

Community Tree Ordinance

What is that?

- **A tree ordinance is a formal long-term policy for dealing properly and effectively with *tree care* and *public policy*.**

Why is it important?

- **A tree ordinance sets up permanent procedures and establishes legal authority.**
- Not having a tree ordinance is like not having any other ordinance: there is no policy that is consistent, rational, and public.
- The primary goals of a tree ordinance are:
 - to establish a permanent and official policy for the community
 - to declare standards for selection, planting, maintenance, etc.
 - to provide a reasonable basis for dealing with the public
- It is also a powerful tool for defending long-range public interest through such practices as tree preservation, greenspace protection, etc.

How do you get one in place?

- **Find a copy of existing local code and a sample tree ordinance**
 - It's a lot easier and a lot more effective to begin with what already exists
 - You may have to change both the sample and the code to suit the needs of your community and its trees
- **Work with a small group representing various interests**
 - If the ordinance is to pass, you will need broad support from the start
 - Try to include people from local government, park & street maintenance, the tree care profession, utilities, and the general public
- **Make the ordinance clear, reasonable, and concise**
 - If people don't understand it, they won't obey it
 - Steer between being too rigid and being too loose
 - Detailed specifications and standards can be put in a separate document
- **Keep the process as public as possible without hampering your work**
 - The impression of an open and inclusive process will be your best ally
 - Negotiation and compromise are the key to resolving some of the issues, because different interest groups often have different opinions
- **Follow standard procedures to get the ordinance into law**
 - Start with the community lawyer, so the process follows legal channels
 - When the ordinance is acceptable to all, meet with the mayor or administrator
- **Publicize the ordinance widely after it becomes law**
 - Members of the community need to be made aware of what it says
 - Make sure local government, agencies, services, and street supervisors know how to apply it

Where can I get more information?

Start with a [sample ordinance](#) or obtain one from another community similar to yours. Detailed guidelines on ordinances and their provisions are available at <http://www.isa-arbor.com/tree-ord>. For other information, advice and help on this topic, call offices of your State Urban Forestry Coordinator or University Extension service, visit urban forestry web sites.