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Brunswick tree canopy measured VIA Study

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BRUNSWICK -- Tree canopy cover in Brunswick is good compared to Frederick, and even when compared with the cities of Baltimore and Washington.

It stands at 38 percent, according to a recent study by the University of Vermont. That means 38 percent of land area in Brunswick has shade provided by trees, known as urban tree canopy.

But Brunswick officials would like it to be better. More trees means lower temperatures in the summer, lower energy costs, less pollution and better property values, according to the Chesapeake Bay Trust, which funded the Urban Tree Canopy analysis.

"The U.S. Forest Service has determined that at 40 percent you see benefits," said Marian Honeczy, supervisor of the Urban and Community Forestry Program for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Those benefits are less water runoff pouring into local streams and rivers and better air quality. The benefits improve with even more tree cover, Honeczy said.

While Brunswick can't do anything about what homeowners do with trees on their property, the city is using money from Frederick County's Forest Resource Ordinance to replant trees in parks and other public areas.

The city hopes to get grants to plant more trees for public properties, city Administrator David Dunn said.

The Chesapeake Bay Trust provided Brunswick with an \$8,050 grant to pay for the tree canopy analysis. Former Development Review Director James Castle sought the grant because he thought it would make Brunswick a more appealing place to live.

The analysis offered recommendations to Brunswick. Those included boosting tree canopy along roadways, in commercial areas and in residential areas.

The Forest Resource Ordinance requires developers to plant new trees in place of those removed, or pay to have trees replanted. The share of FRO money Brunswick gets, about \$40,000 this year, comes from trees that have been removed for Brunswick developments.

Many cities protect trees on public properties and in city right-of-ways. For example, the city of Charlotte, N.C., requires a permit be issued before homeowners remove any trees in the right-of-way.

"We don't have anything currently," Dunn said. "We're just getting into this."

"I'm proud of the fact that we do have so much tree cover," Councilwoman Karin Tome said. "I was proud of our staff for getting that money for the study."

Brunswick is the only county municipality other than Frederick that has had its tree canopy measured. "People talk about being green, and that's the classic meaning of being green," Tome said.

The presence of trees make a community much more livable, she added.

Becky Wilson, western region urban and community forestry coordinator for DNR, said when Brunswick became a part of the Urban Tree Canopy program, technology has made it easier to plant trees in urban areas.

Trees also extend the life of asphalt and other hard surfaces, she said at the time.

DETAILS

Urban Tree Canopy — how does Brunswick compare

Brunswick — 38 percent

Annapolis — 41 percent

Baltimore — 20 percent

Baltimore County — 49 percent

Bowie — 46 percent

Cumberland — 48 percent

Rockville — 44 percent

Washington — 35 percent

The University of Vermont conducted the study using satellite imagery taken in 2007, combined with LiDAR, which is similar to radar. DNR commissioned the imagery for the entire state. UVM's Spatial Analysis Laboratory does the analysis in consultation with the U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station.

"Not many of these studies have been done," Honeczky said. "We're cutting edge."

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