STREET TREES

Plant continuous rows of street trees between the roadway and sidewalk in developed areas, as well as trees along rural roads to create green corridors through the countryside.

Create a canopy of roadside trees

Trees have long been used in Dutchess County to define the edges of both rural roads and city streets, providing windbreaks for farmland and shade for village sidewalks. Too often these days the tangle of utility wires takes priority over trees, or for the sake of wider roads and higher speed traffic, roadside trees are cut down while utility poles remain. Trees should be placed close to the road and each other to create a park-like canopy.

Academy Street, City of Poughkeepsie, c. 1910

Street trees also:

- clean the air by absorbing polluting gases (carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, ozone);
- provide shade to lower summer temperatures;
- visually unify the varied architecture, parking lots, and setbacks along streets;
- help slow down traffic by narrowing the field of vision from highway proportions;
- give a sense of protection from traffic for walkers on the sidewalk; and
- increase adjacent property values (homes by an average of 5 to 10 percent).

Residential streets with large setbacks and no street trees look so wide that they induce higher speeds.

Narrower residential streets lined with trees provide a pedestrian scale and sense of enclosure to help slow traffic.

Street trees along a main commercial street are perhaps the single most effective physical addition to make sidewalks seem welcoming and more walkable. Trees placed between the sidewalk and curb form a protective row to make walkers feel safely separated from traffic. Trees should be spaced close together: 20 - 30 feet in centers with slow speed limits and farther apart (30 - 40') and slightly back from the road in higher speed situations.

In rural areas trees along the road can be in more naturalistic patterns, although many farm lanes in Dutchess County were traditionally lined with rows of maples. A shift in street trees close to the road is an excellent way to mark the entrance to a village, hamlet, or school zone and help reinforce slower speed limits.

Street trees need to be hardy varieties, salt and drought resistant, free from droppings that mar sidewalks and cars, and tall enough to frame the street and not block the view of storefronts. Cornell Cooperative Extension can provide advice on appropriate species.

Street trees in the Village of Rhinebeck not only shade the sidewalk, they give a sense of visual enclosure that helps slow traffic. Street trees can also hide the view of overhead utility wires.

This new section of Route 55 features brick pavers and street trees, which when fully grown will create an attractive boulevard quality and reduce the apparent width of the road.

To begin to implement the Greenway Program, federal funding has been secured to place landscaping and street trees in the Route 9 median in front of the Samuel F. B. Morse Historic site.

Sources:
Gary Moll and Sara Ebenreck, Shading Our Cities, 1989
American Forests and National Association of Home Builders, Building Greener Neighborhoods, 1995