Evaluating Residents’ Experiences with Tree Planting Programs in Worcester, MA

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Study Area and Past Replanting

The discovery of the invasive Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) in 2008 in the Greater Worcester Area necessitated the felling of over 30,000 trees as part of the eradication strategy. In response, a multi-agency reforestation effort involving the City of Worcester, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), and Worcester Tree Initiative (WTI) began in 2010. Between Fall 2010 and Spring 2012, the Massachusetts DCR replanted over 17,000 trees in Worcester, Holden, Boylston, West Boylston, Auburn, and Shrewsbury.

This study assesses how residents who received trees were impacted by the tree planting programs. 79 residents were interviewed to assess their reactions to the DCR and WTI tree planting programs. 1,156 trees sampled for health characteristics; 20% were associated with an interview. 95% of the interviews were conducted in Worcester.

Field Work

Over the course of our study, we conducted 67 short interviews and 12 long interviews. After recording and transcribing the 79 interviews we coded them based on the following themes: general tree care, environmental awareness, relationship with stakeholders, change in neighborhood and community, the process of getting trees, and general feelings.

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Demographics and Interview

53% Male
47% Female

Average Age: 60.6
86% White
53% Retired

Interviews consisted of both short and long interviews. Short interviews, 3-5 minutes, consisted of people who were home during the time we were sampling their trees and agreed to participate in our study. Long interviews were scheduled and lasted 20-40 minutes. The demographics section was optional, 67% completed the form. Because the majority of our interviewees were sampled opportunistically, the resulting sample is biased. Homeowners who were older and retired were more likely to be at home during the times we were sampling trees and thus make up the majority of the population.

Analysis and Summary

Our analysis shows that residents who received trees from the DCR do not feel inherently burdened by the need to take care of the trees. The majority of residents (79%) reported following the DCR’s suggested watering practices and 36% reported continued watering after this time period. Residents showed a preference for ornamentals and front yard trees.

1. How did you come to have this tree?
2. Tell me about the care of your tree:
   • Now that it is older do you water it as much?
   • Did you find it hard to care for your tree(s)?
3. Do you feel there has been a difference in your neighborhood as a result of the tree-planting effort?
   • Do you have a close relationship with your neighbors?
   • Do neighbors help each other out in caring for trees?
   • Are there any community replanting efforts? Tell me about them
4. Have the tree-replanting efforts made you more aware of environmental issues or groups?

Field Work

Figure 3: Photograph of interview in progress with local resident

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