

BOROUGH TREE CANOPY IMPORTANCE ELEVATED

As reported in the October 2019 borough newsletter, Churchill's tree canopy was reduced by 48 acres in just five short years from 2010 to 2015 dropping our overall tree coverage to about 50%. More than 30 large trees were removed from the borough in 2019 alone further reducing the canopy that impacts the attractiveness of our borough.

Pittsburgh Magazine developed a report card published in October 2019 grading 130 suburban municipalities outside the city limits. Five factors were used including housing, neighborhood, schools, safety and traffic. One of the criteria in this assessment is "Land area under tree cover" as part of the neighborhood grading. Churchill with a tree canopy of 50% is ranked 58th. Nearby Penn Hills (57%), Wilkins Township (56%), Monroeville (55%), and Forest Hills (54%) are all graded higher than Churchill. Given that 10 other municipalities are just within a couple percentage points of Churchill, continued tree loss will further erode our borough's appeal to those reviewing this information when considering moves to our community. Continued tree loss will also exacerbate serious storm water runoff issues.

Recent studies estimate that there are more than 3 trillion trees worldwide and the world's forests absorb about 40% of the nearly 42 billion tons of manmade carbon dioxide or CO₂ each year. 3.5-to-7 billion trees are estimated to be lost each year. Major categories contributing to forest loss beyond natural attrition include timber harvesting, agricultural expansion, wildfires, clearing pathways for mining/extraction, pipelines & power lines, and expansion of roads such as the nearby continued widening of the Pennsylvania Turnpike and plans to extend PA Route 43 Toll Road north to the Parkway East I-376 just east of Churchill.

Global tree count has been estimated to have fallen by almost 50% since the beginning of human civilization. To counter such loss, the World Economic Forum, including the USA, has launched a global initiative to grow, restore and conserve 1 trillion trees around the world by 2050 as announced in Davos, Switzerland at their January 2020 meeting. This effort is proposed in a bid to restore biodiversity and help fight climate change. Naturalist Dr. Jane Goodall said: "trilliontrees.org offers innovative technologies which will serve to connect tens of thousands of small and large groups around the world that are engaged in tree planting and forest restoration." While this appears to be an unattainable task, its intent is laudable, and our Churchill Tree Committee intends to be one of those "small groups," given our own situation.

To this end, the Churchill Tree Committee has begun interface with *Tree Pittsburgh* and other outside organizations to initiate tree planting efforts within the borough while working to protect the beautiful tree canopy that remains. Residents have begun to make use of our recently enacted Tree Ordinance, as the Tree Committee is reviewing updates to it based on experience to date, such as to prohibit use of outdated pruning methods, e.g., topping cuts. We also provided more than 90 tree service companies with a copy of our ordinance. More details on these matters, including a way to determine if you have trees in or near a public right-of-way, are provided in a presentation given at the "IT'S TREE TIME!" event hosted by the Blackridge Garden Club on February 19, 2020. The presentation can be obtained on the borough website www.churchillborough.com

3-6-2020

*It has just been reported that the **spotted lanternfly (SLF)** has been found in Pittsburgh, Monroeville, North Versailles, Wall and Wilmerding. This highly destructive, invasive insect can threaten hickory, maple, pine, poplar, red oak, walnut, willow, apple and other types of trees. More information can be readily found on the internet. If you find SLF in Churchill, please report it immediately to the borough office.*

Submitted by: Ken Balkey