

An aerial photograph of a large, lush green park in a city. The park features a large, circular paved area with a starburst pattern in the center, surrounded by winding paths and dense trees. In the background, a city skyline with several tall skyscrapers is visible under a hazy, orange-tinted sky, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The foreground is dominated by a large, bright yellow and orange graphic element that tapers towards the bottom right.

TOP 8 REASONS WHY PARKS MATTER



It's hard to quantify the many benefits that parks bring to a community. From providing a cleaner environment to supporting a more engaged and active community, the green spaces in our cities and towns are usually one of the things we love most about the places we live.

Here are eight of the many reasons why parks matter.

REASON NO. 1

Mental Health Benefits

Do you notice that you feel better after a walk in the park? That's not just hyperbole—science shows us that spending time in parks actually improves our mental health. In fact, proximity to greenspace has been associated with lower levels of stress and reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety. And a 2014 study found that people who move to greener urban environments experience sustained improvements to their mental health. So, the next time you're feeling stressed or overwhelmed—just spend a half an hour in your local park.

REASON NO. 2

Parks Encourage Active Lifestyles

It's a beautiful afternoon and you want to get outside and shake off the hours you spent sitting at work or school. Where do you go? The park, of course. Local parks feature hiking and biking trails, playgrounds and sports fields—and all of these are great for encouraging a more active lifestyle in park goers.

That kind of activity pays off in the long run, too. A study by Lancet Planetary Health found that urbanites who live in close proximity to a park are less likely to die before their life expectancy, thanks to the health benefits of green space.

REASON NO. 3

Parks Strengthen Local Economies

The presence of parks in a community help to boost the local economy by attracting residents and businesses. According to the City Parks Alliance, parks increase revenue for cities, spur private investment and increase job opportunities. The alliance points to Denver, CO as an example, where \$1.2 million federal park grants created over \$2.5 billion in local public and private investments—that's some serious bang for your buck.





REASON NO. 4

Decreased Crime and Revitalized Communities

Turning blighted properties and empty city lots into parks can go a long way toward decreasing crime rates and revitalizing communities. According to a [paper by the American Planning Association](#), parks can serve as central walking, resting and meeting places and can revive failing or threatened commercial areas. The association also points out that community residents and the city, working together on a neighborhood park, can turn around a distressed residential area.

REASON NO. 5

Parks Help Close Equity Gaps

There's a wide gap between communities that are rich in parks and those that are lacking in green space. The communities without access to parks are often underserved and exposed to negative environmental impacts, such as pollution. These environmental impacts can have negative consequences on the health of the people living there.

Parks, then, are not just about access to green space—they're an equity issue as well. When we build parks in all communities, everyone benefits, regardless of socioeconomic status.

REASON NO. 6

Parks are Good for Kids

[Guidelines from the Department of Health and Human Services](#) state that kids and teens ages six and older need at least an hour of physical activity each day. For many kids, however, finding a safe place to play outside can be a challenge if there aren't parks nearby.

When kids can escape to a park after school, they're less likely to stay at home on the couch watching TV or hunched over their phone or iPad playing games—both things that can have huge negative consequences on both their physical and mental health.

REASON NO. 7

Parks are Good for the Environment

Parks aren't just green sanctuaries for the people that enjoy them, they're extremely important to the plants and wildlife that live there, too. [One study found](#) that sites inside parks had 15% more species than did areas outside of parks. Even [pop-up parks](#) (small, temporary green spaces in urban environments) have been found to have heightened biodiversity, leading to an increase in pollination and nutrient cycling.

REASON NO. 8

Art and Cultural Programs

Parks aren't all about trails and picnics! In addition to the green space we enjoy and love, parks offer many art and cultural programs as well. From summer camps to musical events and everything in between, parks expose visitors to a variety of activities they may not have access to otherwise—and often for free or at a reduced cost.

ACTIVE Network partners with parks and rec departments across the world and has been able to see first-hand the incredible impact parks have.

Learn more about how ACTIVE can become your partner in building stronger communities.

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