

8.2 TREE CONSERVATION

The Druid Hills Local District is characterized by remnants of a mature hardwood forest contained within its public open spaces and privately-owned, institutional and residential lots. The management of this vegetative resource within the district will assist in the perpetuation of this significant historic and character-defining feature. A management plan should be developed for the Druid Hills Local Historic District to promote the conservation of the mature hardwood forest. Management of the district's tree resources, both pines and hardwoods, can be accomplished through a variety of techniques - voluntary as well as mandatory.

A tree ordinance is one of the most effective mandatory techniques. Tree replacement and protection of existing trees are fostered through the requirements contained within such an ordinance. Such ordinances are designed to protect and perpetuate the wooded character of mature landscapes, such as Druid Hills. Most ordinances typically control large scale development actions, while individual actions occur unchecked. In Druid Hills, it may be desirable to monitor individual actions related to tree preservation and replacement, since incremental actions over time lead to major changes in the character of a community.

Voluntary actions might include a survey and analysis of existing trees. Survey and analysis activities should include an assessment of the existing resource through a tree inventory and recommendations for rejuvenating the existing urban forest. Pruning of dead wood is suggested to stimulate growth of mature trees. Pruning specifications and guidelines (typically available through county extension offices) should be followed. Trees in deteriorated conditions or of advance age should be removed and replaced.

An underplanting program should be initiated in anticipation of future replacement. In an underplanting effort, young trees of identical or compatible varieties to existing trees are planted adjacent to aged vegetation for the purpose of eventual replacement. In most cases, replanting schemes should follow the diversity of tree types contained within tree groupings. In a few special situations, such as the cluster of beech trees on Oakdale, tree groupings of identical varieties is recommended. Replacement trees should be of adequate size to make a visual impact in the district. For that reason, seedlings are not recommended. Underplanting should be carried out by both the public and private sectors.

Recommendation - The mature hardwood forest within the Druid Hills Local Historic District should be perpetuated through a district-wide replanting program. Trees should be replaced when mature trees are lost to age or damage or are removed for safety reasons. Replacement trees should be of identical or similar varieties to the original trees. A diversity of tree types is recommended to perpetuate the existing character of most tree groupings. Replacement trees of adequate size (1.5" caliper minimum) are recommended. Existing ordinances that provide for the protection and replacement of the district's tree resources should be applied to development activities within Druid Hills.

Example of mature hardwood forest that characterizes much of the local historic district.

