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ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES *Newsletter*

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS - ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



Arbor Day 2009

Planting the Seeds of
Tomorrow Today

Department of Public Works
Environmental Services
Communications
Committee Members

Preston Cole
David Sivyer
Wanda Booker
Cecilia Gilbert
Ronald Melanz
Shannon Davis
Tamara Schneider
Marvece Sandles
Jeffrey Kluslow
Najjar Abdullah



Why are these children hugging a rope? See Page 3



Contact Information: (414) 286-CITY (2489)

Room 619 Zeidler Municipal Building • 841 N. Broadway • Milwaukee, WI 53202

SUSTAINABLE BOULEVARDS – Milwaukee’s Strategic Boulevard Plan

The City of Milwaukee has 120 miles of irrigated and landscaped boulevards that represent a long-term investment in public infrastructure that is rare in major American cities. Many cities have landscaped boulevards in their downtown areas; however few are as extensive and well developed as Milwaukee’s.

Milwaukee’s proud heritage of landscaped boulevards dates back to the 1920’s and expanded as the City grew in the 1950’s and 1960’s.

The City’s Forestry Section has been and continues to be the steward of the boulevard system. Forestry designed the system based on a customer service philosophy responsive to residents and adjacent property owners. The result is a visually striking boulevard system that is popular with the community. At the height of its glory, Milwaukee’s boulevards resembled a roadside botanical garden boasting 475 acres of well manicured turf, over 3,000 stunning annual beds, and thousands of shrubs and trees that required a seasonal workforce of 120 employees to maintain.

While of collective importance to the community, Milwaukee’s boulevard system faces ever greater challenges. The customer request service philosophy that fueled rapid growth of landscaped boulevards during the mid 20th century could not be sustained under the fiscal constraints of the 21st century. Many of the landscape beds added at the request of residents, or by staff in attempt to conceal the base of light poles, irrigation vacuum breakers, and other street infrastructure, were small and out of scale with the boulevard and consequently added little value. Nevertheless, these low impact beds still required multiple maintenance visits annually to plant, water, weed, edge and mulch. Forestry recognized that for the boulevard system to survive, significant restructuring would be necessary.

To ensure its future, Forestry developed a thoughtful and deliberative plan based in part on recommendations from community representatives and landscape professionals. The plan provides for the long-term growth of the boulevard system based on sound design principles and the sustainability of resources.

The plan also recognized that tough choices were necessary in today’s climate of competing priorities and tight resources. Forestry developed ***Sustainable Boulevards***, Milwaukee’s Strategic Boulevard Plan.



95th & Bluemound - In Process

Sustainable Boulevards calls for:

- Removal of approximately 1,800 low-impact flower beds to be replaced with grass and trees
- The addition of Signature landscape beds at approximately 300 designated locations throughout the city
- Planting of approximately 4,500 shade trees on boulevards to increase tree canopy; and
- Conversion to an automated drip irrigation system to save water and operating costs

Boulevards (continued on page 4)

Career Day

This Arbor Day, Rich Ladell and I went to the Silver Spring Elementary School to plant a tree. During this event, we also did a tree climbing demonstration and took a few teachers up in the lift truck. The students and teachers enjoyed the presentation so much that they invited us back for Career Day.

On May 6th, we returned to the school and were greeted warmly. Throughout the day, we visited 3 classrooms, and explained what an arborist is and what we do. We also spoke of the importance of trees to the world and why taking care of them is so critical. Rich and I made sure to stress the importance of having good reading and math skills, which help arborists further their skills through the reading of industry publications and to do calculations for pesticide applications. The classes were very interested and had many great questions.

Once again we brought our climbing gear and other pertinent tools. Although students were given the opportunity to try on earmuffs and hold a bull rope, they were most impressed and excited by the chainsaws. Even the fireman and the mail lady that were there to do career day speeches, seemed interested in what we did.

Overall, it was a great day. I hope that next year we have as much fun with the next school as we did here.

Tammy Spitzer



Future Arborists? Tammy and Rich preach the Forestry gospel.

Boulevards (continued from page 2)

Sustainable Boulevards identifies three distinct types of boulevards; Gateway, Historic/Landmark, and Connecting boulevards. Gateway boulevards occur at entry points to the city and within the city limits at prominent areas such as the central business district. As the name implies, Historic/Landmark boulevards occur in designated historic areas and at significant landmarks. Connector boulevards support the majority of 4,500 new shade trees to be added to the boulevards.

The hallmark of Sustainable Boulevards is the striking large signature landscape beds that are being installed at key focal points throughout the city. Signature beds average 1,200 square feet in size and include natural stone elements such as boulders, Lannon stone (limestone quarried from Lannon, WI), or recycled granite street pavers, massed perennials (maximum of 3 species for ease of maintenance), flowering shrubs, ornamental trees, and annuals strategically placed at the noses or along the borders of the bed for season long interest. Signature beds also include modern drip irrigation systems to conserve water and reduce operating costs.

Sustainable Boulevards will take three years to complete. The first phase, completed in 2008, removed approximately 600 low-impact landscape beds along 70 miles of boulevard and added 103 new signature beds at strategic locations. The remaining two phases will be completed in 2009/10, respectively. The City's budget allocation of 1.5 million to construct the new signature beds is leveraged by Milwaukee's municipal nursery, which grows most of the plants required to support Sustainable Boulevards at a substantial savings over comparable wholesale purchase.



95th & Bluemound - Finished

So what makes *Sustainable Boulevards* sustainable?

- **Low maintenance plant composition and simplistic design.** Simplistic designs utilizing perennials, flowering shrubs, and ornamental trees and only limited annuals in Signature Beds will reduce maintenance frequencies.
- **Fewer, but larger landscape beds.** The strategic placement of larger signature beds near key intersections, commerce centers, landmarks, and gateways to the city will enable the beds to be serviced more efficiently than the smaller widely scattered beds they replace.
- **Water conserving automated irrigation.** *Sustainable Boulevards* replaces Milwaukee's manual overhead irrigation system with a sophisticated automated drip irrigation system. Automation of the irrigation system represents a significant savings in labor costs.

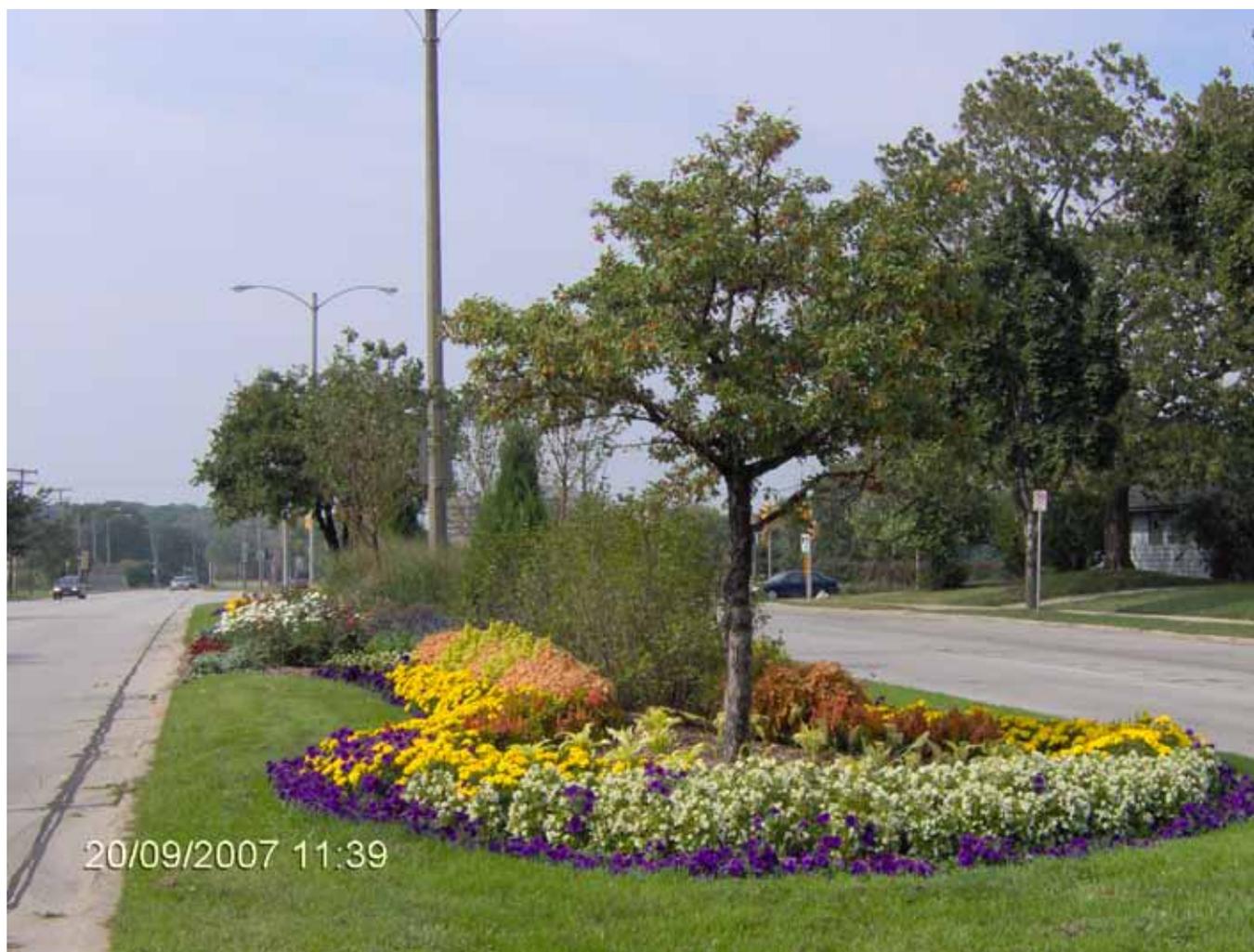
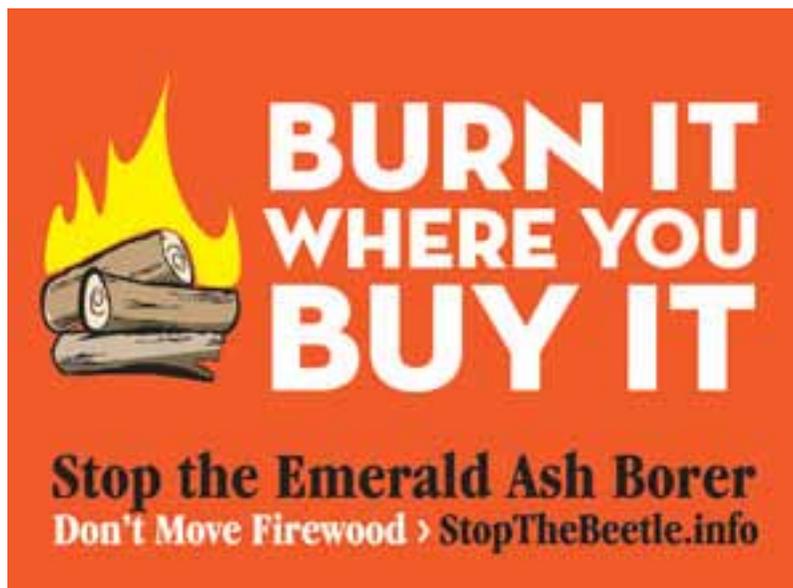
Boulevards (continued on page 5)

Boulevards (continued from page 4)

- **Replacement of 1,800 annual beds with turf and shade trees.** Additional mowing acreage represents a relatively low incremental maintenance cost. Once established, the new shade trees will be integrated into the city's 5-year pruning cycle.

These combined efficiencies will enable the City to reduce its seasonal workforce by 18 employees once *Sustainable Boulevards* is fully complete, at a savings of approximately \$160,000 annually, and ensure the longevity of Milwaukee's boulevard system for years to come.

David Sivyer





Environmental Services will soon reduce its average age a bit as a crew of 16 to 19 year olds kick off Mayor Tom Barrett's "earn & learn" summer youth internship program. Youth assigned to ES serve as clean and green ambassadors and help clean up and beautify city boulevards, vacant lots and other public spaces.

The goal of "earn & learn" is to provide employment opportunities in the city for high school youth and young adults, exposing them to the working world and improving workforce preparedness. The program runs from June 22 – August 14.

Last year ES facilitated a hands-on training session at Washington Park for over 30 interns. Najjar Abdullah did a climbing demonstration, Wanda Booker talked about the benefits of working for the City and Bobbi Kubish from UW-Stevens Point encouraged students to explore "green" careers. We welcome the youth aboard and hope it will be a rewarding and enriching summer experience for all!

Wanda Booker



Najjar Abdullah entertains the troops

WELLNESS AWARENESS

Proposed furloughs, proposed layoffs, talk of privatization. These issues very often create stress, which impacts our health and our relationships. Many employees of ES - Sanitation practice some type of wellness routine in attempts of continued physical and mental health.

Central district manager Gary Colorez has experienced success through his routine of over 40 years in martial arts. Gary has added exercise and diet changes recently. "I get up 2 hours before work, stretch, do 5 miles on my Nordic Track ski machine and warm up movements, 1000 steps on a hydraulic stepper and calisthenics. For breakfast, 1 glass of water, a bowl of cereal with fruit and mostly during the day I eat just fruit. I repeat the same exercise routine in the evening. With this routine I have lost 80 pounds in 5 months. My goal is to attain the same body I had when I was 37 years old"

Gary has also stated, "I've noticed other employees at Central east working on wellness routines." One such group practiced the 50 Million pound Challenge made popular by Dr. Ian Smith in partnership with State Farm Insurance. The 50 Million Pound Challenge is an endeavor to promote healthier lives and more nutritious diets. The group followed the meal plans for three months and exercised together for three months. For more Information on the 50 Million Pound Challenge go to www.50millionpoundchallenge.com and register online for meal plans and exercise plans as well as other health tips. Become active in the wellness of yourself. Wellness is not just for our physical health, but for our minds and spirit too.

Shannon Davis



Who in ES is the photo artist responsible for this?
Find out in the next issue.

Transforming School Playgrounds One Tree at a Time

Children using green space to run and play or relishing in the shade of a tree and teachers using the outdoors as the classroom are what *Green Schools* is all about. *Green Schools* is an extension of an award-winning program to create playable green space for children by replacing portions of asphalt playgrounds with trees and turf. *Green Schools* retrofitted 10 Milwaukee Public Schools playgrounds by removing a total of 77,100 square feet of asphalt and planted over 300 trees. To participate, schools completed an interest survey and were ranked according to their location within the city's combined sewer area (roughly bounded by Capitol Drive to the north, Holt Avenue to the south, 60th Street to the west and Lake Michigan to the east); ratio of existing hard surface to soft surface; ability to contribute funding and incorporation of the green space into school activities and curriculum.

To mark the success of *Green Schools*, Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School hosted the City's 44th annual Arbor Day Celebration on April 24, 2009. The green retrofit at MSIS removed 15,400 square feet of asphalt and planted 50 trees. The event featured song and dance performances by MSIS students in honor of trees and their benefits and a ceremonial tree planting. Because of the excitement of the principal, teachers, staff and students at MSIS, this year's Arbor Day event celebrated the transformational impact of trees and green space on children and the environment. *Green Schools* is a partnership with Milwaukee Public Schools.

Kimberly Kujoth

Some of the schools already Greened

MILWAUKEE SPANISH IMMERSION
SCHOOL

HUMBOLDT PARK SCHOOL

SHERMAN MULTICULTURAL ARTS
SCHOOL

HARTFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL
PIERCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

GREENFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
MILWAUKEE FRENCH IMMERSION
SCHOOL

HAWLEY ENVIRONMENTAL SCHOOL
URBAN WALDORF SCHOOL
LINCOLN CENTER FOR THE ARTS



Got a question, comment, or suggestion? Let us know about it.
Email us at ESfeedback@dpw.net

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