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Capturing opportunities to reduce landscape services costs and increase sustainability

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Opportunities abound for properties to respond to challenging economic conditions faced today. By proactively deploying smart landscape services managers can reduce landscape costs, while still improving the sustainable elements of a property. Applying some simple measures and best practices can provide numerous benefits.

Certainly, the economy presents a real need to be more efficient in the operation of a property, yet still be friendly to Mother Earth. The impact of a smart landscape and maintenance plan can be significant, with annual savings in the 15% to 20% range. When making decisions about how to achieve the goals of a property, an obvious starting point is to assess the existing design, systems and plantings before developing a plan to improve and enhance a property.

For example, properties constructed 20 or more years ago have common age-related elements that typically need to be addressed. First, an area to look at is the irrigation system, which usually involves deploying more advanced technology. A second area to explore is enhancements of the existing landscape with sustainable, drought-resistant plants. Finally, consider what elements of the original landscape design still meet today's standards.

Smart controllers or sensors to detect when plants actually need water didn't exist when properties were built in the 1970s or 1980s. By investing in these kinds of improvements to an irrigation system a property can generate the kind of savings that reasonably would expect to pay off within 24 months and in some cases even shorter ROI periods.

Sustainable landscape is good for the environment and can impact bottom lines as well. Replacing existing plants with those that are native or adaptive to an area or are drought tolerant will help address a need for all to use water resources more wisely. A property might even be able to utilize a recycled water source.

Over time the needs of a property may change so it is necessary to examine the original landscape design and determine what improvements can be made. A smart approach considers selective removal and replanting of marginal performing or high-maintenance shrubs and trees. The region of the country in which a property is located serves as a good guide for what to plant.

Landscape services partners must drive value and serve as a maintenance strategist rather than just a contractor. For properties, it is critical in today's budget sensitive environment to count on a team of landscape experts who also understand the business side of a property because it can directly impact value. The landscape services team needs to build a relationship with a property that's based on listening, caring and acting in the property's best interest.

Knowing what can be done with the landscape, when it should be done and why a recommendation makes sense from a financial and landscape best practice is the measure of true value of a landscape services firm to a property. A landscape services partner must ensure the landscape

reflects the quality and value the owner desires since it is one of the first things people see.

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