

WHAT IS...A Deck Park?

Analyzing the Impact of Interstate Infrastructure



More Than a Park

A deck park is a public or civic space built on a structural "lid" over an existing roadway—most often an interstate or sunken highway. By spanning across the infrastructure below, a deck park reconnects neighborhoods that were once divided and reclaims land previously lost to transportation corridors. These parks can support green space, walking and biking paths, cultural programming, and community gathering areas—transforming infrastructure into an asset rather than a barrier.

URBAN HEAT ISLANDS

Interstates are major contributors to the Urban Heat Island effect, acting as massive radiators that absorb solar energy by day and release it by night. This leaves adjacent neighborhoods significantly hotter—often 5° to 10°F warmer—than the rest of the city, driving up energy bills and health risks.

- Energy Poverty: Residents living in these "heat zones" have to run air conditioning longer and harder, leading to higher utility bills. For low-income communities already struggling with costs, this is a significant

Deck Park Solution

- A park could cover this hot asphalt with a lush canopy of shade trees and grass, lowering ambient temperatures by 5–10°F.

AIR QUALITY

Open highways create a "pollution plume" of exhaust and micro-particles that drifts into nearby homes and schools, contributing to high rates of asthma and heart disease. This "invisible smog" disproportionately harms the communities immediately adjacent to the corridor.

Deck Park Solution

- The structure contains vehicle exhaust within the tunnel for controlled venting, while the dense new vegetation on top acts as a "green sponge," actively filtering dust and particulates to create a cleaner breathing zone.

SOUND POLLUTION

While concrete divides a neighborhood physically, sound divides it socially. An interstate highway functions as a continuous "line source" of noise, generating a constant roar (75–80+ decibels) that extends for blocks.

This "acoustic wall" kills the "front porch" culture of a neighborhood. When you have to shout to be heard, people stop gathering outdoors.

Deck Park Solution

- A deck park's massive concrete and soil structure physically traps highway noise in the tunnel below. This instantly drops decibel levels from a "diesel roar" to a "library whisper," allowing the community to speak, sleep, and gather in peace.

