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**MAJORITY OF AMERICANS BELIEVE LACK OF OPPORTUNITY, NOT LACK OF  
HARD WORK, KEEPS PEOPLE IN POVERTY**

*New National Poll Shows Strong Support for  
Investments that Increase Access to Opportunity*

**NEW YORK – March 29, 2017**– Polling data released today from [the Strong, Prosperous, And Resilient Communities Challenge \(SPARCC\)](#) shows that most Americans agree hard work alone cannot lift people out of poverty when there is a lack of access to opportunities. Moreover, there is strong support for investing in local projects that would increase economic opportunities. The polling data is part of a new report by SPARCC, [“How Local Leadership Can Drive Prosperity for All: A new vision for promoting equitable growth and infrastructure development in America’s communities.”](#)

According to the national poll, 74 percent of Americans agree more that lack of opportunities, not lack of hard work, keep people impoverished. What’s more, approximately nine in ten say they support using public funds to invest in a range of projects that can help people lift themselves out of poverty. Initiatives that garnered support range from expanded access to health services and public transit, to preparing for extreme weather events, and updating housing policies.

Potentially trillions of dollars in public and private infrastructure investments will be funneled into American cities over the next decade, and an [estimated \\$3.6 trillion](#) is needed by 2020 to upgrade and build new infrastructure. The time is ripe for public-private partnerships that encourage investing in neighborhoods in ways that benefit all residents and help lift entrenched barriers to opportunity.

**Infrastructure investments can create opportunities for all**

Evidence shows that where Americans grow up is one of the strongest predictors of their future chances for economic mobility.<sup>1</sup> In the past, local and regional infrastructure investments were made in ways that often divided neighborhoods and limited opportunities, particularly for people

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<sup>1</sup> Chetty, Raj, John Friedman, and Nathaniel Hendren. The Equality of Opportunity Project. <http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/neighborhoods/>

of color and low-income communities. This produced areas where residents lack access to job centers, public transportation, and healthy foods, and experience worse health outcomes and impacts of climate change. The [report](#) makes the case for locally driven solutions that ensure major new infrastructure investments lead to better opportunities for all.

“We must rethink how we invest in communities so we don’t perpetuate poverty and barriers to opportunity,” said Brian Prater, executive vice president of strategy, development, and public affairs at the Low Income Investment Fund. “Cities and regions are recognizing that the same approach and policies of the past won’t lead to different outcomes – and they’re taking action. SPARCC is proud to support these local efforts and we are glad to see through this report that the American public backs this positive change as well.”

As the [report](#) details, exclusionary policies, lack of investment, and under-representation at decision-making tables have entrenched many Americans in poverty for generations. The pervasiveness of these barriers can be seen across regions, such as Washington, DC; Martin County, Kentucky; and South Texas.

However, considerable [research](#) shows greater equity and fewer barriers to opportunity benefit overall economic growth. Cities across the U.S. are now rejecting trends of the past and rethinking investments as opportunities to help all communities thrive.

“The solutions we need to improve the places we live, particularly for people of color and low-income communities, have to be driven locally and regionally,” said John Moon, district manager of community development at the San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank. “SPARCC is propelling innovative local groups that are bringing together community residents, the public and private sectors, and local governments to make sure that all residents have a voice in ensuring new infrastructure investments benefit everyone.”

“Through SPARCC’s collaborative approach, these local efforts are intended to help transform how we approach infrastructure investment in communities nationwide,” said Melinda Pollack, vice president of national initiatives at Enterprise Community Partners. “As the report shows, there are strong supporting research and public backing for SPARCC’s mission. We will take the lessons learned through SPARCC’s local work in our six regions to help inform process changes that could be adapted and adopted across the country.”

“When it comes to making our communities resilient, healthier, and more prosperous—place matters,” said Shelley Poticha, director of the Urban Solutions program at the Natural Resources Defense Council. “SPARCC will help improve the way we build in our communities to increase equal access to transportation, clean air and water, and opportunity.”

### **SPARCC supports locally driven efforts to ensure investments lead to opportunities for all**

SPARCC is a [new national initiative](#), backed by some of the nation’s leading nonprofits and

foundations, that aims to spur innovative change and support locally driven efforts to ensure infrastructure investments lead to equitable development. In February 2017, SPARCC announced the initial [six regions](#) receiving direct funds and technical assistance to implement local strategies that would make their communities more prosperous and equitable. These solutions, range from transit expansion and revitalizing existing transit hubs, to reshaping and redirecting housing and land use.

The six initial SPARCC regions are:

- Atlanta
- Chicago
- Denver
- Los Angeles
- Memphis
- San Francisco Bay Area

The six SPARCC regions are positioned to be leaders promoting equitable development. Their local partnerships will encourage cities to think about change holistically by considering the intersections of equity, health outcomes, and climate change preparedness.

The full report, including all poll findings, can be found online [here](#).

**Methodology:** From January 30 to February 1, 2017, Hart Research Associates conducted an online survey of 1,021 adults nationwide on behalf of the Strong, Prosperous, And Resilient Communities Challenge. The data have been weighted to reflect the demographic composition of adults across the United States, including gender, age, race, education, and geography. As this survey was conducted online, a traditional margin of error cannot be calculated. Instead, online surveys have a 'credibility interval', which is +/- 3.1 for this survey.

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#### **About SPARCC**

The Strong, Prosperous, And Resilient Communities Challenge - or SPARCC - is supporting local efforts to make sure that everyone benefits from major new investments in the places we live, work, and play. By supporting locally driven initiatives, SPARCC aims to improve equity, health, and environmental outcomes to positively shape our cities and regions for generations. SPARCC is an initiative of Enterprise Community Partners, the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, the Low Income Investment Fund, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, with funding support from the Ford Foundation, The JPB Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and The California Endowment.

For more information on SPARCC and the selected regions, please visit [sparcchub.org](http://sparcchub.org).