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# BEST GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PRACTICES FOR URBAN LANDSCAPES: SITE PLAN REVIEW

*Looking Beyond the Landscape Plan  
to See the Forest for the Trees*

## OUR MISSION

*To unify green-industry and municipal professionals in the effort to develop functional environments that contribute to healthy, livable communities.*

## OUR VISION

*To advance the adoption of research-based green infrastructure policies and technologies across multiple green-industry and municipal disciplines.*



*Developing functional landscape environments that contribute to healthy, livable communities is a multi-disciplinary process, involving professionals from planning, design, regulatory, nursery, installation, and maintenance disciplines. One important element of this process is the review of development site plans. All participants in this process have a role in establishing ordinances that are the rules which govern the creation of functional green infrastructure. This brochure, as part of an overall series, seeks to describe the site plan review process as it relates to the contribution of trees and other woody plants in the landscape.*

## Ordinance Standards

Standards for the preservation of existing trees, installation and maintenance of new trees, need to be developed and made available to all partners in the site plan review process. These standards are typically provided in a book of ordinances. Ordinance standards are the minimum requirements to be met in order for a project to be approved and granted occupancy. Ordinances use language such as ‘you must’ or ‘you shall’. Allowable options or alternatives may be provided for within the ordinance. Due to the large amount of detail and variety of plant options available to serve specific ordinance requirements, a separate landscape manual is often provided, and would therefore be referenced as part of the ordinance.

### UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE



When reviewing site plans, the reviewer makes correction comments to ensure that ordinance-based requirements are met, referencing applicable ordinance sections. Recommendation comments may be made but should be noted as such. Recommendations can include information regarding best management practices and plant cultural requirements, and may reference a separate landscape manual for further details.

- Other applicable details may include:
  - Pruning
  - Street tree planting location options
  - Trees and overhead utilities

*The preservation and protection of qualifying existing trees, and the installation and maintenance of new trees, are important elements in the development of sustainable green infrastructure. The site plan is an important part of the overall instruction manual created and used to communicate how green infrastructure features will be established. The site plan describes how ordinance-required standards for development will be met. Review of the site plan verifies compliance with ordinance standards. Interpretation and implementation of the site plan falls on the landscape professional. While the production and review of site plans is typically associated with design and regulatory staff, it takes a multi-disciplinary approach, from plan inception to implementation, to ensure healthy, functional landscapes that meet ordinance standards.*

## References

- Best Green Infrastructure Practices for Urban Landscapes: Plant Specifications*; Green Infrastructure Alliance
- Protecting and Retaining Trees: A Guide for Municipalities and Counties in North Carolina*; NC Co-operative Extension
- American Standards for Nursery Stock: <http://americanhort.org/>
- City of Durham Unified Development Ordinance <http://durhamnc.gov/414> and Landscape Manual <http://durhamnc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1034>
- City of Raleigh Unified Development Ordinance <https://www.raleighnc.gov/content/extra/Books/PlanDev/UnifiedDevelopmentOrdinance/> and City Tree Manual <http://www.raleighnc.gov/environment/content/ParksRec/Articles/Programs/UrbanForestry/UFDivision.html>
- City of Greensboro Landscaping Ordinance and Landscaping and Tree Conservation Manual <http://www.greensboro-nc.gov/index.aspx?page=1779>





