City Parks: America’s New Infrastructure

NOVA Urban Forest Conference
November 9 | 2017
CITY PARKS ALLIANCE ORGANIZATIONAL VISION

City Parks Alliance leads and serves a network of diverse organizations that encompass the parks world, from neighborhood groups to government agencies, championing high quality urban parks throughout the nation.

City Parks Alliance is vital to sound public policy and citizen engagement that recognizes city parks as integral to ensuring that communities are equitable, healthy, green, and engaged and that cities are economically competitive and resilient.
• **Leading Edge Thought** – curating and promoting the latest research, case studies, and opinions on the potential of city parks

• **Advocacy** – supporting federal funding for city parks as well as empowering local groups to secure public and private investment

• **Connecting Park Leaders** – strengthening cross-sector partnerships for funding, governance, research, and on-the-ground results
Webinars
Urban Park Study Tours
Online Agreements Database
Case Studies
Knowledge Sharing Forum
City Workshops
NATIONAL STUDY OF NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS
WE ARE
MAYORS
ADVOCATING FOR PARKS

Mayor Betsy Price (R)
Fort Worth, TX

Mayor Michael B. Hancock (D)
Denver, CO
How do we Make the Case for City Parks?

• *City Parks: America’s New Infrastructure* – five-part video series on the multiple benefits of parks

• *City Parks Are A Smart Investment For America’s Health, Economy, & Environment* - infographics

• Emerging Issues Opinion Series
CITY PARKS: AMERICA’S NEW INFRASTRUCTURE

- Interviews with local business leaders, real estate developers, elected officials, urban design and park professionals, academics, and others
- Projects in Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Nashville, New York, New Orleans, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC.
- The series includes an overview video and four others focused on Transportation, Resilience, Health, and Economic benefits of city parks
- www.cityparksalliance.org/infrastructure
CITY PARKS ARE A SMART INVESTMENT FOR AMERICA’S HEALTH, ECONOMY, & ENVIRONMENT
City Parks Improve Health and Reduce Costs

**PHYSICAL BENEFITS**

Nearly **HALF** of all adults in the U.S. have chronic health conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes and obesity.

About **1 in 3** children in the U.S. is either **obese or overweight**.

Studies show that people **EXERCISE MORE** if they have access to **PARKS** and other safe outdoor places. **Physical activity** reduces and can prevent these serious health problems.

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City Parks Improve Health and Reduce Costs

MENTAL BENEFITS

Mental illness affects over 43 MILLION adults in the U.S. according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

Studies have shown that people who have access to parks are more likely to exercise. Exercise reduces anxiety and depression and can help alleviate symptoms of a variety of mental health conditions, including dementia and Alzheimer's.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Greening of vacant urban land has been shown to decrease public safety crimes.
COST SAVINGS

The high costs of chronic diseases each year in the U.S. include:

**OBESITY**
$147 BILLION

**DIABETES**
$245 BILLION

**HEART DISEASE**
$108 BILLION

Maintaining a healthy weight saves $1,500 per person in healthcare costs a year.

Parks help to reduce the costs of healthcare.
City Parks Provide Economic Benefits

PARKS ATTRACT RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES.
People want to live and businesses want to locate in cities that have access to parks.

Nashville’s investment in downtown parks has contributed to a 50% increase in the number of 25 to 34 year olds with college degrees moving to Nashville’s urban core over the last decade.

PARKS INCREASE PROPERTY VALUES.

+50%

Houses near parks or trails have 5–20% higher property values than those in the surrounding community.

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Parks contribute to increased revenue for cities.
The National Association of Home Builders found that 65% of home shoppers surveyed felt that parks would seriously influence them to move to a community.

Property tax is one of the most important revenue streams for cities. Cities receive an increase in property tax revenue from people moving back to the cities. Since 2000, the number of young, educated adults moving to livable, walkable urban neighborhoods has increased 37%.

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City Parks Provide Economic Benefits

PARKS LOWER INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS FOR CITIES.

Cities are creating and using parks as a green infrastructure approach to managing stormwater and preventing flooding.

Philadelphia is saving $14 BILLION by managing storm water and preventing flooding with parks and green infrastructure instead of new pipes and tunnels.
City Parks Provide Environmental Benefits

PARKS CLEAN THE AIR.  
The leaves on trees in urban parks remove toxins from the air, such as carbon monoxide, that can pose serious health risks to people.

PARKS PROVIDE $3.8 BILLION IN AIR POLLUTION SAVINGS.  
Urban trees in the U.S. remove 711,000 TONS of air pollution annually, at a value of $3.8 BILLION not only saving money but also improving public health.

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City Parks Provide Environmental Benefits

PARKS CLEAN THE WATER.
Parks absorb water better than concrete and asphalt. Parks with green areas can help to reduce water pollution, protect drinking water and decrease rates of waterborne illnesses thereby improving environmental health and saving communities money.

PARKS KEEP CITIES COOLER.
Asphalt and concrete absorb the day’s heat and radiate it at night. Parks help to cool cities.

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Parks Make Cities More Resilient.
Nationwide cities are confronted with the impacts of climate change and increased flooding.

Hurricane Sandy caused up to $70 billion in damages to communities.

Cities are creating and using parks as a green infrastructure approach to managing stormwater and preventing flooding.

Using just one park and investing in green infrastructure instead of gray infrastructure, the City of Atlanta is saving at least $16 million.
Influencing Stakeholders and Other Decision-Makers

• Consistent voice on the value and role of parks as infrastructure
• Identify the right outlets to reach government officials and potential collaborators

EMERGING ISSUES OPINION SERIES