



## **Policy: Tree Protection and Replacement**

**The Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association desires a healthy tree canopy and looks forward to working with local government leaders to ensure a balanced approach to achieve our mutual goals.**

As one of the most critical environmental issues in metro Atlanta and the nation, tree preservation touches on issues such as climate change, stormwater runoff, water quality, and air quality. Trees enhance a community's image and the value of real estate; improve energy efficiency through home shading and cooling; filter air; buffer noise and wind, and provide wildlife habitat. The building and development industry has traditionally created developments that preserve trees, yet the homebuilding industry is largely viewed as the responsible party for degrading the environment and destroying trees. As a result, many jurisdictions have enacted punitive ordinances that prohibit tree removal or require expensive recompense fees during the construction process.

**The Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association supports flexible, performance-based, non-prescriptive tree ordinances that balance legitimate development and construction concerns with environmental and aesthetic values that trees can provide.** Setbacks, driveways, streets, sidewalks, drainage, and other common development regulations, in addition to topography, affect the ability to save, move, or plant trees. Tree preservation standards can sometimes be too restrictive and inflexible, making preservation and replanting a difficult and costly proposition. **It is imperative that property owners must be able to fully utilize the "buildable area" of their lots.** Communities must adopt performance-based standards for tree preservation, as well as allow variation from rigid development requirements to enable property owners the flexibility to sensitively respond to the unique conditions of each site.

**The Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association supports collaboration between local officials, planners, the community and the homebuilding and development industry to create tree ordinances.** These collaborative efforts should include the vision of elected officials and their constituents and the professional expertise of planners and the development community who understand the constraints and effects of local zoning and subdivision and development regulations on a developer's ability to save trees.