

The Long-Term Gains of Landscape Architecture & Urbanism: Why It Should Be Every City's Priority

How one city manager offset future budget needs by
prioritizing Landscape Architecture



Maryville:

Planning a Creative City Budget

As the City Manager of the fictional City of Maryville, Michelle was all too familiar with her community's challenges. Aging infrastructure, limited green spaces, and a growing disconnect between residents and their surroundings had left the city feeling disconnected and worn down. With major development projects to create new shopping and living spaces on the horizon, she knew the time had come to take action.

Meet City Manager Michelle



"We were at a crossroads," Michelle recalls. "The proposed development plan prioritized efficiency and cost-savings over community well-being. I knew we had to find a better way forward — one that would transform Maryville and make it a vibrant place where people wanted to live."

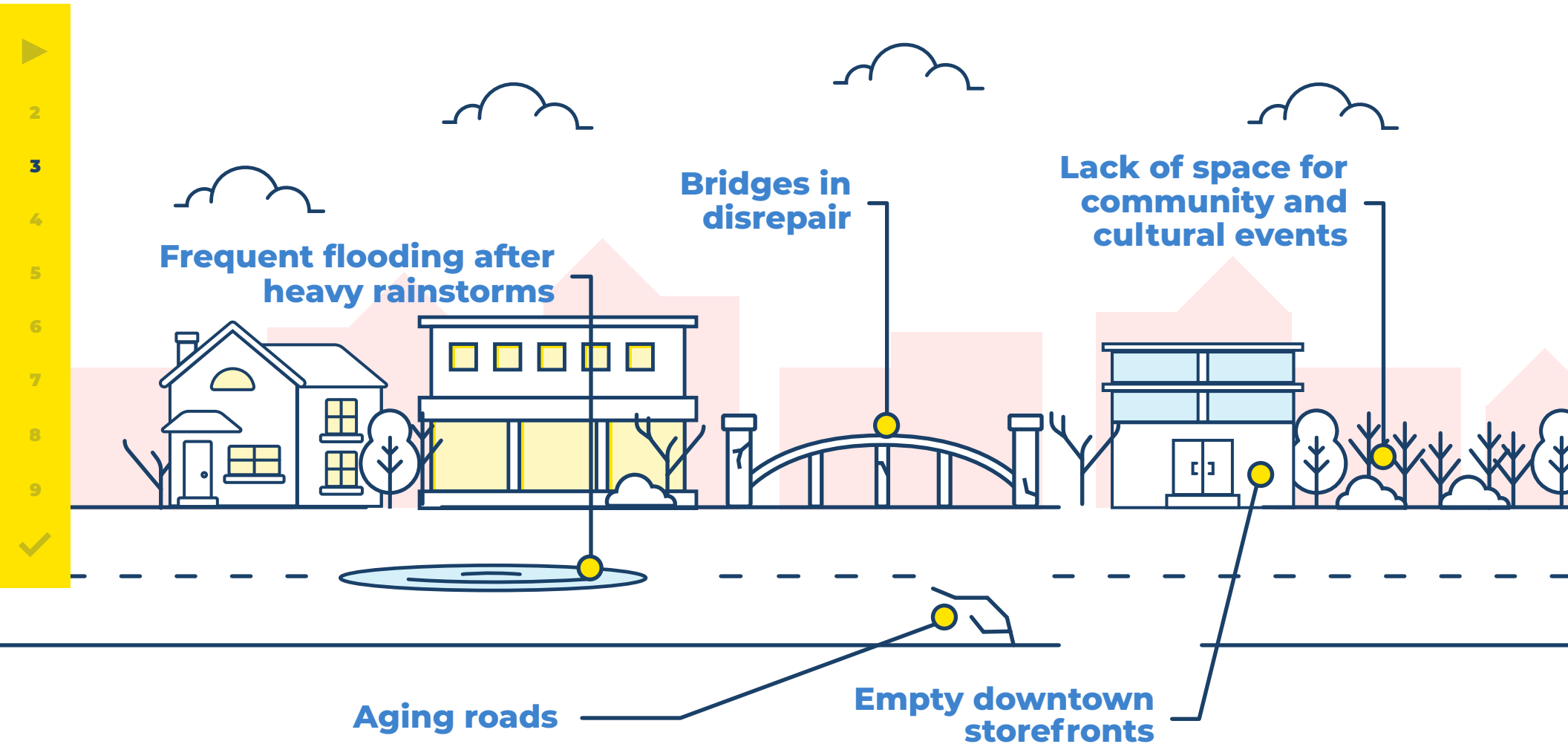
Year after year, Landscape Architecture and Urbanism were not prioritized

Historically, Landscape Architecture and Urbanism has often been overlooked in Maryville's urban planning efforts, overshadowed by more immediate infrastructure needs and budgetary constraints.

As a result, Michelle had focused on delivering "tangible" infrastructure projects rather than what many stakeholders considered to be "aesthetic" improvements. But she was determined to change that mindset.

The current state of Maryville

In its current state, Maryville was up against some challenges that required immediate budget to address.



Maryville's budget focused on infrastructure improvement and public spaces



Maryville's budget was largely focused on:

- Repairing roads and bridges
- Funding police, fire, and emergency services for public safety
- Improving student resources in public schools
- Economic development programs to stimulate job growth



However, Landscape Architecture Services could be directly tied to these initiatives and benefit the current budget. For example:

- Permeable sidewalks and rain gardens help manage stormwater, reduce road damage, and minimize erosion
- Less crime in well-designed public green spaces²
- Tree canopies lower temperatures for public buildings to help save money¹
- Attractive public spaces attract new developers and residents

Do your budgets often skew towards “must-do” infrastructure projects?

Then Landscape Architecture and Urbanism might just be the key to your budget's success. These services can address bigger issues with less budget (and bring additional benefits to the community). Because remember: Parks are also considered infrastructure!³

The Reasons Why Landscape Architecture is Often **Not** Prioritized...

...Are Often the Reasons You **Need** to Prioritize Landscape Architecture

Landscape Architecture can become a large budget line item, making it difficult to pitch to stakeholders.



Nature-based solutions can enhance environmental resilience, mitigating the impacts of climate change and reducing long-term maintenance costs.

Aging roads, bridges, utilities, and other core infrastructure require consistent maintenance and upgrades.



Sustainable stormwater management systems and green infrastructure can reduce the burden on aging utilities.

Current and prospective developers and residents will not be interested in a community that does not prioritize emergency services, education, transportation, etc.



Successful Landscape Architecture projects can showcase a city's commitment to livability and environmental stewardship, attracting new residents, businesses, and developers while improving property values.

Historically, city planning and development have focused on efficiency, functionality, and cost-savings



Landscape Architecture can catalyze a more holistic, inclusive approach to urban planning. Integrating landscape design principles can improve connectivity, accessibility, and a city's overall livability.⁴

The community might lack understanding or appreciation for the more comprehensive community benefits of Landscape Architecture and Urbanism.



Collaborative design processes that engage diverse stakeholders can help shape public spaces that truly reflect the community's needs and aspirations.

Making the choice to prioritize Landscape Architecture

Determined to chart a new course, Michelle turned to SAFEbuilt, a trusted partner in community development. Together, they worked through three general phases of project planning and implementation.

Step 1:

Create a comprehensive assessment

- Conducted a thorough study of Maryville's existing green spaces, transportation networks, and public realm
- Identified gaps, challenges, and opportunities for integrating Landscape Architecture principles
- Developed a clear roadmap for enhancing livability, connectivity, and environmental resilience

Step 2:

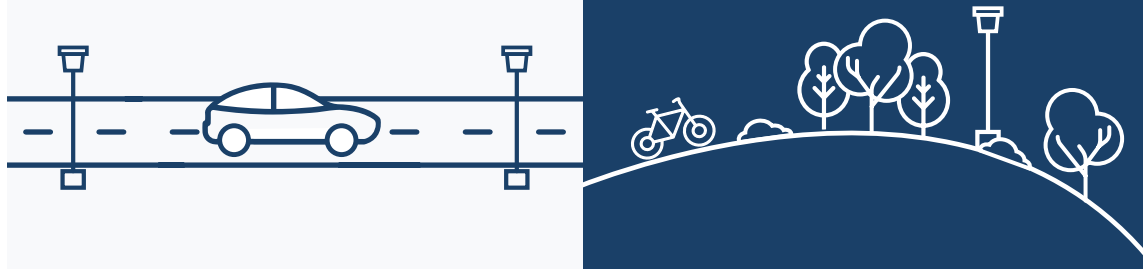
Collaborate on the design process

- Craft innovative, nature-based design solutions for revitalizing public spaces
- Establish a network of green corridors, pocket parks, and sustainable stormwater management features
- Incorporate community input gathered during the workshop and charrette sessions

Step 3:

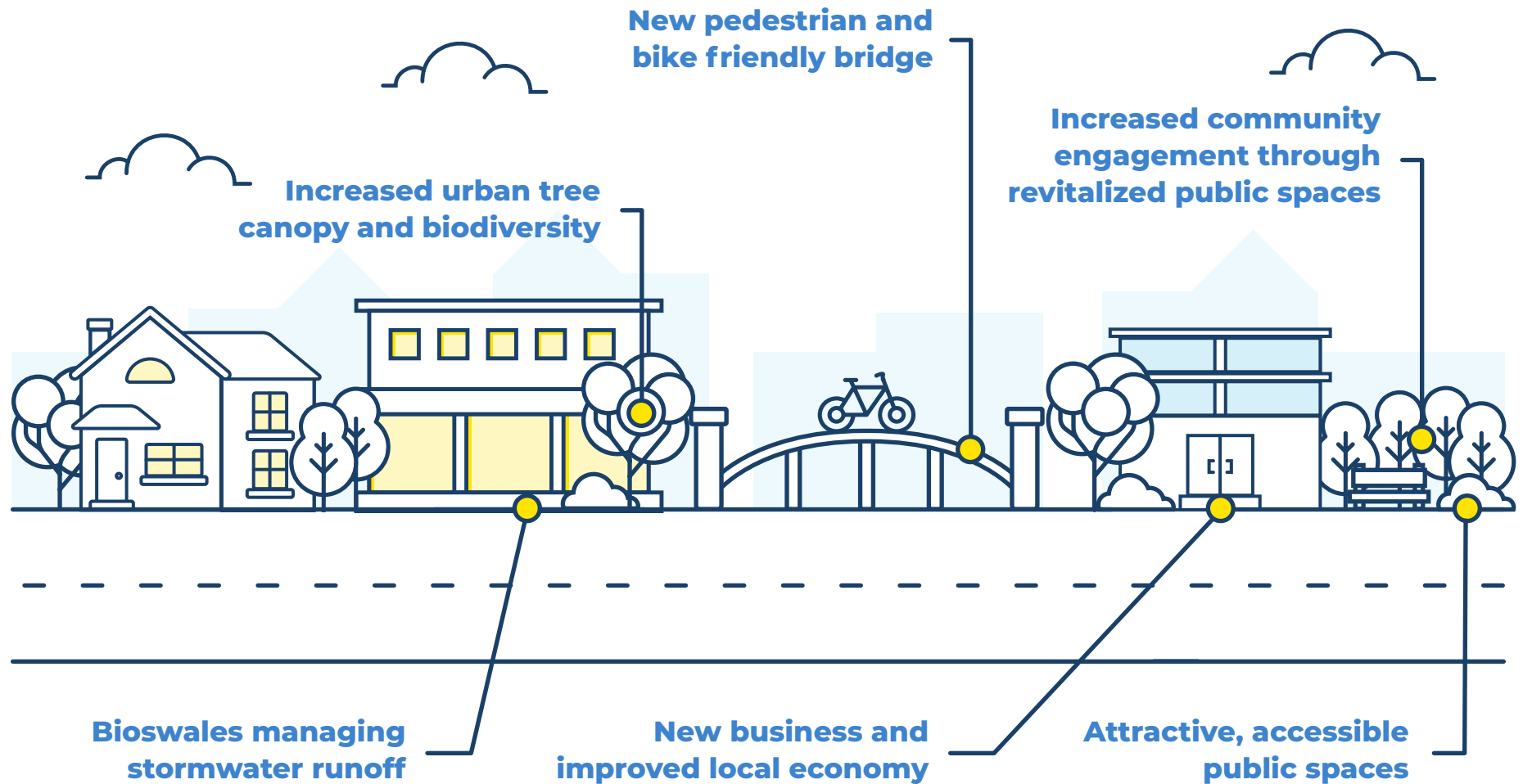
Implement the comprehensive plan

- Integrate Landscape Architecture and Urbanism principles into Maryville's overall urban planning framework
- Ensure the proposed interventions aligned with the city's long-term development goals
- Identify potential funding sources and implementation strategies



The state of Maryville today

Following the implementation of the Landscape Architecture and Urbanism plan, the positive impact on Maryville became increasingly evident in its new vibrant public spaces, improved connectivity and accessibility, environmental resilience, and renewed interest in the community by businesses.



Making the case for your community's budget

Securing the necessary funding for these Landscape Architecture projects was no easy task, but SAFEbuilt provided crucial support and guidance.

To address budgeting and financing for these services, SAFEbuilt:

- Worked with Michelle to identify opportunities for reallocating resources and securing additional funding
- Assisted with navigating the budgeting process and obtaining approval from the city council
- Helped Michelle explore grant programs and other external funding sources

To support Michelle through project implementation, SAFEbuilt:

- Collaborated with the city's project management team to facilitate the implementation process
- Provided guidance on best practices, regulatory requirements, and necessary approvals
- Ensured each Landscape Architecture initiative was executed per the plan, efficiently, and effectively

SAFEbuilt doesn't just hand a community a blue print and walk away. We become true partners with the communities we serve, supporting them every step of the way — from securing approval to managing the implementation process. The key advantage of working with SAFEbuilt is that we are a multi-disciplinary firm that can tackle any challenge.

See Your Project Before it is Built

When you work with SAFEbuilt's Landscape Architecture team, you'll see exactly how your project will look before construction begins. Our detailed 3D visualizations and renderings help you and your stakeholders understand every aspect of the design — from new downtown streetscapes to sustainable parks and plazas. We believe showing is better than telling when it comes to transforming your community spaces.



Palm Desert Lupine Plaza



Woodlake, CA



After



It's time to see Landscape Architecture and Urbanism as a strategic investment



"In the past, we viewed Landscape Architecture as a nice-to-have — something that could be deprioritized when funds were tight. But I realized that by integrating these principles into our planning, we could create a lasting, positive impact on our community's quality of life while minimizing future budgeting needs."

This transformation showcases how Landscape Architecture and Urbanism is more than an aesthetic consideration but a strategic investment in a city's future. By integrating nature-based solutions and sustainable design principles, communities can create more livable, resilient, and prosperous urban environments.

SAFEbuilt's comprehensive approach — from initial assessment to implementation support — provides city managers with the expertise and resources needed to overcome budget constraints and stakeholder skepticism. By reimagining urban spaces through the lens of Landscape Architecture, cities like Maryville can build a brighter, greener future for generations to come.

Ready to take the first step toward transforming your community?

[Explore Landscape Architecture Services](#)

SOURCES:

1. [The American Society of Landscape Architects Fund – Case Studies](#)
2. [ASLA – Landscape Architecture Magazine – Honor Award - Addressing Systemic Inequities in Neighborhood Greenspace: Leveraging Green Stormwater Infrastructure Design Elements to Enhance Well-being](#)
3. [Parks and Recreation Design | Asla.org](#)
4. [Green infrastructure: wildlife habitat and corridors | Asla.org](#)

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