



The Care of Trees
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To: Jim Glennon, Hospitality Partners LLC

From: Chris Cowles, Sr. Urban Forestry Consultant

Project: Conference Center Associates Site Irving & Michigan NE, Washington DC

Date: July 5, 2009

Subject: Description of Vegetation on Site

Our assignment is to visually assess and characterize the vegetation located upon the northwest half of the site mentioned above at the corner of Michigan and Irving Streets NE, in Washington DC. The site vegetation has been previously described both as "overgrown shrub trees and bushes"¹ as well as "Mature oaks, elms, and black locust trees ...and other mature tree species clearly visible from the perimeter... referred to as a "stand" within an urban area the value of the land becomes more complex and exponentially beneficial ...its removal having serious repercussions for the various habitats being supported."²

The following are our professional findings, discussion, and recommendations:

Findings

General Description-

Approximately 75% of the vegetated northwest area of the site was walked and visually assessed. Typically for a smaller parcel of this size 90% would be inspected but the dense vegetation precluded a more complete coverage without the use of significant machete time. The vegetation is very dense, shorter in height than the mature trees at the adjacent multifamily complex to the south as viewed from the parking lot on the southeastern side. The density of vegetation is due to both the young age of the saplings and seedlings which have not had time to thin out to maturity but also the thick vines and understory which will be described later. The ground of the entire site is littered with decades of debris and trash and obvious signs of homeless encampments with only one resident observed on this date.

Soils on the site observed from uprooted trees was sandy clay with heavy river rock devoid of natural topsoil. Either brought in as urban fill decades ago or similar soil type common to rock quarries in Prince Georges County up through Laurel, MD

Dominant Overstory Trees-

Black locust maximum average size on site 12-14" diameter comprising 80-90% of the dominant trees; Siberian elm cluster of 14"-16" diameter was found in the NE corner. Some scattered black walnuts were found within the same size range.

ZONING COMMISSION

CASE No. OP-33

EXHIBIT No. 33

Subordinate Trees-

Black locust, oaks (northern red, willow, scarlet) black cherry, red and sugar maple average size 4-5" diameter with the oaks and sugar maples favoring the outside edges where seeding in from older street trees probably occurred. These species comprise 80% of the subordinate trees.

Understory Trees-

Small saplings and seedlings less than 4" diameter. Species include black cherry, oaks as above, white mulberry*, sugar and red maple, horsechestnut³, flowering pear*, sumac, American holly.

Shrubs/ Herbaceous layer-

Tartarian honeysuckle shrub*, Black Raspberry, Poison Ivy, Honeysuckle vines*, Seedlings and saplings of above tree species especially horse chestnut*, sugar maple, mulberry*, black locust.

Discussion

Black locust, a short lived pioneer species commonly found colonizing prior farm sites and poor soils of disturbed urban lands is by far the dominant species in size and number. Most common maximum size found on the site is 12-14" trunk diameter while mature trees occurring frequently in the Mid Atlantic reach 18-28" diameter before succumbing to trunk or basal decay. Some of the larger, taller trees had been wind thrown recently which is common to trees laden with vines.

No larger trees typically described as "mature"⁴ were found. Mature trees within the Mid Atlantic are typically described as 75- 100+ feet in height and 24+ inches diameter.

While it can be argued a diversity of species occupy the site it must be pointed out that many are exotic invasive trees, shrubs, and vines thus an ecological liability to the site rather than an asset. These are marked with an asterisk(*).

Recommendations

It is our conclusion that the existing vegetation and ecological conditions are not healthy or beneficial to the community due to the degraded nature of the site, the trash and use by homeless people, and that there were no "special trees" of 55" or greater in circumference that were observed. A more thorough walk through to verify whether any trees of 55" circumference exist is recommended prior to permitting.

Should this site be designated as a park site for natural ecosystem restoration management our estimation for funding would be upwards of \$250,000 over 5 years for control of invasives by brush mowing and herbicide treatment; cutting of undesirable trees and wood debris cleanup, trash and debris clean up, mulching barren soils, and replanting of native species. Then in another 25- 50 years its value could be very beneficial indeed.

In lieu of parks acquisition we recommend that a high value urban landscape will add considerably more to the neighborhood property values according to the highest and best use of the land.

Representative Photos-



(Above) Dense vegetation of saplings and vines, several invasive species.



(Above) Numerous wind thrown black locusts and trash throughout site.



(Above) Young oaks saplings of various species along edges ranging 4-5" diameter.



(Above) Cluster of Siberian elms in NW corner.

References-

¹ Vegetation Description from Report of Planned Unit Development (PUD) Case No. 08- Conference Center Associates I, LLC= Parcel 121/31

² Description from Urban Forestry Administration (UFA) Memo June 19, 2009 re: Case No. 08- Conference Center Assoc. I, LLC= Parcel 121/31

³ Horse Chestnut- Ecological Impacts: This species is on the Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council list. It has been planted as an ornamental for the attractive large white flowers and has escaped intended plantings. The weak-wooded branches break easily. The large leaves, nuts and dropping twigs create litter. Once established, this species competes with native species for sunlight, moisture and nutrients. Toxicity: Seeds and tea made from leaves and sprouts are highly toxic and can cause death. Control and Management:

- Manual- Girdle remove bark and phloem layer from 10 cm band around trunk; Note: damaging the xylem layer could encourage suckering
- Chemical- Cut stems then apply herbicide; retreat suckers. Contact your state extension service. Follow label instructions and wear appropriate personal protective equipment.

⁴ **Mature Tree** - A tree that has reached a desired size or age for its intended use. Size, age, or economic maturity varies depending on the species and intended use. Steve Nix, www.About.Com: Forestry.