

INDUSTRIAL PARKS LURE TENANTS WITH ATTRACTIVE LANDSCAPES

By GEORGE L. ZEIS



Streiler adds dazzle to his properties to give tenants that special sense of pride.

Prior to the 1950's, most of the industrial and business establishments in St. Louis County were inner city. Anyone buying land 20 miles west of St. Louis for an industrial development was considered foolish.

Today, the area alongside Interstate 270, west of St. Louis, is almost completely filled with thriving industrial parks and downtown St. Louis is forced to try harder to keep businesses from moving out.

"The value of commercial and

industrial park acreage in St. Louis County, and those under construction, runs into the hundreds of millions of dollars," says Roger Grow of the St. Louis County Planning Department. According to Grow there are more than 70 industrial complexes in the County, with acreages ranging from two-and-a-half to 1,000. "An average park is 20 to 30 acres."

It wasn't until "campus" developments began in the outlying areas that business executives saw the

need to improve the appearance of their business establishments. There was more space. The new buildings were attractively designed and required proper landscaping. Perhaps most important, industrial parks were competing with each other for tenants and attractive landscaping was a powerful lure.

Sylvester Streiler supervises more than \$30 million worth of commercial property in St. Louis

Continued on page 38

County for Windsor Management Corporation. His title is vice president - property management. The corporation manages a total of five industrial parks, office buildings, and shopping centers.

"Landscape maintenance and beautification are of primary importance to our company," claims Streiler. "With the valuable property we manage, it behooves us to keep it attractive and appealing to our renters."

Streiler's \$60,000 landscape budget is a sensible investment for the \$3 million of rental income generated by the properties. "Our operating expenses amounted in 1981 to approximately 50 percent of gross income," Streiler figured. "We have special projects each year as our budget grows roughly ten percent annually. Each complex is charged separately for landscape work."

Budget planning for 1983 takes about three months with plans fairly well finalized by the end of September.

Four full-time employees are on the payroll. Most of their work during the summer months is landscape maintenance. Fall, winter and early spring activities involve snow removal, repair work both inside and out and other work activities as they arise.

There are more than 70 industrial complexes in St. Louis County.

Six extra workers are employed during the summer months. Their pay is based somewhat on previous experience, how much time they had worked previously for the Windsor organization and their alertness to daily responsibilities. The pay rate is about \$4.25 per hour.

Streiler has two full time landscape employees reporting directly to him. But he also makes periodic visits with his part-time workers. And the employees are fully aware that the "boss" may appear at any time. While it is well to "inspect



Thirty acre campus in west St. Louis County.

what you expect", Streiler feels that it should be a two-way street. Men on the job may have a new approach to performing a certain task and they want to pass it on first hand. It gives the employee a sense of responsibility that they might not have otherwise. Periodic inspections also stop any sloppy or poorly handled work loads before they become habit-forming or have a negative effect upon tenants.

No large equipment is owned as it relates to landscape maintenance or landscape work by this company. "We use the services of an outside contractor to do heavier work or to mow large areas," Streiler pointed out. "This means we have no investment in trucks, large mowers or other large equipment."

"From our experience, we have found it more practical to have larger areas mowed by an outside contractor. However, our staff does all the trimming. It is this last five percent of the job that really shows, the well trimmed shrub or walk area that seems to attract attention. This we want to have direct control over."

Windsor buys at least six trim mowers at a time and they are available at a moment's notice. "We know mowers will break down, sometimes rather quickly," Streiler said. "If this should happen, all we have to do is pull a replacement out of storage and no time is lost. This is important to us, particularly when weather condi-

tions change rapidly."

No herbicides are used. Occasionally Diazinon is used to control grub infestation.

A 12-12-12 fertilizer is applied two times a year. Hand spreaders are used for distribution. Fertilizer is purchased just prior to application to avoid storage. Approximately \$1,200 is spent on fertilizer each year.

A combination of Bluegrass and ryegrass is used for spot seeding. Approximately \$500 is spent on seed each year.

An underground irrigation system was installed at one of the building sites to overcome a problem created by sunlight reflected from glass windows. "Shortly after the building was completed and occupied," Streiler said, "we had an unusual problem. Grass wouldn't grow. We finally determined that the reflected sunlight was more than the grass could stand. Now, the sprinklers are turned on at night, whenever extra water is needed, and the problem has been solved."

It is evident that Streiler likes color. One building area is bright with color from plantings of tulips, marigolds and chrysanthemums. These flower plantings are usually along walk areas. Bright and varying colors are there during the entire summer and fall seasons. Approximately \$1,000 is spent on the purchase of tulip bulbs annually.

WTT