



**Summary
GreenPrint Committee**

Date: Tuesday, July 21, 2009 **11:00 am** **Location:** **Council Conference Room 391**

Committee Members Present: **Nevitt, Chair; Linkhart, Vice-Chair; Lehmann**

Committee Members Absent: **Brown**

Other Council Present: **Robb**

Agenda: 1. Denver's Tree Canopy

1. Denver's Tree Canopy and "The Mile-High Million": Progress, Problems, & Plans.

Summary of Discussion

Sara Davis and Sara Barber, Parks & Recreation, discussed the City's efforts to evaluate and improve the tree canopy in the metro region. The following points were made:

- A 2001 canopy assessment determined that there is a 6% tree cover in the metro region--much less than the desired 20%
- In 2006, Mayor Hickenlooper launched the regional "Mile-High Million" Initiative—under the auspices Greenprint Denver--with the goal of planting and stewarding one million new trees by 2025
- Day-to-day operations are led by two Project Coordinators, housed within the Dept. of Parks & Recreation with oversight provided by the Deputy Manager of Parks and Planning, Director of Greenprint Denver, and an Advisory Council comprised of representatives from federal, state and local government, business, and the philanthropic community, and non-profit partners
- Current funding for the Initiative comes primarily through the support of Suncor Energy which contributed \$150,000 to the Initiative in 2007, followed by a subsequent agreement with the City & County of Denver committing to contribute \$1,000,000 over five years.
- To date, 173,624 trees have been planted through a variety of events ranging from regional to neighborhood-based plantings; major tree planting events have been held in coordination with the Democratic National Convention last summer, sports partners like the Rockies baseball club, and other groups
- The rationale for improving the regional tree canopy is that the increased impervious surface in the region over the past 50 years has increased temperatures, contributed to ozone formation and evaporative emissions that comprises smog and other pollutants,

increased energy consumption for cooling and heating, and increased storm water runoff, flooding events and contributed to poor water quality

- Conversely, many of the following benefits of urban trees are quantifiable:
 - Reduced energy consumption
 - Reduced summer air temperature of 5° to 10° F
 - Improved air quality
 - Improved water quality
 - Increased property value
 - Increased life span of paving surfaces
 - Increase business revenue
 - Traffic calming effect
 - More walkable streets
- Using the Street Tree Analysis Tool for Urban-Forest Managers—a peer-reviewed software from the US Forest Service and other professional arborist groups—trained volunteers inventoried a randomly-selected 1.5% of Denver's street segments and analyzed tree structure (species composition, age distribution, canopy cover); function (environmental and aesthetic benefits)' and value (annual monetary value of benefits and costs)
- The analysis determined that there are 355,678 street trees ($\pm 18,945$) and 6,477 acres of canopy cover in Denver with a value of \$38,838,202 in cumulative annual benefits ($\pm 2,053,966$) including air and water quality and storm water benefits, reduced energy consumption, increased property values, reduced carbon emissions, and other cost benefits.
- Future goals for the Initiative include developing a regional school program, conducting a planting event in each partner municipality, developing a regional canopy coverage compact, increasing green industry participation and individual tree registration, organizational development, developing fundraising and marketing plans, and seeking stimulus funding.

Councilman Nevitt pointed out that the cost benefits for this program argue for public investment. He questioned the calculation of the temperature increase. (Subsequently staff provided the correct calculations: i.e. since 1951, each decade has seen a .5° C (.9° F) rise in temperatures due to the urban heat island effect in the metro region, for a total 2.5° C (4.5° F) rise in temperature.) Councilwoman Lehmann suggested that the program work with staff who are developing other initiatives at Denver Public Schools. She also pointed out that the City does support urban trees via other initiatives, such as streetscaping and forestry's annual tree replacement program.

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