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Studies prove benefits of green space in the urban environment

New research shows that greener urban areas are associated with sustained mental and physical health improvements, suggesting that policies to increase urban green space may have long-term public health benefits.

The authors of a new article, [Integrating Vegetation and Green Infrastructure into Sustainable Transportation Planning](#), highlight the ways that trees and vegetation act as buffers between roads and homes. Besides aesthetic benefits, native vegetation along highways improves ecosystems, air quality, and stormwater regulation. These are just some of the reasons that Scenic America has long supported [tree conservation](#) and opposed the [practice of tree cutting](#) to increase billboard visibility.



Meanwhile a [new study](#) published in Environmental Science & Technology reinforces just how important green spaces are for human long-term well-being. Researchers from the University of Exeter looked at five years' worth of mental health data and found that those who moved to urban areas with more surrounding green space showed higher mental health scores for a full three years after their relocation.

"These findings are important for urban planners thinking about introducing new green spaces to our towns and cities, suggesting they could provide long term and sustained benefits for local communities," Dr. Ian Alcock, the study's lead author, said. [Watch a video](#) of Dr. Alcock discussing the study's findings.

Rhode Island's highway beautification program expands

Governor Lincoln D. Chafee has unveiled new gateway welcome signs to be installed along Rhode Island interstates. The signs display the newly-branded "Discover Beautiful Rhode Island" logo and are part of the highway beautification program established by



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Essential reading from *Harper's Magazine* February 1960: [How to Look at Billboards](#) by Howard Luck Gossage



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the Governor three years ago and for which [he received](#) Scenic America's Stafford Award.

The signs were designed to pay tribute to Rhode Island's rich Industrial Revolution and maritime heritage. They feature authentic Colonial paint colors, Colonial typography, turnbuckle decorative elements and recycled period granite block quarried in Coventry and Westerly in the 1870s.



"[Our highways] are often the first impression people have of Rhode Island. Through this project, we are proud to play a small part in beautifying our gateways and investing in our future while at the same time paying tribute to our past," said RI DOT director Michael P. Lewis, another Stafford Award recipient.

Governor Chafee's Gateway Beautification project was initiated in 2011. In addition to the welcome signs, the project includes seven murals depicting original art and several major new landscape installations.

The Discover Beautiful Rhode Island sign design was developed with the assistance of a review committee which included Scenic America chairman Ronald Lee Fleming, resident of Bellevue House in Newport.

Study shows billboards associated with increase in crashes

A study on one of Israel's busiest highways found that the removal of roadside billboards significantly reduced the number of crashes along the roadway, including a more than two-thirds reduction in fatal or injury crashes.

The analysis on the Ayalon Highway in Tel Aviv compared the number and types of crashes at treatment sections, where billboards were present along the roadway, with crashes within a control group of road sections where billboards had been removed or covered.



The study's authors said: "The downward trend in accidents in the 'after' period was robust and consistent...particularly for injury crashes. Therefore we can conclude that...there is empirical evidence of a link between the removal of advertising signs and the improvement of road safety."

[Click here](#) for more and to read the study's abstract.