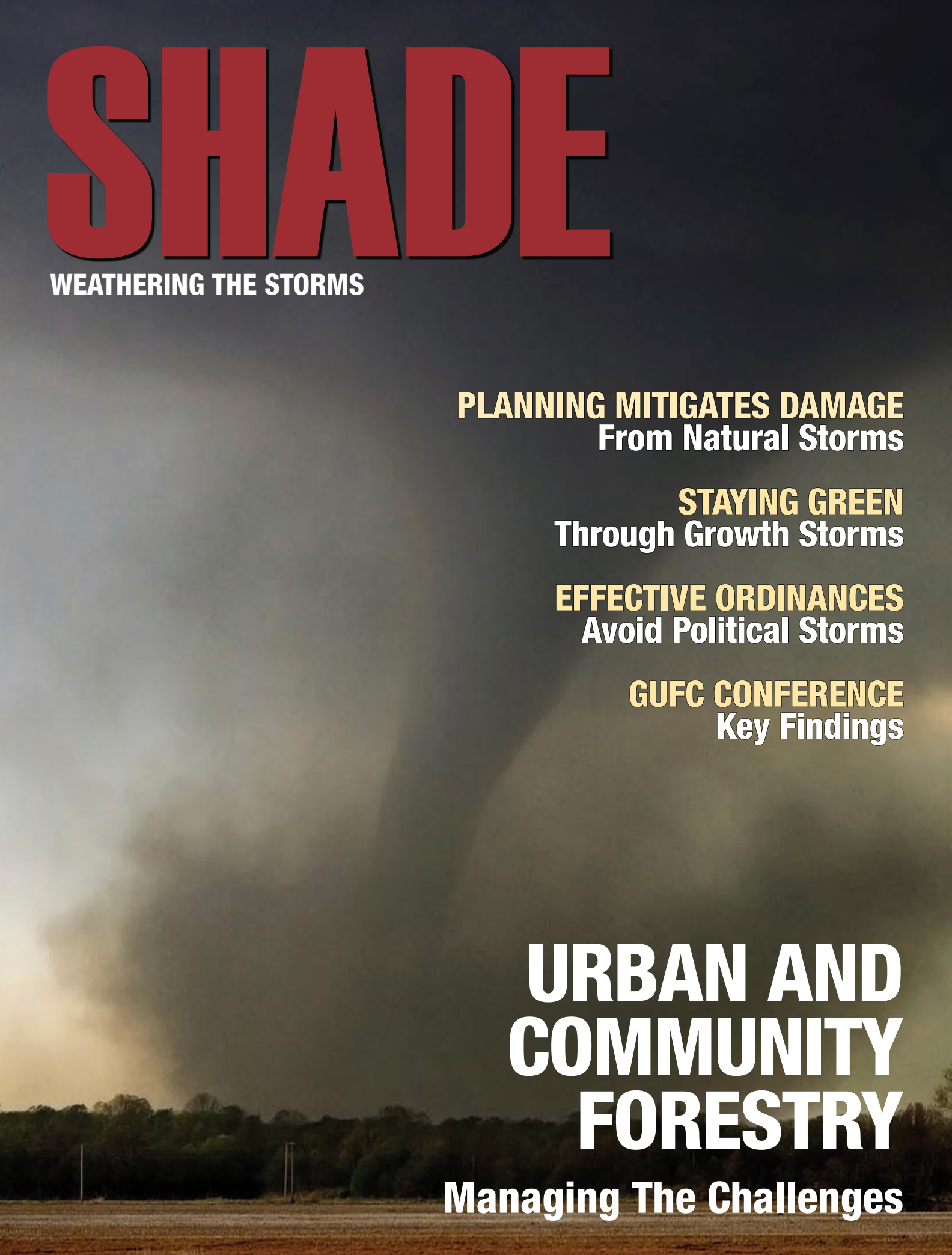
SHADE

WEATHERING THE STORMS



PLANNING MITIGATES DAMAGE
From Natural Storms

STAYING GREEN
Through Growth Storms

EFFECTIVE ORDINANCES
Avoid Political Storms

GUFC CONFERENCE
Key Findings

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY

Managing The Challenges

SHADE

WEATHERING THE STORMS

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Georgia Urban Forest Council (GUFC)

MISSION
To sustain Georgia's green legacy by helping communities grow healthy trees.

VISION
To be a broad based leadership resource in promoting the importance of trees throughout Georgia by leveraging user-friendly technology, influencing the policy-making process and providing cutting-edge programming.

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Vol 3

WELCOME TO

SHADE

A publication that helps communities

Weather the Storms and Manage the Challenges of the Urban Forest

Dear Forestry Partners:

Storms often strike with little warning; however, in Georgia we have an unusual opportunity. Having weathered some storms, we can see clearly that there are more on the horizon. Growth, natural, financial and political storms all threaten our urban forest.

While storms can damage a community, they can also provide opportunities, clearing away the old and making room for new advances. With careful planning and coalitions built of nonprofits, governments and businesses, Georgia communities can face these challenges and emerge with a stronger and healthier urban forest.

Storms, like most changes, cannot be avoided entirely. With your help, Georgia's communities will be ready.

Sincerely,

Sarah B. Visser
President, Georgia Urban Forest Council
Education Coordinator, Keep Georgia Beautiful

Dear Community Forestry Friends:

The 2005 hurricane season and in particular Hurricane Katrina, and the 2006 fire season are constant reminders of what has become a clash between civilization and nature. Across the country and in the south, the human-urban footprint is sprawling ever further into the landscape and rendering us more vulnerable to catastrophic natural events. Since Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, the urban forestry community has been responding to the devastation, and efforts towards restoration of functioning ecosystems have just barely begun.

In the Southern Region, we need to be more prepared. First and foremost, we need to plan and build our cities in ways which minimize risks to natural disasters, while at the same time maximizing the environmental goods and services that nature provides us. We must also plan to respond to the inevitable event before it occurs and plan for recovery and restoration. Finally, we must work to keep our urban forests healthy so they can better withstand storms.

I encourage you to use SHADE as a resource to plan and manage your urban forests, and I applaud the GUFC for the leadership.

Sincerely,

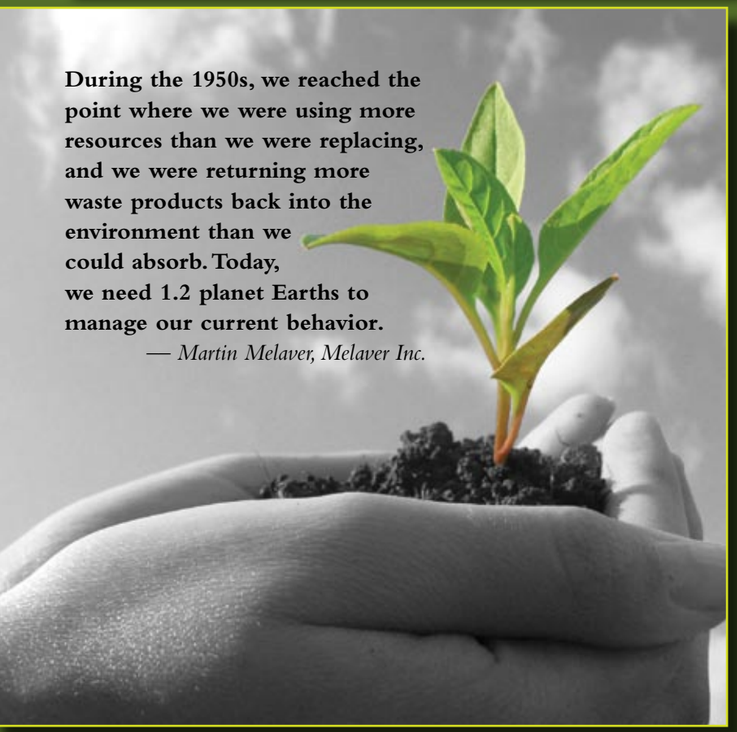
Ed Macie
Regional Urban Forester
Southern Region
USDA Forest Service

TREES MATTER in Georgia

MANAGING THE CHALLENGES OF THE URBAN FOREST

Weathering the Storms

Attendees at the 16th annual Georgia Urban Forest Council Conference and Awards Program dodged a predicted thunderstorm, enjoying instead crisp fall weather among live oaks and native palms. Leaders from around that state gathered on Jekyll Island on November 15, 16 and 17, 2006 to discuss ways to successfully manage the challenges of the urban forest. Presenters offered tips to help communities and tree boards weather all sorts of storms – natural, growth, political and financial. Some of the data, along with other statistics, is highlighted on these pages.



During the 1950s, we reached the point where we were using more resources than we were replacing, and we were returning more waste products back into the environment than we could absorb. Today, we need 1.2 planet Earths to manage our current behavior.

— Martin Melaver, Melaver Inc.

Georgia has 23 of the top 100 population growth counties in the U.S. The state has seen a 10.8% growth rate in the past five years.

– Ken Stewart, Georgia Forestry Commission

Of the 757 total cities and counties in Georgia, 24% have tree ordinances and 12% have management plans.

– Ken Stewart, Georgia Forestry Commission

The Earth is losing 23 ½ million acres of forest every year at a time when we are off-gassing twice as much carbon as our remaining inventory of trees can support.

– Martin Melaver, Melaver Inc.

The population of the 20-county Atlanta region is projected to reach 7 million people by 2030.

– Brad Calvert, Atlanta Regional Commission

The Georgia coast is 100 miles long but it contains one-third of the total wetlands in the entire eastern seaboard.

– Martin Melaver, Melaver Inc.

The services provided by Georgia's salt marshes – including filtering pollution, buffering against flooding, erosion and storm surges, providing a nursery for a wide variety of fish and shellfish and promoting recreation and eco-tourism – is conservatively valued at $14,000 an acre, for a total worth to the state of $5.6 billion annually.

– Patty McIntosh, Georgia Conservancy Coastal Programs

Of the tree ordinances reported in Georgia, 74% apply to public trees, 69% apply to new construction on public property, 58% apply to privately owned trees, 75% apply to new developments, 67% apply to new residential subdivisions, 38% apply to existing developed property and 27% apply to existing single-family residential property.

- Survey of Community Tree Regulations in Georgia, Connie Head

Metro Atlanta measured about 65 miles from north to south in 1990. Today it spans about 110 miles across. By 2018, its range is expected to include suburbs such as Athens and Dalton.

– Negative Population Growth

20% of tree ordinance administrators are arborists or foresters. 27% are planning, zoning or building directors or officials and 13% are city or county managers or administrators.

– Survey of Community Tree Regulations in Georgia, Connie Head

87% of the 121 communities responding to a community tree regulations survey reported having a "stand-alone" tree ordinance.

– Survey of Community Tree Regulations in Georgia, Connie Head

"Today, we can see the beginning of a new way of thinking about the world - as sets of relationships rather than separated objects . . . .We tend to think of a tree as the brown and green bit sticking up above the ground. Even if you include the roots, you are excluding most of the tree. The air that moves around it, the water that moves through it, the sunlight that animates it, the earth that supports it are all integral parts of the tree. What about the insects that fertilize it, the fungi that help it draw in nutrients, and all the rest of the life involved with that tree? Is the visible solidity the only 'real' part, or does it exist as process, relationship, connection as well? We know the answer very well."

David Suzuki in Sacred Balance

Natural STORMS

By Martha Nolan McKenzie

Photography by Kelly Blackmon

At midnight on Sept. 15, 2004, Rachel Barker packed a small bag and headed into her office. She knew she had a long night – and an even longer day – ahead of her.

Barker is the deputy director for Public Services for the Columbus Consolidated Government, and she was preparing for the arrival of Hurricane Ivan, a Category 3 storm with 130 mph winds. By 3:00 a.m. the calls started coming in – reports of trees down, blocked roads, damaged roofs.

"It always starts off slow, and time seems to just drag by while you're waiting," says Barker. "Then all at once it's hopping, just like popcorn."

Barker was ready. Thanks to a detailed storm management plan and days of meetings with the mayor, city manager and all department heads prior to the storm, everyone knew what to do and how to communicate. Barker had an evacuation plan in place and a debris-removal company under contract and on notice, although she did not have to use either. And she had a method in place to prioritize calls and dispatch crews.

The total cleanup took about a month, but all the major roads were cleared almost as soon as they were blocked, and the city of Columbus suffered minimal traffic and operational disturbance.

Columbus' Ivan experience brings into sharp focus the need for a thorough storm management plan. "As an urban forester, it's important to have safe and efficient operations during storms," says Barker. "It all needs be set up before the storm hits, so you know how to react, how to get your streets cleared, where and how you are going to dispose of the debris. You don't want to be figuring all this out in the middle of a storm."

Such a plan should have three components – preparation, response and recovery.

The calm before the storm

In urban forestry, as in sports, the best offense is often a good defense. That means planning ahead for how to handle a storm's damage –how are you going to get rid of downed limbs and trees? Where you are going to put them? "You want to map out beforehand where your brush staging areas are going to be, because you don't want to have to move all that debris again," says Barker.

It's important to contract with a debris removal company and a chipping company in advance, so you are not competing with scores of other communities trying to secure services in the aftermath of a storm. And those contracts should include established prices. "After a big storm, prices can fluctuate quite a bit," says Barker. "We have a standing contract with fixed prices so we know they are going to come to us before they go to any other community and we know what they are going to charge us."

Donna Yowell learned that the hard way. Executive Director of the Mississippi Urban Forest Council, Yowell was faced with an unimaginable cleanup nightmare in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. “With the benefit of hindsight, we now see that if we had been ready with renewable resource equipment, we could have used woody debris for power,” says Yowell. “If we had mulching systems on the coast, we could have mulched the trees on site rather than paying huge amounts to remove the trees.”

Communities also would be well served to identify and take steps to protect particularly valuable trees. “Some trees deserve a bit of extra risk mitigation – the historic courthouse tree, the landmark community square tree,” says Dr. Kim Coder, professor of Community Forestry and Arboriculture at the University of Georgia Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources. “There’s no single answer – it depends on the structure of the tree, the site, what is nearby. But measures can be taken beforehand to protect valuable trees.”

Finally, trees can be used as a buffer to protect a community and its interior trees from storm damage. Live oaks and native palms, for example, stood up against the wrath of Hurricane Katrina better than other varieties. “So we learned that a buffer of live oaks along the coast could be an effective storm mitigation strategy,” says Yowell. “That is something that we often miss in urban forestry – the idea of creating tree buffers to reduce storm damage.”

In the eye of the storm

Once a storm hits, planning gives way to action, and a detailed description of how to handle incoming calls is invaluable. The Columbus response plan, for example, dictates that if the number of calls exceeds 10, the Urban Forestry supervisor is notified to coordinate any additional crews needed. Operators are armed with a written priority ranking of storm calls – from trees down with injured people caught in a car or a home as the highest priority to trees down and at rest on a home or car as the lowest – so they can best allocate equipment and crews.

Immediately following a storm, clearing major roads to ensure access for medical emergency and subsequent cleanup equipment is vital. The next focus should be on hazard mitigation – cutting down hanging limbs and broken branches that pose a risk. Brush pick-up, staging and chipping or mulching would be the last task to occur.

It’s important to keep the public informed every step of the way. “In all of your planning and response activities, you should include a public information component,” stays Phillip M. Webber, director of the Chatham Emergency Management Agency. “You should develop and coordinate pre-scripted announcements regarding the debris removal process, collection times and storage sites. Public safety announcements can include such topics as how to stay safe by watching for hanging limbs, leaning trees and downed power lines, as well as chainsaw safety operations. The more the public knows, the better.”

Life after the storm

“Recovery is not just about cleaning up the debris,” says Barker. “It’s about managing these huge living objects that have been damaged. One of the most important things we can do as far as urban forestry is to go out and evaluate and monitor, if necessary, trees that have been damaged.”

Indeed, through a program of routine pruning and evaluating both healthy and damaged trees, the Columbus Public Services department has been able to reduce its claims from damage caused by fallen trees and limbs. Claims paid fell from over 70 claims paid in 2002 to almost nothing today. In addition, 911 calls relating to fallen trees fell from 56 in 2002 to only 17 to date in 2006. “We’ve reduced our costs considerably by diligently monitoring and maintaining our trees,” says Barker.

Perhaps no one is as well versed in the process of recovery as Yowell. Sixty of Mississippi’s 80 counties were listed as disaster areas after Hurricane Katrina. The Corps of Engineers did not have specifications on what trees to remove, so a lot of hazardous trees were left standing. Add to that the effects of a drought that has weakened coastal trees, and the scope of the cleanup effort is staggering.

“The damage was so vast, we’ve had to create programs that are sustainable on a local level,” says Yowell. “We’re going into each of the communities and recruiting local people who may have had nothing to do with trees in the past. We’re training them how to recognize hazard trees and how to successfully plant new ones. This will end up providing us with a great opportunity to get a lot of people involved in urban forestry who have not been in the past.”

Yowell’s office has started another program – Replant Hope Together – in which northern counties are growing live oak seedlings for the coastal counties when they are ready to replant. “The six counties along the coast are really not ready to plant trees yet because they are still replacing their utilities,” says Yowell. “So this gives us a chance to do some educating and training about where and how best to replant when they are ready.”

What lesson would Yowell share with her Georgia counterparts? “Look at predisaster mitigation,” she says. “Urban forestry is not just about planting trees – it’s about protecting our homes and our families. Trees, especially a buffer zone of trees – can be used to mitigate storm damage, and urban forest councils need to take that role seriously.”

Growth STORMS

By Martha Nolan McKenzie

Move over, New York. Make room, California. Georgia is poised to join your ranks as one of the largest population states in the near future.

Indeed, Georgia has 23 of the top 100 growth counties in the United States and the Peach State has seen a 10.8 percent population growth rate during the past five years. And the flood of new residents shows no signs of abating. By 2030, the 20-county Atlanta metropolitan area is projected to hit a staggering 7 million residents and the population along the state's coast is expected to swell by 50 percent to 840,000.

This rampant growth has fueled a frenzy of development, adding to the already intense pressure on urban forests, trees, parks and open spaces. The Atlanta area has already lost 60 percent of its natural tree cover over the last 20 years, and trees continue to disappear at a rate of 54 acres a day.

All of this points to an undeniable fact. "Development as it has happened in the past is not going to work anymore," says Brad Calvert, principal planner in the Land Use Division of the Atlanta Regional Commission. "We have to think about new ways to preserve greenspace, new growth patterns and new development practices."

The Georgia of towering pines, magnificent live oaks and sweeping magnolias is on its way to becoming a Georgia of clogged highways, sprawling parking lots and cavernous shopping malls. In an effort to preserve the "green" heritage of the state, the Georgia Office of Planning and Quality Growth is working to develop an interconnected network of greenspace. The idea is that each town would develop a map of its areas of greenspace and a series of corridors to connect them. These would be connected within a region, and then within the entire state, thereby resulting in a sort of green interstate system linking parks, forests and open spaces.

"Creating these networks will be good for wildlife, so it can move from area to area in order to thrive," says Jim Frederick, director of the Office of Planning and Quality Growth. "But they would also open the door for alternative forms of transportation, such as biking or walking.

Ultimately, we would hope that everyone in the state would have easy access to greenspace areas."

Frederick's office also urges local officials to think outside the box when it comes to preserving greenspace. "It's important not to always assume that you have to buy the land to protect it," he emphasizes. "There are many other strategies to preserve land."

In addition to the rather commonly used conservation easements and transferable development rights, local officials could consider differential assessments that would allow farmland to be assessed at its agricultural value rather than at its fair market value, which would encourage farmers to keep farming the land rather than sell it for development due to high taxes.

Towns and municipalities also can turn to the non-profit sector for help. Land trusts and conservation groups may be willing and able to buy the development rights of significant properties. The key is to coordinate these purchases with an overarching plan in mind.

"Right now, there are a lot of different groups across the state buying up property, but they are not necessarily working in unison toward a common goal," says Frederick. "If we can finalize a regional map of interconnected greenspace areas, then perhaps it will yield more coordination of these efforts."

The flip side of promoting greenspace is controlling the urban development patterns that encroach on it. So far, the state has done anything but. According to Negative Population Growth, a national advocacy group, metro Atlanta measured about 65 miles from north to south in 1990. Today, it's about 110 miles across. By 2018, its range is expected to include outlying suburbs such as Athens and Dalton.

In an effort to curb this sprawl, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources developed "Green Growth Guidelines" which, among other things, promote new development patterns. In the traditional suburban model, residential lots cover the entire area with the minimum state-required buffer of 25 feet with a focus on private cars and low residential density. More green-friendly models include the Community Preserve design and the Village design. These development styles feature reduced lot sizes and clustered residential areas, thus leaving more space undeveloped.

Not only do these models allow developers to preserve greenspace, but they also offer greater profit potential, claims Patty McIntosh, vice president for Coastal Programs at the Georgia Conservancy. "Your road and infrastructure costs are lower with the Community Preserve and Village models, and the value of the lots are higher," she says. "People are willing to pay for access to greenspace and pedestrian walkways."

Local governments have several tools at their disposal to herd development into suitably contained areas. Incentive zoning, for example, may offer developers a "density bonus" or "floor-area ratio bonus" in exchange for providing open spaces, parks and/or donating a conservation easement.

Governments also can control development by what they *don't* do. If they don't put roads, sewers and utilities in an area, developers won't be able to go there. "This is a very underutilized strategy," says Frederick. "What you see now is local governments putting in roads, water pipes and sewer lines without thinking about the growth consequences. Once those are in place, you are almost guaranteed that development will follow. But if governments are a lot more strategic about where they will allow these extensions, it makes it much easier to manage growth."

A novel approach could be minimum density zoning, or the opposite of how zoning is currently done. Rather than putting a ceiling on the number of units per area, this type of zoning would put a floor on it to encourage higher density developments in contained areas.

Finally, although this approach would likely need to be approved by state legislation, local governments could look at taxing land at a higher rate than buildings. "Right now, there is an incentive for local governments to see the land developed in order to increase the property value and thus the tax base," Frederick adds. "But if you give land a higher value, you will take away that incentive."

Whatever methods are employed, the need to change cannot be understated. And the problem is not Georgia's alone. "As a planet, we are losing 23 million acres of forest every year," says Martin Melaver, CEO of Melaver, Inc., a sustainable real estate company based in Savannah. "And we're doing it at a time when we're gassing twice as much as our remaining inventory of trees can support. As we all know, it's not just about trees anymore. It's about helping to create a process and a vision for sustaining the natural environment."

Green Development

Although just 100 miles long, the Georgia coast contains one-third of the total wetlands along the entire Eastern seaboard. There are only about 400 barrier islands in the entire country, and 13 of them are situated along the Georgia coast. Its vast salt-marsh ecosystem is one of the most diverse and productive in the world.

"When you fly down the East Coast at night, from Maine to Florida, all you see is an endless array of lights," says Martin Melaver, CEO of Melaver, Inc., a sustainable real estate company based in Savannah. "There is but one patch of darkness in this otherwise virtual sea of lights, which represents a ray of hope for nature as it were, and it occurs along a less than 100-mile stretch from Savannah to St. Mary's. That one patch of natural hope is fading in a daily progression of development and growth, though. The Georgia coast is a real treasure not only economically, but also environmentally. If we allow rampant growth to occur there as it has on the rest of the Eastern seaboard, we will have done our nation a tremendous disservice."

If Gregg Bayard has anything to say about it, Georgia's natural treasure will remain intact. Bayard, along with his partner, Curry Wadsworth, operates Barbour Pointe, a conservation community in Savannah. "Curry and I are both plant-oriented people," says Bayard. "He had a landscape company he operated for 20 years, and I have a degree in horticulture. So when we got together to do development, we knew we wanted to concentrate on conservation measures."

In March 2005, the pair found a pristine 38-acre marsh corridor – 20 acres of salt marsh and 18 acres of developable land – just 10 miles from downtown Savannah that was perfect for their purposes. "From the beginning, we were focused on maximizing tree preservation and minimizing site and soil disturbance," Bayard adds.

Toward that end, they decided on a condo-style of ownership, in which homeowners would own the house and its footprint, but all other land would be owned communally. This structure offered several benefits. Homeowners couldn't decide to cut down trees in their "yards" because those yards would actually be communal property protected by a conservation easement. And Bayard was able to position the individual home sites to preserve trees without worrying about how that affected the lot lines. Using aerial photos and a tree survey, Bayard positioned the home sites and then figured out how to connect them with roads. As a result, fewer than 12 of the site's 250 trees of 15 inches or more in diameter were lost to road construction.

Finally, condo-style ownership guarantees the development remains true to its original ideas. "We knew we wanted to carry our principles past the development phase," says Bayard. "With this type of ownership, there will be one single entity responsible for maintaining the property. So we won't have to fight with 35 different homeowners who want to use ChemLawn. We'll only have to deal with one who will understand our strict restrictions on chemical and pesticide use."

Barbour Pointe will boast 100 percent pervious concrete. While that decision added *significantly* to the project's cost, it eliminated the need for curbs, gutters and storm drains which, in turn, minimized the site disturbance and change of site hydrology. It also allowed water back into the soil, thereby promoting tree health.

Bayard and Wadsworth also wanted their development to encourage the use of alternative energy sources. In a novel approach, they are putting a series of geothermal heat pumps under the roadbed and requiring that all Barbour Pointe homeowners run off that system. "Geothermal systems are extremely efficient and the homeowners also will be able to generate about 80 percent of their annual hot water needs for free," say Bayard. "This system will generate a significant energy cost savings."

As for other energy needs, Bayard is hoping to meet them with solar power. The project has a pre-existing causeway that is perfect for a small solar array. "Our objective is to be net zero for community electrical use – for street lights and community structures," explains Bayard. "But solar generation is in its toddler stage. As technology improves, Barbour Pointe will have the infrastructure in place to allow homeowners to upgrade and perhaps go net zero throughout the whole community."

Perhaps above all else, Bayard hopes to inspire other developers. "I want Barbour Pointe to show that a sustainable and conservation-oriented community not only can be economically feasible, but also can be profitable," he concludes.

Political STORMS

By Martha Nolan McKenzie

Growth storms and financial storms can come together to create the perfect political storm. Why? Because Georgia is a Home Rule State, which means, among other things, that the power to control land use resides in the hands of local governments. So if you want to protect greenspace and preserve trees in Georgia, you've got to get local officials on your side.

Easier said than done, you say? Perhaps. But here are a few tips from strategic planning and urban forestry experts.

Getting everyone on the same page

Whether your are trying to preserve a forested area, launch a tree planting program or restrict clear cutting for new development, you're going to have to get elected officials, developers, local businesses and residents to share your vision. Here are some suggestions for getting everyone on the same page – hopefully your page.

Before you can hope to convince someone of the worthiness of your cause, you need to do a little soul searching to define your vision, according to Sam Collier, an Atlanta-based strategic planner and facilitator. "You've got to ask yourself, 'Why do trees matter?' " says Collier. "If you answer, 'Because they create a healthier environment,' then you need to ask yourself why a health environment matters. If you answer, "Because I want my children to be healthy and happy," then you've brought it down to a core value. Children are something that resonates within everyone, even people without kids."

From that vision, you need to craft a specific and measurable goal. Something like "I want to restore Atlanta's tree canopy to 40% from the current 26%." To convince others to embrace that goal, you will need to separate the people from the position, says Collier. For example, talk to the developer to find out what his main interest is. If it's making a profit, validate that interest. Then you might say, "What if we found some ways for you to make the same profit while leaving more trees standing. Would you be interested?"

"In your position as tree advocates, it's incumbent on you to invent options for mutual gain," says Collier. "You have to make it a win/win situation."

Conceptualizing that page

The tree ordinance itself likely will be your most important tool for preserving your urban forest. According to a survey of community tree regulations conducted by Connie Head, a consulting urban forester with Technical Forestry Services in Commerce, for the Georgia Urban Forest Council, 24% of Georgia's cities and counties have a tree ordinance. Many of the communities that lack an ordinance are interested in developing one.

Experts agree that for an ordinance to be effective, it must be tailored to your community. Cookie cutter ordinances borrowed from neighboring areas likely will miss the unique goals and objectives of your town. That said, however, here are some general tips for making your tree ordinance effective and successful.

First, it's important to recognize what a tree ordinance is *not*. "Tree ordinances are not growth management tools – they don't keep developers from coming to your community," says Ed Macie, the USDA Forest Service's regional urban forester for the Southern U.S. "Rather, ordinances are policies that help maintain forest canopy in the context of a developing community."

You also need to assess what you have by taking an inventory of your urban forest. This not only can point out needs that might not be obvious and help establish appropriate goals, but it provides a baseline against which future changes can be measured.

Once you know where you are, you're ready to figure out where you want to go and how you are going to get there. For this part of the discussion, it's wise to get everyone at the table. "You have a lot of competing interests within the community," says Head. "That's why it's so important that all the different interests are involved in developing the ordinance. You need input – and buy in – from the development community, the local government, the business community and the citizens if the ordinance is going to work."

Writing the page

In crafting the actual ordinance, consider separating the regulations from how they are administered. "Land development and tree biology are both very complex," says Macie. "I like ordinances that separate the two, where one part of the document spells out what the regulations are and the other part tells you how to do it."

There are many different ways to detail procedures, as Head learned from her survey. For example, some plans require preconstruction meetings with the developer and the ordinance administrator on the site before there is any site disturbance. Others require that a few people who will be working on the site go through a short training program on the ordinances. Some write in inspection periods both during construction and up to a few years after completion to make sure the trees are being maintained.

However you construct your procedures, make sure they work toward getting you to your goal. "Very few ordinances say, 'We want no net loss of trees in our community,' or 'We want to maintain a tree canopy of 40% in our community,' " says Head. "Spell out your goal in a measurable form in your ordinance."

Also clearly spell out what happens to someone who ignores the ordinance. For example, your ordinance might detail that a developer will first get a warning letter, then a stop-work order and then a penalty assessment. "If your ordinance is not enforced, it is no good," says Head.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you need to be realistic. You can't save every single tree on a site. You need to allow flexibility in terms of which trees are preserved and provide some sort of alternative compliance. "If you build in some flexibility, I think you are going to end up with better compli ance," says Macie. "For example, you could have a builder whose project is going to get into the root system of a landmark tree. A very restrictive ordinance could tie him up with months and months of appeals, the prospect of which might encourage him to risk the fine and plow ahead. Alternately, you could allow for an arborist to work in the field with the builder who could say, 'I realize you are going to damage some of the roots with this project. But here's how you could mitigate the damage by altering your plans just a bit like this.' That kind of flexibility can be the difference between success and failure."

Financial Storms

By Martha Nolan McKenzie

Money doesn't grow on trees, but it sure can help trees grow. After all, it takes a bit of the foldable green stuff to plant public trees, prune them and otherwise maintain them. But raising money to preserve greenspace or to plant trees isn't always the easiest sell. There is plenty of competition for the pocket books of local governments, civic groups and citizens. Here are a couple of ideas for creative fund raising from some of the state's most effective tree groups:

Partying for fun and profit

The Coastal Bryan Tree Foundation has put the "fun" in fund-raising. For the past two years, the 5-year-old foundation just outside Savannah has sponsored an outdoor fete tagged the Root Ball. The event drew a crowd of 200 last year, raising more than $25,000 for the group. Tickets to the ball go for $50 a head and sponsorships range from $1 to $1,000, but it's the silent auction that is the real money-maker. Last year, for example, the foundation was able to auction a guided day tour of St. Catherines Island off the Georgia coast and a complete landscaping job.

"We've been fortunate to be able to get things to auction that people really got excited about," says Wendy Bolton. "It doesn't take too many things like the trip and the landscaping job to really boost the bottom line."

Tis the season for putting trees in

While most tree groups have a program allowing donors to fund a tree planting in honor of someone, Trees Columbus focuses its efforts in a one-time tree planting dubbed the Holiday Forest. For a minimum donation of $10 a card, the organization will send a holiday card to each recipient informing him that a tree is being planted in his honor. Proceeds from the fundraiser are earmarked for specific projects. Last year, for example, $12,000 was raised to begin reforestation of two local cemeteries and to begin a NeighborWoods project to restore tree canopy in specific neighborhoods.

"When we first starting doing the Holiday Forest, we didn't specify where we were going to be planting," says Gena Taylor, executive director of Trees Columbus. "But we found that people respond more when they know where the trees will be going. This year we are going to plant trees at the home of our little league baseball team, which just won t he Little League World Series. People have really gotten behind that project."

Looking for a few good sponsors

Savannah Tree Foundation President Dale Thorpe has learned an important lesson. "If you can think of activities that companies can sponsor, you are reaching into a different – and much deeper – corporate pocket than the pocket that handles straight donations," she says. "Right now I'd like to get anything I can think of sponsored." For example, Thorpe arranged for Georgia Power to sponsor a tree work day to remove non-native invasive species from local urban forests. The utility provided funding and volunteers and the foundation supplied refreshments, T-shirts and publicity.

Thorpe's most lucrative sponsorship, however, just fell in her lap. Savannah-based Melaver, Inc., a sustainable real estate development company, voluntarily analyzed its business operations to determine their ecological impact. As a way to reduce its carbon footprint, Melaver partnered with the Savannah Tree Foundation's existing tree planting program. "They came up with a formula showing how many trees a year would be needed to offset their carbon exchange," says Thorpe. "So they have been funding the planting of 200 trees a year. It's an amazing and wonderful initiative – one we hope other businesses will emulate."

After the Storm

By Martha Nolan McKenzie

It was fair fall weather when coastal area elected officials gathered at the Jekyll Island Conference Center to share how their communities' urban forests navigated various types of storms. As the finale of the Georgia Urban Forest Council's 16th annual conference and awards luncheon, which was held Nov. 15 – 17, 2006, officials described the challenges of absorbing unprecedented growth, recovering from tropical storms and weathering financial blows. Here's a synopsis of what they collectively discussed:

Rowland Eskridge, Mayor of the City of St. Mary's, Ga.

When the Durango-Georgia Paper Company was operating its mill in St. Mary's, it provided employment for 900 people, but it also blanketed the town's buildings, cars, trees and residents with dust. Today, the mill is shut down. The people of St. Mary's can breathe easier, their cars are spared of rust and the town's trees are regaining their health.

The abandoned mill, however, still poses a dilemma for city leaders. "It's not just the building that needs to be cleared," says St. Mary's Mayor Rowland Eskridge. "The problem goes down 35 feet into the ground. There are buried drums of industrial waste that are hazardous and need to be cleared out."

Fortunately, the city is working with a Jacksonville, Fla., developer to tear down the mill, clean up the site and create a vibrant redevelopment area featuring a convention center, restaurants, shops and housing units. "It will really be a city unto itself," says Rowland. "We're trying to keep it geared toward what we already have here, and what we have is a beautiful place. Each part of the development has to have greenspace and trees are a major priority. When it's all said and done, it will be really nice."

John J. Fretti, Mayor of the City of Valdosta, Ga.

Mayor John J. Fretti served the role of educator and coach at the elected officials' panel. He urged his audience of tree advocates to stand firm in the face of sure opposition. "You have an inherent conflict of interest with government officials and developers, so you have to hold your ground," says Fretti. "We (politicians) might care about something more than trees, so you have to educate us. You truly have to train us."

Fretti recommended filling the tree boards with true zealots. "You want folks who we'll look at and say, 'Wow! He's really out there!" says Fretti. "And that's okay. That's their job. Our job is to rein them in a bit so we meet somewhere in the middle."

Fretti advised that environmental advocates have their best opportunities when an official is newly elected. "Just as soon as that person gets elected, you need to go meet him, shake his hand and then give him a ride in your car," says Fretti. "Take him around to the sites you are interested in."

He also urged his audience to remind elected officials they don't have to come up with the money to acquire and preserve greenspace on their own. "There's always a wealthy citizen out there who needs a tax break," he says.

After the Storm contd.

Colonel Ulrich H. Keller, County Board Commissioner representing Jekyll, Sea and St. Simons Islands, Ga.

Col. Ulrich H. Keller likely found commanding his troops during his 30-year U.S. Army career a good deal easier than commanding the tide of residents who continue to flood the three coastal islands he oversees. “I represent an area that everybody and his brother wants to come to, it seems,” he says. “We haven’t really handled that growth. Instead, it’s handled us.”

Indeed, the influx of new residents, both full time and part time, has pushed property values up some 400 percent since Keller first came to the area. “When a developer has to pay that kind of money for land, there is tremendous pressure to use that piece of property to its maximum extent,” he says. “That means building right up to the setback, and if a tree gets in the way, that tree will probably go. It’s sad, but it’s reality.”

In addition to using “sticks” – fines for tree ordinance violations – to control developers, Keller cites the need for some “carrots” as well. “We need to find ways to entice developers to value trees,” says Keller. “Perhaps the use of tax credits or variance credits. It’s not something we’ve done very much of, I admit, but we need to look into it.”

Bryan Thompson, Mayor of the City of Brunswick

When Bryan Thompson first moved to Brunswick, Ga., from Ohio 10 years ago, the first thing that struck him was the city’s trees. “Not only was the town filled with truly magnificent trees, I also noticed in some areas that the streets were actually routed around a particular tree,” he says. “That gave me a very strong and distinct impression that this was a community of caring. It made me say, ‘I want to live here.’ ”

Today, as mayor, Thompson is dedicated to preserving the beauty that first attracted him. “We developed a comprehensive master plan in 2003 that focuses on the protection and preservation of our historic integrity,” says Thompson. “We consider our trees as part of the historic fabric of our community.”

Today, Thompson is trying to extend protection for area trees. Currently, anyone wanting to cut down a tree within the city’s historic district must get approval. Thompson is trying to extend that provision beyond the historic district to include the entire city,” he says. “I’m pushing for increasing the penalty to $1,000 per inch above a 10-inch diameter,” he says. So if you had a 20-inch tree, the fine for cutting it down would be $20,000. Now that might get someone’s attention.”

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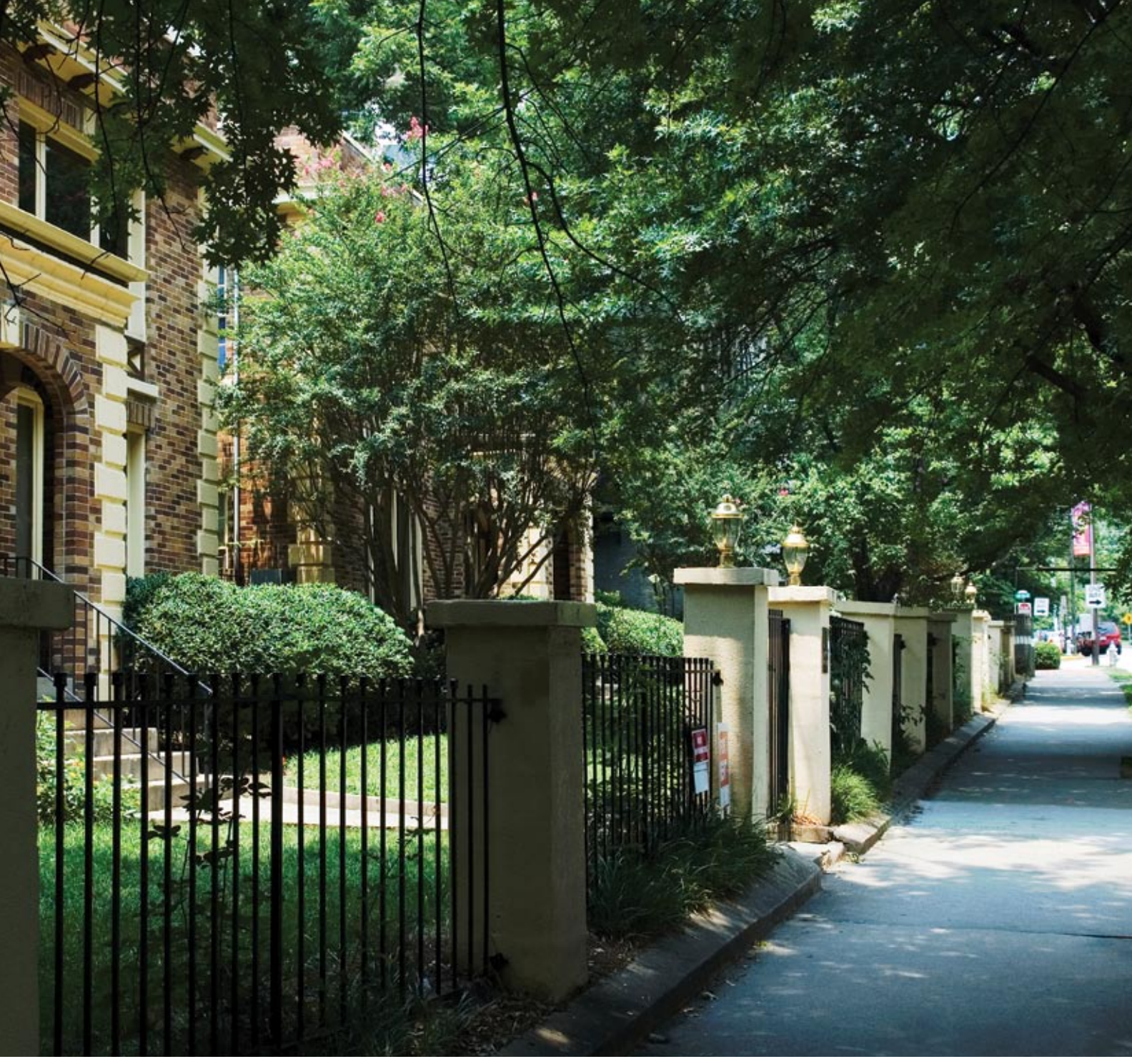

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