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afielding@gainesvilletimes.com

Hall, city to grow more arborists

Grant allows governments to train staff in tree care

Gainesville can now add "certified arborist" to the list of experts in its employee arsenal — with no hiring required.

Using a grant from the Georgia Forestry Commission, the city now will be able to train city and county staff members to become certified arborists. The certification will help both governments implement their tree ordinances and protect significant trees in the community, according to Gainesville's special projects manager, Jessica Tullar.

Until now, neither Gainesville or Hall County government has had a certified arborist on staff — a weakness identified last year in a forestry management plan for the county.

The plan, called the Urban and Community Forestry Management Plan, that was unveiled last year for Gainesville and Hall County suggested that both governments find a way to employ or contract a certified arborist to guide tree planting and protection in the area.

However, the city did not have enough tree-related work to warrant a full-time arborist, Tullar said.

The grant from the Georgia Forestry Commission allows the city and county to have several staff members go through arborist training, Tullar said. The city likely will train employees who work in the Planning, Public Works, Public Utilities and Parks and Recreation departments — all who "are involved in critical decisions affecting our community forests," according to a news release.

With the training, Planning staff could help developers engineer their plans in a tree-friendly way, Tullar said.

"Ideally, those involved in the plan-review process would be able to have this training ... to go out on site (with a developer)... and we would be better equipped with the knowledge and the know-how to perhaps help developers ... save larger healthy trees," Tullar said.

Although the details of the city's first training are not yet certain, Tullar said the city hopes to begin its first training course in January.

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