



Percent for Place

The Case for Civic Infrastructure

Local leaders and policymakers across the country are starting to invest in quality of place—creating livable neighborhoods, thriving commercial districts, and lively entertainment and recreation zones—as a community and economic development strategy for cities, towns and villages. Building and maintaining this high-quality civic infrastructure is an essential element of successful community revitalization.

What is civic infrastructure?

Civic infrastructure is the totality of the public places where Americans connect with each other: the parks, trails, town squares, main streets, play spaces, libraries, and other gathering spaces located in every type of community across the country.



Why civic infrastructure?

Decades of research have proven that when communities have well-funded, programmed and managed civic infrastructure, people and communities thrive. Civic infrastructure is a holistic investment that can:

- **Boost the local economy** by making communities more attractive places to live and work, drawing in visitors, and providing people more opportunities for social connections that improve individual and family economic outcomes.
- **Improve health and well-being** by providing people access to nature, giving families places to recreate and exercise, and fostering the social interactions that are vital to better mental and physical health outcomes.
- **Reduce violence and crime** by creating a high-quality built environment which research shows enhances feelings of safety and attracts a critical mass of people to public spaces, commercial corridors, and town centers in order to naturally deter negative activity. In addition, improving or increasing green space has been shown to decrease violent crime, reduce stress, and improve mental wellbeing.
- **Provide more resilient and sustainable communities** by keeping residents cool during heat waves through natural and manufactured shade, enhancing a community's water management infrastructure to reduce flooding, and improving wildfire management through incorporating green spaces near residential areas. It also supports the social relationships between people which have been shown to increase participation in local governance and improve a community's ability to respond to and recover from disasters.



What can you do?

For local leaders and practitioners interested in maximizing the potential of civic infrastructure in their community, start first by committing to an ambition for high-quality, inclusive, and well-managed civic infrastructure. Urban, suburban, and rural settings provide different, but equally powerful, opportunities to design civic infrastructure that addresses local and national challenges.

Here are a few ways to begin:

- Advocate for robust civic infrastructure in your community.
- Design, maintain and provide access to quality public spaces for everyone in your community, and support public spaces that encourage interaction among people of all backgrounds.
- Invest federal, state, and local dollars into civic infrastructure that specifically seeks to create more equitable economic impacts, counter social isolation, boost well-being, and improve climate resilience.
- Prioritize an accessible, walkable, and bikeable public realm, including better sidewalks, bike lane networks, trails and greenways to increase connections among people as they go about their daily activities.
- Activate key neighborhood commercial districts to serve as gathering places, as well as places for commerce.



About Percent for Place

Percent for Place is a coalition of local, state, and national nonprofit organizations that advocates for greater federal funding for civic infrastructure. Our goal is for a small, ongoing percentage of federal spending to be dedicated to civic infrastructure, to provide a reliable stream of funding for high-quality, shared assets in communities across the country.



Center on Rural
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Reimagining
the Civic Commons

RURAL ASSEMBLY
BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE NATION

