



*Educate.  
Advocate.  
Act.*

**Sustainable Saratoga**  
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February 16, 2021

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Administrator of Parks, Open Lands, Historic Preservation & Sustainability

City of Saratoga Springs

City Hall, 474 Broadway

Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

**RE: Missing Links project**

Dear Tina,

Thanks for inviting us to learn about the Missing Links sidewalk project. You made a great presentation. Our city is very fortunate to have received such a sizeable grant to support the construction of so many connections in our sidewalk system. By providing safe pedestrian pathways, these additions will go a long way toward making Saratoga Springs a more sustainable city, fulfilling the recommendations of our Comprehensive Plan and Complete Streets Plan to promote walking and biking.

We were glad to hear that, in the planning for the alignment of new sidewalk segments, so much importance was given to the protection of existing trees. However, we agree that, when necessary, some significant trees will have to be removed.

Trees are important components of green infrastructure. The canopies of large trees that extend over streets intercept rainfall and significantly reduce the amount of stormwater runoff that eventually makes its way into streams, wetlands, ponds, and lakes. Once new sidewalks are constructed, their locations are not likely to change. Rather than aligning a length of sidewalk closer to the street to protect a few existing trees outside the street right-of-way, the sidewalk should be aligned as far as possible from the street to leave tree belts wide enough to accommodate large street trees. Six feet or more would be ideal for large trees. Widths of four feet or less would require the planting of smaller trees whose smaller crowns would provide fewer benefits.

For existing significant trees that are too close to the optimal alignment, the sidewalk should be curved around the root flare. There wouldn't be too many of these locations, and the curves would bring attention to the value the City gives to the health of the urban forest. Far in the future, when these trees have reached the end of their long lives, the sidewalk can be realigned.

Once the new sidewalks are in place, and as soon as possible after a substantial tree-planting budget has been restored, we hope that the new segments will be lined with new street trees.

Sincerely,

Tom Denny, Chair  
Sustainable Saratoga's Urban Forestry Project

Wendy Mahaney, Executive Director  
Sustainable Saratoga

