

DEVELOPMENT CONSTRUCTION & TREES



A guide to the selection and preservation of trees on development sites.

Developed by

City of Evansville
Evansville Tree advisory Board
Department of Urban Forestry
1000 Oak Hill Rd.



Evansville, IN 47711
812-436-5752

Introduction

New property development must look nice and be environmentally friendly. Trees can significantly improve the appearance of your property. Far too often recently developed properties are either barren of trees, or the existing trees are dying. This can make a property unattractive, can leave the developers with a bad reputation, or cause the properties to be difficult to sell. The following recommendations and guidelines can be used to help prevent this from happening.

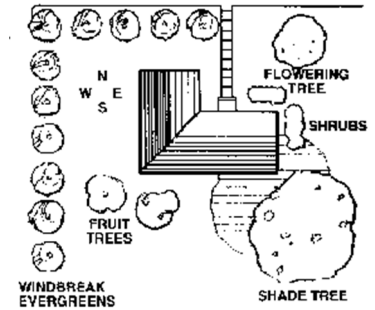
Why should trees be important to newly developed lots?

- The most important reason is attractiveness. To be able to sell these properties we must be able to attract buyers, and the best way to add curb appeal is through landscaping. The right tree in the right place can make a property extremely attractive, more valuable and marketable, as well as creating a more relaxing environment. Trees have been known to add to the value of properties by as much as 25%.
- Today's society is becoming more environmentally minded. Developments that have appropriate landscaping and forested areas can attract buyers that are environmentally minded and are willing to pay more for those properties. Some developers advertise that their lots are more environmentally friendly, and even name their developments after tree or forest related terms.
- Rainwater runoff is often a major concern when new developments are established. Some developments are also designed to reduce wastewater runoff. Trees can significantly reduce wastewater runoff by intercepting rainfall.
- If the right tree is planted or preserved in the right location, they can provide shade for structures, which can lead to lower heating and cooling costs in the future.



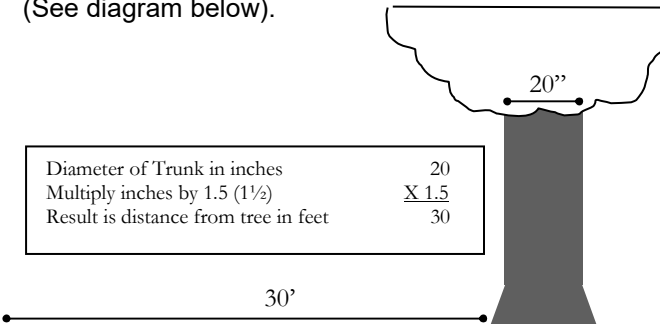
Inventory your existing resources and develop a landscape design

- The first step before designing a new development is to determine the existing resources. At this point you should inventory trees and forested areas. Determine what trees and forested areas can be preserved.



- Not every tree on your property can be saved. Consider which trees should be removed, such as trees that have defects, are completely or half dead, diseased, or have poor structure.

- A good rule of thumb for determining the distance of the Root Protection Zone around trees is to measure the diameter of the trunk in inches at 4 ½ feet from the ground. For every inch of trunk diameter, measure out 1.5 feet from the tree. The Root Protection Zone for a tree with a trunk diameter of 20 inches would be 30 feet from the trunk (See diagram below).



- For individual trees that are being preserved, choose trees that are of small to medium height. Larger trees can become unstable when the smaller or medium sized trees surrounding them are removed. Smaller or medium sized trees will be more vigorous, and will be less likely to have growth and stress problems after development.

- A Certified Arborist is recommended to inspect the property to determine which trees can be preserved, and which should be removed. If they recommend any of the trees be topped, don't hire them, and find someone else.

- Re-grading is often necessary during development. Grade changes and soil compaction within the Root Protection Zone are deadly to trees. Either change the design to keep this zoned undisturbed, or remove the trees.

- Make sure that blue prints and/or maps include which trees or forest areas are to be preserved, and indicate Root Protection Zones. Use fencing on sites to physically mark Root Protection Zones. Minor alterations in the development plan can make a major difference in a tree's survival.

Communicating with contractors

- Sometimes there is a lack of communication or misunderstanding between developers and their contractors. For a development project to run smoothly and prevent problems, communication is a key for any work that is being done on site. Communication is also important for the tree crew to make sure the right trees are removed, tree preservation areas are protected, and to make sure tree pruning is done correctly and to the developer's specifications.

- Educate the contractor so that they will know what needs to be done, how to do it, and what the expected outcome is. If you are unsure of some changes recommended by the contractor concerning trees, call a Certified Arborist in the area that could give you an unbiased opinion, such as the City Arborist or Purdue University Extension Educator.

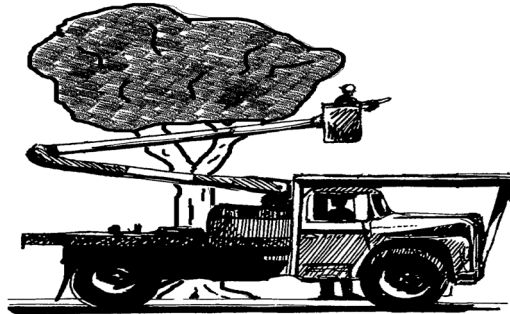
- Make sure your contractors are knowledgeable regarding trees and other landscaping, if not, subcontract or hire someone who is.

- A Certified Arborist is recommended for tree pruning and removals, especially if trees need to be pruned for structure, or specialty pruning such as crown restoration pruning. **NEVER** top trees. Topping is one of the worst things you can do to a tree, and will definitely make the property less attractive to potential buyers.



- Put everything in writing. Make sure your contractor or arborist has the appropriate blue prints and/or maps.

- Inspect the contractor's work before, during, and after development. Check up on them as they perform their work to ensure it is being done properly, and if not, don't be afraid to stop them to have them correct their work. Remember that you are paying them. Make sure you do a follow-up inspection of their work before you release them. There may have been something overlooked.



Follow up

Sometimes new developments are not followed up on by the new responsible parties. When a development is completed, the developer, or property owners, should monitor the landscaping to make sure that it is maintained and thriving. The following are some helpful guidelines for those responsible for monitoring landscaping.

- Inspect and Re-inventory trees.

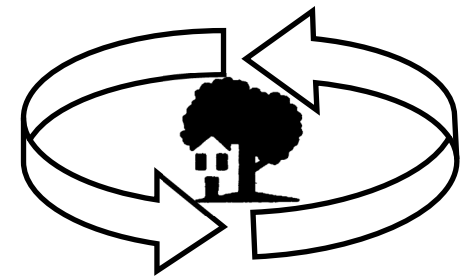
- Replace trees damaged or destroyed during the development.

- Hire an arborist to do professional tree pruning as needed after the development is completed. If the property is in Evansville, make sure they are licensed by the City. During development, contractors do not have to be licensed to do tree work, but once the development is complete, all pruning or removal work would have to be done by a licensed arborist.

- Eventually, the property may be transferred or sold. Explain the landscaping to the buyer, and what you have done to preserve trees. Educate the buyer on how the landscaping should be maintained in the future. Give them resources and contacts that they can refer to if technical advice is needed. The City Arborist or Purdue University Extension Educator has a wealth of information that is available for free.

- The following web site can be visited to download publications regarding proper tree planting & care. The site can also be used to go to other web sites for this purpose.

<http://www.evansvillegov.org/urbanforestry>



There is no final step.

As long as living landscape material is located on a property, it must be maintained. Don't forget to follow up on landscaping inventory and landscaping needs on a regular basis. Follow up inspections should be done annually or at least bi-annually.