



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Implementing a Stimulus Package that will Create Safe, Healthy, Livable Communities
The American Society of Landscape Architects
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Healthy Communities: President-elect Obama's platform on "Promoting a Healthy Environment" states, "How a community is designed – including the layout of its roads, buildings, and parks – has a huge impact on the health of its residents." For decades landscape architects have been designing communities that support active and healthy lifestyles by linking homes, schools, businesses, parks, and recreation facilities together with walking and bicycle paths and sidewalks that provide opportunities for daily physical activity as well as safe and easy alternatives to driving. During consideration of an economic stimulus package, ASLA urges investing critical infrastructure dollars in projects that re-design existing communities to be more pedestrian and bicycle friendly and create other recreational opportunities for its residents.

Moreover, ASLA recommends increased funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which purchases land, water, and wetlands to help preserve, develop, and ensure access to outdoor recreation facilities to strengthen the health of residents. Many states and localities access the LWCF as a revenue source to create parklands and other recreational development. Providing adequate funding for this program will help to ensure that Americans have access to ample recreational spaces, which could greatly increase their health and well-being.

Further, the infrastructure of our national parks is crumbling. Some estimates suggest that there is a nearly \$3 billion backlog of deferred maintenance projects within the National Park Service (NPS), including road, bridge, landscape, and visitor-center maintenance projects. A stimulus package should include funding for NPS to address these critical infrastructure issues, which would provide important job opportunities for our citizens while also preserving recreational environments across our nation.

Managing Water Resources: Our water and sewer systems, another vital part of our national infrastructure, are also decaying. Because of impermeable roadways, buildings, and other impervious surfaces, rain and snowfall in the United States results in billions of gallons of stormwater runoff and combined sewer overflows (CSOs), which stress our stormwater management systems and affect the quality of our nation's drinking water.

In many communities, landscape architects are successfully employing green infrastructure techniques, including green roofs, tree plantings, bioswales, stormwater curb extensions, permeable pavement, and other land contour techniques as a strategy for managing stormwater, reducing runoff, and eliminating CSOs. These techniques are effective, cost-efficient alternatives to managing our water infrastructure needs. Thus, ASLA also requests funding for innovative green strategies to address our aging water infrastructure.

In particular, ASLA urges support for funding for green municipalities programs that give priority to projects that utilize green infrastructure to manage stormwater and CSOs, particularly projects like those highlighted in the Environmental Protection Agency's Green Infrastructure Case Studies.

Sustainable Transportation Corridors: Landscape architects help communities by designing multi-use transportation corridors that accommodate all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, persons with disabilities, and people who use public transportation. These multi-use transportation systems reduce reliance on single use automotive transport, which in turn reduces traffic, improves air quality, and promotes a more healthful environment.

Any stimulus package that provides funding for surface transportation projects should include Complete Streets language so that all modes of transportation projects receive fair and adequate levels of funding.

Also, currently many state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) receive three times as many Safe Routes To Schools applications as there is available funding. Thus, ASLA recommends that the stimulus package include funding for ready-to-go and "Rapid Response" Safe Routes to Schools projects around the country. "Rapid Response" Safe Routes to Schools projects allow state DOTs to expedite projects by hiring design, planning, and engineering professionals to immediately work with local grantees to do the planning, regulatory clearance, and construction of SRTS projects, which means that important projects are implemented and completed in a more expeditious and efficient manner.

Also currently awaiting federal funding are several bicycle and pedestrian facilities projects around the country. These important projects will connect transportation networks, improve safety, and require the least transportation costs. ASLA strongly urges support for funding for these "ready-to-go" bicycle and pedestrian projects and for funding for the planning and design of additional facilities that are desperately needed in more communities. These important design and construction projects will not only provide much-needed jobs in towns across our country, they will also provide Americans with more sustainable options for transportation.

Tax Relief for Small Businesses: Finally, ASLA recommends that a stimulus package include tax incentives for small businesses that would reduce some of the tax burdens associated with payroll taxes and capital gains taxes on start-up small businesses. In addition, extending the investment expensing limit would encourage small firms to pursue investing during these difficult economic times.

With nearly 80 percent of landscape architects working in private practice, many in small landscape architecture firms with fewer than 10 employees, tax relief is needed by these businesses so that they can continue to employ hard-working Americans and continue their important work of designing safe, healthy, livable communities.