

A New Plan for Our Old Trees

As we head into the long, hot days of summer, one of the most recognized benefits of our cherished tree canopy becomes especially appreciated—shade! We all know how enjoyable it is to walk beneath the shady limbs of our street trees, even on a hot summer day. Amazingly, the difference in temperature between the area beneath a large shade tree and an exposed asphalt road can be as much as 30 degrees! Clearly, these trees help significantly in cooling us and our houses. Studies have estimated that a large tree can reduce cooling costs for buildings by as much as 50%. And that's just one of the many benefits that Dilworth's trees provide. The list of what trees do for us is pretty impressive. They:

- Reduce Stormwater Runoff and Decrease Flooding
--\$1.87 Billion in Annual Savings for Mecklenburg County
- Remove Pollutants from the Air
--Mecklenburg is the 12th worst county in the country for ozone
- Improve Water Quality
- Reduce Noise Pollution
- Extend the Life of Roads and Paved Surfaces
- Reduce Vehicle Speeding and Increase Traffic Safety
- Increase Occupancy Rates for Apartments and Offices
- Provide Habitat for Wildlife
- Sequester Carbon
- Reduce Heat Island Effects
- Increase Worker Productivity
- Decrease Number of Calls to the Police and Help Reduce Crime
- Improve Sense of Well-Being
- Increase Property Values

And one of the easiest to recognize—our street trees help create the historic “look” that Dilworth is known for. Without a doubt, the uniform plantings of mature trees—mostly willow oaks—that line our roads are a distinguishing feature of our neighborhood. Sadly, many of these trees are nearing the end of their lives, and it is time to begin an aggressive tree-replanting program. Although several hundred trees were planted earlier this spring, most were small ornamental trees, not the large shade trees that are necessary to maintain the mature tree canopy “look” that is such a part of this historic neighborhood.

Therefore, the DCDA has been working with the city to develop a tree master plan for Dilworth. This plan will identify how we can transition from what we have now (a canopy that is mostly one variety of tree, and mostly planted at the same time) to what we need (a canopy that has several different varieties of trees, and of varying ages.) This type of canopy is healthier, and can be managed in perpetuity—so that Dilworth will continue to have a canopy of large trees which will continue to provide us with the wide range of benefits described above.

This does not mean that we have to lose the historic “look” of our street trees, however. This is the goal of the tree master plan—to put together a blueprint for future planting efforts that will maintain both the appearance and the health of our street trees. And we want your involvement in this process! A first draft of the master plan is now being developed, and the DCDA will be organizing several workshops over the summer to gather as many suggestions and recommendations from neighborhood residents as possible. To participate in an online survey, please go to www.dilworthonline.org. The preliminary plan will be posted there as well—please

take a look and give us your feedback. If you have questions or would like to get more directly involved in this process, please contact Debra Glennon at debeby@yahoo.com or Betsy Turner at bturner20@carolina.rr.com.

This master plan will serve as the guideline for all future city street tree planting efforts in Dilworth, so please help in making it the best it can be!

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