



REVITALIZING VELVA PARK

The Velva Park District used an Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) grant to remove declining trees in their city park and replace them with new shade and ornamental trees. A local tree service company was hired to remove 12 large, hazardous ash trees that had suffered storm damage over the years. A variety of new young trees were purchased from a local greenhouse and planted in appropriate locations around the park. Selections planted include ‘Harvest Gold’ Mongolian linden, ‘Spring Snow’ crabapple, quaking aspen, common hackberry, littleleaf linden, and American linden. These successful new plantings enrich Velva’s community forest and serve as an inspiration for tree diversity all across town.

Town of Velva, ND

Velva is a small town of roughly 1,000 people in north-central North Dakota, in McHenry County. Although the city's economy is centered around agriculture, it lacks a full-time forestry position. According to 2022 U.S. Census Bureau data tools and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, this community meets the criteria for a rural community.

Significance of City Park

Velva only has one city park, located within a bend of the meandering Souris River. The city park serves as a primary gathering place for school and community activities. In addition to the natural beauty and historic setting, the area is desirable for its protection from wind and ample shade. Historically, the forest consisted of American elm,

green ash, boxelder maple, cottonwood, and occasional bur oak along with native riparian understory species. Unfortunately, invasive insects and diseases have jeopardized the two most abundant native trees in North Dakota. Additionally, the relentless onslaught of prairie summer storms and harsh winter conditions had left many poor-condition ash standing in the park, many of which posed a hazard to park users.

Removal of Declining Trees

The City of Velva decided to be proactive by utilizing an IIJA grant to remove 12 declining ash and plant 20 replacement trees in canopy gaps throughout the park. Not only did this grant project mitigate a potential hazard, it also increased species diversity and strengthened the resilience of Velva’s urban forest against exotic pests and

diseases. Mongolian linden, American linden, littleleaf linden, quaking aspen, hackberry, and crabapple trees are now thriving in the park’s understory and will become part of the next generation of park trees as the ash trees are removed in stages. This IIJA grant project also brought awareness of the threat posed by Emerald Ash Borer and served as a template for Velva residents to follow for removal and replacement of green ash. While enjoying a shady walk along the Souris River, park users can view a sampling of alternative tree species hardy to North Dakota while contemplating the benefits these young trees will one day provide to future generations.

Header: Ground View of Velva Park. Photo: Joel Allen