

New Greenway Guide: Slower, Safer Streets

By: John Clarke, Development & Design Coordinator

Greenway Connections, which initially included 18 Greenway Guides, was completed in 2000 and has since been adopted as a voluntary compact program of land use policies and guidelines by the County and 29 out of 30 Dutchess County communities. Designed as a three-ring binder, *Greenway Connections* was always intended to be a living document with additional guides adopted in response to changing circumstances and needs. The Greenway Compact is entirely voluntary, respects local home rule, and relies on incentives and guidelines rather than any requirements.

This eNewsletter introduces the second of several draft Greenway Guides for public review, comments, and eventual adoption by local municipalities. “Slower, Safer Streets” offers design recommendations to calm traffic speeds on local streets in developed areas. Designing narrower streets that encourage slower speeds is more effective than trying to manage traffic on overly wide streets with speed limit signs or enforcement measures. Many communities have street specifications that reflect outdated, suburban standards or have one-size-fits-all dimensions. This guide for streets in centers will be supplemented by a similar one for lower volume rural roads (March/April 2010).

B4 **Strengthening Centers**

GREENWAY GUIDE

SLOWER, SAFER STREETS

Design narrow streets in cities, villages, and hamlet centers with buildings close to sidewalks, street trees, and other pedestrian-friendly features that promote slower speeds.

Narrow streets with short setbacks and framed by buildings like an outdoor room are safer, since closer clearances to storefronts, on-street parking, and overhanging trees tend to slow vehicle speeds. Studies show that narrow lanes and street trees can reduce the severity of car crashes, with one eight-year study finding that injury accidents rose over 400% as streets increased in width from 24 feet to 36 feet.¹

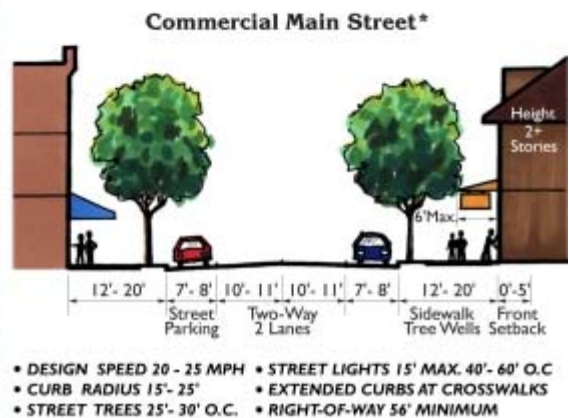
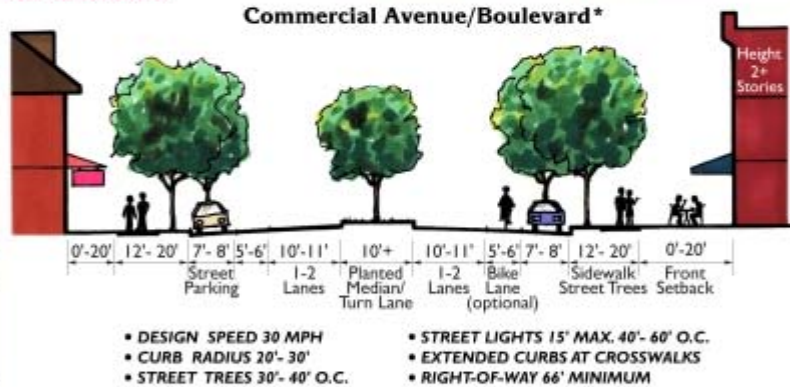


Skinnier streets with tighter corner radii also shorten crosswalks, use less land, reduce stormwater runoff, and cut construction and maintenance costs, contributing to less expensive initial housing prices and lower long-term taxes. Narrow, pedestrian-friendly streets reduce speeds more reliably than just speed limit signs or irregular enforcement. And slowing traffic to 30 mph can actually move more cars through an area per hour than faster speeds, which compel drivers to increase gaps between vehicles. Safe, smoothly flowing traffic should be the goal for street design in centers.



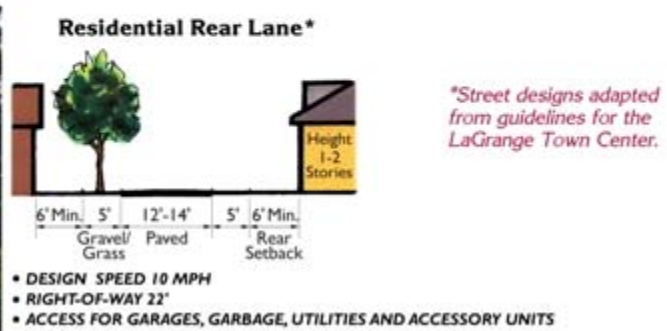
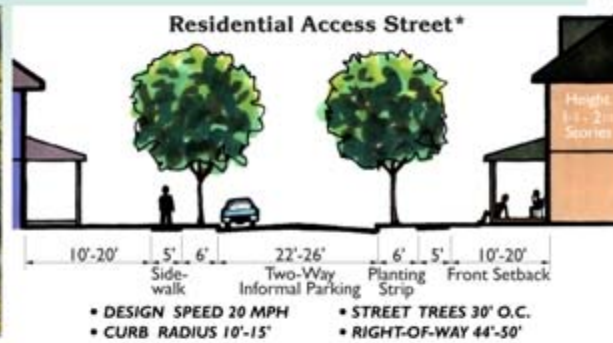
Compare two main streets: one is difficult to cross and looks like a highway, while the other is narrow, balancing cars with walkability.

Commercial Street Guidelines for Centers



This guide is intended for local streets, not higher volume state or county thoroughfares.

Residential Street Guidelines for Centers



What about fire and emergency access?

Street design must consider both traffic and fire safety, but vehicle crash injuries far outnumber fire injuries, by up to 185 to 1. Having multiple ways to get to a fire from an interconnected street system with short blocks and rear access lanes is more important than making all streets wider and prone to higher everyday traffic speeds. The Village of Tivoli significantly narrowed two of its main intersections for traffic and pedestrian safety, but first chalked the proposed curb lines on the pavement and made sure that the fire trucks could still easily make the turns.



Curb extensions narrow intersection, Village of Tivoli

Sources:

Dan Burden, *Street Design Guidelines for Healthy Neighborhoods*, Local Government Commission, 1999

Walter M. Kulash, *Residential Streets, Third Edition*, Urban Land Institute, 2001

Philip Langdon, "Context-sensitive design makes headway with planners, engineers," *New Urban News*, June 2003

Share Your Feedback

The Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development is accepting public comments on this draft Greenway Guide. Please email your thoughts by January 15th to:
DCPlanningFederation@co.dutchess.ny.us

Visit the [Planning Department's website](#) for information on the Greenway program.

[CLICK HERE](#) to view past issues of the DCPF's newsletter, *Plan On It*.

This newsletter was developed by the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development, in conjunction with the Dutchess County Planning Federation.

To unsubscribe from our e-newsletter mailing list, please send an email with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject line to DCPlanningFederation@co.dutchess.ny.us.