

The Organized Construction Trades: Building Wealth for Illinois Communities

What is the community wealth building approach?

Community wealth building is an approach to economic development that strengthens communities while fostering inclusive growth. This approach leverages assets that already exist within a community to create new forms of shared prosperity. Rather than relying on expensive incentives designed to entice outside corporate entities (which also send profits back to shareholders and distant corporate offices), community wealth building aims to create a resilient infrastructure of locally controlled businesses, powerful and responsive anchor institutions (such as schools and hospitals), and new vehicles for driving local economic opportunity.

How do the organized construction trades help build wealth for Illinois communities?

Through their operations, business structures, employment practices, and economic impacts, the organized construction trades help build community wealth in many ways.



Local Business Ownership



The vast majority of organized construction and contracting firms are place-based small businesses with deep roots in the communities

where they were formed. Many are passed down through generations of family ownership. In this way, they provide stable local employment, tax revenues, and other benefits to communities.

Workforce Development



Through apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, the organized construction trades provide highly valuable training and life skills education that give students lifelong skills and expertise,

leading to career advancement and good, secure employment.

Infrastructure Strength



Strong water, electric, transportation, and other infrastructure systems are vital to community economic growth as well as public health and safety.

The organized construction trades deploy the most advanced training, materials, and techniques to keep community infrastructure sound and make it possible for communities to grow.

Local Economic Participation



The family-supporting wages and healthcare, retirement, and other vital benefits that workers in the organized construction trades earn bring economic security to these workers and their

families. Union construction workers rely far less on public assistance than their non-union counterparts and have more disposable income to spend in their communities, supporting local businesses and helping to increase the capacity of municipalities to provide needed services to residents and businesses.

Community Life



Workers and employers in the organized construction trades are often actively involved in the life of their communities.

Their participation in local government, community organizations, and other civic activities helps to increase community vitality and hometown pride.

Development Capacity



The organized construction trades represent a ready force of highly skilled and experienced crews fully prepared and equipped to handle all types of development projects. These crews

make it possible to stand up high-quality buildings and infrastructure that generate revenue and jobs – and do so on time and on budget.

Equity



The organized construction trades are working to help level the playing field for minorities and other traditionally underserved populations. All workers within the organized construction

trades are paid a fair and family-supporting wage and have access to vital benefits. Training and employment opportunities offered by the organized construction trades help low-income communities close opportunity gaps and break the cycle of poverty by providing career ladders, entrepreneurial opportunities, and other means of advancement.

How can communities harness the power of the organized construction trades to build community wealth?

1. Develop and adopt asset-based approaches to economic development that build off of existing forms of community wealth.
2. Collaborate – rather than compete – with neighboring communities to establish a robust regional economic development infrastructure.
3. Establish effective lines of communication with the organized construction trades in their region and seek out their input and technical assistance on new municipal plans and construction projects.
4. Prioritize high quality construction projects and adopt policies promoting responsible construction practices that provide broad community wealth building benefits.