

Pottstown's Shade Tree Program

Pottstown – Asphalt jungle?

Downtown Pottstown is mostly asphalt and rooftops. There's not much green, even in the summer. As a result, cities and towns like Pottstown are often much hotter than the surrounding suburbs.

Hot roofs and pavements, baked by the sun, warm the air blowing over them. The resulting urban "heat island" causes discomfort, hikes air conditioning bills, and accelerates air pollution.

A study by four energy experts, reported in the MIT Technology Review, concluded that the two least expensive and most effective methods to reduce energy consumption in cities and towns are:

- * Use lighter colored roofs and pavement.
- * Plant lots of trees.



Towns need trees more than the suburbs

Pottstown does not have the huge lawns of the suburbs or the open fields of the countryside. We are densely populated, with houses and other buildings placed close to each other and to the street. We have lots of paved surfaces and rooftops, especially in the older parts of town.

If we want to bring nature into our town, we must do it with shade trees. Even big cities can be green and shady if they plant hundreds of big trees.



*In Paris, the streets **are** the parks*



Boston's Back Bay is one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in America. It enjoys lots of big trees to bring nature into the city.

Trees improve Pottstown's quality of life

Pottstown has 3,300 street trees. Street trees are publicly owned shade trees located in grass planting strips between the curb and sidewalk, or in pits within the sidewalk itself. These trees greatly enhance the environment and quality of life in our town:

- * Trees fight global warming by absorbing greenhouses gases like carbon dioxide from the air.
- * Trees filter pollutants from the air. Street trees can attract and remove up to 75 percent of airborne dirt, dust, pollen and smoke from the air, binding it to their leaves until the rain washes it back to the earth.
- * Trees lower ambient temperatures, making Pottstown cooler in the summer. One mature tree provides the cooling equivalent of five 10,000 BTU air conditioners running 20 hours daily.
- * Trees reduce energy consumption by reducing the need to run air conditioners.
- * Trees soften the urban environment. They unify disparate buildings and screen eyesores.

Many of Pottstown's street trees were planted between 1984 and 1989 by Trees Inc., a private, non-profit organization. The photos below show the difference trees have made:



1983



Today



1983



Today



1983



Today

Outdoor rooms

When we build houses, our indoor living space is divided into different rooms.



Historically, when we built our cities and towns, we made our streets into outdoor rooms, with the walls formed by the buildings on either side of the street, like Delft, or Paris, or Pottstown.



Delft



Paris



Pottstown

Trees create “cathedral ceilings” for outdoor rooms

Consider the most magnificent of buildings: the cathedral. Pillars on each side of the sanctuary are stone imitations of tree trunks, and the latticework ceilings are stone imitations of tree branches



Our outdoor living spaces can become cathedrals of green, with the tree canopy creating a "cathedral ceiling" over our streets.

Creating a high canopy for "cathedral ceilings"

To form a canopy over our streets, and to cool our houses, trees must grow to a height of at least 40 feet. Trees that grow too low block the way, make dark passageways, and obstruct windows and signs.



Too low



Correct height



These trees are trimmed to create a high canopy and let in plenty of light.



In Paris, trees have their lower branches removed at an early age.



These trees were planted on the 300 block of Walnut Street by Trees Inc. in 1984. They have now grown tall enough to form a "cathedral ceiling" over the street. The lower limbs have been removed, so the canopy is least 16 feet above the street.

Pottstown's tree trimming policy

With the approval of the Pottstown Shade Tree Commission, a private non-profit corporation called Trees Inc. has been regularly trimming Pottstown's younger street trees. These trees are being "elevated" – that is, their lower branches are being removed - as the trees grow.

Our goal is that once a tree reaches a height of more than 30 feet (well above the second story of a building), the lowest branches will be 16 feet off the ground.