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City committed to replacing trees

- by [Robert Stuart](#)
- on July 9, 2015
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Commissioner Robert Stuart

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As we look around our City, there are many factors that make it special... and make it ours. One of those dynamics is our tree canopy. When I look in my mind's eye as to what constitutes the perfect street, one aspect that never changes is that the road is lined by a gorgeous tree canopy.

And tree benefits are not just aesthetic; did you know that according to the Center for Urban Forest Research:

- 1 million trees = \$3.5 million in annual stormwater runoff costs
- 1 million trees = \$10 million in annual energy savings
- 1 front yard tree = 1% increase in home sale price

With these statistics and the perfect street picture in my head, I was excited to learn during my last Parks briefing that the City planted 88 trees through our street tree program during the month of May... our average is 15.

While I think many of our residents have heard of this program, I think it is worth mentioning again. Our City’s Parks Division has two tree planting programs. The City’s “Trees in the Parkway” offers a tree to any City property owner to be planted in their right-of-way, free of charge. The owner must agree to water, feed and care for the tree until established. Following establishment, the City will be responsible for trimming and maintaining the tree.

The second program, “Trees to a Good Home” allows neighborhood groups to order 15 or more trees at our City wholesale cost and receive City assistance to help plant them on private property. Once planted, the trees are the full responsibility of the property owner.

Another beautification effort that is available to groups in our City is our “Green Up Orlando” program. Established in 1985, this program allows the City to partner with civic organizations, schools, faith based organizations, scout troops, neighborhood associations and families to plant trees and shrubs, clean up or beautify common areas around our City. The City provides all of the materials and supervision while the organization provides “sweat equity” in the form of volunteers willing to make a difference. Some of my favorite times as a commissioner have been participating in a community “Green Up.” For information on all of these efforts, visit cityoforlando.net/parks.

As I think about trees, I can’t help but mention the hot topic that has been on all of our minds during the past few months—the State of Florida’s I-4 Ultimate Project. Growing up on Gerda Terrace in College Park, I still remember the headaches that the original construction caused for my parents and their neighbors. One of the biggest concerns was losing so much foliage during the process. Here we are again at that same crossroads, with many of us heartsick watching healthy trees being removed to make way for progress.

[I-4-Ultimate Landscaping Handout](#)

In the College Park area, the need for tree removal is not only for the expansion of the interstate itself, but for the underground exfiltration system that is being constructed. At one of our recent College Park Rotary meetings, the Public Information Officer for the project, David Parks, gave a presentation that included information about the system. He told us that the exfiltration system protects the environment by collecting stormwater runoff and helps ensure the water is clean. The system also provides flood control storage. Required water quality treatment and storage cannot be provided without this system, and it is the only type of system that will work in College Park where available right-of-way space is limited. Some trees must be removed to install the new exfiltration system. While the system will be more aesthetically pleasing than open stormwater ponds, trees cannot be replanted in its footprint since tree roots would, over time, adversely impact its performance and design. The I-4 Ultimate project will also provide an opportunity for enhancement to Lake Ivanhoe for a more natural shoreline.

[I4 Ultimate Exfiltration Handout](#)

One thing that they didn’t have back when my parents and many in our community lived through this the first time, was guidelines that mandate a certain percentage of the project budget must be spent on landscaping and design. So while the exfiltration area won’t be tree-covered, the project does include the planting of more than 14,500 new trees, however, landscaping can’t be done until later phases of the project.

For more information, visit the Florida Department of Transportation’s I-4 website at i4ultimate.com.

Thanks for your support of our Great City, and I encourage you to get out there this summer and plant a tree!

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As I listened, last month, to the Project DTO committee present their vision for our Downtown core, it stood out to me how much our parks and green spaces mean to our residents and how much they serve to define our City. With that in mind, I wanted to tell you about a few changes [...]



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by [Robert Stuart](#)

At last month’s ribbon cutting ceremony for the State’s Fallen Firefighter Memorial at the State Capitol Courtyard in Tallahassee, Florida Chief Financial Officer and State Fire Marshal Jeff Atwater said, “Firefighting isn’t just what you do. It’s who you are.” For Roderick Williams, who officially begins his tenure as the City of Orlando’s 19th Fire Chief this [...]



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