_ASSE MB_Y ™

SHAPING SPACE FOR CIVIC LIFE

CONTENTS

Knight Foundation

Assembly is a pioneering effort to understand how **place-based design** informs a range of civic engagement outcomes. The initiative is being led by the Center for Active Design (CfAD), with support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and a diverse cross-section of expert advisors.

INTRODUCTION

Assembly is advancing a range of original research initiatives. This publication summarizes key findings from the **Assembly Civic Engagement Survey (ACES),** a large-sample survey fielded in 2016. ACES makes two major contributions to our understanding of place and engagement: 1) it illuminates the ways in which neighborhood design is connected to civic attitudes and behavior; and 2) it uses experiments to better measure the impact of specific design interventions on civic perceptions.
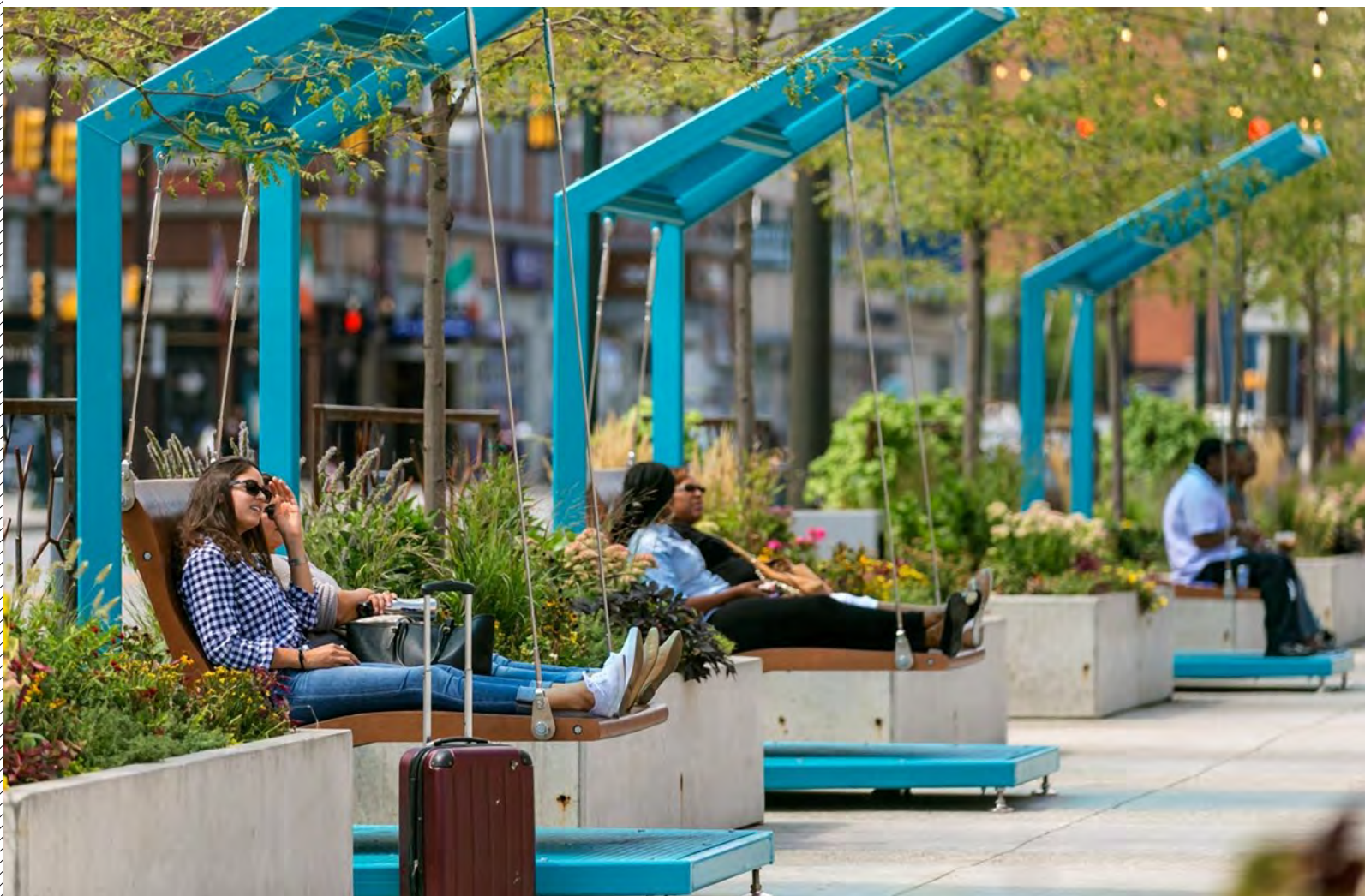
FOUR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

In collaboration with Knight Foundation and the Assembly Advisory Committee, CfAD has identified four civic engagement objectives that frame research efforts:

CIVIC TRUST AND APPRECIATION

Individuals feel they are a part of a collective civic identity. As such, they appreciate the value of public spaces and feel invited to participate. Individuals recognize local government and other responsible parties that provide and maintain collective civic assets.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE

Public spaces entice and provide the opportunity for contact and socialization with neighbors and strangers, facilitating equitable access and positive interactions among diverse groups.

STEWARDSHIP OF THE PUBLIC REALM

Individuals feel responsible for public spaces and express that in a practical way, by advocating for improvements and additional funding, and by participating in maintenance, programming, and beautification.

INFORMED LOCAL VOTING

Those who are eligible to vote feel informed about their choices, are registered, and cast a ballot in local elections. Individuals express their civic engagement in local politics by contacting officials, signaling support for issues, and exhibiting knowledge about the role of local government.

Research findings will ultimately be translated into practical design strategies, and disseminated in an upcoming publication known as *Assembly: Shaping Space for Civic Life*. In the interim, CfAD is periodically disseminating emerging findings to generate broader awareness of important connections between place and civic life.
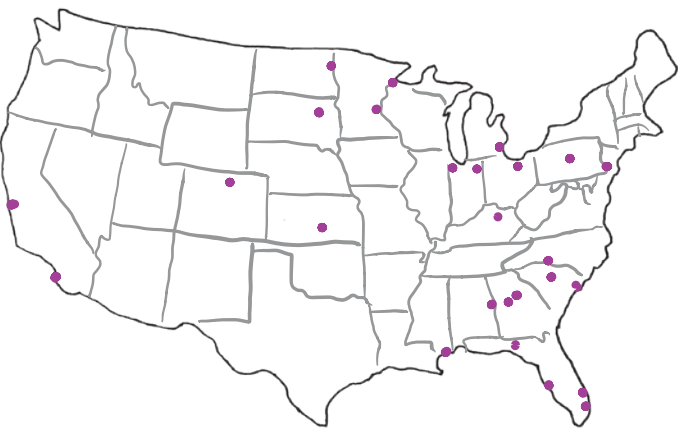

ACES is a groundbreaking analysis of how specific community design features influence multiple measures of civic engagement.

ACES

The Assembly Civic Engagement Survey

ACES is the first study of its kind to examine specific community design features that influence civic engagement outcomes, using large-sample survey methods and visual experiments.

Findings from ACES validate previous literature, while also filling considerable research gaps. The survey illuminates nuanced connections between place-based design and civic engagement, and provides a powerful resource for shaping evidence-based design strategies to support civic life.

In the summer of 2016, ACES was fielded as an online survey to a sample of 5,188 respondents from 26 communities across the United States. Communities surveyed vary in economic conditions, racial composition, and density.

PARTICIPATING COMMUNITIES

Aberdeen, SD	Lexington, KY
Akron, OH	Long Beach, CA
Biloxi, MS	Milledgeville, GA
Boulder, CO	Myrtle Beach, SC
Bradenton, FL	Macon, GA
Charlotte, NC	Miami, FL
Columbia, SC	Philadelphia, PA
Columbus, GA	Palm Beach County, FL
Duluth, MN	San Jose, CA
Detroit, MI	St. Paul, MN
Ft. Wayne, IN	State College, PA
Gary, IN	Tallahassee, FL
Grand Forks, ND	Wichita, KS

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

ACES captured a diverse cross-section of respondents, reflecting the composition of the selected cities' community demographics.

ACES investigated a range of local community design features—such as parks, community gardens, pedestrian amenities, and civic buildings—and elicited details on the quality and maintenance of those features. ACES also captured information on behaviors and perceptions associated with Assembly's four civic engagement objectives. In order to account for the 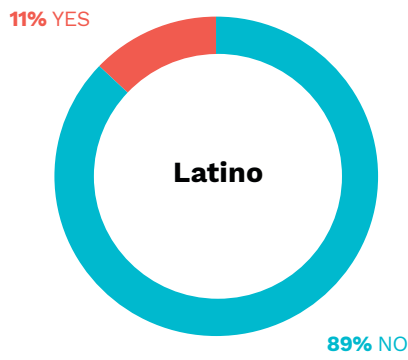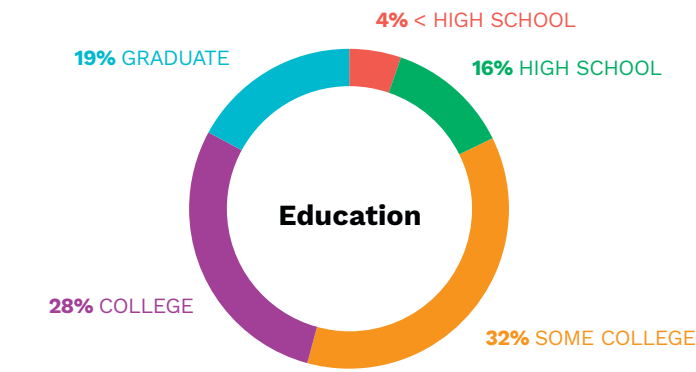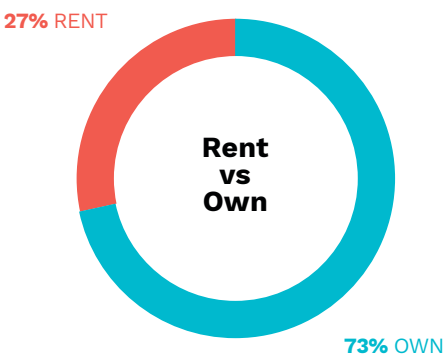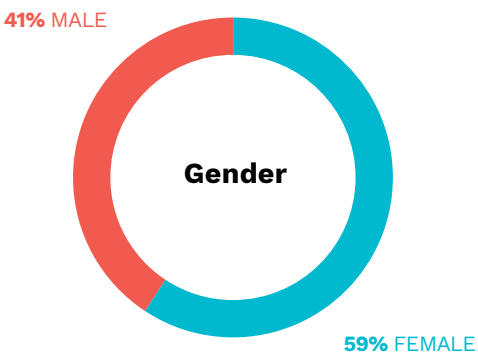variation across these diverse communities, all results presented in this brief are drawn from research models that control for a host of variables including age, number of children, political party affiliation, health status, income, gender, rent/own, race, Hispanic origin, employment status, urban/rural status, education, and city of residence.

Gender
41% MALE
59% FEMALE

Rent vs Own
27% RENT
73% OWN

Education
4% < HIGH SCHOOL
16% HIGH SCHOOL
32% SOME COLLEGE
28% COLLEGE
19% GRADUATE

Income
13% UNDER $20K
20% $20K–$40K
19% $40K–$60K
17% $60K–$80K
11% $80K–$100K
23% > $100K

Latino
11% YES
89% NO

African American
12% YES
88% NO
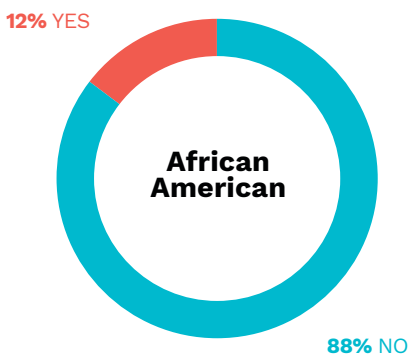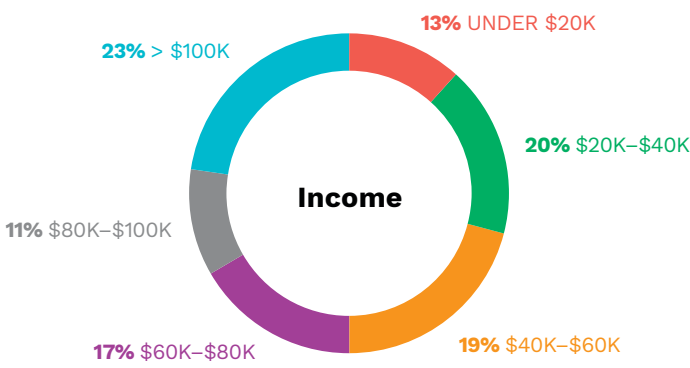
UNDERSTANDING THE DATA:
ASSOCIATION VERSUS CAUSATION

The findings presented in this section capture several methods of analysis to unpack the relationship between community design features and civic engagement outcomes. Findings fall into two main categories: associations and causation.
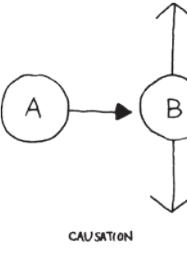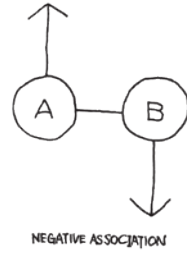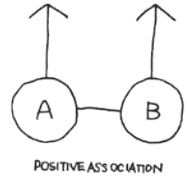
ASSOCIATIONS

Associations reveal a relationship between two or more variables, as well as the direction of that relationship, whether positive or negative. For example, ACES finds that park access is positively related to civic trust and stewardship, and that litter is negatively related to the same outcomes. Associations are very helpful for building a foundation of understanding and illuminating opportunities for further research.

Within this report, associations are made between place-based features and both individual and indexed civic engagement variables. Indexed variables synthesize and compile feedback on a range of survey questions. For example, the Civic Trust and Appreciation index is comprised of more than 10 different survey questions on community pride, trust in local government, and trust in neighbors. The Appendix provides a full list of questions for each index.

CAUSATION

While associations are very helpful, they cannot be used to infer whether changes in one variable *directly cause* changes in another variable. To address this gap, ACES incorporated a series of photo experiments (see example on next spread) that explore the causal impacts of design. For each photo experiment, CfAD developed two to three images that were identical save for minor differences in a particular design element. Respondents were then randomly assigned just one of these images, and all respondents were asked the same questions about their civic engagement intentions. Because the photo treatments were randomly assigned, any difference in the civic engagement measures can be directly attributed to the differences in design.

POSITIVE ASSOCIATION

NEGATIVE ASSOCIATION

CAUSATION

METHODOLOGY

All findings with respect to the index and survey items are represented by marginal predicted probabilities from ordered logistic regression models or ordinary least squares models that control for age, Hispanic origin, number of children, political party affiliation, health status, income, gender, rent/own, race, employment status, urban/rural status, education, and city of residence. Results from the photo experiments are presented as differences in means. In all cases, findings that are statistically significant use 95% confidence levels.

The Detroit RiverFront Conservancy hosts an annual Touch-a-Truck event, providing residents with the opportunity to explore city services up close.

SAMPLE PHOTO EXPERIMENT

"How interested would   you be in attending this meeting?"

Outdoor Community Meetings Spark Interest

ACES used the images on this spread to test whether holding a community board meeting outdoors could impact attendance rates. The flyers are identical except for the photograph used and the use of the word "outdoor." Each respondent was randomly shown only one of the following images, asked to imagine it was their own community, and then asked, "How interested would you be in attending this meeting?"
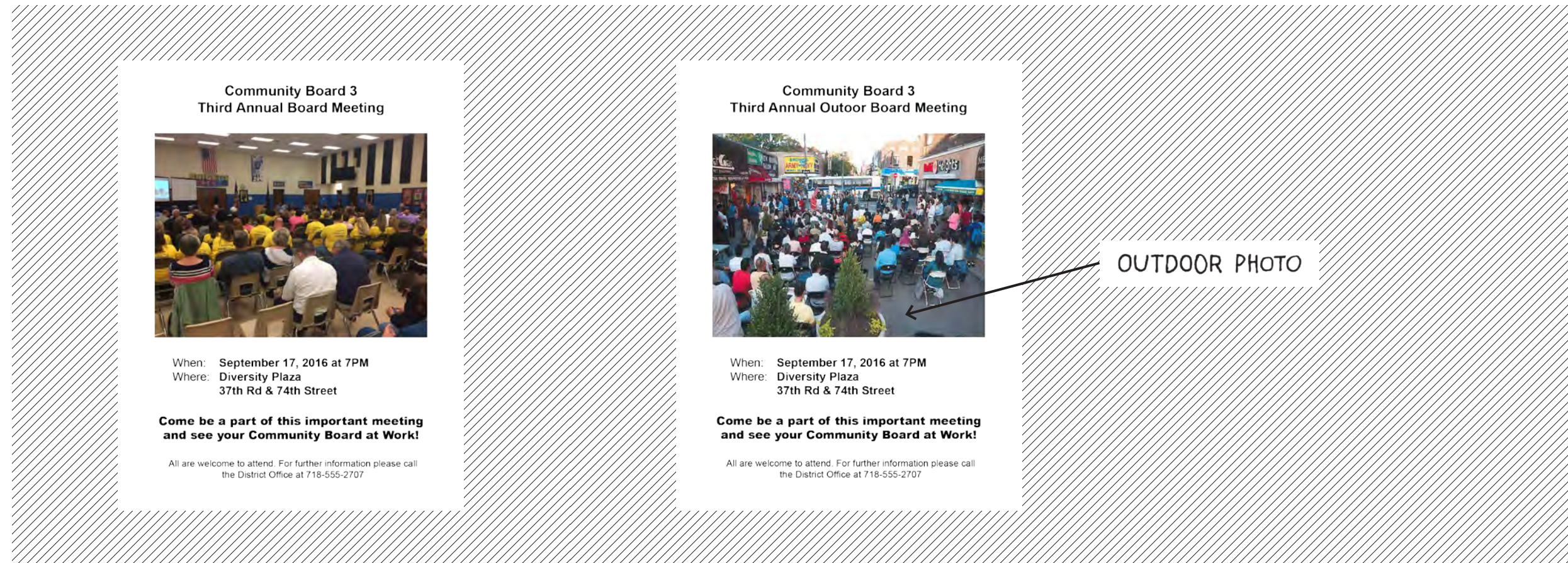
OUTDOOR PHOTO

RESULTS

As the results indicate, the outdoor photo significantly increased interest in meeting attendance. In fact, respondents who received the flyer with the outdoor photo were 21% more likely to report that they would be "very interested" in attending the meeting. Since the images were randomized across ACES respondents, we know this result is causal.

* N refers to the number of respondents
  who were randomly assigned each image

1 **Indoor Community Meeting**
N = 2,902

2 **Outdoor Community Meeting**
N = 2,787

45% VERY INTERESTED

+21

24%
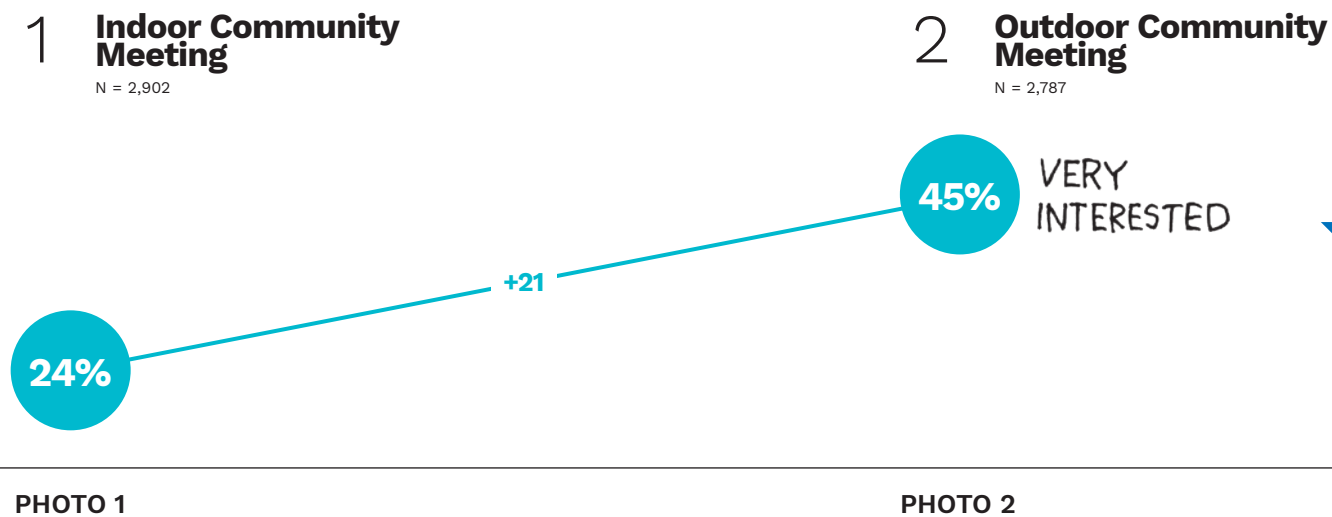
Respondents shown Photo 2 were 21% more likely to report they would be "very interested" in attending.
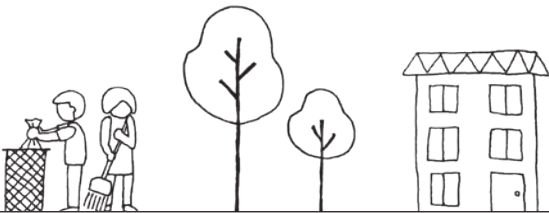
PHOTO 1

PHOTO 2

MAIN FINDINGS

ACES has produced a trove of data that will continue to be analyzed to support the Assembly initiative. This section summarizes top-line findings related to the following topics.

Park Design and Maintenance
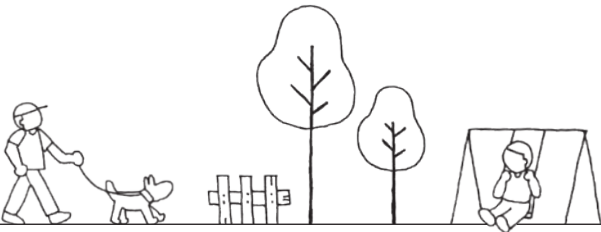
Neighborhood Order (and Disorder)

Welcoming Civic Spaces and Buildings

Park Design and Maintenance

Parks are valuable civic assets. They provide space for public events and social functions, and help support a sense of community. Studies indicate that people living in neighborhoods with parks are more likely to report a sense of civic trust and willingness to help others. Parks also provide opportunities for intercultural and intergenerational interaction.[1,2]

ACES reaffirms the valuable role of parks in facilitating community connection: over 30% of respondents say they regularly meet and talk to neighbors at parks. ACES goes a step further in expanding our understanding of how particular elements of park design—including park proximity, accessibility, and the condition of park amenities—relate to civic engagement outcomes.

Houston's Midtown District celebrates local identity. The large sculptural letters are part of Bagby Corridor, a 10-block streetscape reconstruction and park revitalization.

Living within a 10-minute walk of a park is positively and significantly associated with higher levels of civic trust and appreciation (⬆2%) and stewardship (⬆2%).
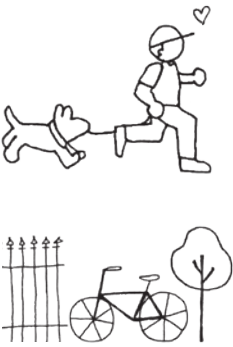
People living near a popular park that is used by many people exhibit even higher levels of civic trust (⬆10%). Interestingly, this finding holds true whether or not respondents report visiting the park themselves.

Park access matters. ACES respondents living near parks with few entrances or parks surrounded by busy streets report diminished levels of civic trust and appreciation.

PARK CHARACTERISTICS RELATE TO CIVIC TRUST

+10% → PARK POPULARITY

CIVIC TRUST

-2% → FEW ENTRANCES
→ BUSY STREETS
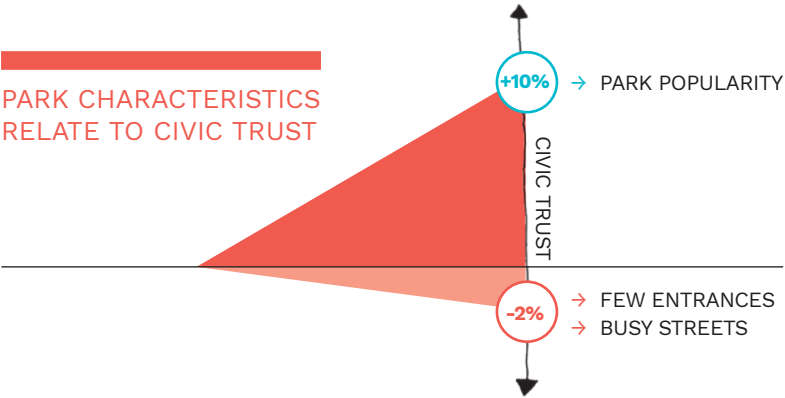
POPULAR PARKS AND CIVIC TRUST

Popular parks are strongly associated with satisfaction in local government institutions. ACES respondents who report living near popular parks show:

HIP HIP HOORAY!

29% greater satisfaction with their parks and recreation department

14% greater satisfaction with police

13% greater satisfaction with their mayor
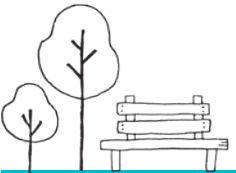
Park maintenance matters.
ACES surveyed respondents about the amenities found in their local park, and what condition they are in.
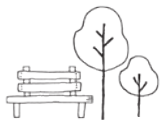
In many cases, the simple presence of a park amenity is associated with higher levels of civic trust and stewardship.

For some amenities, the association with civic trust and stewardship is only positive when the amenity is well maintained.

For certain amenities, poor condition has a negative association with civic trust.

WHEN DOES PARK
MAINTENANCE MATTER
FOR CIVIC TRUST?

MANDATORY MAINTENANCE

HIGH MAINTENANCE

MEDIUM MAINTENANCE

SPORTS FIELDS

BATHROOM

RECREATION CENTER

SEATING

FOUNTAIN

TABLE

PLAYGROUND

INFORMATION BOARD

PUBLIC ART

DOG PARK

COMMUNITY GARDEN

CIVIC TRUST
Positive when in good condition
Negative when in poor condition

CIVIC TRUST
Positive when in good condition
Neutral when in poor condition

CIVIC TRUST
Positive regardless of condition

The redesign of Blue Hole Regional Park in Wimberley, Texas integrates multiple recreation amenities for users of all ages and abilities, encouraging participation in public life. Park access is enhanced through well-lit pedestrian routes and connections to the regional trail system.

PHOTO EXPERIMENT

Positive Park Signs Increase Civic Trust

ACES included a photo experiment to investigate whether the messages on park signs can be used to boost civic trust. The idea came from the City of Charlotte, where the local Parks Department was considering replacing restrictive, rules-based signs (such as "No loud music" or "No alcoholic beverages") with positive, inviting, "Can-Do" signs. To test this theory, ACES randomly assigned each respondent only one of the following photos, and asked them to imagine this was a park near their home. They were then asked, "How proud are you to live in this community?" and "How well do you think the city cares for people in this park?"

RESULTS

Analysis of the photo experiment reveals that positive messaging significantly increases measures of civic trust. In fact, respondents shown Photo 3 "You can give a high five!" are 11% more likely to say they are "really proud to live in this community," and 9% more likely to believe "the city really cares about people in this park," compared to respondents shown Photo 1 with a more typical, rules-based sign. This experiment validates Charlotte's approach to developing new park signs, and will be used to inform future installations.

* N refers to the number of respondents who were randomly assigned each image

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"How proud are you to live   in this community?"

"How well   do you think the city cares for people in this park?"

1 **Traditional Sign with Rules**
N = 1,841

2 **Sign with Positive Photo Messaging**
N = 1,898

3 **Sign with Positive High-Five Messaging**
N = 1,760

61% ← REALLY PROUD

57% ← CITY CARES

55%

51%

50%

48%

+5

+3

+6

+6

Respondents shown Photo 3 were 11% more likely to say they are "really proud to live in this community" compared to those shown Photo 1.

PHOTO 1   PHOTO 2   PHOTO 3
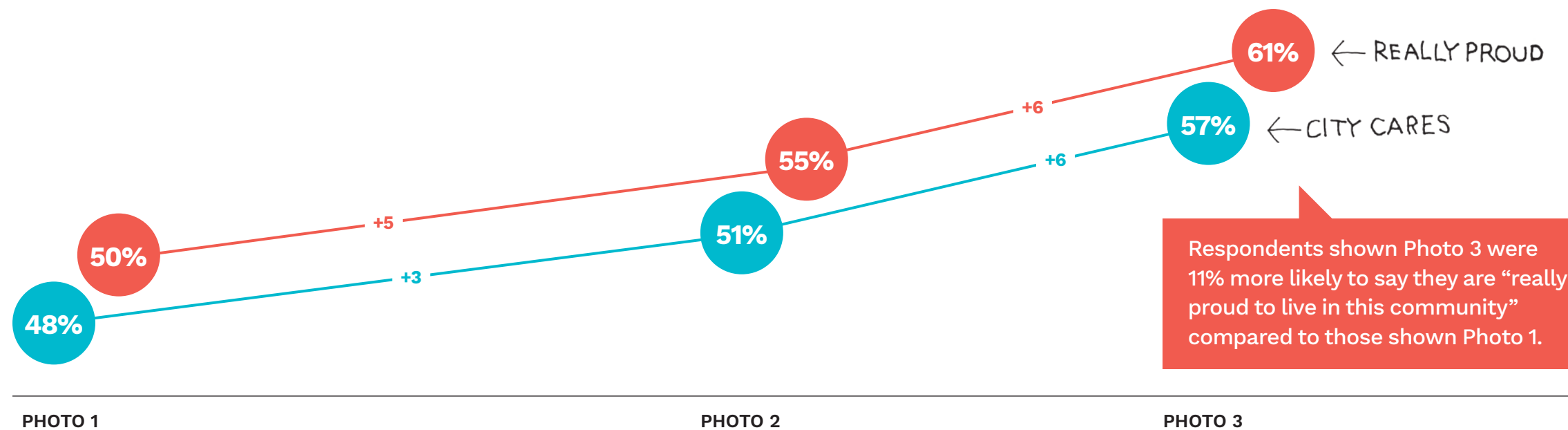
Park vibrancy and popularity can foster community connections and civic trust. In Philadelphia, the Fairmount Park Conservancy orchestrates signature events and innovative programming to build excitement around the city's parks.

TAKEAWAYS

Leveraging Parks to Support Civic Life

People living near popular parks report greater community connection and greater satisfaction with local government. To increase park popularity, consider incorporating park assets that reflect the culture and interests of the local community and create a sense of vibrancy—such as public art, events, and programming.

Parks that are easily accessible are associated with greater civic trust and appreciation. Explore opportunities to improve park access, for example through traffic calming, pedestrian improvements, and creating additional entrances.

Park conditions may also impact civic life. Amenities catering to children and families—such as playgrounds, recreation centers, sports fields, and bathrooms—are associated with high levels of civic trust and appreciation when they are in good condition, but much lower levels when they are in bad condition. To reinforce civic trust, allocate sufficient maintenance and operations budgets to support these critical amenities.

Messaging around parks can directly impact measures of civic trust and appreciation. Updating park signs with positive messaging is a low-cost approach to generating community pride and enhancing trust in government.
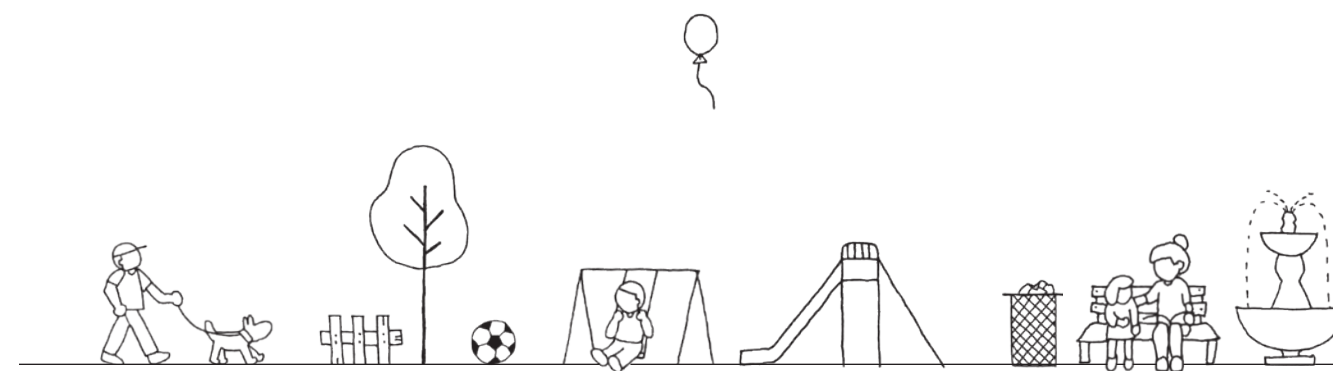
Neighborhood Order (and Disorder)

Initial research shows that neighborhood order and disorder are connected to civic engagement. Perhaps unsurprisingly, studies indicate that graffiti and other signs of disorder have a negative impact on civic trust.[3-5] Similarly, when public spaces are well-maintained individuals may feel more inspired to be conscientious stewards of their communities.[6]

ACES illuminates details on the specific elements of place that contribute to perceptions of neighborhood order and disorder. Survey findings reveal litter as the single aspect of disorder most compromising to civic life, and also point to critical opportunities for maintaining and beautifying vacant lots.

At the Capital Roots Urban Grow Center in Troy, NY a collaborative mosaic has engaged hundreds of residents in stewardship and beautification of the public realm.

Litter is associated with depleted civic trust. ACES asked "If you could change one thing about your community, what would it be?"

Selecting from a series of seven options, including crime, traffic, and noise, a remarkable 23% of respondents chose litter.

Further analysis indicates that people who report litter to be "very common" in their neighborhood exhibit depleted civic trust across a number of measures.

HIGH LEVELS OF LITTER: RELATIONSHIP TO CIVIC TRUST

-10%
→ **COMMUNITY PRIDE**
→ **TRUST LOCAL GOVERNMENT** TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC SPACES
→ BELIEF THAT **COMMUNITY MEMBERS CARE** ABOUT ONE ANOTHER

-5%
→ **TRUST POLICE** TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT

-4%
→ **TRUST LOCAL GOVERNMENT** TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT
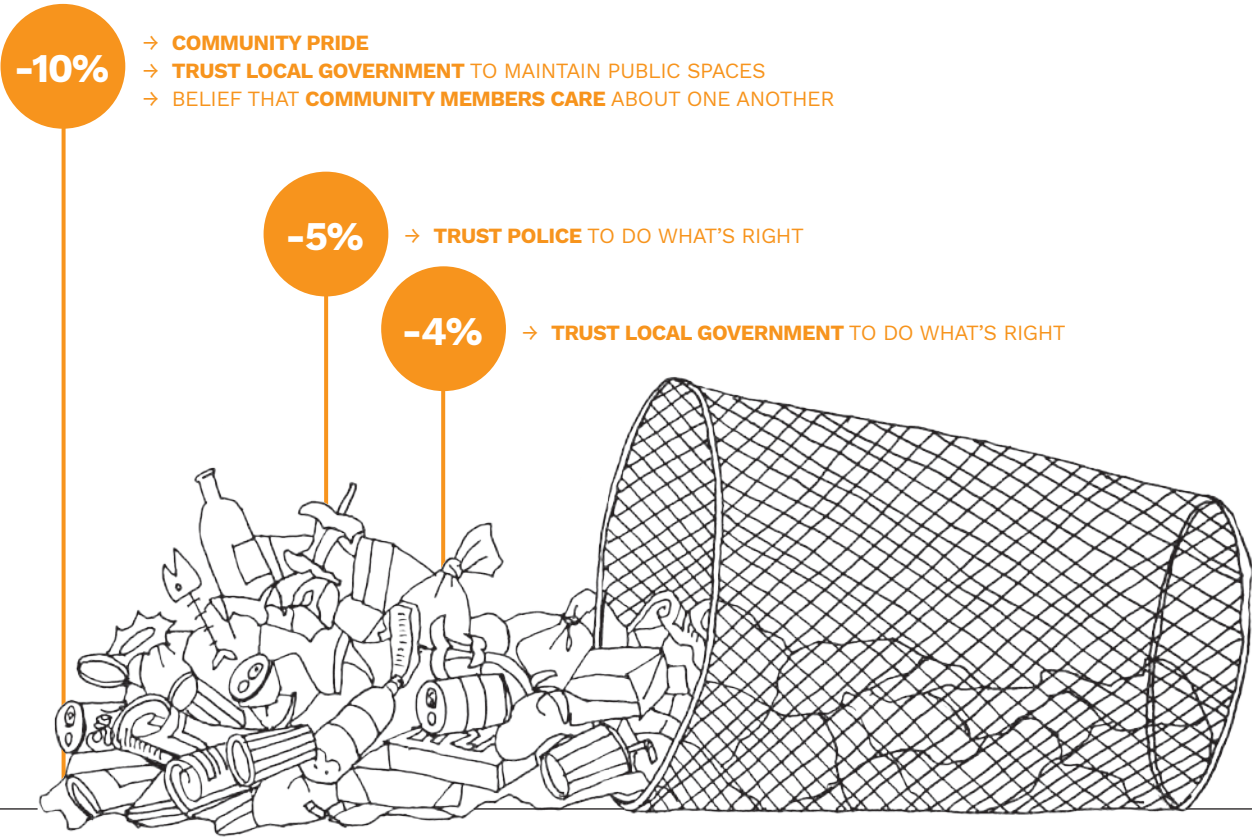
Vacant lots present a challenge—and an opportunity. Given the abundance of vacant lots in many urban areas, ACES sought to learn more about their connection to civic engagement.

ACES respondents without any vacant lots near their homes report ⬆ 5% higher civic trust, compared to respondents who have a vacant lot on their block.

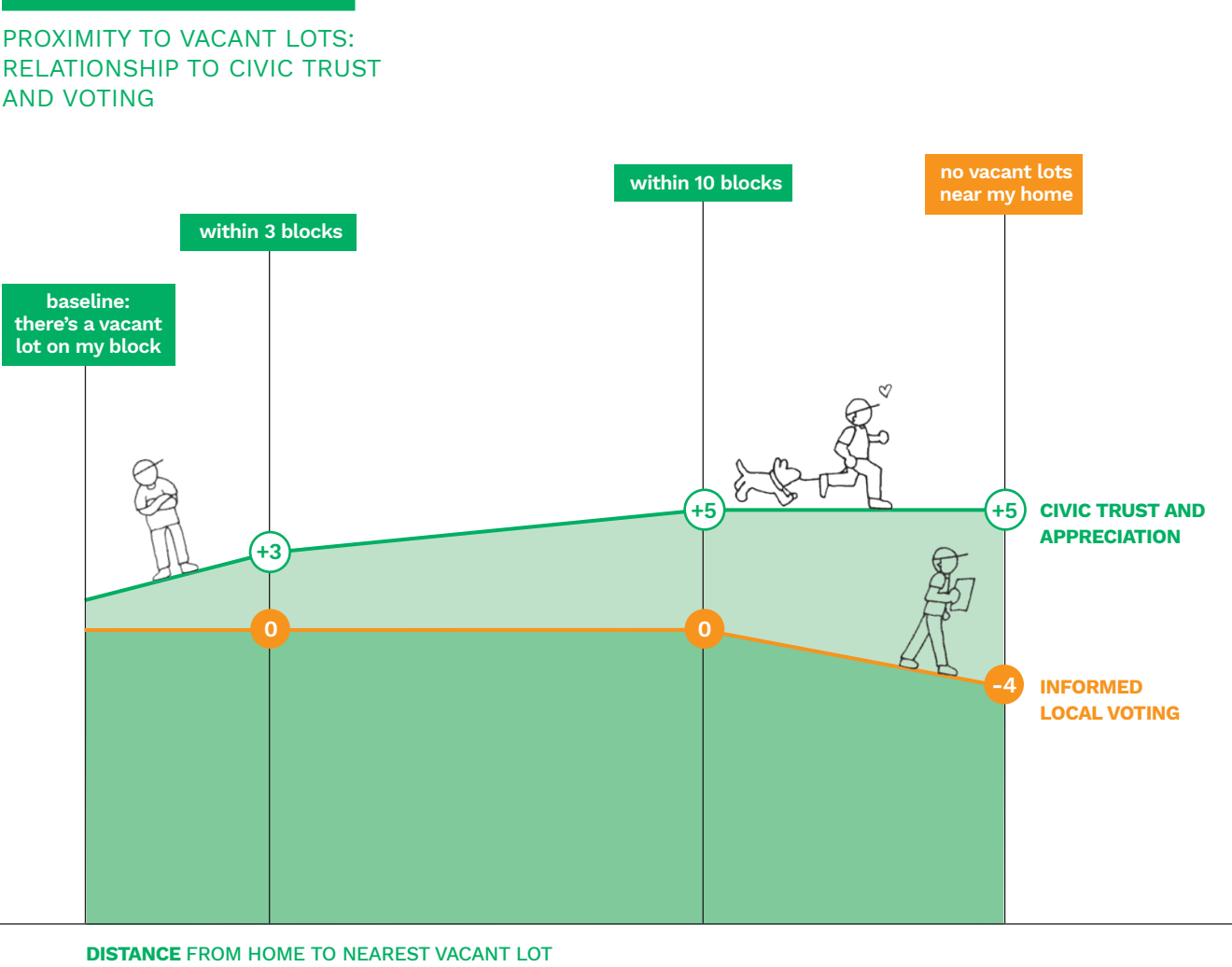Conversely (and perhaps surprisingly), those who live closer to a vacant lot report higher levels of informed local voting compared to those who have no vacant lots near their home. In theory, this may be because a certain amount of disorder helps mobilize people to become more politically engaged in their local communities.

PROXIMITY TO VACANT LOTS: RELATIONSHIP TO CIVIC TRUST AND VOTING

within 10 blocks

no vacant lots near my home

within 3 blocks

baseline: there's a vacant lot on my block

+3

+5

+5 CIVIC TRUST AND APPRECIATION

0

0

−4 INFORMED LOCAL VOTING

DISTANCE FROM HOME TO NEAREST VACANT LOT

Vacant lots can be an untapped community asset—a space for inspiring acts of stewardship and social interaction. The Workshop Garden in Queens, New York has transformed underutilized land near public housing into community gardens that support civic life.

PHOTO EXPERIMENT

Vacant Lot Improvements Bolster Civic Trust

ACES included a photo experiment to investigate whether vacant lot improvements can benefit civic engagement. Each respondent was randomly assigned only one of the following photos, and asked to imagine this was a lot near their home. They were then asked a series of questions on their perceptions of civic trust.

RESULTS

Responses to the experiment indicate a very consistent trend. Compared to the unmaintained lot shown in Photo 1, even moderate upkeep of a vacant lot (shown in Photo 2) results in a significant boost to civic trust. The well-maintained, beautified lot shown in Photo 3 has an even more impressive effect. Respondents who viewed that lot express dramatically higher scores across all civic trust indicators. While these photos capture relatively broad variation in lot characteristics, the experiment provides initial findings that lot maintenance can go a long way in shaping civic attitudes. Further research efforts can explore more nuanced impacts of specific design interventions.

* N refers to the number of respondents who were randomly assigned each image

"To what extent do you think people in this community...?"

1 **Unmaintained Lot**
N = 1,907

2 **Somewhat Maintained Lot**
N = 1,808

3 **Well-Maintained Lot**
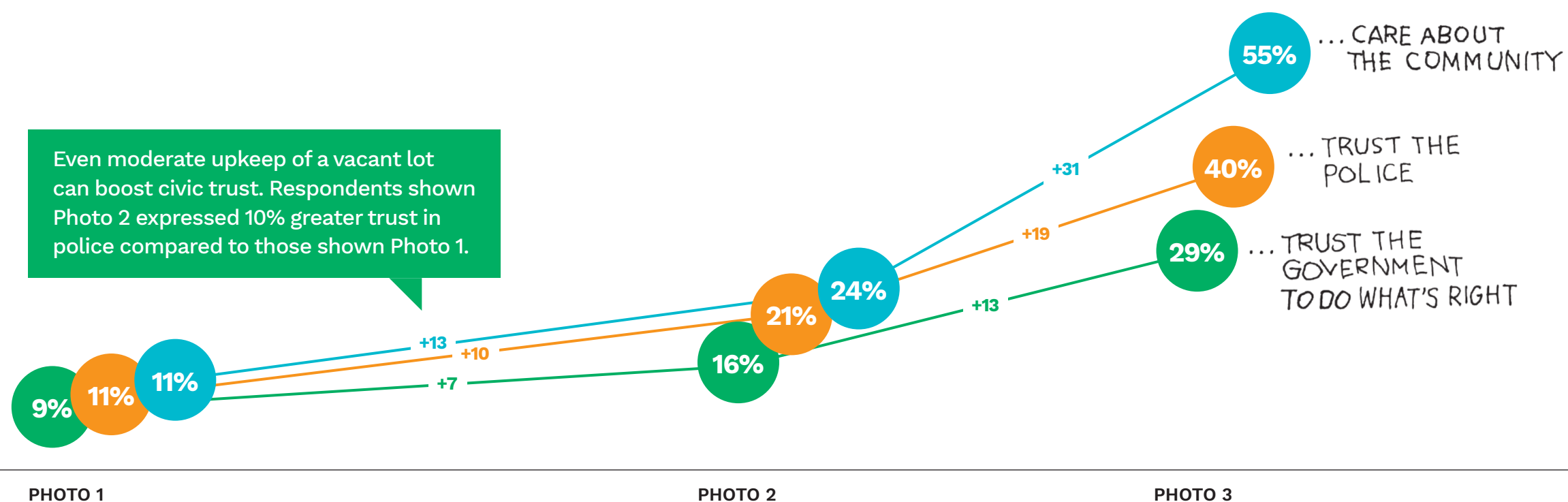N = 1,887

Even moderate upkeep of a vacant lot can boost civic trust. Respondents shown Photo 2 expressed 10% greater trust in police compared to those shown Photo 1.

... CARE ABOUT THE COMMUNITY — 55%
... TRUST THE POLICE — 40%
... TRUST THE GOVERNMENT TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT — 29%

PHOTO 1: 9%, 11%, 11%
PHOTO 2: 16%, 21%, 24%
PHOTO 3: 29%, 40%, 55%

+13 / +10 / +7
+31 / +19 / +13

PHOTO 1   PHOTO 2   PHOTO 3

Community gardens and public art may mitigate the negative impacts of vacant lots. ACES reaffirms existing literature positing that community gardens may serve as a space for cultivating community pride, stewardship, and political participation.[7-10]
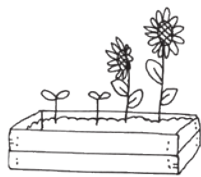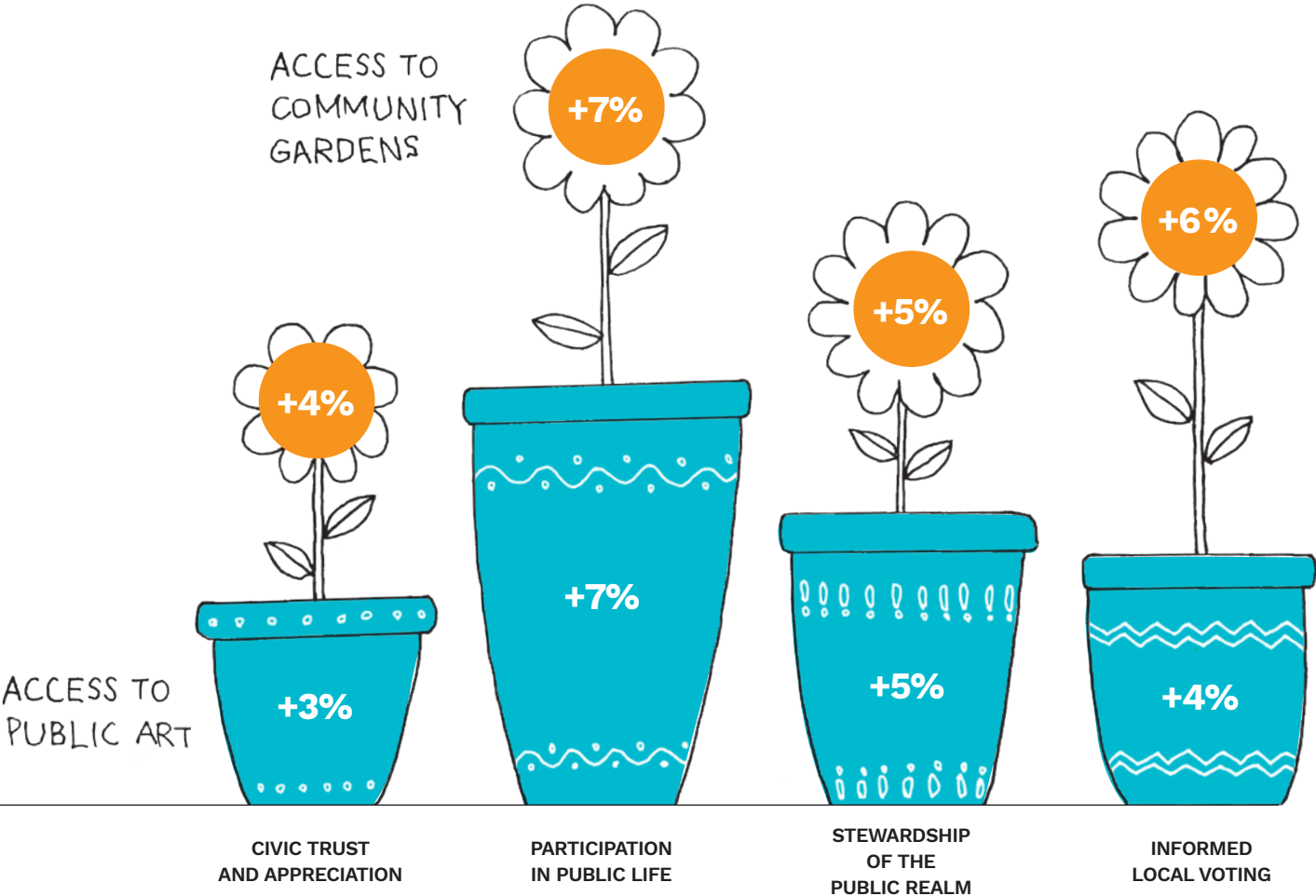
Respondents who have a community garden within a 10-minute walk of their home report elevated measures across all four civic engagement outcomes, compared to respondents who do not have easy access to a community garden.

Similar improvements are seen among respondents who report having public art, such as a mural, in the vacant lot closest to their home.

COMMUNITY GARDENS AND PUBLIC ART: RELATIONSHIP TO CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

ACCESS TO COMMUNITY GARDENS

ACCESS TO PUBLIC ART

+7%

+4%

+5%

+6%

+7%

+3%

+5%

+4%

CIVIC TRUST AND APPRECIATION

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE

STEWARDSHIP OF THE PUBLIC REALM

INFORMED LOCAL VOTING

Stewardship of the public realm is one of Assembly's core measures of civic engagement. Philadelphia encourages residents to maintain and beautify park spaces through its annual "Love Your Park" program, a multi-day schedule of events and volunteering.

TAKEAWAYS

Enhancing neighborhood order to support civic life

When it comes to concerns around neighborhood disorder, litter is foremost on people's minds. Litter is associated with eroded civic trust and appreciation. To mitigate negative impacts, implement design and maintenance strategies to reduce litter—such as visible trash and recycling receptacles, frequent garbage collection, and regular street cleaning.

Even moderate upkeep of vacant lots can significantly enhance civic trust and appreciation. Explore opportunities to establish and enforce maintenance standards for vacant lots. Work with community groups to facilitate lot maintenance and beautification efforts.

Community gardens and public art may help mitigate the negative effects of vacant lots. These locally-driven, place-based interventions can be employed as essential tools for reducing neighborhood disorder.

Modest streetscape improvements and frequent maintenance can vastly transform perceptions of civic trust and appreciation. Providing a clean and enjoyable environment for residents and visitors can invite participation in public life.

Welcoming Civic Spaces and Buildings

Although existing scholarly literature is scarce, the Assembly initiative posits that the design of public buildings, and the civic spaces around them such as public plazas and sidewalks, can play a significant role in shaping civic behaviors and perceptions.

ACES findings suggest that subtle modifications to civic spaces and buildings can directly enhance a range of civic engagement outcomes.

A the Bay Terrace Community and Education Center in Tacoma, WA, the central hallway is designed to enhance a sense of welcome and facilitate interaction.

Public seating can support civic life. Many public buildings are directly adjacent to sidewalks, plazas, and other public spaces that can be modified to create a more welcoming threshold and ultimately invite community members inside.
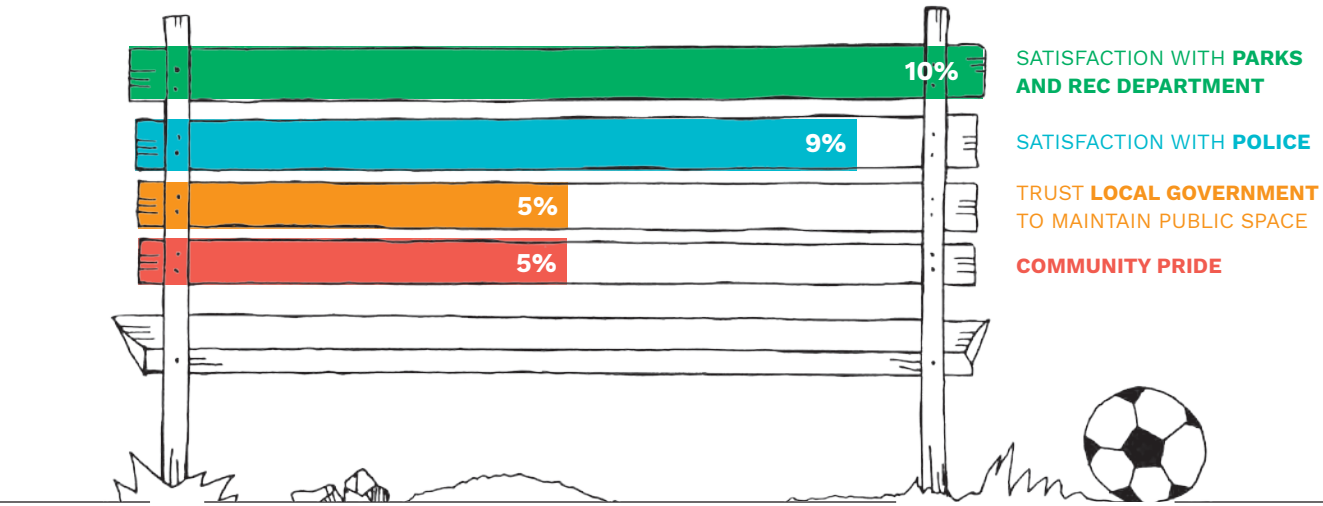
ACES found that adequate outdoor public seating, such as benches in public plazas, is connected to ⬆10% higher civic trust and ⬆4% higher public participation.

Respondents who are content with the public seating in their neighborhood report ⬆9% greater satisfaction with police, and ⬆7% greater trust in government compared to respondents who do not have access to adequate public seating.

PUBLIC SEATING AND CIVIC TRUST

People who report that there is adequate public seating in their community also exhibit higher levels of civic trust across a number of measures.

10% — SATISFACTION WITH **PARKS AND REC DEPARTMENT**

9% — SATISFACTION WITH **POLICE**

5% — TRUST **LOCAL GOVERNMENT** TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC SPACE

5% — **COMMUNITY PRIDE**

Greenery in public spaces must be maintained. Nature and greenery have been shown to benefit communities on a variety of fronts—positively impacting residents' physical and mental health. ACES reveals that greenery also connects to the civic life of communities. Once again, findings point to the critical importance of maintenance.
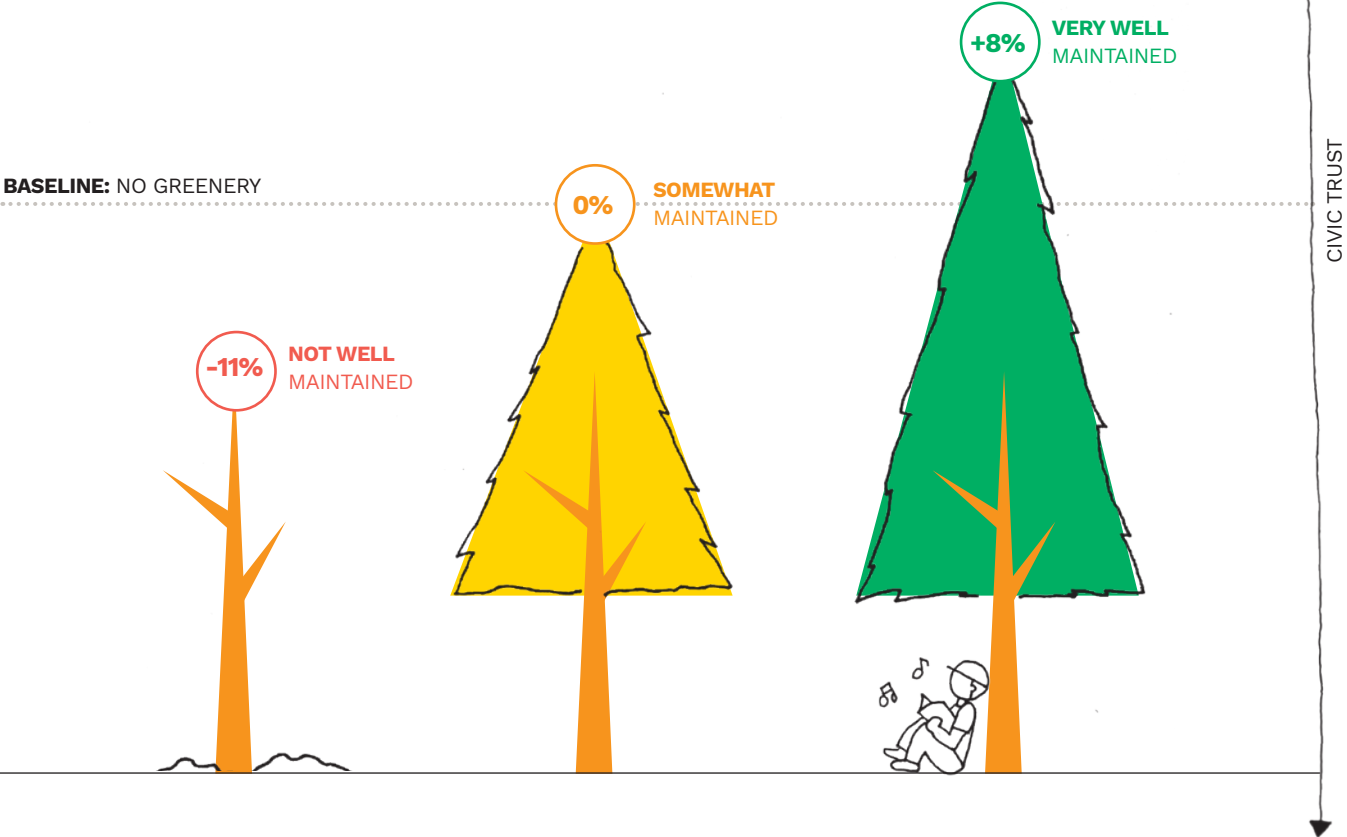
Well-maintained greenery, such as street trees and plantings, is strongly associated with increased civic trust (↑8%) and stewardship (↑6%).

People who report that public greenery on their block is not well maintained have lower civic trust scores compared to those who report having no public greenery on their block.

At Regatta Park, near Miami City Hall, greenery is used to enhance the pedestrian experience and create attractive nodes for community gathering.

MAINTENANCE OF GREENERY: RELATIONSHIP TO CIVIC TRUST

BASELINE: NO GREENERY

-11% NOT WELL MAINTAINED

0% SOMEWHAT MAINTAINED

+8% VERY WELL MAINTAINED

CIVIC TRUST

PHOTO EXPERIMENT

## "Front Porch" Improvements Make Public Buildings More Welcoming

ACES incorporated a photo experiment to investigate whether small-scale, low-cost improvements to outdoor seating and greenery can make public buildings more inviting. Each respondent was randomly assigned only one of the following images and asked to imagine it was their local library. Photo 1 has no seating and very little greenery, while Photo 2 has bench seating, enhanced greenery, and a lamppost.

"How welcome would you feel attending an event in the library?"

1 **Library with No Inviting Features**
N = 2,870

2 **Library with Inviting Features, Including Seating and Greenery**
N = 2,831

RESULTS

Despite the subtlety of the design treatment, respondents shown Photo 2 were 10% more likely to say they felt "extremely welcome" at the library compared to those shown Photo 1. This photo experiment indicates that minor improvements at the entrance to public buildings may have significant benefits in terms of inviting participation in public life.

* N refers to the number of respondents who were randomly assigned each image
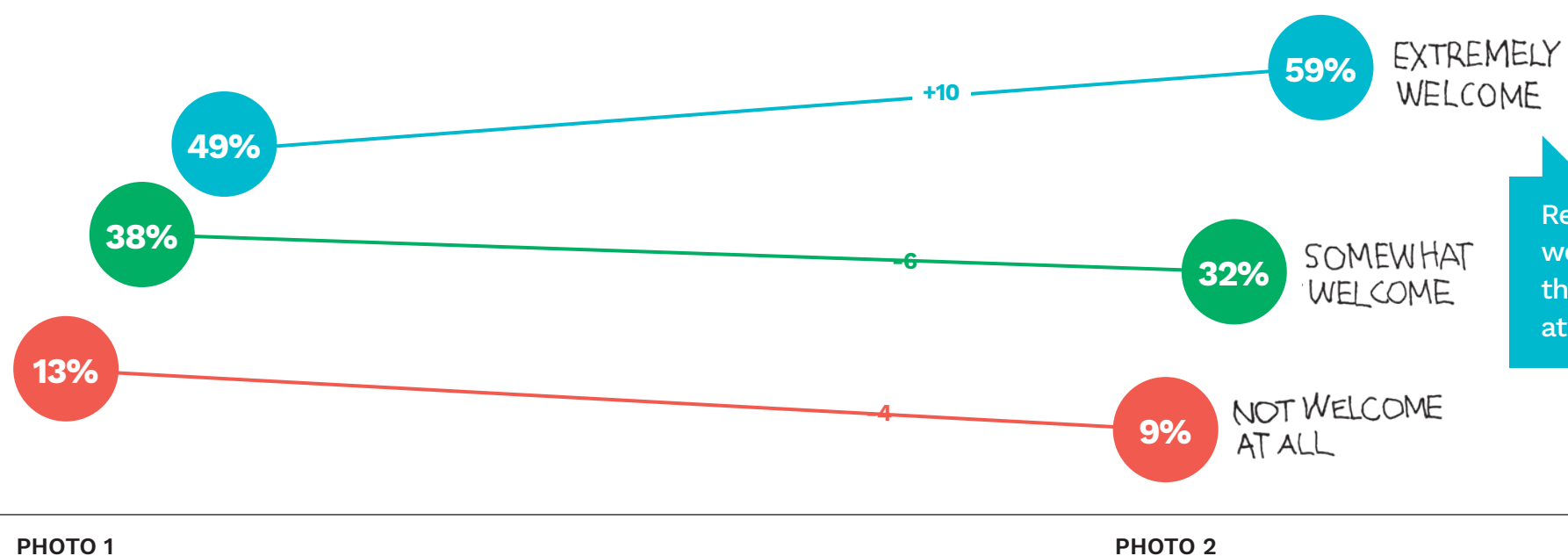
49% — +10 — 59% EXTREMELY WELCOME

38% — 6 — 32% SOMEWHAT WELCOME

13% — 4 — 9% NOT WELCOME AT ALL

Respondents shown Photo 2 were 10% more likely to say they felt "extremely welcome" at the library.

PHOTO 1   PHOTO 2

PHOTO EXPERIMENT

Messaging in Public Buildings Can Foster a Sense of Inclusion

Another ACES photo experiment explored the impact of placing inclusive and welcoming signs at building entrances. For this experiment, each respondent was randomly assigned only one of the following photos, and asked to imagine this was the entrance to their own community center. Respondents were then asked to consider how welcoming and inclusive the community center might be.

"How welcoming is this community center?"

"Do you feel this community center is inclusive?

1 **No Additional Message**
N = 2,825

**2** **Inclusive + Welcoming Message**
N = 2,794

BILINGUAL WELCOME SIGN

A MESSAGE INVITING QUESTIONS

RESULTS

Respondents who viewed Photo 2 with a bilingual welcome sign and a message inviting questions were 4% more likely to view the community center as welcoming and inclusive. The result was substantively similar regardless of the respondent's race or ethnicity.

* N refers to the number of respondents who were randomly assigned each image

35% WELCOMING

29% INCLUSIVE

+4

+4

31%

25%
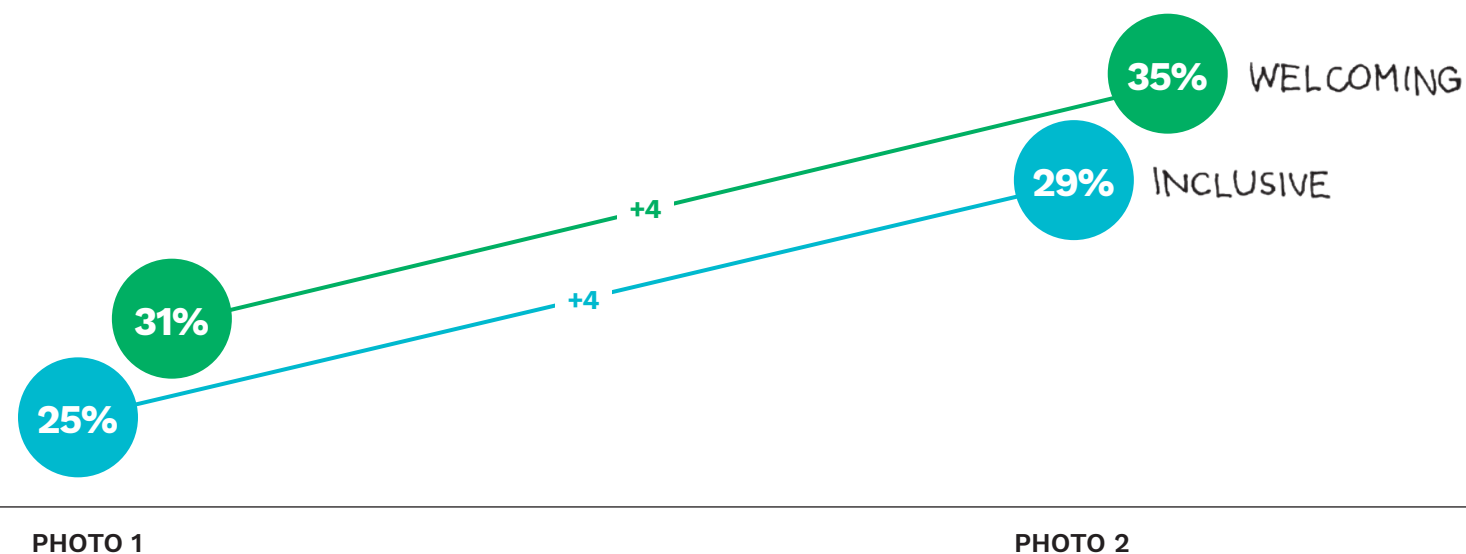
Respondents shown Photo 2 were 4% more likely to view the community center as welcoming and inclusive.

PHOTO 1

PHOTO 2

The Superior Court of California in San Benito County incorporates a dynamic public space designed to foster civic trust. The site features seating, greenery, and a transparent façade to support a sense of community connection.

TAKEAWAYS

Creating Welcoming Civic Spaces

Strategic enhancements to civic spaces—including amenities to improve public plazas and sidewalks—can positively impact measures of civic trust. Consider low-cost improvements such as comfortable seating, plantings, and improved lighting.

Modest improvements can make public buildings feel more approachable and welcoming. Seating, plantings, and lighting can also be integrated as "front porch" improvements at the entrance to public buildings such as libraries and community centers.

Maintenance is critical. Ensure all amenities—especially public greenery—are well maintained.

Messaging matters. The installation of welcoming signs at building entrances is a low-cost strategy to invite community members inside and instill a sense of inclusiveness.

CONCLUSION

ACES results point to many opportunities to enhance civic engagement through affordable design tactics and maintenance of community assets.

ACES is the first study of its kind to explicitly and empirically examine the value of design as a tool for supporting civic life. Results point to practical opportunities for building upon and enhancing existing community assets. Two overarching themes stand out:

Maintenance matters. Across multiple topics, the condition of public amenities emerges as a crucial priority for supporting civic life. Communities that undertake efforts to maintain park amenities, reduce litter, enhance public greenery, and improve vacant lots are likely to inspire greater trust, participation, and stewardship among citizens.

Design improvements don't need to be costly. ACES points to a number of low-cost interventions that can make public spaces and buildings feel more welcoming and accessible. Communities that incorporate additional public seating, plantings, and signs with positive messaging can help residents and visitors feel more welcome, and enhance civic trust.

ACES findings will serve as a cornerstone in shaping the overarching Assembly initiative— inspiring research questions for future experiments, and informing the development of the forthcoming Assembly design guidelines scheduled for publication in 2018. While there is still much more to learn about the relationship between place-based design and civic engagement, ACES provides a roadmap for the future of this essential field of study.

HIP HIP
HOORAY!

APPENDIX:
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT INDICES

The following ACES survey questions underpin the index analyses for each of Assembly's four civic engagement objectives:

Civic Appreciation and Trust

How much pride do you have in your community?

How much do you feel like people in your community care about each other?

How much do you trust local government / your neighbors / the police to do what's right for your community / repair, improve, and maintain public spaces in your community?

How likely are you to ask a neighbor for a favor?

In the last year, have you helped a neighbor in need?

How satisfied are you with the following entities in your community?

1) The Mayor
2) Parks and Recreation Department
3) Local police

Informed Local Voting

Are you registered to vote?

Did you vote in a local election in the last year?

Do you know where your local polling station is?

Do you know the name of the mayor of your city?

Do you know the name of your congressman?

Have you attended a political rally in the last year?

How interested are you in local politics?

How often do you talk about local politics or community issues with friends, family, or coworkers?

Do you think you could change your community through the electoral process?

Participation in Public Life

In the last year have you attended a neighborhood meeting about a local issue?

In the last year have you hosted an event for people in your community?

How many local social or civic groups are you a member of?

How many of your neighbors do you know by name?

Have you helped a neighbor in need in the last year?

Stewardship of the Public Realm

In what ways have you been active in your neighborhood in the last year?

• Advocated for neighborhood improvements
• Organized your neighbors around a community cause
• Wrote to or called a local government official
• Planted or maintained trees in a public space
• Swept the sidewalk, picked up litter, or other community maintenance
• Canvassed for a local election

How often have you volunteered with a local organization in the last year?

How likely are you to do a favor for a neighbor?

How often have you donated to a local organization in the last year?

To what extent do you feel like residents in your community have the ability to impact the community?

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