

# Making the Business Case for Activity-Friendly Places

HOW LOCAL LEADERS CAN CREATE VIBRANT PLACES THAT WORK FOR EVERYONE

## Measurable benefits of activity-friendly settings

Which lead to economic benefits like:

Which contribute to:

 Greater walkability

 More small business development

 Higher retail sales

 Longer and healthier lives

 Better air quality

 Balanced vacancy rates

 Higher employment rates

 NCCOR convened a panel of experts who identified potential economic factors that may change with efforts to support more activity-friendly communities. Among these, the following benefits rose to the top!

 Fewer vehicle miles traveled

 Increased property values and tax revenues

 The possibility of more affordable housing

## Activity-friendly places help meet many local community needs



Activity-friendly places<sup>2</sup>



- Fewer vehicle miles traveled
- Less traffic congestion
- Better infrastructure design

**Lead to:**

- Cleaner air
- Less noise
- Better ability to handle extreme weather<sup>3</sup>



- Safe, accessible places
- Mix of everyday destinations
- Access to transit and trails
- Affordable housing

**Lead to:**

- More robust retail activity
- More jobs
- Increased tax revenue<sup>4</sup>



- Safe, convenient, appealing choices

**Lead to:**

- Healthier people today, tomorrow, and years from now
- Lower health care costs in the long run<sup>5</sup>

## Popular approaches communities use to create activity-friendly places

### TRANSPORTATION

- Support policies such as Complete Streets to ensure every road is safe.
- Use rail, utility, and waterfront corridors to create transportation trail networks.
- Implement Safe Routes and Vision Zero initiatives that slow neighborhood traffic and improve safety for all.

### HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT

- Create affordable, diverse, and accessible housing near jobs, essential services, and transit routes.
- Utilize thoughtful planning and zoning to create more compact, mixed, and accessible places for people of all abilities.
- Provide planning expertise and funding, particularly for communities without planning staff.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Require broad input to develop a community vision and comprehensive plan to guide healthier designs and community safety.
- Use pro-active, in-community approaches such as walk audits and listening sessions to gather inclusive input.
- Engage businesses and developers on healthy design policies and creative funding opportunities.



## Saving an iconic bridge for a pedestrian and bike trail catalyzed Chattanooga's rebirth.

POP. 175,000

Saving the Walnut Street Bridge for pedestrians and bicyclists, along with turning a highway into a magnificent waterfront area and trail, was key to revitalizing Chattanooga, TN. Instead of focusing solely on moving vehicles through the area, the department of transportation worked collaboratively with the community to:

- » Restore access to the Tennessee River
- » Extend downtown beyond the urban core
- » Create a defining element of the city's bicycle and pedestrian trail network
- » Economically revitalize downtown Chattanooga

### THE APPROACH:

- » Transportation trails
- » More Complete Streets citywide

### KEY BENEFITS:

- » Less vehicle miles traveled
- » Improved air quality
- » Improved walkability



## Investing in a walkable downtown brought businesses back to Sulphur Springs.

POP. 15,000

Sulphur Springs, TX's courthouse square had turned into a downtown dominated by paved parking lots, one-way streets, and 80% vacancy in storefronts. A spirited redesign funded with tax increment financing and led by tremendous community engagement created:

- » A vibrant green and public gathering space
- » Two-way pedestrian-friendly streets
- » More places for people to shop, dine, and socialize
- » More dedicated spaces for people to move about safely

### THE APPROACH:

- » Inclusive community engagement and planning led to Complete Streets and Safe Routes efforts focused especially on state roads cutting through downtown.

### KEY BENEFITS:

- » Increased property tax and retail revenue
- » Lower vacancy rates
- » More small businesses and jobs
- » Less vehicle miles traveled



## Historic preservation and affordable housing are key to Morganton's healthy downtown.

POP. 17,000

Morganton, NC rebuilt an accessible downtown with diverse housing types nearby. Community members worked together with local businesses to:

- » Preserve the town's character
- » Re-energize business development by combining a historic theater with adjacent underutilized buildings to create a multi-screen theater on the courthouse square, rather than in an edge-of-town strip development
- » Re-use former industrial buildings and creatively redevelop affordable housing options near downtown

### THE APPROACH:

- » Maintaining and improving housing affordability
- » Creative planning and zoning to support mixed redevelopment in and near downtown

### KEY BENEFITS:

- » Improved housing affordability
- » More small businesses preserved
- » Increased retail sales
- » More jobs



For more information on activity-friendly places and how to make the case in your community, visit [www.nccor.org/physical-activity/econimpact](http://www.nccor.org/physical-activity/econimpact)

#### REFERENCES

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