

TREE APPRAISAL

Trees have economic and legal values beyond their social and aesthetic contributions. Both public and private trees can be appraised to determine a monetary value. It has been well documented that trees contribute to property values. Miller (1997), author of *Urban Forestry*, cites many examples where trees added 6 to 15 percent to parcel prices when compared to similar parcels without trees. In the May 2003 issue of *Money* magazine, the reporter writes that mature trees can add as much as 20% to the property value when compared to treeless land. The economic or monetary value of trees is used for settlement of insurance claims, for loss of property value by the Internal Revenue Service, and for proactive reasons to justify costs for featuring or saving trees.

Various methods have been designed to calculate tree values with formulas and figures to eliminate emotional biases. Just as jewelers or antique car dealers have developed specific criteria and methods in appraisal in their respective fields, professionals in arboriculture have developed tree appraisal formulas. And just as precious stones or makes of cars are valued differently, not all tree species are rated the same. Trees considered "weedy" such as boxelder maple or Siberian elm have a lower calculated value than similarly sized sugar maple or bur oak.

Methods for calculating tree values based on their size, location and condition have been developed since the early 1900's. By 1947, a joint committee of the National Shade Tree Conference and the National Arborist Association was established to develop procedures for determining the monetary value of a tree. These widely accepted procedures, based on tree size, species and condition, were published in the 1957 booklet entitled *Shade Tree Evaluation*. Since 1975, the Council of Tree & Landscape Appraisers (CTLA), a committee that represents the several organizations, has continued to revise the appraisal procedures and has published several editions of the appraisal guide. The CTLA committee represents the American Nursery and Landscape Association, the American Society of Consulting Arborists, the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Associated Landscape Contractors of America, the Association of Consulting Foresters of America, the International Society of Arboriculture, and the National Arborist Association.

The 10th edition of *Guide for Plant Appraisal* is organized to guide the appraiser through the plant appraisal process. This edition also provides a foundation for understanding concepts related to highest and best use, contributory value, the principles of diminishing returns and balance, and others fundamental to economic theory and market behavior.

The Forestry Division has been using the most current edition of the *Guide for Plant Appraisal* since the early 1980's. Tree appraisal is used to determine restitution when trees are damaged, destroyed, require removal for construction activities, or for proactive reasons to help save trees

near construction. Original copies of all appraisals and photographs are kept on file in the forestry office for a 5 year timeframe. Staff attends seminars featuring tree appraisal whenever possible and reads articles about tree appraisal to remain current on all practices.