



**BRYAN COUNTY
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

Subject: Tree Valuations for Protected Tree Mitigation

Background:

Section 114-634(c) of the Bryan County Unified Development Ordinance requires that all protected trees classified as heritage¹ or historic², be mitigated by either replanting or paying a fee in lieu of replanting. As required by the ordinance, the mitigation for heritage and historic trees is to occur at the following rates:

1. Mitigation for heritage trees shall occur at a rate of 50 percent, where every two inches of heritage trees removed, measured in DHB, shall be replaced by one inch of mitigation trees, measured in caliper-inches; and
2. Mitigation for historic trees shall occur at a rate of 100 percent, where every inch of historic trees removed, measured in DBH, shall be replaced by one inch of mitigation trees, measured in caliper-inches.

However, in applying this ordinance, several questions have arisen regarding the value of trees that are qualifying as heritage or historic based on their size alone, but which may have much less inherent value based on other characteristics such as their species, if they are invasive to their habitats, or their condition (dead, diseased, or decaying). Because there are multiple aspects that can be considered when determining one tree's value over another, the process can often seem more subjective than objective. This can then result in unnecessary staff time to review, with inconsistent outcomes. Therefore, it became necessary for the Community Development Department to consider a more objective way to approach tree values, which can then be applied consistently.

In researching this matter, staff found that a common practice in addressing this issue is to apply a value factor which can be assigned to different categories of trees. In some instances, the category descriptions are developed using a broad range of specie characteristics³, while others are specie specific⁴. For Bryan County's purposes, staff recommended using the former approach of applying broad specie characteristics, over the latter, as it would provide for more flexibility in classifying a wider variety of tree species.

Using this approach, a ranking of categories from 1-5 was developed based on common specie characteristics. A tree value factor was then applied to each category, placing a higher value factor on larger evergreen trees and endangered species, and a lower value factor on smaller trees. Invasive and

¹ Heritage tree. All trees meeting a minimum of 16 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) up to 28 inches DBH.

² Historic tree. All trees 28 inches in DBH or greater.

³ Town of Hilton Head Island, SC Land Management Ordinance – Section 16-6-104.G.2.

⁴ City of Richmond Hill, GA Unified Development Ordinance – Section 15.6.G.5.

diseased trees have no value factor applied, as the removal of invasive species and diseased trees should be encouraged rather than penalized. These categories and value factors are shown in the table below.

| Category | Description | Tree Value Factor |
|----------|--|-------------------|
| 1 | Large and Medium Broad-Leaved Evergreen Trees and Endangered Species | 1.00 |
| 2 | Large and Medium Deciduous Trees | .75 |
| 3 | Palms and Coniferous/Cone-Bearing Trees | .50 |
| 4 | Small and Ornamental Trees | .25 |
| 5 | Invasive or Diseased Trees | 0 |

Policy Determination:

Based on research of best practices conducted by staff, it will be the policy of the Community Development Department to apply the tree value factors identified above in the assessment of mitigation requirements. Once the tree value is calculated, the total DBH will next be adjusted by the identified mitigation rate.

To measure the adjusted DBH of each protected tree, the tree value factor shown in the table above, should be multiplied by the total DBH in inches of each tree based on its respective category. Once totaled, the mitigation rate of 50% for heritage trees and 100% for historic trees will then be applied.

Example:

| Tree Species | Total DBH | Tree Value Factor | Adjusted DBH | Protected Tree Status | Mitigation Rate (%) | Mitigation Required (inch.) |
|---------------|-----------|-------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Live Oak | 28 | 1.00 | 28 | Historic | 100% | 28 |
| Loblolly Pine | 16 | .50 | 8 | Heritage | 50% | 4 |
| Tulip Poplar | 18 | .75 | 13.5 | Heritage | 50% | 6.75 |

Effective Date:

This policy becomes effective immediately and can be applied retroactively to any development project for which a tree survey and mitigation plan has already been approved. For retroactive approval, an updated protected survey / inventory and mitigation plan must be submitted to the Community Development Department for review.



Community Development Director



Date