

GREENING CORPORATE GROUNDS

BUSINESS GREEN SPACE MAKES ECONOMIC SENSE



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“... both property values and people’s spending behaviors can be affected by the presence of parks and green spaces.”

—Wolf, Kathleen L. “Public Value of Nature: Economics of Urban Trees, Parks and Open Space.” 2004



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While improving environmental health may be the biggest driver for creating natural urban spaces, businesses that green their grounds are enjoying a host of economic advantages as well.

Infrastructure Savings

Greening conventional infrastructure can take many forms, from living walls and green roofs to simple tree and wildflower planting projects. When combined with other green approaches such as energy audits and water-efficiency retrofits, infrastructure greening can significantly reduce heating and cooling costs, while also increasing property value.

Vancouver Aquarium

The Marilyn Blusson Learning Center at the Vancouver Aquarium is a model of green infrastructure. The building features a living exterior wall of native plants, which provide year-round insulation as well as insect and bird habitat. On the surrounding property, the use of native plants reduces the need for irrigation, and the building’s roof is designed to harvest rainwater for flushing toilets and watering plants.

Reduced Maintenance and Operations

Naturalized landscapes use native plants—species that are well-adapted to local conditions—which require only minimal irrigation and reduced maintenance. In addition to being beautiful and inviting, naturalized corporate grounds are more cost-efficient to maintain than lawns and other conventional, horticultural landscaping.

Queen’s Park, Toronto

There are about 140 drought-resistant plants at the Queen’s Park garden in Toronto. The sustainable design of the garden decreases maintenance costs by roughly 70%.

Competitive Advantage

Corporate greening can help companies stand out among their peers. Naturalizing business grounds, adopting more sustainable manufacturing practices, and retrofitting infrastructure can all add up to a competitive edge. Greenery can even draw customers to a business: according to a 2005 study, shoppers tend to have more favorable views of products and merchants located on forested streetscapes, compared with those found on less green streets.

— Wolf, Kathleen L. “Business District Streetscapes, Trees and Consumer Response.” 2005

The Green Commitment Pays Off

According to a 2009 study by A.T. Kearney Global Management Consultants, companies that remained committed to their sustainability initiatives throughout the global economic down-turn in 2009 seem to be outperforming their industry competitors, as well as thriving in the eyes of the public.



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Natural Capital

Natural capital is the term given to the stock of natural and environmental resources that produce ecological goods and services. Because they aren't usually measured in terms of market value, ecological goods and services are traditionally undervalued. Consider, for example, the air filtration capacity of a tree, the water purification function of an aquifer, or the wave barrier created by a wetland. In effect, these "free" resources subsidize the industries that use them as inputs and raw materials. When ecosystems are compromised, our access to natural capital becomes limited, and costly engineering or technological substitutions must be made.

Measuring Natural Capital

Increasingly, natural capital is being valued in economic terms. According to a 2004 report by Ducks Unlimited and The Nature Conservancy, the value of all the goods and services generated by one hectare of wetlands is \$5,792 to \$24,330.00 each year. This includes the value of habitat for fish, birds, mammals and reptiles; water supply; erosion control; storm and flood control; and recreational opportunities.

Return on Investment

In the past, environmental sustainability projects and programs have often been perceived as desirable but non-essential elements of doing business. More and more, forward-thinking businesses around the world are rejecting that notion and realizing the bottom-line benefits of investing in environmental capital.

The Sustainability Advantage

In a survey conducted by A. T. Kearney Global Management Consultants, consumers indicated a willingness to pay more for products manufactured by companies that can demonstrate with a strong environmental sustainability track record.

Take Action

Interested in greening your business or institutional grounds? Evergreen and its partners can help. For information on our corporate greening support, check out www.evergreen.ca or contact stewardship@evergreen.ca

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes
www.sustainability-index.com

Canadian Business for Social Responsibility
www.cbsr.ca

Environment Canada www.ec.gc.ca

Canadian Urban Institute www.canurb.com

Ontario Ministry of Natural resources
www.mnr.on.ca

Greening Corporate Grounds is a program that works together with businesses, corporations, institutions and places of worship on implementing and managing corporate outdoor landscapes with nature in mind.

Program developed in partnership with:



Project support provided by:



National Supporters of Common Grounds

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