

Complete Streets Help Pave Schenectady's Resurgence

Capital Roots



Capital Roots is partnering with the City of Schenectady to build alternative transportation infrastructure and support accessibility-focused planning.

This movement, known as Complete Streets, increases people's ability to safely walk, bike, use public transportation, and drive, simultaneously improving health outcomes by increasing physical activity and reducing air pollution. Complete Streets spurs economic growth by decreasing transportation costs and connecting people to their jobs, neighborhood businesses, faith-based organizations, health care providers, and schools. It benefits communities by improving the mobility of youth, elderly, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups.

Making Schenectady Healthier, Wealthier, and Strong Again

Schenectady, formerly known as the Electric City, was once a major manufacturing hub. Over the last decade, however, manufacturing has moved out. Like other once-thriving industrial cities, Schenectady has suffered from a declining population and economic downturn. Today, Schenectady is championing Complete Streets, which has been identified as a critical element to the city's current resurgence. Given its location along the Mohawk River and Mohawk-Hudson Trail, city officials have recognized the importance of helping residents and visitors reconnect to downtown, where new businesses, eateries, and event spaces are opening in previously vacant spaces. This involves working to make streets and sidewalks accessible to pedestrians and cyclists.

Partnering for Impact, One Street at a Time

In July 2016, Capital Roots worked with city staff and community partners to design, install, and test a "pop-up" traffic-calming strategy on Washington Street in the Stockade neighborhood. Capital Roots demonstrated the effectiveness of Complete Streets by installing contemporary bike lanes, a roundabout, and pedestrian safety signage.



Neighbors check out the region's first contra-flow bike lane

This pop-up led to more sustainable change: the city is permanently enhancing its bicycle network with contra-flow bike lanes, which allow bicyclists to ride in the opposite direction of motor vehicle traffic safely.

Capital Roots has continued to partner with the city and county, the regional Metropolitan Planning Organization, and other nonprofits to host pop-up demonstrations. In collaboration with the Boys and Girls Club in September 2016, an event featuring new bike lanes and crosswalks, and a bike rodeo was held on Craig Street in the

Hamilton Hill neighborhood. In addition, a guided bike ride demonstrated the benefits of being able to walk and bike to destinations. This year, Capital Roots sought supplemental funding to design and install two enhanced intersections. The project will use painted bump-outs, bollards, and new crosswalks to enhance pedestrian safety for users of all abilities.

“Right now I take the bus because we only have one car. I would love to ride a bike if the roads were safer.”

Yates Village resident



One of several public bike fix-it stations in the city

Capital Roots’ Healthy Streets Program has also helped the city take a thoughtful approach to community engagement, which has been an ongoing challenge. For example, in 2017, Capital Roots staff worked with city and county officials to host an event at Yates Village, the city’s largest public housing facility. In addition to showcasing a bike lane and providing educational outreach, the event featured a helmet giveaway and free bike repairs, which created a lot of excitement among attendees. Capital Roots Healthy Streets Program staff conducted a survey, which highlighted the need for accessible bike maintenance. Using CHSC funds, Capital Roots installed three bike fix-it stations—two at the community centers and one at the gateway of the bike trail— that can be accessed by anyone at any time.

Capital Roots’ work has led to pop-up demonstrations in two nearby towns. Capital Roots recently introduced a Complete Streets ordinance in Schenectady, similar to those adopted by three other local municipalities with the support of Capital Roots. Meanwhile, Capital Roots will continue to provide crucial traffic safety education and help the city return to a vibrant, healthy place for families to live and people to work.



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