



GREENING

PLACE-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION
STRATEGY RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

A growing body of evidence supports greening activities as a violence prevention and reduction strategy. The following document explores Greening as a strategy to advance health equity and prevent sexual and intimate partner violence. The resources compiled in this report are intended to build practitioner toolkits to make the case for Greening



in their violence prevention work, and build successful strategies, based on evidence and best-practice. This document is intended to build sexual and intimate violence prevention practitioners' toolkits to make the case for greening in their violence prevention work and to develop successful strategies informed by evidence. It presents a compilation of resources including research articles, guides, and organizations performing relevant work.

What is Greening?

Greening is a strategy used to [modify the Physical and Social Environment](#), to prevent multiple forms of violence by creating community-level protective factors.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines Modifying Physical and Social Environments to prevent violence as:

“Enhancing and maintaining physical characteristics of places people come together to foster social interaction, strengthen connectedness, improve safety, and increase shared trust among community members. Physical environment modifications can include increasing lighting, managing accessibility to buildings and public spaces, street cleaning, increasing security, repairing or replacing abandoned buildings, creating green spaces, and organizing community events and activities that bring together local residents and provide them with opportunities for more community involvement.”

CDC outlines the key objectives of the approach to modify the physical and social environments in their [Essential Elements node](#) on Veto Violence, describing the core benefits of Greening as:

- Creating safe spaces and places to increase their use and appeal
- Reducing incidents of crime and violence
- Promoting social norms that protect against violence
- Strengthening connections between residents, businesses, law enforcement, and other community organizations
- Strengthening the local economy of neighborhood.

While there are multiple strategies to modify environments to prevent violence, this document will focus on greening.

Greening activities can modify neighborhood physical and social environments and prevent multiple forms of violence. Greening includes a range of activities, such as fixing up and replacing abandoned buildings and vacant lots; removing trash and debris; planting grass and trees and community gardens; creating parks and recreation areas, and other beautification activities that bring residents together. The creation of greening strategies in a community, or the shared use of green areas that already exist in a community, can foster community cohesion, where residents unite to promote social interaction, fortify bonds, cultivate shared trust, and diminish avenues for crime and violence.

Using a [Health Equity Approach to Violence Prevention](#), practitioners are encouraged to select strategies that impact multiple forms of violence, including sexual and intimate partner violence prevention. The following resources are arranged into the following categories, indicating how Greening decreases the prevalence and likelihood of each, by promoting environmental protective factors:

- Community Health and Wellbeing
- Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence
- Gun Violence
- Parks
- Rural Greening

This document is not an exhaustive list of evidence around Greening as a strategy to prevent violence, but is intended to support new initiatives and build the evidence base around community-level prevention.

Community Engagement, Health and Wellbeing

The following evidence supports Greening as an effective strategy to promote Community Engagement, Health and Wellbeing.

Busy Streets Theory: The Effects of Community-engaged Greening on Violence

[Heinze JE, Krusky-Morey A, Vagi KJ, Reischl TM, Franzen S, Pruett NK, Cunningham RM, Zimmerman MA. Busy Streets Theory: The Effects of Community-engaged Greening on Violence. *Am J Community Psychol*. 2018 Sep;62\(1-2\):101-109. doi: 10.1002/ajcp.12270. Epub 2018 Sep 14. PMID: 30216464; PMCID: PMC6373470](#)

From broken windows to busy streets: a community empowerment perspective

[Aiyer, S. M., Zimmerman, M. A., Morrel-Samuels, S., & Reischl, T. M. \(2014\). From Broken Windows to Busy Streets: A Community Empowerment Perspective. *Health Education & Behavior*, 42\(2\), 137-147. doi:10.1177/1090198114558590](#)

A Difference-in-Differences Analysis of Health, Safety, and Greening Vacant Urban Space

[Branas, C. C., Cheney, R. A., MacDonald, J. M., Tam, V. W., Jackson, T. D., & Ten Have, T. R. \(2011\). A difference-in-differences analysis of health, safety, and greening vacant urban space. *American journal of epidemiology*, 174\(11\), 1296-1306. doi:10.1093/aje/kwr273](#)

Environmental, health, wellbeing, social and equity effects of urban green space interventions: A meta-narrative evidence synthesis

[Hunter, R. F., Cleland, C., Cleary, A., Droomers, M., Wheeler, B. W., Sinnett, D., . . . Braubach, M. \(2019\). Environmental, health, wellbeing, social and equity effects of urban green space interventions: A meta-narrative evidence synthesis. *Environ Int*, 130, 104923. doi:10.1016/j.envint.2019.104923](#)

The Relationship between Social Cohesion and Urban Green Space: An Avenue for Health Promotion

[Jennings, V., & Bamkole, O. \(2019\). The Relationship between Social Cohesion and Urban Green Space: An Avenue for Health Promotion. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*, 16\(3\). doi:10.3390/ijerph16030452](#)

Neighborhood Interventions to Reduce Violence

[Kondo, M. C., Andreyeva, E., South, E. C., MacDonald, J. M., & Branas, C. C. \(2018\). Neighborhood Interventions to Reduce Violence. *Annu Rev Public Health*, 39, 253-271. doi:10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040617-014600](#)

Integrative Review of the Intersection of Green Space and Neighborhood Violence
[Mancus, G. C., & Campbell, J. \(2018\). Integrative Review of the Intersection of Green Space and Neighborhood Violence. *J Nurs Scholarsh*, 50\(2\), 117-125. doi:10.1111/jnu.12365](#)

Environmental Determinants of Aggression in Adolescents:
Role of Urban Neighborhood Greenspace

[Younan, D., Tuvblad, C., Li, L., Wu, J., Lurmann, F., Franklin, M., . . . Chen, J. C. \(2016\). Environmental Determinants of Aggression in Adolescents: Role of Urban Neighborhood Greenspace. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*, 55\(7\), 591-601. doi:10.1016/j.jaac.2016.05.002](#)

Urban green space interventions and health: A review of impacts and effectiveness
[Urban Green Space Interventions and Health: A review of impacts and effectiveness. World Health Organization \(2017\)](#)

Reducing Violence Without Police: A Review of Research Evidence

[John Jay College Research Advisory Group on Preventing and Reducing Community Violence \(2020\). Reducing Violence Without Police: A Review of Research Evidence. New York, NY: Research and Evaluation Center, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York](#)

Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence

The following evidence is supports Greening as an effective strategy to prevent sexual violence and intimate partner violence.

Green Space, Violence, and Crime: A Systematic Review

[Bogar, S., & Beyer, K. M. \(2016\). Green Space, Violence, and Crime: A Systematic Review. *Trauma Violence Abuse*, 17\(2\), 160-171. doi:10.1177/1524838015576412](#)

Toward a gendered Second Generation CPTED for
preventing woman abuse in rural communities

[DeKeseredy, W. S., Donnermeyer, J. F., & Schwartz, M. D. \(2009\). Toward a gendered Second Generation CPTED for preventing woman abuse in rural communities. *Security Journal*, 22\(3\), 178-189. doi:10.1057/sj.2009.3](#)

Perceived Neighborhood and experiences of Intimate
Partner Violence: a multilevel analysis

[Thulin, E. J., Heinze, J. E., Kusunoki, Y., Hsieh, H. F., & Zimmerman, M. A. \(2020\). Perceived Neighborhood Characteristics and Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence: A Multilevel Analysis. *J Interpers Violence*, 886260520906183. doi:10.1177/0886260520906183](#)

Greenness and the Potential Resilience to Sexual Violence: "Your Neighborhood Is Being Neglected Because People Don't Care. People With Power Don't Care"
[Mancus, G. C., Cimino, A. N., Hasan, M. Z., Campbell, J. C., Sharps, P., Winch, P. J., Tsuyuki, K., & Stockman, J. K. \(2022\). Greenness and the Potential Resilience to Sexual Violence: "Your Neighborhood Is Being Neglected Because People Don't Care. People With Power Don't Care". *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37\(19-20\), NP17344-NP17368. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605211028009>](#)

Gun Violence

The following evidence is supports Greening as an effective strategy to prevent gun violence.

Modifiable Neighborhood Features Associated With Adolescent Homicide
[Culyba, A. J., Jacoby, S. F., Richmond, T. S., Fein, J. A., Hohl, B. C., & Branas, C. C. \(2016\). Modifiable Neighborhood Features Associated With Adolescent Homicide. *JAMA Pediatr*, 170\(5\), 473-480. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2015.4697](#)

Effects of greening and community reuse of vacant lots on crime
[Kondo, M., Hohl, B., Han, S., & Branas, C. \(2016\). Effects of greening and community reuse of vacant lots on crime. *Urban Stud*, 53\(15\), 3279-3295. doi:10.1177/0042098015608058](#)

The Impact of Green Space on Violent Crime in Urban Environments: An Evidence Synthesis
[Shepley, M., Sachs, N., Sadatsafavi, H., Fournier, C., & Peditto, K. \(2019\). The Impact of Green Space on Violent Crime in Urban Environments: An Evidence Synthesis. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*, 16\(24\). doi:10.3390/ijerph16245119](#)

How Green Spaces Can Combat Gun Violence in America
[John E. Dobbs and Joseph V. Sakran, 2023: How Green Spaces Can Combat Gun Violence in America *American Journal of Public Health* 113, 739_741, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2023.307309>](#)

Parks

Maintaining green parks and gardens in cities has the potential to lower the risk of crime, study suggests
[University of Edinburgh. "Maintaining green parks and gardens in cities has the potential to lower the risk of crime, study suggests." *ScienceDaily*. \[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2022/10/221012101717.htm\]\(http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2022/10/221012101717.htm\)](#)

Rural Greening



While greening is often referred to as creating green spaces like parks, gardens and trees, there are specific benefits and considerations to Greening in rural areas: focusing on the level of community connection in green communal spaces, rather than the amount of green space itself. The following resources offer guidance to greening in rural spaces, how strategies differ from urban greening efforts and the core benefits to Greening in rural areas.

University of Edinburgh – [ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2022/10/221012101717.htm](https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2022/10/221012101717.htm)

"Maintaining green parks and gardens in cities has the potential to lower the risk of crime, study suggests."

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN RURAL RESOURCES TOOLKIT

This toolkit is for people working in community development, health and community leaders who want to strengthen community resilience factors: social networks & support, positive outlook, learning, early experience, environment & lifestyle, infrastructure, sense of purpose, diverse economy, embracing differences, beliefs and leadership.

- [University of Queensland and University of Southern Queensland \(2008\)](#)

HEALTHY RURAL COMMUNITIES TOOLKIT: A GUIDE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

This tool kit is intended for use in rural communities. Municipalities, including planners, health authority staff, and elected officials are the intended audience, although the tool kit will also help other interested community members advocate for healthier communities and populations. Overall, this tool kit is meant for those interested in how the built environment and local development impacts health.

- <https://planh.ca/sites/default/files/tools-resources/healthyruralcommunitiestoolkit.pdf>

MINNESOTA INTELLIGENT RURAL COMMUNITIES PROGRAM- DEMONSTRATION COMMUNITIES FINAL REPORT

- https://blandinfoundation.org/content/uploads/vy/MIRC_ICF_Final_Report--04-08-13.pdf

ORGANIZATIONS CONDUCTING RELEVANT EFFORTS



Evidence base studying the connection between Greening and Sexual Violence prevention is still growing. Part of the limitations in gathering evidence are the limited CDC-funded organizations working in the intersections of Greening and Sexual Violence Prevention. Even so, there are a growing number of organizations doing innovating Greening prevention work. The following is a non-exhaustive list of some of them.

Groundwork USA

Groundwork USA is a national network of organizations devoted to transforming the natural and built environment of low-resource communities—a national enterprise with local roots, working at the intersection of the environment, equity, and civic engagement, by uplifting projects dedicated to:

- Pursuing a future in which everyone's neighborhood environment is green, healthy and resilient.
- Undoing legacies of poverty and racial discrimination.
- Breaking the trend of widening disparity between communities that are enjoying a renaissance and communities that are experiencing disinvestment, neglect, and deepening poverty.

GROUNDWORK USA PROJECTS OF INTEREST:

- [Green Space Actions Evaluation Project](#)
- [Equitable Development / Brownfields Planning](#)
- [From Brown to Blooming: Groundwork USA's Field-Tested Guide for Getting from Brownfield to Neighborhood Asset](#)
- [Green Space: An Underestimated Tool to Create More Equal Cities](#)

PlanH

PlanH, implemented by [Building Healthy Communities Society](#), supports local government engagement and partnerships across sectors for creating healthier communities. Recognizing that community policy, plans, and decisions affect health and well-being, PlanH provides learning opportunities, resources, and leading-edge practices for collaborative local action.

PROJECTS OF INTEREST:

- [Guides and Toolkits Library](#)
- [Everybody's Welcome: A Social Inclusion Approach to Program Planning and Development for Recreation and Parks Services](#)
- [Building Social Connection through multi-unit housing](#)
- [Resilient Streets Guide for Community Resilience](#)

Greater Boston Anti-Displacement Toolkit

This multimedia organizing toolkit is a collection of activities, how-to guides, facilitation plans, and resources that organizers and residents can use to fight displacement in their communities. The Toolkit follows Chelsea and Everett, two communities in Massachusetts that are facing pressure from developers that has resulted in the forced displacement of residents and small businesses. The toolkit is intended to help residents, neighborhood councils, organizations, and anyone organizing against displacement engage with each other in meaningful ways.

- <https://www.greaterbostontoolkit.org/en/toolkit/mapping>

Restore Forward

Restore Forward is a cooperative, land-based healing and reconciliation entity launched by Black Women's Blueprint. Restore Forward's vision is to advance the well-being and steward journeys where people can be seen, held, and heard by each other. Located on 300 acres in upstate New York, Restore Forward designs and delivers its land-based healing program, farm programs, crisis intervention and mental health services, reproductive health services, retreats, and its transformational Institute offerings.

- <https://restoreny.org/>

Deeply Rooted, Penn Medicine

[Deeply Rooted](#) is a community-academic collaborative that uses the healing power of nature to promote health and wellbeing in Black and other minority Philadelphia neighborhoods. Nature — including trees and parks — makes us healthier, lowers gun violence, betters heart health, improves birth outcomes, and reduces stress and anxiety. Nature helps us feel more connected to one another, with the goal to:

- Empower communities to create new greenspace including planting trees, greening vacant lots, and building mini-parks and community gardens.
- Provide grants to community organizations and residents to put on events related to nature and run activities in parks and other greenspaces.
- Create career development opportunities for youth, returning citizens, and other community members through leadership and nature-based job training.
- Advocate for policies and neighborhood investments that promote environmental justice.

READ MORE ABOUT DEEPLY ROOTED'S PROJECT: GREENING FOR HEALTH EQUITY IN BLACK AND BROWN COMMUNITIES

- <https://communityimpact.penncmedicine.org/greening-for-health-equity-in-black-and-brown-communities/>

Urban Health Lab

The Urban Health Lab (UHL), located at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, is dedicated to designing and testing individual and community level interventions to build healthy neighborhoods. The organization leverages research and action to dismantle structural racism and catalyze healthier, safer, and greener neighborhoods. With a particular focus on urban nature and leveraging green space for health, Urban Health Lab partners with community organizations, non-profits, and policy makers to create the highest levels of evidence to advance the science of urban health and wellbeing.

AREAS OF WORK INCLUDE: URBAN NATURE, BLIGHT REMEDIATION, COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND HOUSING QUALITY

- Read more at: <https://www.urbanhealthlab.org/>

National Environmental Education Foundation

The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) is the nation's leading organization in lifelong environmental learning, aimed at making the environment more accessible, relatable, relevant, and connected to the daily lives of all Americans. The foundation creates opportunities for people to experience and learn about the environment in ways that improve their lives and the health of the planet.

- NEEF put together a Toolkit, to draw connections between community gardens and community safety. Read more here: <https://www.neefusa.org/story/health-and-environment/how-greening-communities-can-reduce-violence-and-promote-health>

The Impact of Community Gardens on Neighborhoods

Community gardens are shared spaces where neighbors unite to tend to a garden, providing their community with fresh food, educational opportunities, and a sense of community.

Nutritional Access
Regular access to fresh, healthy foods helps prevent negative health outcomes in children.

Expanding Palates
Community gardens introduce children to a variety of foods, encouraging adventurous eating and a love for fresh produce.

Environmental Impact
These gardens contribute to urban greening, supporting local ecosystems and biodiversity.

Safety
Well-maintained community gardens have been shown to reduce violent crime and gun violence, creating safer neighborhoods.

Community Engagement
Community gardens foster inclusivity and build strong neighborhood connections.

NEEF National Environmental Education Foundation