

Treeways

2020 -1

Living Well in Sunfish Lake

For the 545 residents of Sunfish Lake, our 1.7 square mile community is a hidden gem tucked away on the edge of the Minneapolis/St.Paul metro area. The closest thing we have to brick and mortar businesses in our community are the four local churches. Three lakes are available for recreation as long as the watercraft are not motorized. We live in a quiet city close to the international airport, interstate highway, Metro arts scene, excellent schools, open spaces in three park areas, and with enough room to stretch, move and decompress on our larger than typical personal estates. In most neighborhoods it takes a significant effort to walk to a neighbor's home, either down the lane or through the woods on a path. While on the walk you may see some of the plentiful wildlife living with us including deer, squirrels, rabbits, hawks, cardinals, turkeys, ducks, woodpeckers (4 species), eagles, raccoons, coyotes, foxes, owls, geese, and woodchucks. We get to enjoy diverse wildlife up close even if they cause some damage to our landscapes while they live their normal lives.

Take some time to get to know your neighbors. There are lots of interesting people here with fascinating life stories. When we get to know our neighbors we will also know when there are strangers about and we are all better off when we know and look after one another. Some neighborhoods are developing "Neighborhood Watch" groups and also organize get togethers one or more times each year so catch up with each other. Most properties have a mix of woodland, meadow, lawn, waterway or wetland ... uncommon amenities for a community so close to the action of the Metro area. Nearly all residences have their own well and septic systems so it is critical that we not pollute our groundwater supply. Septic systems need to be pumped out at least once every three years so if you cannot remember the last time it was pumped then perhaps this is the year. Septic systems, working as designed, help us protect our drinking water too.

As City Forester I have had the joy of being on or near most properties in the City while surveying for oak wilt, emerald ash borer or other trees issues and know that we truly live in a magical mix of woodlands, meadows, waterways and wetlands. Our oldest trees are some of the oaks that are 150 or more years old. They are survivors from the period when trees were harvested for steamboat fuel back when steamboats traveled up the Mississippi River. Most of what we might think of as old growth forest in Sunfish Lake is actually second growth forest that grew up after the original forest the Europeans saw when they arrived was cut down for fuel and lumber.

Our larger properties and outdoor spaces meld seamlessly into each other because the fences and walls that divide so many suburbs are not allowed here. Our early residents liked the feeling of openness so much they enacted guidelines in our building codes to encourage open spaces into the future. Fences and walls here are considered decorative features more like garden art than property barriers.

Arbor Day in Sunfish Lake is the first Saturday in May and always includes opportunities to buy and plant trees. Put it on your calendar so you can participate this spring. The Friends of Musser Park action committee will likely get going in 2020 so watch for announcements regarding a possible invasive species removal event, potluck and new year bonfire. If these turn out to be fun maybe they will be back bigger and better in 2021. Life is what we make it and life is good in Sunfish Lake.