

Community Trees

Sharon Township

2022

Trees benefit the entire community, so all trees should be considered when examining the use of local laws and resources. This snapshot outlines how trees are managed in your community and is intended to encourage resident involvement in shaping future land use, resource management, and conservation policies.

Current Tree Canopy Cover: 24%
Woodlands Protection Ordinance: No

Township Parks: None
Street Trees: Washtenaw County Roads Commission or Private Ownership



Website:
sharontownship.org

STRENGTHS

Zoning to Protect Natural Features & Agriculture

Nearly all land is zoned A-1 (General Agriculture) or RC (Resource Conservation) to preserve rural character and ensure natural features, such as trees, remain prominent. Large minimum lot sizes for single family residential contribute to rural, low-density, and natural resource-rich character, but lawn may replace previously wooded or agricultural areas. Public and private conservation areas are also permitted in A-1 and RC.

Local Wetlands Protection

Proposed development must demonstrate a plan to protect wetlands as part of the site plan review. Certain activities impacting the quality, size, or function are unlawful in any wetland without first obtaining a Wetlands Use Permit.

Open Space Community Cluster Developments

Requires clustering housing units to maximize continuous areas of open space and requires a permanently open space to promote the preservation of natural features such as mature woodlands, wetlands, floodplains, stream corridors, and special plant and animal habitats and agriculture.

OPPORTUNITIES

Expand Natural Features Setback

A natural features setback, the separation between development and a natural feature, is required within RC zoning. Currently, natural features are limited to wetlands, watercourses, or steep slopes. A setback for woodlands that meet certain criteria could help to preserve contiguous forest.

Adopt a "Woodlands Preservation Ordinance"

To safeguard woodland resources from unnecessary removal and to regulate their removal under special circumstances.

Strengthen Construction Protection Standards

Protect the critical root zone (CRZ), which varies by species and site conditions, from disturbance.

CHALLENGES

Mineral Extraction: Environmental Impact & Privacy Concerns

A special land use permit is required within RC and A-1 zoning districts. The Township recognizes these operations can pollute the environment, but State laws limit the Township's authority. When permitted, landscaping for privacy screening and noise reduction is required.

Lack of Jurisdiction for Street Trees

The majority of rights-of-way (ROW) are privately owned or under the jurisdiction of Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC). The WCRC's main goal is driver safety, which means prioritizing removal of trees and vegetation that pose a hazard to motor vehicles. A property owner needs a WCRC permit to plant a tree in the ROW.

Lack of Planning Capacity

No dedicated planning staff means most planning work is contracted out and makes implementing changes to land use policy and the Code of Ordinances more difficult.

Adopt Approved and Prohibited Species Lists

For new development, create tables of approved and prohibited tree species, and corresponding diameter at breast height (D.B.H.) size requirements, to ensure appropriate and desirable species are planted. Encourage residents to avoid planting prohibited species.

Utilize PDR for Woodland Preservation on Private Land

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) is a voluntary agreement that compensates property owners willing to accept a permanent deed restriction (through a conservation easement) on their land. While PDR is primarily used to protect farmland, it can also be applied to protect privately-owned natural features like woodlands from development.

WHAT CAN I DO?



SPEAK UP

Attend public meetings or serve as an elected official.



LEARN

Use this guide to review local ordinances and planning documents.



PROTECT YOUR LAND

Consider conserving your property!

See Resources on Back ►

Sharon Township Ordinance Overview

The table below summarizes applicable forestry and landscape standards included in your local ordinances compared to elements typically included in robust programs. This brief overview does not examine the quality of each element nor how well it functions in practice. A more detailed document was provided to local staff and/or elected officials to provide guidance for future regulatory updates.

	Code/Ordinance Element	Yes	No	Zoning Ordinance Location
Development	Tree Planting	●		Sec. 4.04(D)(2d); Sec. 17.03(A)(1); Sec. 17.07(B)
	Tree Preservation	●		Sec. 4.05(B)(2); Sec. 17.06(C)(1)
	Tree Removal/Maintenance	●		Sec. 17.03(A)(5,6)
	Tree Replacement	●		Sec. 17.07(C); Sec. 17.06(C)(2)
	Requires Landscape Plan, Inclusion of Trees and Vegetation in Site Plans	●		Sec. 17.03(A)
	Parking Lots: Tree Planting	●		Sec. 17.05(A)(1,2)
	Woodlands: Tree Preservation		●	
	Tree Requirements and Landscaping Standards: Greenbelts, Berms, Planting Screens, Fences, etc.	●		Sec. 17.04
General	Approved/Suggested Species List	●*		Sec. 17.06(B)
	Prohibited Species List	●*		Sec. 17.06(A)
	Plant Material Guidelines: Species, Size, Spacing		●	
	Promote Use of Native Species	●*		Sec. 17.06(B)

KEY

* = Ordinance partially fulfills criteria, but could be strengthened and improved.

Find Sharon Township's Code of Ordinances and Zoning Ordinances at sharontownship.org/ordinances.

What's a Tree Ordinance?

An ordinance is a law issued by a local government. Tree ordinances establish official policies for how a community wants to maintain its trees and establishes legal protection.

Example Types of Tree Ordinances

Street/Park Tree: Addresses planting, maintenance, and removal of trees within the ROW or parks. May include private trees if they impact public interest or pose a public hazard.

Tree/Woodland Protection: Conserves desirable trees, tree canopy, or historic trees on public and private property. May require a permit to remove, encroach upon, or prune protected trees.

Landscaping/Buffer: Establishes requirements, such as number, placement, and types of suitable trees. May require trees in parking lots or buffer strips to protect needs of adjacent property owners (noise and views) or water quality (riparian buffers).

RESOURCES

For more information, visit washtenawcd.org/communitytrees

- Community Maps
- Tree Ordinance Development
- Tree Board Information
- Tree Benefit Facts
- How to Plant a Tree
- And More!

