

## City of Griffin Tree Replacement Program

Our founding fathers had the vision to line many of our streets with trees, enhancing the City aesthetically, environmentally, and economically. The City must now continue their work by replacing declining trees and planting as the city grows. Like any forest, the key to keeping it healthy is good management. Bright orange posters on Maple Drive designate the removal of seven oak trees that will soon be removed along the tree canopied street. Each tree, which has been designated a hazard, is well over 100 years old. Pink paint dots on the curbs are indication of planning by the new City of Griffin Tree Board of more than sixty new replacement trees to keep the street beautiful for many years to come.

The seven oaks tagged for removal are literally nearing the end of their natural lives with poor or very poor condition. A certified arborist and a member of the Georgia Forestry Commission looked at the trees and have recommended removal. When the City is warned that a tree on public land is hazardous, it has a moral and legal responsibility to protect the safety of its citizens. Most people understand this, but that doesn't diminish the regret of losing a tree very much. To an untrained eye, some trees may look fairly vibrant. Several times people have said, "It's still so green. Surely it can be trimmed and kept for a few more years." Sometimes that is so, but telltale signs guide us – numerous dying limbs, root rot, fungi, peeling bark, hollowing, and so forth. Tree root systems are broad and shallow; strong wind can easily topple a weakened tree.

Many of the city's trees are nearing the end of their natural lives. Residents understanding does not, by any means, diminish the regrets. We can preserve Griffin's remarkable canopy cover by planting new trees every year so that the overall tree population is varied in maturity. Maple Drive residents may lose many trees at once simply because they are near the same age. The Maple Drive Tree Replacement Plan, to be used as a pilot project for other corridors in the City, is the result of weeks of planning by the newly formed Griffin Tree Board. Tree removals and about 60 new plantings will be between Milner Drive and Pineridge Road. New trees slated for planting this fall will include Shumard, Nuttall, and Willow oak varieties with October Glory, Japanese, and Trident maples. Although many residents have expressed a desire for larger new trees, smaller trees often have a better chance for survival in an urban environment. Larger trees are more inclined to "go into shock" once they are transplanted, whereas smaller trees with immature root systems can easily become established in the new setting and thrive quickly. City crews will plant and maintain these trees. However, if one of the larger trees doesn't live, there are no guarantees that it will be replaced with the same size.

Griffin is recognized throughout the state for its Historic and Landmark trees at Stonewall Confederate Cemetery and for its Millennium Tree at City Park.

The City of Griffin has also been awarded the Tree City USA designation for 14 years, partly because it has an ongoing urban forestry program based on a tree ordinance with a comprehensive community forestry program for maintenance, removals, and planting. The City of Griffin regularly trims healthy trees and removes dead and dangerous trees as funds permit. Assisting us with this task is a state of the art GIS system for mapping tree locations, size, and conditions with recommendations for maintenance or removal. We have a newly appointed tree board made up of citizens representing each voting district who love trees and volunteer many hours each year working on tree planting projects, mulching, and Arbor Day activities. Planting of new nursery stock is done in the Fall and Winter of each year.

Griffin's Tree board is conservative about tree removal and very liberal about tree replacement. Every effort is made to replace trees that are removed. Plant the Future, a non-profit organization dedicated to the planting and preservation of Griffin's urban forest, has partnered with the City of Griffin to plant over 3,000 trees on public land over the last 15 years, far more than the number removed. Plant the Future would welcome anyone who would like to get involved by volunteering or perhaps purchasing a tree in honor or memory of a loved one. If you would like to donate the cost of a tree or volunteer to water and care for a new tree until it becomes established please contact the President of Plant the Future, Jerry Walker, at 770-227-0411.

A community informational meeting for residents to discuss the tree replacement program will be held on October 2, 2006 at 6:30 in City Hall. Anyone who has questions or concerns is asked to call Milton McCarthney, Deputy Director of Stormwater at 770-229-6424, or City of Griffin Tree Board President, John Hemphill at 770-233-8347. Problems and comments about the plan can also be reported at the City of Griffin's website, <http://www.griffinstorm.com/SW/ReportingProblems.htm>