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VIEW



Mayor touts Fort Wayne's 'urban forest'

City earns 20th 'Tree City USA' title

*By Bob Caylor
of The News-Sentinel*

Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry celebrated Arbor Day on Friday by touting the city's commitment to trees. He joined students from St. Joseph-St. Elizabeth Catholic School in planting two trees at Buckner Park, located off Bass Road west of Interstate 69.

He also said the "Tree Commission" he established last year should be supplanted by a "Tree Advisory Board" to become a standing monitor of urban-forestry practices that would report directly to him.

"Our trees are one of Fort Wayne's remarkable assets," said Henry. "They clean our air, keep us cool, dampen noise and beautify our world. To keep them working hard for us, they

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need our attention. While many cities are cutting their tree programs, I am committed to finding other funding sources that will help us preserve our exceptional urban forest and keep our trees great, green and growing.”

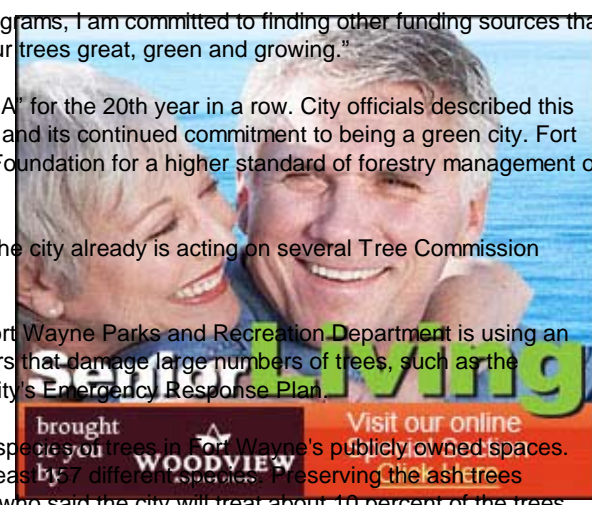
The mayor said Fort Wayne has been named a “Tree City USA” for the 20th year in a row. City officials described this designation as recognizing the city's tree-canopy stewardship and its continued commitment to being a green city. Fort Wayne also earned a Growth Award from the National Arbor Foundation for a higher standard of forestry management of the city's 80,000 trees.

Chad Tinkel, the city's manager of Forestry Operations, said the city already is acting on several Tree Commission recommendations.

One recommendation was to improve storm response. The Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department is using an urban forestry grant to develop a plan for dealing with disasters that damage large numbers of trees, such as the December 2008 ice storm. That plan will become part of the city's Emergency Response Plan.

The commission also recommended increasing the variety of species of trees in Fort Wayne's publicly owned spaces. Tinkel said progress is being made on that front, too, with at least 17 different species. Preserving the ash trees threatened by emerald ash borers also is a priority for Tinkel, who said the city will treat about 10 percent of the trees and cut down those already too severely damaged by the insect infestations.

Carol Cavell, executive director of Trees Indiana Inc., thanked the Home Depot Foundation for its NeighborWoods program. In Fort Wayne, that led to planting 23 large, native Indiana trees in the Renaissance Pointe development. Cavell said the foundation plans to support planting 50 more trees in Renaissance Pointe.



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