Austin Community Trees (ACT)

A volunteer-based tree planting program

Program Description

- Tree planting in those neighborhoods with an adopted neighborhood plan began March, 2006
- Plant trees on private property: front or side yard (if on corner lot) to shade street and/or sidewalk
- Property owners responsible for tree maintenance for two years

Program Criteria

- Tree canopy below 40% in neighborhood planning area: <u>North Lamar has 21% canopy</u>
- A good neighborhood entity (i.e. a neighborhood planning contact team or umbrella organization)
- Sufficient number of volunteers for pre-planning, organizing and the tree planting event

Program History

- Austin Energy's "Urban Heat Island Initiative" fund
- Heat Island Effect: can increase temperatures from 2-8 degrees higher in an urban environment
- $50,000 available since 2005 for a pilot project to increase tree canopy in neighborhood planning areas

Program History con't

• First event: March 2006, Central East Austin
  Neighborhood, planted 200 trees.

• Second event: November, 2006 Crestview/Wooten
  Neighborhood, planted 600 trees.

•Third event: November, 2007 Old West Austin
  Neighborhood, planted 200 trees

• Fourth event: November 2008 Rosewood Neighborhood

Benefits from trees

• We need to consider trees as part of a
  community's infrastructure just as we do
  utility lines, water and sewage treatment
  plants and roads

• Trees can cool neighborhoods by 3-6
  degrees if planted to shade areas that
  absorb heat such as streets, sidewalks
  and parking lots

Benefits con't

- Trees have economic value: properties with trees sell faster than those without;
- Trees can improve air quality by absorbing carbon dioxide and other harmful pollutants.
- Trees save money on heating and cooling.
- Business districts with trees are more prosperous than those without trees.

Benefits con't

- Homes with trees and landscaping are worth up to 15% more than those without.
- Tree planting programs help build sense of community and well-being.
- Tree canopy has potential of reducing runoff by 7-12 percent and can abate storm water costs.

Trees and Neighborhood Planning

Integrating the urban forest into the neighborhood planning process

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Trees and Neighborhood Planning

- With this round of neighborhood plans we are integrating a tree component into the planning process
- This program evolved from a mandate from the City Manager's office as trees are considered to be infrastructure and therefore protected and maintained.
- Some of the following areas will be addressed as we plan future neighborhoods:

Trees and Neighborhood Planning

- Characteristics:
  - types, quantities of trees
  - historical nature of the urban forest
  - trees on residential streets
  - trees on commercial roadways
- Issues:
  - aging/diseased trees needing replacement
  - local conditions affecting neighborhood forest

Trees and Neighborhood Planning

- Goals, objectives, recommendations (examples)
  - Where should more trees be planted?
  - Where are the priorities in the public right of way?
  - Are there any heritage trees or large groves of trees?

Trees and Neighborhood Planning

- What "look" does the neighborhood want?

- What educational information would be helpful to the neighborhood?

- What are the benchmarks to determine the health of the neighborhood forest?

Examples of trees in ACT

- Usually offer a choice of 5 large trees such as Live Oak and Chinquapin Oak and 3 small trees such as Texas Mountain Laurel and the Texas Redbud.
- Smaller trees which do not grow more than 25 feet are planted under power lines.
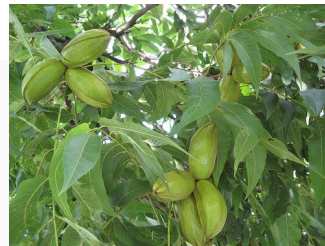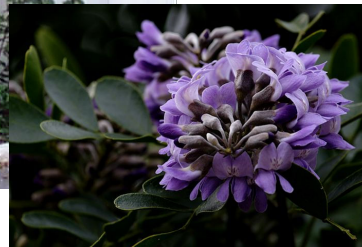- Normally two trees per yard.

Live Oak

Chinquapin Oak

Chinquapin Oak

Burr Oak

Pecan

Cedar Elm

Texas Mountain Laurel

Desert Willow

Texas Redbud