

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2001**

**SESSION LAW 2001-191  
HOUSE BILL 910**

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF DURHAM AND THE TOWNS OF CARY, GARNER, MORRISVILLE, KNIGHTDALE, FUQUAY-VARINA, AND SPENCER TO LIMIT THE CLEAR-CUTTING OF TREES IN BUFFER ZONES PRIOR TO DEVELOPMENT AND ALLOW FOR THE PROTECTION OF SPECIMEN TREES DURING THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.(a)** A municipality may adopt ordinances to regulate the removal and preservation of existing trees and shrubs prior to development within a perimeter buffer zone of up to 65 feet along roadways and property boundaries adjacent to developed properties and up to 32 feet along property boundaries adjacent to undeveloped properties. All such buffer zones shall be measured from the outside boundary of any property, including property zoned for residential and nonresidential use. The purpose of such ordinances shall be to protect existing trees and shrubs for use as future buffers.

**SECTION 1.(b)** Ordinances adopted pursuant to this act shall be limited to situations where undeveloped property is planned or zoned for residential or nonresidential use in accordance with adopted municipal plans and zoning regulations. Such ordinances shall include reasonable provisions for access onto and within the subject property.

**SECTION 1.(c)** Notwithstanding any limitations contained in Section 1(a), a municipality may adopt ordinances to regulate the preservation and removal of significant specimen or "champion" trees on sites being planned for new development. Specific standards for identifying and designating such trees, including species and size, shall be incorporated as part of any such ordinance.

**SECTION 1.(d)** Any ordinance adopted pursuant to this act shall exclude normal forestry activities on property taxed under the present-use value standard or conducted pursuant to a forestry management plan prepared or approved by a forester registered pursuant to Chapter 89B of the General Statutes. However, for such properties, a municipality may deny a building permit or refuse to approve a site or subdivision plan for a period of five years following harvest if all or substantially all of the perimeter buffer trees which should have been protected were removed from the tract of land for which the permit or plan approval is sought.

**SECTION 2.** Before adopting an ordinance authorized by Section 1 of this act, the governing board of the municipality shall hold a public hearing on the proposed ordinance. Notice of the public hearing shall be given in accordance with G.S. 160A-364.

**SECTION 3.** Nothing in this act shall be construed to limit or be limited by any provisions of S.L. 2000-108 or any other existing laws or ordinances.

**SECTION 4.** This act shall apply only to the City of Durham and the Towns of Cary, Garner, Morrisville, Knightdale, Fuquay-Varina, and Spencer and to property located within the municipality's corporate limits and extraterritorial planning jurisdiction under Article 19 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes.

**SECTION 5.** This act is effective when it becomes law.  
In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 12<sup>th</sup> day of  
June, 2001.

s/ Beverly E. Perdue  
President of the Senate

s/ James B. Black  
Speaker of the House of Representatives