

## Economic Benefits of Landscape

The advantages of a professionally installed and maintained landscape go beyond “curb appeal” and head straight for the bottomline. A well-designed landscape invites customers in the door producing higher occupancy rates, increased rentals and lower vacancies. However, the savings go beyond occupancy when you consider that the proper selection and placement of plant material can lower heating and cooling costs by as much as 20% while creating a healthier environment. The use of landscape to lower noise levels, reduce crime and enhance unpleasant views are economical alternatives that add up to increased profits.

**According to a study by Professor Joel Goldsteen**, landscape amenities had the highest correlation with occupancies of any other architectural and urban design variables evaluated. His conclusion was “landscaping amenities pay back the developer as evidenced by the higher occupancies (and rents) clearly justifying the investment.” A shopping center in San Diego cites landscaping as the reason for high occupancy and the ability to charge rental rates that are double those of other shopping plazas. The carefully designed project uses landscaping to create a refuge in the midst of a busy shopping area. **A Chicago developer points to unique interior landscaping in glass-roofed atriums as a major selling point and reason the building occupancy rates are 21% above the national level.** According to Judith Guido, Director of Marketing for LandCareUSA, landscaping can add as much as 14 % resale value to a building and speed the sale of a building by as much as 6 weeks. In the ‘90’s, as corporations are struggling to retain employees, the benefits of using landscape to create an enhanced work environment is a valuable sales tool.

In a recent Wall Street Journal article by Lucinda Harper, entitled “Landscapers Help Spruce Up Main Street,” several revitalization efforts around the nation were cited where landscape was key to creating a sense of community and bolstering the local economy. The city of Valdosta, Georgia, according to Harper, had tried everything from incentives to restoring the facades of buildings only to find that \$9 million in landscaping brought shoppers to the district who spend longer periods of time, which in turn, brought more shops.

Two other studies, one by Mark S. Henry of the Department of Agriculture and Applied Economics at Clemson University and another by Robert L. Degner of the Florida Agricultural Market Research Center, University of Florida found that landscaping contributed to higher resale values in single residences. Interestingly, Mark Henry’s study, “The Contribution of Landscaping to the Price of Single Family Houses: A Study of Home Sales in Greenville, South Carolina,” pointed out not only did homes with excellent landscaping sell 4 to 5 percentage points higher, but homes with poor landscaping in neighborhoods with excellent landscaping sold for 8-10% less. That means, if your landscape is not up to the standards of your local community, then it does have an impact. “Keeping up with the Jones,” means better business.

As you prepare for the spring and summer, budgeting dollars for renovation and development will certainly come into focus. Landscape is an attractive alternative, which “grows” with time. According to the studies, city planners and developers, it can also pay back on the investment.