

Talking Trees

Wisconsin Dells has earned Tree City status, and many residents have been wondering what this will mean for city residents. The Tree Board hopes to raise public awareness of the benefits, care, and ordinances pertaining to our city trees by writing this column for publication in this newspaper as well as on the City's Public Works website. Consider these reasons to appreciate our city's trees:

- A study of Chicago's urban forest found that increasing tree cover by 10% (3 additional trees per building) would reduce total heating and cooling energy use by up to 10%.
- Trees improve air quality as leaves filter and remove dust and other particulates. A single tree stores on average 13 pounds of carbon annually. One acre of trees generates enough oxygen each day for 18 people.
- Trees can intercept between 7-22% of storm water runoff from impermeable surfaces. Leaf and branch surfaces intercept and store rainfall, reducing runoff volume. Roots increase the rate at which rainfall infiltrates soil, and tree canopies reduce soil erosion and diffuse the volume of water running in storm sewers during rain events.
- The shade from street trees can help offset pavement costs by protecting asphalt from UV radiation. Streets with little or no shade need to be repaved twice as often as those with tree cover.
- Trees reduce noise pollution by acting as absorbent sound barriers.
- Studies have shown that the calming and healing effect of trees on hospital patients and employees who can see trees through their windows. Certainly this holds true for residents who enjoy seeing trees in their yards.
- Healthy, attractive trees improve curb appeal of real estate—buyers willing to pay 3-7% more for property with well-maintained trees than property with few or no trees.
- Promotes sales in business districts:
A study by University of Washington social scientist Kathleen Wolf on the role of trees in revitalizing business districts across the country shows that trees attract business and tourists. People linger and shop longer along tree-lined streets. She also found that people believed that merchants in a heavily treed district would be more knowledgeable and helpful than those in an area without trees. They felt product quality was higher in areas surrounded by trees and were willing to pay more for those products. According to Wolf, people claim that they are willing to spend 9% more on products in small towns and 12% more in large cities for identical products in places that have trees versus those that don't.

Information from The forest where we live: growing a legacy by USDA Forest Service, 2006,