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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Watch a preview clip of Scenic America's 2014 Conference:

Full videos of all speakers will be available on Scenic America's website soon.

Essential reading from Harper's Magazine February 1960: How to Look at Billboards by Howard Luck Gossage

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.