



# How to Prevent Tree/Sign Conflicts

TREE CITY USA®  
BULLETIN

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**WRONG:** The signs are visible, but without trees the streetscape is harsh and unpleasant.



**WRONG:** Because the trees are not properly pruned and one of the signs is poorly located, business signs are difficult to see.



**RIGHT:** By correctly locating signs and pruning trees, business areas can have both beautiful trees and readable signs.

**S**igns are the lifeblood of most businesses. But so is a friendly, inviting shopping environment. Trees can provide a softened touch to an otherwise harsh downtown area and reduce even the most imposing buildings to human scale, and they can do it without interfering with signs.

The saying goes that some people shop to live, and others live to shop. That may be so, but one thing that is certain is that few of us enjoy the trudge between stores. In recent years, smart shopping mall designers have taken note of this fact and have gone to great lengths to provide interesting, appealing indoor decor to enhance the between-shop experience.

Outside the mall in the sprawling parking lots and in the central business area of town, trees can be an important way to provide an interesting, attractive business environment.

They do this by giving the area a unified appearance even if stores vary widely in architectural design; they also “soften” hard building materials, sidewalks and harsh streets, and add color, character and seasonal variety. Of course, they also provide their cool, welcome shade in summer.

How ironic, then, that some merchants oppose tree planting or ask that trees be removed. The reason is usually signs. Signs are a merchant’s link to customers and they must be seen to do their job. If a tree blocks the view, the conclusion by many business owners is that the tree must go.

Fortunately, there are proven ways to prevent the conflict between visible signs and the benefits of trees. Through improved signage, proper planting and planned tree care, an improved business environment can be created and both the businesses and the community will benefit from the presence of trees.