

Did you know?

Answers to common questions about **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT** in the City of Wilmington

It seems that the City of Wilmington is losing its tree canopy to clearcutting. Please explain.

It is true that new developments, particularly those on wooded sites, usually require significant tree removal—for buildings, parking areas, driveways, sidewalks and plazas, and oftentimes, to create positive drainage on flat terrain. Wilmington is becoming a more urban place, but removal of trees today does not imply removal of trees forever. Consider the following:

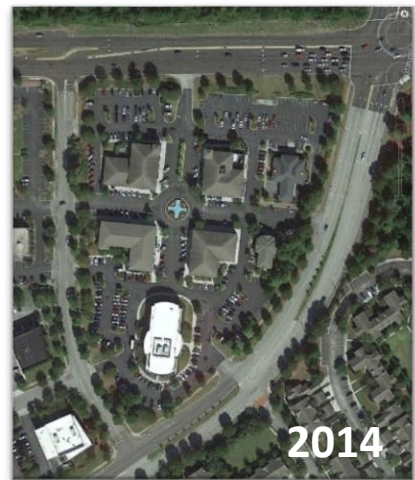
Comparing Old and New Rules for Trees



We are no longer operating in the 1960's and 70's when there were few requirements for tree preservation and planting. At the left is a picture of the former K-mart property, developed under the rules of that time, and now sitting vacant. Notice the amount of paved area with no trees.



Now, compare the K-mart development with the Barclay Commons property, at the southwestern corner of Shipyard Boulevard and Independence Boulevard. (pictures left and below) This property was developed under current rules for tree preservation and planting. As shown in the aerial photos below, the site previously had been wooded (1993), then almost completely clearcut and developed (2002). By 2014, the trees that had been planted as required by the city's Land Development Code had grown to create the tree canopy we see today.



Did the restoration of a tree canopy at Barclay Commons happen overnight?

Certainly not. It was at least a decade before the trees planted under the city's development code had grown sufficiently to restore a tree canopy of some size.

Can we do better?

Yes. We still see examples around town where our tree standards have fallen short or have not been fully implemented. In other instances, we find trees that have been improperly pruned or removed without a permit. We need to do a better job of educating about our standards and enforcing them.

What's ahead for our city's trees?

Currently, the City of Wilmington is in the process of updating our Land Development Code. Tree preservation, planting, and maintenance is one of many important issues being examined for improvement. The tree preservation and planting codes of other cities are being evaluated for best practices. Up for consideration are reduced parking requirements for less asphalt, enhanced streetscapes with better landscaping and street trees, and tighter standards for tree size and species at planting and maturity, among other things.

A final word and reason to be proud.

Recently, the City of Wilmington contracted with a tree advocacy organization, the Green Infrastructure Center, to conduct a study: *"Maximizing Stormwater Benefits Using Green Infrastructure in Wilmington, NC"* (July 2018). The Green Infrastructure Center has conducted similar audits of several other communities in the United States. A notable finding of the study was that Wilmington has one of the highest tree canopy coverage percentages of any of the communities studied. Specifically, the report found that 48% of the city's land area is covered by tree canopy. Our long term goal as a city is to sustain that high percentage of canopy coverage, whether by preservation or replanting, even as we grow more urban in the decades ahead.



For more information on the **City's Tree Canopy Program**, visit:

wilmingtonnc.gov/departments/parks-recreation/trees/urban-tree-canopy-program

For more information on the **Land Development Code Update** visit: wilmingtonnc.gov/LDC