

October 21, 2021

The Honorable Maxine Waters  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Waters:

Thank you for holding today's hearing, "A Strong Foundation: How Housing is the Key to Building Back a Better America," and for your ongoing leadership to ensure the Build Back Better Agenda continues to include robust funding for housing and community development programs. The historic \$327 billion investment that passed out of Committee last month would help millions of Americans access stable, affordable housing options and support communities in building back from the pandemic with greater equity and resilience. We are particularly encouraged that the Committee included funding for a new Community Restoration and Revitalization Fund (CRRF), which would create a new grant program at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to invest in community-led civic infrastructure projects in distressed communities. Investments in community-led civic infrastructure represent a small but potentially transformative element of the overall package. We urge you to continue prioritizing this innovative and urgently needed investment in civic infrastructure as a final budget reconciliation bill is negotiated.

Earlier this year, [our two coalitions sent you and your fellow Congressional leaders separate letters](#), each with over 100 organizations signed on in support of federal investments in civic infrastructure. Our respective coalitions have since aligned, and combined now represent Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), affordable housing investors, small businesses lenders, Main Street organizations, parks and public space leaders, and community and economic development organizations.

We are aligned behind a common belief that robust civic infrastructure is essential to creating neighborhoods where people want to live, work, and play. That's because civic infrastructure means the places that boost our economy, increase our economic and environmental resiliency, support our health and well-being, and strengthen our democracy: parks, trails, Main Streets, town squares, libraries, community and recreation centers, early care and education programs, storefronts for local entrepreneurs, small business incubators, and more assets that together contribute to a community's social, economic, and civic fabric.

The specific projects may vary between neighborhoods, but across the country we see immense value in the community assets that serve as the connective tissue between people and places. However, we have also worked for decades with communities that have received neither adequate nor equitable investment in this critical infrastructure. In these neighborhoods, segregation and concentrated poverty continue to entrench cycles of disadvantage that are proven to [disproportionately impact Black, Latino and other communities of color](#). To Build Back Better, we must do things differently. That includes identifying opportunities to fill the gaps where existing policies and programs have failed to meet local needs.

CRRF is one such opportunity that truly meets this moment. Civic infrastructure investments can work hand in hand with investments in housing, transportation, and other community infrastructure to stimulate new economic opportunities for local residents, improve education and health outcomes, and help ensure a neighborhood's long-time residents are not displaced from appreciating market factors, but rather are fully integrated in community life. Returning decision-making authority back to these communities—particularly communities that have been marginalized and disinvested—is directly aligned with the goals and mission of the Build Back Better Agenda. Further, civic infrastructure can directly advance climate

resiliency by improving equitable access to nature, supporting more walkable and bikeable neighborhoods, reducing urban heat island effect, mitigating flood risk, and strengthening the social fabric of communities.

Currently, in the absence of federal resources dedicated to civic infrastructure investments, many neighborhoods miss out on the opportunity to fully benefit from robust and nature-rich public spaces. The Build Back Better Agenda can change that. CRRF would create an innovative and urgently needed new resource for distressed communities to plan for and invest in their local civic infrastructure priorities. These resources are an important complement to the Committee's comprehensive set of priorities and can have an accelerative impact on broader racial equity and climate resilience initiatives. We urge you to continue prioritizing CRRF as an essential element of the Build Back Better Agenda.

Please contact Olivia Barrow, Policy Manager, Low Income Investment Fund ([obarrow@liifund.org](mailto:obarrow@liifund.org)) or Kelly Humrichouser, Director of Government Relations, Main Street America ([khumrichouser@savingplaces.org](mailto:khumrichouser@savingplaces.org)) with any questions.

Sincerely,

Akron Civic Commons  
Capital Impact Partners  
City Parks Alliance  
Fairmount Park Conservancy  
Guadalupe River Park Conservancy  
IFF  
KABOOM!  
Lexington Public Library  
Low Income Investment Fund  
Memphis River Parks Partnership  
Main Street America  
Minneapolis Parks Foundation  
National Recreation and Park Association  
Opportunity Finance Network  
Purpose Built Communities  
Reinvestment Fund  
Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future (SAHF)  
The Trust for Public Land