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Amid construction projects, OU leaders work to maintain campus beauty, environmental health

As the University manages major growth projects such as construction of the new southern student housing facility, renovation of the Oakland Center and expansion of parking lots, administrators and facilities and grounds personnel are maintaining a strong commitment to protect the environmental health, quality and beauty of OU's 1,443-acre campus.

Much of what makes the OU campus as bucolic as many have come to see it is a robust population of mature trees growing both over rolling hills and in developed space. Pat Engle, associate vice president for facilities management, said that protecting these trees is a primary concern in every campus construction project.

"They are an essential part of not only the beauty of our campus, but also the health of the surrounding environment and ecosystem," Engle said. "Any environmentally conscious development project must incorporate a landscape plan with strong emphasis on protection and revitalization of trees and other indigenous plant life. We take that part of our work very seriously."



OU leaders are managing major growth projects while maintaining a strong commitment to protect the environmental health, quality and beauty of OU's 1,443-acre campus.

Over the summer construction season, a total of 47 trees needed to be cut down for various purposes across campus. Many of these were given to the Reroot Pontiac environmental initiative for research purposes.

In contrast to this felling work, however, 70 trees on campus were salvaged by moving them from construction sites to new locations for future growth. Seen as valuable campus assets, some of the relocated trees have trunk diameters of up to seven inches, while the average trunk diameter among them was about four inches.

Perhaps most indicative of the University's commitment to preserving a vital landscape environment is the fact that 475 new deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs were planted on sites across campus. The total represents a substantial increase over the number of plantings anticipated this past spring to be completed over the summer growing season.

All of the landscape work completed this season was guided by the University's recently updated Campus Master Plan. Work locations were identified not only to support the health and future growth of campus, but also to enhance the campus' already rustic landscape.

Campus construction work this summer also called for University personnel to address the need to replace a culvert located under Mead Brook Road on the southwest side of campus. Completion of this project provided the environmental advantages of improving water flow allowing passage of aquatic life in the stream running through the culvert.

Project engineers note that along with revitalizing the stream as a natural campus amenity, natural plantings within and surrounding the project site will enhance the overall quality of environmental assets in the area.