

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE II OF CHAPTER 328 IN TITLE 3 OF SUBPART B OF THE CODE OF ROCKDALE COUNTY, GEORGIA PROVIDING UPDATES TO THE ROCKDALE COUNTY LANDSCAPING AND TREE PROTECTION AND REPLACEMENT ORDINANCE.

WHEREAS, Chapter 328 of the Code of Rockdale County, Georgia regulates landscaping and tree protection and replacement within Rockdale County; and

WHEREAS, the Rockdale County Planning and Development Department analyzed the provisions of Article II and found a need for an amendment to the provisions; and

WHEREAS, following a review of those regulations, the Board of Commissioners finds that the following amendment is appropriate in order to advance public health, safety and welfare.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED that it is the intention of the Rockdale County Board of Commissioners and it hereby is ordained by the authority of same that the provisions of this Ordinance shall become and be made a part of the Code of Rockdale County, Georgia, and the sections of the code and this ordinance may be renumbered to accomplish that intention, and that Article II of Chapter 238 in Title 3 of Subpart B of the Code of Ordinances of Rockdale County, Georgia, hereby is amended as follows:

Section 328-16. Administration

- A. Remove “county forester” and replace with “Director of Stormwater Management or designee”

Sec. 328-18. Permit procedures; application and plan review.

- A. Remove “county forester” and replace with “Director of Stormwater Management or designee” in subsections (a) and (b).

Sec. 328-22. Tree protection standards.

- A. Remove “exceptional” and replace with “Specimen” in
 - 1. two (2) places in subsection (a)(1); and
 - 2. three (3) places in subsection (a)(2).
- B. Remove “county forester” and replace with “Director of Stormwater Management or designee” in
 - 1. subsection (a)(5); and
 - 2. subsection (a)(7).
- C. Create a subsection (a)(9) entitled “Specimen trees” with the following language:
 - a. Specimen trees shall be identified by the Director of Stormwater Management or designee and shall be located on the tree protection plan.

- b. Standards for the identification, preservation, and protection of specimen trees shall be as follows: Any tree in fair or better condition which equals or exceeds the following diameter sizes:
 1. Large hardwoods, i.e. oaks, hickories, yellow poplars, and similar species: Thirty (30) inches DBH.
 2. Large softwoods, e.g. pines, evergreens, and similar species: Thirty (30) inches DBH.
 3. Small trees, e.g. dogwoods, redbuds, sourwoods, and similar species: Ten (10) inches DBH.
- c. A tree in fair or better condition should meet the following minimum standards:
 1. A life expectancy of greater than fifteen (15) years.
 2. A relatively sound and solid trunk with no extensive decay or hollow, and less than twenty (20) percent radial trunk dieback.
 3. No major insect or pathological problem.
- d. A lesser-sized tree can be considered a specimen if:
 1. It is a rare or unusual species, or of historical significance.
 2. It is specifically used by a builder, developer, or design professional as a focal point in a project or landscape.
 3. It is a tree with Specimen aesthetic quality
- e. The Director of Stormwater Management or designee may identify and require the preservation of a tree stand if it contains one (1) or more specimen trees and the specimen trees are interlocked with other members of the stand in such a way as to imperil the specimen tree if other members of the stand were to be removed.
- f. It shall be prohibited to cut specimen trees existing on a tract of land that is the subject of a land disturbance permit, development permit or building permit without a special exception granted by the zoning board of appeals if removal of the specimen tree has not been approved by the county arborist.
- g. Any specimen tree removed from a parcel shall be replaced by one and five-tenths (1.5) times the equivalent inches (DBH) of replacement trees or existing trees in excess of the requirements of subsection (g), tree preservation and replacement requirements, using species with potentials for comparable size and quality at maturity.

Sec. 328-24. Requirements of single and two-family residential subdivision developments.

- A. Remove "county forester" and replace with "Director of Stormwater Management or designee" in
 1. subsection (b)(2); and
 2. subsection (b)(3); and

3. two (2) places in subsection (g).

Sec. 328-25. Requirements for other developments.

- A. Remove “county forester” and replace with “Director of Stormwater Management or designee” in two (2) places in subsection (g).

Sec. 328-26. Exceptional trees.

- A. Replace the title with “Specimen trees.”
- B. Replace the word “exceptional” with “Specimen” in two (2) places in subsection (a).
- C. Replace subsection (b) in its entirety and replace it with the following language:
 - (b) A Specimen Tree Survey Plan is required to be submitted to Director of Stormwater Management or designee for all development that does not meet exemptions listed in the ordinance prior to the submission of Specimen Tree Concept Plan and shall be prepared by a certified arborist, authorized registered professional or registered forester. In cases where there is phasing of a development, a Specimen Tree Survey Plan and Specimen Tree Concept Plan are required for the entire property boundaries prior to the Final Plat for the first phase. Any tree that meets the identification criteria for tree size and condition as described in this article shall be shown on the Specimen Tree Concept Plan. In general, the Specimen Tree Survey Plan shows where the existing specimen trees that meet the identification criteria for size are located, and the Specimen Tree Concept Plan shows where the existing specimen trees that meet the identification criteria for size and condition are located in relation to the preliminary plan design. For plan preparation guidelines for the Specimen Tree Survey and the Specimen Tree Concept Plan refer to the Administrative Guidelines.
- D. Modify subsection (c) by
 1. Remove “county forester” and replace with “Director of Stormwater Management or designee” in three (3) places; and
 2. Remove “county forester” and replace with “Director of Stormwater Management or designee” in subsections (1) and (2); and
 3. Remove “exceptional” and replace with “Specimen” in nine (9) places; and
 4. Change subsection to (e).
- E. Change subsection (d) to subsection (f).
- F. Create a new subsection (c) with the following language:
 - (a) Specimen Tree Identification Criteria.
 - (1) Tree Size: Tree must meet size criteria in number 1 and number 2 below tree must meet conditions i through vii.
 - i. Large Hardwood: 30-inch diameter or larger
 - ii. Large Softwood: 30-inch diameter or larger

- iii. Small Native Flowering: 10-inch diameter or larger (e.g. – Dogwood, Redbud, Sourwood)

(2) Condition.

- i. A life expectancy of greater than 15 years.
- ii. A sound and solid trunk with no extensive decay or hollow and less than 20 percent radial trunk dieback.
- iii. No more than one major and three minor dead limbs (hardwoods only).
- iv. No major insect problem.
- v. No major pathological problem (fungus, virus, etc.)
- vi. Exceptional quality.
- vii. Of historical significance.

G. Create a new subsection (d) with the following language:

Specimen Tree Preservation. In order to encourage protection of specimen trees and the incorporation of these trees into the design of projects, additional density credits shall be given for specimen trees that are successfully protected from damage up to and including the date a certificate of occupancy is first issued, or a final plat is first approved for the property. To obtain credit as a specimen tree, the tree must be protected in its natural state, free from damage within the critical root zone.

Sec. 328-27. Maintenance period for all developments.

- A. Remove “county forester” and replace with “Director of Stormwater Management or designee” in eleven (11) places throughout Sec. 328-27; and

Sec. 328-29. Alternative compliance.

- A. Replace title with “Tree Replacement Fund for Alternative compliance”; and
- B. Remove “county forester” and replace with “Director of Stormwater Management or designee” in three (3) places throughout Sec. 328-29.

Sec. 328-30. Inspections.

- A. Remove “county forester” and replace with “Director of Stormwater Management or designee” in four (4) places throughout Sec. 328-30.

Sec. 328-31. Remedial care of trees and trees save areas.

- A. Remove “county forester” and replace with “Director of Stormwater Management or designee”.

Sec. 328-35. Appeals of decisions of administrative officials.

- A. Remove “county forester” and replace with “Director of Stormwater Management or designee”.

Sec. 328-36. Administrative standards.

- A. Replace title with "Administrative Guidelines."; and
- B. Replace "standard" with "guidelines"; and
- C. Remove "county forester" and replace with "Director of Stormwater Management or designee".

Sec. 328-37. Timber harvesting.

- A. Remove "exceptional" and replace with "Specimen" in
 - 1. subsection (e)(3); and
 - 2. four (4) places in subsection (e)(4); and
 - 3. Remove "county forester" and replace with "Director of Stormwater Management or designee" in
 - a. subsection (e)(4); and
 - b. subsection (f); and
 - c. subsection (g).

That all ordinances or resolutions, or parts thereof, in conflict with this Ordinance are hereby repealed.

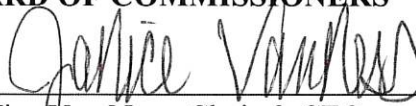
Should any court of competent jurisdiction declare any section of this ordinance invalid or unconstitutional, such declaration shall not affect the validity of the ordinance as a whole, or any part thereof, which is not specifically declared to be invalid or unconstitutional.

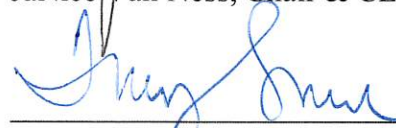
This Ordinance shall become effective upon adoption.

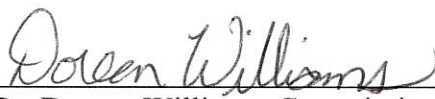
ADOPTED AND APPROVED THIS 9 DAY OF September, 2025

ROCKDALE COUNTY, GEORGIA

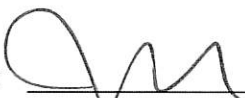
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS


JaNice Van Ness, Chair & CEO

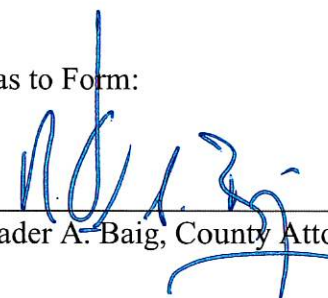

Tuwanya C. Smith, Commissioner Post I


Dr. Doreen Williams, Commissioner Post II

Attest:

By: 
Jennifer Rutledge, County Clerk

Approved as to Form:

By: 
M. Qader A. Baig, County Attorney

First Reading: 7/8/2025

Second Reading: 9/9/2025