
Compensatory (Replacement) Value of Tampa's Urban Forest

What does the "compensatory value" of the urban forest mean?

The compensatory value of the urban forest of Tampa is an estimate of the amount of money it would cost to replace a tree with a similar species. The compensatory value of the urban forest was calculated based on the guidelines published by the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers (CTLA) (8th ed., 1992).

Compensatory value is based on four factors:

1. trunk area (cross sectional area at 4.5 ft in height)
2. tree species
3. tree condition (health)
4. tree location

How much is the compensatory value of Tampa's urban forest?

The estimated compensatory value of Tampa's urban forest is approximately \$1.47 billion dollars. A compensatory value was estimated for all tree species that occurred in the 2007 inventory, including those considered to be problematic (e.g. Brazilian pepper), and contribute to the total value of Tampa's urban forest. Initially it seemed logical to remove these trees from the appraised value, but because they are part of Tampa's urban forest, there will be a cost associated with replacing them. Therefore, all of the trees in the urban forest were included.

The compensatory value is only the replacement value and does not include the value of the many other environmental services provided by the trees in Tampa's urban forest. The urban forest is an asset that is part of the city's infrastructure and is providing many services to the city at a relatively low investment and maintenance cost.

How can the compensatory value of the forest be used?

The compensatory value is regularly used to determine monetary settlement for damage or death of plants through litigation, insurance claims, loss of property value for income tax deductions and real estate assessments. It is based, in part, on the replacement cost of a similar tree (size, health, location) of the same or similar species and is an estimate of the amount of money the tree owner should be compensated for tree loss. In the case of Tampa, the compensatory value is an important figure to estimate damage to the urban forest following large storm events such as a hurricane. Frequently the Federal and State government need quantitative estimates from city officials to justify sending emergency relief. This figure can be used as a basis for estimating the current value of the urban forest, should such an event occur.

