

Bringing Back the Sidewalks

Sidewalks, common in years past, are in demand once again by residents of the region cities & suburbs

By William Tuthill

In the decades after World War II, when it came to transportation planning, the automobile ruled. The new suburbs owed their existence to the automobile, and planners responded by accommodating it as much as possible.

New roads were built with the idea of moving the highest number of cars. From curb to curb, most if not all the space was given over to traffic lanes. Walkers, joggers and bicyclists were nowhere to be seen, and in-line skates hadn't even been invented yet.

"You'd be hard pressed to find any projects that were built in that era with sidewalks," said John Poorman, staff director of the Capital District Transportation Committee. "Very few people needed to walk, so it was an item that was deleted from plans."

Then, in the final decade of the 20th century, the thinking changed rapidly. From the grassroots level to the highest transportation policymakers in Washington, D.C., everybody seemed to realize sidewalks and bike paths might be a good idea.

Now, as a matter of course, suburban municipalities in the Capital Region require walkways on new roads and new housing developments. The NYS DOT includes sidewalks as part and

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Diverse Animal Life Lessens Risk of Lyme Disease

By Catherine Zandonella

When ticks have a rich array of dining opportunities, they are less likely to take a bite from an animal carrying Lyme disease bacteria and thus less likely to pass the disease on to humans, suggests a study by a New York husband and wife research team.

Although rural areas often sport a diversity of species, the picture from the suburban year is different: Species diversity is minimal in woodlots cut off from large forested areas by housing developments.

And this lack of diversity is linked with higher rates of Lyme disease, according to the study's co-author, Richard Ostfeld of the Institute of Ecological Studies in Millbrook.

"The greater the diversity of potential hosts for ticks, the fewer ticks that will become infected," said Ostfeld, "and the lower the risk to humans."

Not all ticks are capable of becoming infected with the bacteria that cause Lyme disease. Those that can--deer ticks of the genus *Ixodes*--acquire the bacteria when they bite certain species of small mammals, lizards and birds.....To look at the relationship between species diversity and Lyme disease, the researchers compared the numbers of different kinds of animals in 16 Eastern states with the incidence of Lyme disease in those areas. States with high species diversity had fewer cases of Lyme disease per capita, according to the findings published in the June issue of *Conservation Biology* by Ostfeld and co-researcher and wife Felicia Kessing, now at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson.

Species Diversity

The study did not account for intrastate differences in species diversity or Lyme disease rates, however. Nor did it directly tie species diversity to the number of infected ticks in the states. Ostfeld said he planned to collect this information with a future study, funding permitting. "I'd like to send a team of researchers on the road to go

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parcel of road widenings and other improvement projects, and in 1998 the U. S. Congress passed a \$203B multi-year transportation funding bill that includes specific language requiring federally funded road projects to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians.

One of the key principles in transportation planning today, said the CDTC's Poorman, "is that we plan and build for all modes--bicycles, pedestrians, delivery truck, as well as automobiles." He could not have said even five years ago.

"As a society our perspective on all this has changed," said Poorman, whose organization sets transportation spending priorities for the region

Poorman illustrates it this way: For years, transportation planners looked at existing demand to justify the extra cost of building sidewalks and bike paths. But there never appeared to be much demand--for the reason there were so few lanes for walking and biking. It was a kind of circular, self-fulfilling policy, he said.

But in the last decade, the ability to walk and bicycle safely along roadways, as well as the desire to reduce vehicle traffic, became major issues in cities and suburbs. Policies were changed to take a more proactive stance to encourage bike paths and sidewalks--that is, *creating* demand for them rather than *following* demand.

In Saratoga Springs, a state-sponsored improvement of South Broadway has recently been completed near the Saratoga Spa State Park. Broadway is the main north-south artery into the city, and for

years was a high-speed road and not one a walker or bicyclist would be comfortable on.

Today, the road is broken up with a landscaped median, sidewalks and a bicycle/walking path set well back from the road. The effect is to "calm" traffic, and to make it safe and attractive for pedestrians.

But on smaller suburban roads it becomes more difficult to add sidewalks, planners say, because of tighter spaces and narrower rights-of-way. If a bike path or sidewalk is added, front yards are narrowed, trees are removed or driving lanes are narrowed.

Silo, the regional engineer at DOT, attributed part of the new emphasis on bike paths and sidewalks to society's anxiety about urban sprawl, and to the emphasis on recreation and health in people's lives.

The change in people's thinking and in public policy has come rapidly. Municipal budgets have not necessarily risen to match the new demand for sidewalks and other amenities, however, said Poorman of CDTC.

"These needs have clearly risen in terms of their profile," Poorman said. But the money available has not caught up to what is desired, he said. "There is a bit of a mismatch between our collective commitment and our funding commitment for retrofitting our communities."

In years past, Poorman said, highway capacity and bridge repair came first in transportation funding, discussions. If anything was left over, sidewalks or bicycle paths might be considered.

"Now," he said, "these needs have a reasonable claim to their portion of the pie." ♦ Excerpted from the **Capital District Business Review**, 8-6-00

FRIENDS OF CLIFTON PARK OPEN SPACE would like your *financial help* in sustaining our research and outreach efforts. If you would like to help in this way, please detach, complete and mail the form below with your check made out to: **FCPOS, P.O. Box 821, Clifton Park, New York 12065**

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Yes, I would like to help the Friends of Clifton Park Open Space in their work to preserve the "Park" in Clifton Park.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

FCPOS GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

PLACE: SHENENDEHOWA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

TIME: 7:30 PM, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21ST

7:30 PM, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19TH

CLIFTON PARK TOWN BOARD MEETINGS

PLACE: TOWN HALL

TIME: EVERY MONDAY NIGHT, 7:00 PM

CLIFTON PARK PLANNING BOARD MEETINGS

PLACE: TOWN HALL

TIME: EVERY 2ND & 4TH TUESDAY NIGHT, 7:00 PM

CONCERNED ABOUT CLEARCUTTING OF TREE IN THE NORTHWAY MEDIAN AND ALONG THE I-87 RIGHT OF WAY?

Call Dan Moore, Director of Design for these projects and NYS Department of Transportation, Region 1 at (518) 474-3015 to express your objections and ideas you may have about preferable alternatives.

Friends of Clifton Park Open Space
PO Box 821
Clifton Park, New York 12065

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

There are Many Ways You Can Help.....

Our public meetings are held most every month on the third Thursday. (See schedule at left) Perhaps you would like to help the group in some way but cannot attend the meetings to get involved.

Don't fear...there are many tasks that need addressing and maybe you have a limited amount of time to lend to a specific task. Listed below you will find some of the jobs we would appreciate if you could lend a hand at. Call Margaret Catellier at 371-6392 if you are interested in assisting the group in one of these ways.

Thanks in advance!

1. Take photographs of some of the scenic areas around you. These can be recreational, ecological, agricultural or just lovely to look at. Remember all the different seasons of the year.
2. Be available on an ad hoc basis to distribute posters about special public meetings, walks, events, etc.
3. Take charge of sending press releases to the local papers. We would provide the list of mailing, emailing or faxing names, numbers or addresses as well as the articles. Just take care of getting them out on a timely basis.
4. Do research on various topics—track “Smart Growth” bills in the NYS Legislature, review successful open space town and zoning laws in other areas like Red Hook, NY or Pittsford, NY.
5. Arrange fund-raising activities---an Art Exhibit, Bake Sale or Tag sale, neighborhood drives, etc.
6. Help with a special event like the Agricultural Informational Forum we sponsored in April.❖

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up and down the East Coast, measuring the number of ticks infected, how many ticks there are, what is the rates of infection are and what is the local diversity of birds, mammals and reptiles," said Ostfeld. "We are doing some of these studies this summer at 12 sites in upstate New York."

For example, New York, with 28 different species of mammals and 30 Lyme disease cases per 100,000 is not as diverse as, say, Georgia, with 38 different species of mammals and fewer than one case per 100,000. Deer ticks capable of carrying the bacteria, meanwhile, are evenly spread from north to south, said Ostfeld. Species diversity is greatest in warmer climates to the south.

Might increasing species diversity be a new way to control Lyme disease?

Not any time soon, said Dennis White, director of the Tick-borne Disease Institute at the New York State Department of Health. "Current interventions are designed to target mice or deer to keep them from getting infected, but not to manipulate the populations of individual species."

"If anything, this study is a wake-up calls that when people move into areas that are natural, they are going to be exposed to diseases that are there," said White.

Where you have the right combination of ticks, animal species and human presence you are bound to have a higher incidence of Lyme disease in the populations"

Importance of Ecology

Ostfeld and Keesing are now looking further into how small wooded lots affect the incidence of Lyme disease. They recently completed a survey of ticks in different-sized wooded patches in New York's Dutchess County. By counting how many of the ticks carry the Lyme disease bacteria, they can correlate the size of the forest patch with the risk for Lyme disease.

The researchers hope to discover whether keeping large wooded spaces around new homes can decrease the rate of Lyme disease, or whether small wooded areas are just as good. "What we find could be used to influence planning of housing developments," said Ostfeld.

"A lot of people are just waking up to how ecology affects infectious diseases," said Ostfeld. Insect-borne diseases such as Lyme, West Nile encephalitis and malaria rely for transmission on the complex interplay of insects, animals and humans.

And yet, said Ostfeld, "the ecological aspect of infectious diseases is often overlooked."

Excerpted from the Schenectady Gazette 7-17-00

1990 Census Data for the Town of Clifton Park.....Let's see what happens with the upcoming 2000 Census!

Total Persons:	31,271	Age:	Under 1 Year:	429	55 to 59 Years:	1,207
Total Households:	11,441		1 and 2 Years:	964	60 and 61 Years:	480
Sex: Male	15,455		3 and 4 Years:	1,086	62 to 64 Years:	586
Female	15,816		5 Years:	547	65 to 69 Years:	795
Educational Attainment:			6 Years:	486	70 to 74 Years:	563
(Persons 25 years and over)			7 to 9 Years:	1,511	75 to 79 Years:	355
Less than 9 th Grade:	597		10 and 11 Years:	936	80 to 84 Years:	201
9 th to 12 th Grade, no diploma:	1,217		12 and 13 Years:	780	85 Years +:	93
High School Graduate:	4,481		14 Years:	361		
Some College, no degree:	3,243		15 Years:	464		
Associate Degree:	2,050		16 Years:	461		
Bachelor's Degree:	5,231		17 Years:	485		
Graduate or Professional Degree:	3,259		18 Years:	327		
Housing Units:			19 Years:	335		
Median Year Structure Built:	1975		20 Years:	400	Mean Income by Town:	
Bedrooms: No Bedrooms:	44		21 Years:	368	City of Mechaniville:	\$28,197
1 Bedroom:	1,246		22 to 24 Years:	1,253	Waterford:	\$36,620
2 Bedroom:	3,289		25 to 29 Years:	2,820	Stillwater:	\$38,145
3 Bedrooms:	3,439		30 to 34 Years:	3,005	Halfmoon:	\$40,894
4 Bedrooms:	3,708		35 to 39 Years:	2,975	Malta:	\$43,924
5 or more:	562		40 to 44 Years:	2,987	Ballston:	\$45,104
Median Value:	\$137,200		45 to 49 Years:	2,458	Clifton Park:	\$62,029
Median Household Income:	\$49,172		50 to 54 Years:	1,553	Southern Saratoga Average:	\$42,130