

URBAN TREE ORDINANCES

Ordinances provide the framework for how the trees in your community are managed, responsibilities and penalties. A tree ordinance is also required to be a [Tree City USA](#).



A Tree Ordinance may be developed or revised to address such matters as establishing municipal authority over public trees, setting standards for tree planting, maintenance and management, outlining enforcement, fees and fines, and defining nuisance conditions on private trees.

A tree ordinance can go by many different names including "Street Tree Ordinance", "Tree Protection Ordinance", "Tree Preservation Ordinance", "Landscape Ordinance", or "Beautification Ordinance" depending on the level of policy being set. The focus of a tree protection ordinance is the regulation of the removal or establishment of trees by establishing definitions, procedures, penalties, and appeals necessary for enforcement. A Tree Preservation Ordinance may be included in or be separate from the Tree Ordinance.

It may be tempting for a community to rely on another community's ordinance as a template, or even to adopt it with minor revisions. But every community has its own needs and challenges that require language specific to the community and its structure and capacity. That is why there are many resources/references available for ordinance creation.

HINTS

The larger the community and the more complex the issues, the more important it is to involve an experienced and knowledgeable consultant, whether creating or reviewing the ordinance.

Ordinances will be more effective if developed as a part of a comprehensive community forest management strategy and developed with support from your community and involvement by various municipal departments.

Guidelines for developing a tree ordinance for your community:

1. State goals clearly
2. Designate responsibility
3. Set performance standards
4. Design flexibility
5. Specify enforcement methods

RELATED RESOURCES

[Arbor Day Foundation sample ordinance for Tree City USA](#)

[Guidelines for Developing and Evaluating Tree Ordinances](#)

[Developing Tree Protection Ordinances](#) - while the authorities for such an ordinance may be specific to the state referenced, the context and goals are still relevant.

[APWA Ordinances, Regulations, & Public Policies](#)

[Reviewing your Codes & Ordinances: a worksheet](#)

Among other things, a "thorough" ordinance should address:

- tree board establishment
- tree master plan
- hazard trees
- boundary trees
- vandalism and fines
- line of sight
- tree preservation/conservation (can be a separate ordinance)
- professional standards to be adhered to on private land
- development (and tree planting in newly developed areas)
- contract and nursery specifications
- removal and pruning specifications
- approved species for planting by individuals or the community
- planting specifications including staking, mulching, watering, training pruning

URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM (U&CF) Tree Ordinances

The development of ordinances is a community action eligible for funding through the [U&CF Grant Program](#), which can assist with the development of the ordinance, hiring assistance to develop and/or review the ordinance (1:1 cost match). A professional consultant can help you develop an ordinance that meets the needs of your community, with the right level of complexity for the community staffing and enforcement capacity. A consultant can also help create the specifications for tree species, planting and removals, landscaping and buffering, etc.

Look at the grant pages on the DFE website and then contact the U&CF Coordinator for further information.