



Regarding “A Bridge to Somewhere: The Case for a National Infrastructure Policy”
(Winter 2009)

While the gray infrastructure of roads, bridges, and highways is important, the role of green infrastructure is equally significant in sustaining healthy communities.

If, as the editor says, “the essential purpose of infrastructure is to support commerce and the public welfare” and that a national infrastructure policy “would embrace sustainability,” then the purpose and policy must include green infrastructure as a central component.

Green infrastructure is a smart growth concept that balances development with conservation by connecting environmental, social, and economic health issues.

Green infrastructure advances smart conservation through large-scale thinking and a holistic approach to planning. It achieves a healthy and livable balance between development and conservation, highlighting the importance of the natural environment. Its application contributes to the health of ecosystems and human beings as components of the natural world. In many instances, it is the interconnected network of open spaces and natural areas, such as greenways, wetlands, parks, woodlands, and native plants. Those features can also manage stormwater, reduce flooding, improve water quality, clean the air, and provide areas for shelter, shade, and rest. These are life-sustaining functions.

A good example of Bay State green infrastructure on a large scale is the Quabbin Reservoir complex. While many communities around the nation rely on expensive filtration systems to treat the surface sources of their drinking water, 2.5 million Greater Bostonians rely on the 80,000-acre forested landscape of the Quabbin to filter their water. This green infrastructure is far less expensive and more importantly safer and more effective from a public health perspective.

Inherent in keeping a city or town livable, green infrastructure is not simply an “amenity,” it is a new and necessary way of undertaking community development.

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