Community Well Being

A selection of facts and resources supported by research

2024

Participating in a Tree Planting Builds Healthier Communities

Overview

Urban green space provides vital places for facilitating impromptu and organized social gatherings—spaces for playing, sharing, bumping into, and networking with others. This in turn reduces loneliness, improves social cohesion, and provides a greater sense of trust in a neighborhood, place and belonging to society. Cleaning up vacant lots, restoring parks, and creating community gardens are often markers of community resilience.

Family

- Green spaces can promote **multi-generational social interaction**. Green spaces provide places for parents and children to engage in outdoor activities and spend time together (Urban Forestry Toolkit, n.d.).
- Green spaces provide a place for older adults to engage in physical activity and socialize with others, which can help to **combat feelings of loneliness** and depression (Urban Forestry Toolkit, n.d.).

Connection and Civic Engagement

- Communities where residents are immersed in trees and nature can **be kinder and more compassionate** (Piff et al., 2015).
- Participants in tree planting campaigns often engage in broader civic activities, reinforcing **democratic values** and community bonds (Fisher et al., 2015).

Place-making and Time

- Trees, green spaces, and nature enhance the quality of living space and the **distinctness of the places we live in**. Many cities use this in their official mottos – Raleigh, North Carolin is the City of Oaks and Atlanta is the City in a Forest of Trees (Beatley, 2023).
- Older trees connect **generations and history**. Being near a larger older trees reinforces the experience that generations of others have also been there (Beatley, 2023).
- Turning vacant spaces (lots etc.) into vibrant places that reflect a community's aesthetic, cultural values and strengths create a sense of **community pride, and ownership** among residents. ("How Creative Placemaking Transforms Vacant Properties into Vibrant Community Spaces.," 2023).

Safety and Peace
- Neighborhoods with homes fronted with street trees experience **lower crime rates** (Donovan, 2010).
- In under-resourced Philadelphia neighborhoods, transforming vacant spaces into parklike areas or just removing trash and cleaning them up reduced overall crime by more than 13% and gun violence by 30% (Dengler, 2018).

Community Gardens
- Community gardens allow for the creation of social ties and build a **greater feeling of community.** These connections help reduce crime, empower residents, and allow residents to feel safe in their neighborhoods (Munro, 2013).
- A community garden program can **reduce food insecurity**, improve dietary intake, and strengthen family relationships. (Carney et al., 2011).

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