Urban Forestry/Natural Resources

One of the Park and Recreation Department's responsibilities is to maintain the City's inventory of over 33,000 trees located in parks, boulevards, golf courses, and other public places.

Trees are a valuable, important assets because they greatly enhance the community appearance, quality of life, and environment. A study conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency determined that every urban tree contributes an average of $350 per year to the community in direct environment benefits. These benefits include reduced heating and cooling costs, greatly reduced stormwater runoff, less erosion, reduced pollution through carbon sequestering, and others. Based on this report, the 33,000 public trees in Great Falls provide $11.5 million per year in direct environmental benefits.

The indirect social, economic, and aesthetic benefits that trees provide to a community have not been quantified but are thought to be much higher than the direct environmental benefits. In addition, these trees also continue the heritage that began in the 1890's when Paris Gibson and other settlers planted thousands of trees in Great Falls. Their legacy and that of later generations have resulted in a public forest that is now valued at over $77 million. In addition to the City's tree inventory, the Department also maintains over 3.5 acres of landscaped spaces that are located outside of parks.

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