Trees: modest cost — big benefits

During the coldest six weeks of last winter, arborists with the Davey Tree Expert Co. methodically pruned more than 1,700 street trees in all sections of Pottstown.

The $104,000 maintenance project, contracted by Trees Inc., was the most comprehensive since the non-profit was incorporated in 1983. The project was supervised by Davey arborist Alan Jensen-Sellers, who is a Pottstown resident.

During the last three decades, Trees Inc. has raised and spent about $1 million to plant and maintain 2,500 street trees, remediate damaged sidewalks adjacent to 400 trees, and create a “tree park” at Beech and Charlotte streets (on which Trees Inc. pays real estate taxes).

Trees Inc. has removed 570 dead trees and ground out 270 stumps.

Less than a quarter of Trees Inc.’s revenue has come from Pottstown Borough. The rest has been grants and private donations.

A computer program developed by the U.S. Forest Service shows that Pottstown’s 3,000 street trees provide $300,000 in benefits annually in improved air quality, storm water management, energy reduction from reduced air conditioning, and increased property values.

If just a portion of that money was invested back into tree planting and maintenance, including sidewalk remediation, trees could provide even greater benefits to the community. Small investment—big return.

Street trees like these on High Street, above, vastly improve the appearance of our streets and the quality of our town. But they need maintenance. (Below, South Street.)

Commentary by Tom Hylton