

8.0 NATURAL LANDSCAPES - PROTECTING THE DESIGN CONTEXT

8.1 OPEN SPACE AND PARKLAND PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION

OPEN SPACE LINKAGES - The open spaces, preserved in Olmsted's original concepts for Druid Hills, remain as major open spaces today. These green spaces are connected by the stream corridors that extend through them. It is imperative that the large scale, historic, public and private open spaces be preserved to provide a rich habitat for plants and wildlife and also to protect the stream corridors. The park-like character created by these large open spaces is reinforced by the unbroken landscapes of the residential settings.

View of Druid Hills Golf Course, one of the district's significant open spaces.



PASSIVE USE of OPEN SPACES - The natural character of these open spaces is best protected by passive use activities. Intensive sports activities, such as ballfields and large-scale playgrounds, would damage the character of these spaces and should be avoided.

ERADICATION of Exotic Species - The open spaces are comprised primarily of native plant communities. Several open spaces have been damaged by a proliferation of exotic species, particularly privet, ivy, elaeagnus and kudzu. The persuasiveness of these species threatens the bio-diversity. A mono-culture environment is created, resulting in a negative impact to the ecology of the district's open spaces. The predominance of English Ivy within the Fernbank Forest is an example of the invasion by exotic species in a natural environment. These exotic species should be removed by the most environmentally responsive approach possible. (See *Eradication of Kudzu* in the Appendix.)

Guideline - The original layout of Druid Hills should be preserved through the conservation of major open spaces and the linear system of parks and green spaces that buffer the stream corridors. Retaining these spaces, both public and private, by limiting their uses to passive activities will perpetuate the park-like character in the district today. An exclusive palette of native vegetation is recommended for these spaces to protect and enhance the ecology.

Recommendation - The Druid Hills Civic Association or the DeKalb County Historic Preservation Commission should consider discussing with private property owners the concept of conservation easements, in combination with tax credits, to preserve the private "open spaces."

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.



Guideline - The removal of five (5) or more mature specimen trees that are not deemed dead, diseased, or hazardous by the County arborist, shall be reviewed by the preservation commission. The planting of replacement trees may be required to maintain the historic grounds and landscaping of a property or area.

8.3 PROTECTION OF THE HISTORIC WATERSHED DESIGN AND DESIGN CONCEPT

Most of the Druid Hills Historic District is contained within the Peavine and Lullwater Creeks Watershed. Peavine and Lullwater Creeks extend through the district's major open spaces including the woods along Peavine Creek at Emory University, Druid Hills Golf and Country Club, Fernbank Forest, and Deepdene Park. The watershed is further comprised of a system of secondary and tertiary streams that feed these major creeks. Olmsted's design placed rear lot lines along these streams and natural drainage ways as a method of protection and flood control.

River protection legislation at the state level requires a 25' setback from the top of a creek bank in the construction of new buildings. This rule should be applied to all drainage ways within the Druid Hills Historic District as a method of limiting development in these environmentally-sensitive zones. Tax maps provide a general location for floodprone zones.

The district's major creek corridors, the floodprone zones taken from tax maps, and other identified drainage ways have been noted on the official "Historic District Map." These primary, secondary, and tertiary system of streams should be considered in all undertakings within the local historic district with the recommended 25' setback maintained.

There are a variety of methods available to address soil erosion along the district's creek corridors. Some methods use rock, such as "rip rap" and "gabions", while others rely on vegetative approaches, such as "live stakes" and "wattling". The City of Atlanta is currently addressing soil erosion city-wide through a comprehensive improvement program in all of the city's drainage basins. Many of the methods used in this effort might be considered for Druid Hills.

Another method for protecting the district's hydrological system includes the reconstruction of the original Olmsted-designed stone and turf gutters and the use of porous paving materials for parking lots, walks, and drives.

View of development along Peavine Creek



Guideline - All construction within the Druid Hills Local Historic District should follow a 25' setback requirement from the top of bank of creek corridors and drainage ways, as delineated on the official "Historic District Map."

Guideline - Methods used to address bankside erosion should complement the natural character of the creek corridor. Natural materials, such as native rock and plants, should be used as the material in erosion control devices.

Use of granite to control soil erosion along Peavine Creek.

Granite used as "rip rap," in addressing bankside erosion is effective, but more aesthetically-pleasing materials can be used with the same result. Native rock materials instead of granite blend with the natural environment. Also, there are a variety of vegetative approaches, equally as natural in appearance.



View of Lullwater Creek illustrating the use of "gabions." Gabions are large, fenced cages filled with rock, placed along the bankside to arrest erosion.

The use of native stone assists in making gabions a visual complement to the natural environment.



