

Spotlight

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REGULATORY UPDATES | BEST PRACTICES | NEW TECHNOLOGIES

in·fra·struc·ture

the underlying foundation or basic framework (as of a system or organization)

Where did you meet your last friend? Really, stop and think about it. Where exactly did you meet? What did you connect on? Think about the friends you spend Saturday nights with or the ones you invite to your Memorial Day picnic. Where did they come from? Your answer might be “she’s a mom friend - our kids go to daycare together”. Or maybe you met at church. Maybe it was a soccer game- or was it a yoga session in the park?

Think about it and then pause. How did you end up chatting with that other mom at daycare? What brought you to yoga in the park? How about the soccer game - did those bleachers encourage you to start talking to the guy next to you? We want to take a second to consider the infrastructures that allow these person-to-person connections to form.

Yes, we said infrastructures. No, we aren’t going to try to convince you that roads and rivers are the reason you have friends. What we’re actually talking about is social infrastructure. These are spaces intentionally designed to support the formation of human connections and interactions. Social infrastructures are the places where human bonds are formed. They are the spots where relationships begin and where human interaction is created.

Social infrastructure is the public library where you and another dad bond over ponytails and braids with your daughters. This space was designed to give you access - access to resources and access to relationships. Social infrastructure is the dog park where you and another dog mom compare notes on indestructible toys. This space was designed to help you relax and it was designed to help you relate. It is the amphitheater where you enjoy a summer concert, the coffee shop where you spend your day off, and the park where your kids finally run out of energy.

We’re living in a world where technology has challenged what we know about social connections. In some ways we fear our constant connection. In other ways, we fear our disconnect.

There will never be a replacement for face-to-face human connection. Here lies the power of developing social infrastructure.

Public libraries, athletic fields, dog parks, playgrounds, and even schools- these are where we make our friends. Community gardens and green spaces- they bring people into the public space. Sidewalks, courtyards, walking trails- they all invite people to come together. These are the places where we gather. These are the places where we form social bonds.

It’s about more than just donating to the local library. It’s also about being innovative. It’s about finding ways that we can create accessible opportunities for humans to interact. Plus, standard infrastructure systems no longer need to be just standard. Instead, we can build social infrastructure into these systems. Our bridges can incorporate walking trails. Our waterwalls can be built into exploration classrooms. Even planned open spaces- let’s create a community garden.

Social infrastructure is diverse in its nature. It varies to meet the needs of many populations. There are opportunities that offer brief social interactions- like chatting at a dog park or sitting next to someone on a subway. There are also deep connection opportunities- like programs at a public library or parent events at a daycare center. Regardless, what all of these offer is a sense of involvement, an opportunity for relationship, and a door open for human connection.

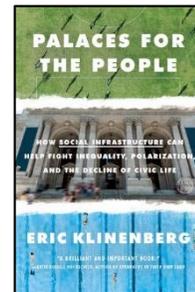
Enhancing and protecting social infrastructures allows us to no longer fear losing person-to-person interaction- but relish in the opportunities we have to build new, long-lasting relationships.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Want to hear the podcast that inspired this month’s Spotlight?

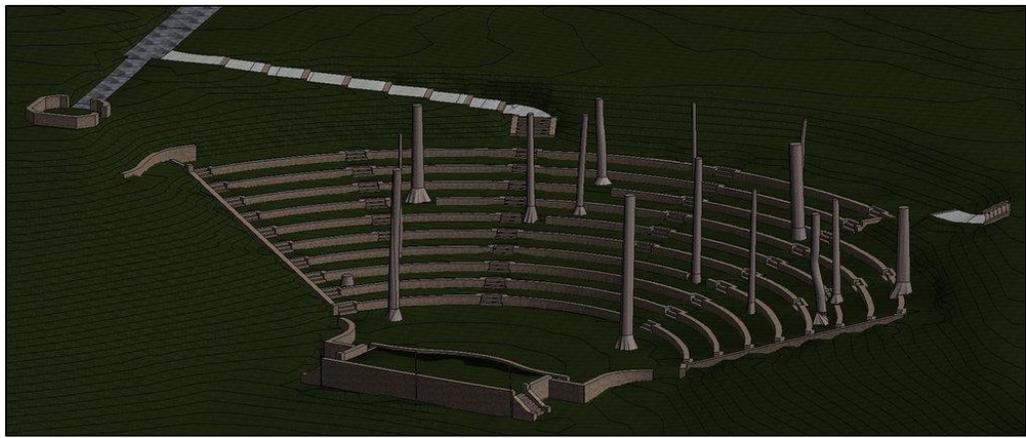
Check it out at this link!

<https://www.podcastone.com/episode/346--Palaces-for-the-People>



Maintenance and improvements to social infrastructures requires the same care and attention as standard infrastructure systems.

As attentive as we are to the streets you drive, so too are we attentive to the spaces that drive your relationships.



technology

Digital software helps ensure the sustainability of social spaces.

The Scott Outdoor Amphitheater of Swarthmore College

Technology is not a competitor of social infrastructure, but a partner. SSM used surveying technology to help Swarthmore College pursue improvements to their 50-year-old outdoor amphitheater. Using high-definition laser scanning software, SSM was able to capture the existing structure and landscape in a digital, 3-D version. This capture was then available for the project team to design potential renovations to the amphitheater and view the effects of their design on the existing landscapes.

The Scott Outdoor Amphitheater is a free outdoor structure, offering a space for human connections to occur year-round. Like many amphitheaters, it is a space for people to come together, communicate, and connect. Events held in amphitheaters invite social interactions and establish personal relationships. Every year, rain or shine, the Swarthmore commencement is held in this very space.

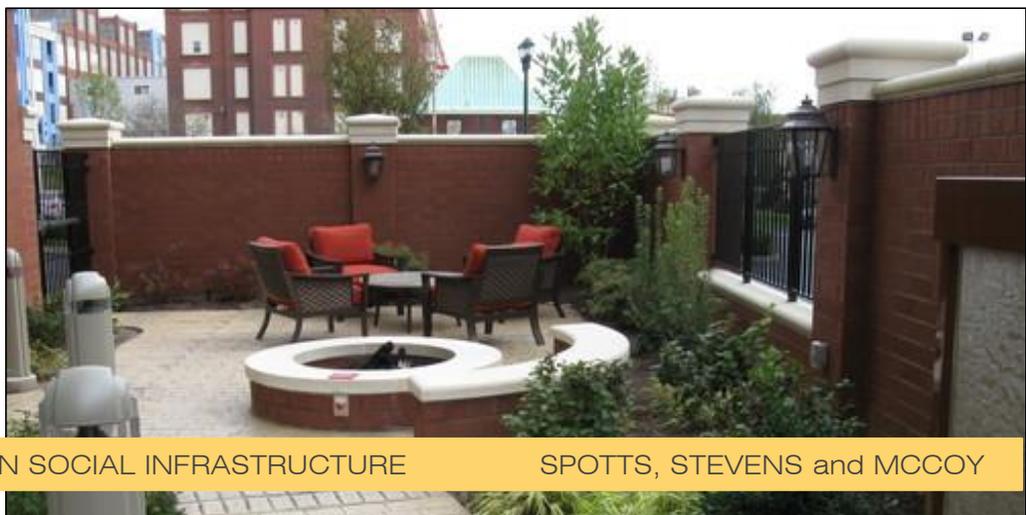
intention

Being purposeful in decision making ensures all social spaces meet the need of the community.

Courtyard Marriott

There is intention integrated into all of our social spaces. Consider the Marriott Courtyard within Wyomissing Square. SSM assisted with construction document preparation for site design. SSM also assisted with the planting plan, construction details, locating utilities, as well as grading and drainage. The design decisions within even these small spaces matter.

This intentional design within Wyomissing Square invites guests to come together. Spaces such as courtyards are free; they are accessible; they nurture human-to-human relationships. Use of inviting scenery and purposeful design enhance and promote the social opportunities that courtyards provide.





simplicity

Design of simple spaces can hugely influence the relationships that are born there.

Oxford Borough

Simple spaces- such as the sidewalk outside of your home, or the grass knoll in the center of town- transcend the basic thought. SSM worked with Oxford Borough, in Chester County, to prepare preliminary and final design plans/specifications for streetscape enhancements. Enhancements included crosswalks, curb designs, pedestrian bump-outs, and design of sidewalks. Enhancements also included planters, benches, and street lights.

Welcoming sidewalks and street spaces foster a sense of community and engagement within a public space. By enhancing their streetscapes, Oxford Borough invested in the social engagement of their residents and their visitors. Making streetscapes accessible, safe, and welcoming invites positive social interactions to occur.

attention

Providing care and commitment to the needs of many people opens the door for diverse human connections.

Wyomissing Borough

Attention to the needs and wants of communities is the crucial component of social infrastructure. SSM worked closely with the Wyomissing Borough to develop and implement Conceptual Master Plans for 4 public parks. With each plan, SSM worked to ensure the objectives of the borough met the results of each park. Whether it be the goal of maintaining an old time feel, or the need to update the most used playground spaces- the finished products contain modern facilities for a wide variety of users.

Community parks that offer many social spaces to enjoy create opportunities for many social relationships to form. Wyomissing Borough's care and attention to all of the needs makes for a comforting and welcoming place for all to enjoy.



From surveying to engineering to environmental planning and assessment - all of the hands on our deck support effective design and preservation of social infrastructures.

Our work touches everyday life.

From the water you drink to the air you breathe to the buildings and communities where you live, work and play.

Spotts, Stevens and McCoy is a family-owned regional engineering, environmental, and surveying firm serving local and global clients. We engineer solutions for a better world. Our work touches everyday life; from the water you drink, to the air you breathe, to the buildings and communities where you live, work and play.

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Welcome Aboard

SSM is excited to welcome Justin Folk and Tomasz Paniak to our Facilities Engineering Department as Graduate Engineers. Both Justin and Tomasz have a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from The Pennsylvania State University.

Opportunities at SSM – join the team!

Our work touches everyday life, from the water you drink to the air you breathe to the buildings and communities where you live, work and play.

Visit ssmgroup.com for more information about these opportunities:

- A **Project Manager** to effectively execute and manage multiple, simultaneous projects for high-paced design, permitting, construction and consulting engagements.
- A **Water/Wastewater Graduate Engineer** to work on all aspects of water and wastewater infrastructure planning, design, construction and treatment, including pumping and piping systems for both new construction and rehabilitation/replacement projects.
- A **Project Coordinator** to perform administrative functions related to tracking of project schedules, deadlines, and associated data management and assist with and coordinate the preparation and submittal of regulatory applications, forms, or reports associated with department projects as assigned by project managers.
- **Electrical Engineer** and **Structural Engineer** each with 5-7 years of experience to support our work in industrial, commercial, and R&D type facilities.
- A **Senior Electrical Engineer** with a minimum of 15 years of experience with data center design and power distribution.
- A **Senior Water Engineer** to work with our engineering staff to support our work in the water, water resources, and wastewater engineering markets on projects such as municipal treatment facilities, distribution systems, collection systems, sanitary and storm sewers and storm water.

Let's Hang Out!

Upcoming Industry Events

- **September 9** – [PA Municipal Authorities Association Annual Conference](#) at the Kalahari Resort
- **September 13** – [Central PA Water Quality Association Trade Fair and Plant Tour](#) will be held at the City of Lebanon Authority.
- **September 16** – [Western Berks Water Authority Golf Tournament](#) All proceeds benefit the “new” Berks County Water and Sewer Source Water Protection Initiative.
- **September 17** – Fall Career Days at [The Pennsylvania State University](#)
- **September 20** – [Eastern PA Water Pollution Control Operators Association](#) Regular meeting and Plant Tour sponsored by Chalfont – New Britain Township Joint Sewage Authority.

