerns.

Sincerely,
The Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods

Larry Young,
President