



Davenport, Iowa Tree Planting Program

“The City is extremely proud and appreciative of the vital partnership between our Forestry Division and Greenway Habitat to color our city green.”

-Edwin G. Winborn, Mayor, Davenport, Iowa



Project Overview

The City of Davenport conducted a tree inventory in the early 1980s and found it was in decline, largely due to disease and neglect. In response, the City initiated the Davenport Tree Planting Program, an exemplary public-private partnership with a committed, long-term volunteer advocate base and a dedicated staff. A comprehensive City-wide initiative, this program has brought the benefits of trees to residential, business, industrial and park areas. The Tree Program organizes both a spring and fall planting, and has planted over 8,500 trees since 1992. In addition, it has created a tree-planting system that addresses the impact of new development areas within the City. By coordinating human, political, and financial resources, the Tree Planting Program has been able to make great strides towards its goal of restocking Davenport's urban forest by the year 2010.

Project at a Glance

Project Partners: The City of Davenport Public Works Department – Forestry Division; Greenway Habitat

Location: Davenport, Iowa

Award Category: Small-city runner-up

Timeframe: 1992 - 2005
(Ongoing program)

Size and Scope: City-wide project to stock the urban forest; over 8,500 trees planted throughout the city

Total Cost of Project: \$2,000,000

Outstanding Accomplishments

- More than 8,500 trees planted.
- Over 13 years of volunteer involvement, maintaining over 500 trees a year.
- Beautification of parks and other civic spaces.
- Systematic inventory of urban trees.
- Enactment of City Forestry Capital Improvement Fund.
- Extensive resident education on the benefits and maintenance of trees.
- Highly diverse sources of funding and strong fundraising efforts.
- Long-term public/private partnership.
- Innovative Reforestation Fee to fund plantings in new subdivisions.

Davenport Trees Program - Project Description

Pre-Existing Conditions

In the early 1980s, the City of Davenport inventoried its urban forest and found that it was dwindling. This was due in large part to tree deaths associated with Dutch Elm disease and trees that had been neglected and needed to be cut, but for which no replacement funds existed. The inventory revealed that the urban forest was less than half stocked with trees. Of the 30,000 available street tree planting sites, only half were planted (roughly 15,000 trees). As long-time tree stewards, City officials mobilized significant efforts and resources to set goals and restock the urban forest.



Project Goals

- Identify locations where trees are desired, such as parks, streets, and other public areas.
- Develop specifications and standards for tree planting.
- Create a mechanism for raising private funds and applying for grants for tree planting activities.
- Increase the City Forestry budget to include funds for tree planting.
- Enact a fee that would raise funds for tree planting in new subdivisions.
- Ensure that all 30,000 curbside planting sites are planted and provide replacement trees as needed.

Project Components

The Trees Program has planted trees in Davenport at a city-wide level, averaging 650 new trees per year over the last thirteen years. Targeted areas include the downtown business district, inner city neighborhoods, industrial sites, business corridors, older established neighborhoods, newly developed residential neighborhoods, and 33 parks that comprise over 2,000 acres. In addition to the City staff, trees are planted and maintained by the volunteers of Greenway Habitat, a local non-profit tree planting organization. The Tree Program has also encouraged tree-friendly City policies, tree codes, and building codes. The Reforestation Fee is a unique policy that collects a fee from developers so that funds are available to plant trees as new subdivisions are built. The City charges \$150 per 50 feet of qualified street frontage. These funds are then used to plant the area when the site is ready. The Tree Program tries to use native species wherever applicable. Trees planted are of significant size and are therefore likely to survive. Deciduous trees are 1.5 inches in caliper and conifers are 5-7 feet tall.



Outreach: This initiative is unique in the way it has maximized the benefits of public/private collaboration. Greenway Habitat is a volunteer organization founded in 1992 with the goal of fully stocking the urban forest. It brings a



diverse set of dedicated and experienced volunteer tree advocates to the table and fosters trust throughout its extensive volunteer network. The City Forestry Division's involvement allows for greater impact on policy and regulations, as well as an institutionalized and stable source of knowledge, support, and funding. In addition, these players have elicited the support of local homebuilders associations and developers who work within the city. In an attempt to reach out to the community at large concerning the benefits of trees, the City Arborist has given a number of special presentations to neighborhood groups on the tree planting program.

Funding

Initially, funds for this initiative were primarily from individual donations. Greenway Habitat was very aggressive in soliciting donations during the early years of this initiative and raised more than \$100,000 annually from individuals. Other funders include the local energy company and the Riverboat Development Authority. The City and Greenway Habitat have also acquired grants from the US Forest Service, the State of Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and the State Department of Transportation. Since 2000, the City of Davenport has budgeted funds into a Forestry Capital Improvement account and money has been collected from the Reforestation Fee program for the Trees Program.



Davenport Tree Program - Benefits

Community and Economic Benefits

Economic Vitality: Plantings in the business districts have beautified those areas and are believed to have increased commerce and improved the economic vitality of the districts.

Safety: It has been observed that there is greater civic use of and less littering in areas of the City where trees have been planted and maintained.

Access to Green Space for Low Income Residents: This project has worked to reforest parks, which are open to all citizens. Plantings along nature trails and park properties are beautiful and help define the play and open areas. In addition, the reforestation fee has contributed to tree plantings in all new subdivisions, regardless of economic status.

Real Estate Value: Anecdotal evidence from local realtors indicates that houses are selling faster in well planted



Environmental Benefits

The City of Davenport has relied on U.S. Forest Service research as well as the experience of other communities to identify the types of environmental benefits that accrue from the tree planting program. These include carbon dioxide sequestration, energy-use reduction, and stormwater mitigation. The City's Forestry Division looks forward to being able to more specifically quantify these benefits in their community in the future when there is sufficient support.



neighborhoods and that properties are well maintained in areas where trees have been planted.

Resident Involvement and Satisfaction: The Forestry Division has received numerous phone calls from citizens who support the program and are interested in having plantings done in their neighborhood because of the positive impacts trees have had in other neighborhoods.

Employment: Because of the success of this program and the increased need for maintenance staff, the Forestry Division has increased its staff by four employees and hopes to continue adding jobs to keep up with the growing maintenance demand.

Education: Each Arbor Day the program features a planting at a school and educates students about trees and environmental stewardship. When trees

are planted in a residential neighborhood, the homeowners are notified of the planting and educated about watering responsibilities. There have also been a number of media releases detailing the Program and the importance of trees; and, the City's website and cable station have featured the program. Events such as the annual Arbor Day celebration have also helped spread the word through the community.





CASE STUDY:
Award of Excellence for Community Trees



Davenport Tree Program - Looking Ahead

Project Evaluation

While there are no formal evaluation methods in place, the Tree Program uses informal feedback from residents in the community as a gauge of the success of their program. In addition, the Tree Program hopes in the future to be able to more rigorously quantify the environmental, economic, and community benefits that result from their efforts.

Project Maintenance

In 2000, the Forestry Capital Improvement Fund was enacted with the goal of institutionalizing the Program's funding into the City's budget, and has since provided a stable source of funding for this program. In addition, the Reforestation Fee was enacted which secures long-term funding from developers of new sub-divisions to provide trees for new development projects. Volunteers of Greenway habitat maintain the trees planted through this program by pruning more than 500 trees annually.

Challenges Faced

As with many tree related programs, Davenport experienced challenges in creating city policies and regulations that are compatible with tree planting and garnering the resources necessary to maintain and expand this program. In an effort to encourage citizens to voluntarily plant trees on their property, the City instituted a policy that provided free yard waste disposal days in the fall, enabling people to dispose of the waste that is generated from the trees without having to pay for it. In addition, engineering specifications for sidewalks and curbs in new subdivisions needed to be, and were, changed to allow for adequate tree planting space. It was necessary to fight for an increase in the City's budget to fund the planting of trees as

well as an increase the city forestry staff in order to maintain the growing population of trees. This funding was achieved by emphasizing the importance of planting and maintaining trees to the environment, public health, and safety.

Innovation Applied

The Davenport, Iowa Tree Planting Program is considered a model of a public/private partnership that has had long-term success and stability. The Tree Program is currently within five years of accomplishing its lofty goal of reforesting the city's urban forest. Davenport is also unique in that it is the first city in Iowa, and one of the few cities in the United States, to enact a Reforestation Fee to provide funds for planting in new development areas.



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