

Research Note

SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF A COMMUNITY SHADE TREE PROGRAM: A REPLICATION

by Robert Sommer, Joshua Summit, Fred Learey and Matthew Tirrell

This is the third in a series of studies of the benefits and costs of resident involvement in planting trees. Earlier studies took place in Fresno and Sacramento, CA. The present study took place in Galt, CA, a city of 15,000 located 15 miles south of Sacramento in relatively new subdivisions where the Sacramento Tree Foundation (STF) had coordinated plantings several years earlier.

Procedures. The procedures were similar to those of the earlier studies (3, 4) using a mail survey to compare satisfaction levels in households whose trees had been planted as part of the STF program with those whose trees had been planted independent of the program. The return rate for the survey was 50.2% of delivered questionnaires and there was no indication of non-respondent bias.

Results. Households whose trees had been planted by a developer were least satisfied with the outcome, specifically in such areas as the staking and support of the tree, location in the yard, perceived improvement to the yard, and had a lower overall opinion of the tree. Those with developer-planted trees also showed more desire to have the tree replaced. Half of the STF households and none of the non-STF households became better acquainted with their neighbors during the planting, and 87% of the STF households received maintenance information compared to only 12% of non-STF households.

These results provide further confirmation of the benefits of community planting in terms of user

satisfaction, neighborhood interaction, and access to tree maintenance information and consultation, all of which have been linked to tree survival (1, 2). Participation in the STF program appeared highly susceptible to cost considerations. If the goal of a community shade tree program is the widest possible access, some type of subsidy is probably necessary for low income households. The potential loss of involvement if trees are obtained without charge can be offset through investments of time and effort instead of money.

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Literature Cited

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Department of Psychology
University of California
Davis, CA 95616