How Green Spaces Prevent Crime

A research on the correlation between green spaces and crime prevention through urban agriculture and community gardens

Tag Words: green spaces, crime prevention

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Summary

Sustainable architecture describes environmentally conscious design techniques. Alongside sustainable architecture ideas such as urban agriculture and community gardens have emerged. This has created an environment that induces crime prevention alongside the idea of a sustainable city. A step into sustainability is urban agriculture, which “is the practice of cultivating, processing, and distributing good in or around a village, town or city”[1]. It is generally practiced for income earning or food producing activities but one of the underlying outcomes of green spaces besides food production is crime prevention. Green spaces can single handedly reduce crime in an urban area by generating positive activity in the neighborhood. (AK)

*www.epa.gov

Video Link
http://youtu.be/rWvwqstjZEU

3.1 Environmental and Health Benefits that Aid and Abet Negativity through Stress Reduction

The role of a sustainable community helps create a pleasant physical environment. Green spaces in urban areas lower the urban heat island effect in that it produces oxygen which acquires the characteristic of being able to cool cities. The urban heat island effect is the idea of the tar and concrete that is used in cities to build buildings, the overall temperature of a city is warmer because of the high albedo of these materials. Green spaces that include community gardens will lower the temperatures and unintentionally abet the overall effects of global warming. Greening in a community in addition to reducing pollution, this in turn aids in reducing stress in an urban area.

“Those who are born and have grown up in an urban environment have a higher activity of stress in their brain”[2]. Those who live in or near green spaces indicates there is less stress on the human mind. “The annual rates of fifteen out of twenty four major physical diseases were significantly lower along those living in green spaces”[3]. The idea of green creates a sense of
feeling of improve health. The prevalence of anxiety disorders for people living in an area with in about 0.6 miles of green space contain only ten percent is twenty six out of a thousand in an area where there was ninety percent green spaces were less likely, about eighteen out of a thousand to have anxiety disorders. The depression rates in urban areas are also significantly higher than places that contain green spaces. Research shows that this is the strongest for children under twelve years old. Another contributing factor is the quantity of the air of the places that contain a green space. The impact of community gardening can improve the health and lifestyle of urban dwellers. Economically, community gardening will aid the people that are involved with growing their down produce. One of the main problems in urban areas is not having access to fresh produce because of the cost and inaccessibility of these items. This is why there are more health issues such as obesity in these areas because of the lack of basic nutrients and the high volume of fast food restaurants. Community gardening will help a city sustain itself in that residents of the city will be the ones volunteering to contribute to the gardening.

CityDwellers have Higher Stress Levels

http://www.anxiety.org/anxiety-news/general/city-dwellers-have-higher-stress-levels

‘Green’ exercise quickly ‘boosts mental health’
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/8654350.stm

3.2 Social Benefits of Green Spaces

As discussed earlier there are several benefits to adapting sustainability. Socially, community gardens bring people together. It increases the sense of leadership in a community, encouraging everyone to take control and be a part of the decision making process. A community garden fosters the development of identity. It offers a focal point for community organizing often tackling other social concerns such as public health, aesthetics in the neighborhood most importantly crime prevention.

One of the most important social benefits of community gardening and green spaces is crime prevention. The idea of a community garden is to not only grow organic produce but to provide opportunities to meet neighbors. Community gardens build block clubs and neighborhood associations creating a tight knit group. It increases eyes on the street such that activity on the street becomes more apparent. Community gardens are recognized by police departments as well. Many residents of low income communities feel that by the active nature of tending to a neighborhood through community gardening prevents crime because just the act of caring about a neighborhood may prevent suspicious activity. Many people living in these places do not have access to yards and using vacant lots to do this, allows them to experience having a piece of land to do their own work. While these benefits have improved lifestyle greatly in these areas there has been an establishment of therapy of gardening. 4

3.3 The Greener the Place the Safer the Place

Green spaces are a key factor in the urban renewal process. In the 1970s New York City was caught up in the midst of a financial crisis leaving landlords to abandon buildings and vacate lots only to leave several neighborhoods to deteriorate and the residents in despair. This brought up the movement of building community gardens in vacant lots. According to the American Community Gardening Association, there were an estimated 150,000 community gardens in the
US in 2004. Studies have shown that the quality of life of urban dwellers has significantly improved because of the lower levels of fear that is endured in these neighborhoods. There has been an increase in the number of owner occupied dwellings, more personal income (a result of attracting people with higher incomes to the community) and rent increases in areas surrounding community gardens leading to a higher investment in revitalizing communities without gentrification.

The collaboration of crime rates and community gardens is the perception of lower crime rates due to the presence of community gardens. According to the National Gardening Association, a study of Norris Square in Philadelphia showed that community gardening directly correlated with crime activity. This community is a predominantly Latino community that was infested with crime, drugs, trash and vacant, rundown buildings. A group of women in the neighborhood decided to clean it up by gaining access to a vacant lot and creating the Las Parcelas community garden. This became a safe haven for people to come and partake in growing their own produce. These women also went as far as to start an outdoor kitchen to recreate life in Puerto Rico in the 1940s known as Lasita meaning, ‘the little house.’ La Casita was known for their fresh produce and exquisite cuisine in addition to murals that depicted life in Puerto Rico in the rural areas, which created life on the street and the known presence of positive activity.

This led to the domino effect in Philadelphia. With a connection to Philadelphia Green as well as help from the city, urban renewal began to take stride. Soon after, residents began to fix up their neighborhood beginning with their own homes. They did this by adding simple items and tasks such as planting flowers in containers as well as cleaning up graffiti. Street trees were planted in an effort to reduce abandoned cars. This encouraged the building of community and the activities of, parades and festivals. According to Eileen Gallagher, project manager for Philadelphia Green, “this community went from being one of the most drug and crime plagued locations in the city where people were afraid to even leave their homes to a beautiful, safe neighborhood filled with trees, gardens, playground, cultural events and pride”.

3.4 The Evidence of Safer Urban Areas

In a study between 1992 and 1993, experiments have shown that thick view blocking ‘green spaces’ such as medians lined with bushes and trees have a high correlation with lower levels of fear of crime in a university campus. Residential settings that acquire vegetation in an urban area found that higher levels of vegetation collaborated with less fear of crime. Nasar (1982) witnesses the fear of crime when showing various photographs in an urban area with various levels of green and vegetation. This same study was conducted in 1983 with Brower, Dockett, and Taylor who used visual simulations to see the impact of green in urban spaces and posed the question of how safe one feels in these areas. The outcome shows that the urban spaces appear safer when trees and shrubbery are visible in the space.

Furthermore, a second study was conducted by Kuo and Baicaicoa (1998) in which a sample of people were shown computer simulations bringing the experiment to the result, that the more dense the space is with photo simulation experiments, an experiment of real life situations was conducted. Kuo and Sullivan (1998) came to the result that low income inner city urban dwellers that lived in areas or buildings that acquired trees in the area or even nearby areas gave high acclaim to the acknowledgement of feeling safer in these usually unsafe areas which were barren and lacked greenery and more importantly, green spaces.
There is more evidence on the studies of the relationship between greenness and impertinence that occur in urban areas, such that fewer incidences of vandalism and graffiti occur in urban green spaces. Stamen (1993) found that the incidence of vandalism and graffiti in sites without vegetation was 90%, and spaces that included green spaces only 10% of these places had an occurrence with vandalism6.

In a study conducted by Brunson (1999) people reported lower levels of vandalism, graffiti and litter in outdoor urban areas. “These evidences are helpful in that they show a sign of human care in public spaces” (Naussaur 1988). These acts provide a warning to intruders and damaging behavior, alas, bringing a less factor of fear of crime into the area.6

3.5 Crime Behavior and its Relationship to the Environment

(LD) There is an extensive amount of research that has been done in terms of green spaces and their role in crime prevention. According to the University of Washington, “Crime behavior is the result of a complex blend of social and environmental factors” 7. They have concluded that intervening directly are common methods of dealing with crime, but that an excellent way to reduce minor crime offenses is increasingly becoming a utilized method throughout the country. In other words, for crimes like robbery and assault, police intervention is more than appropriate, but for crimes such as vandalism, or other forms of misconduct, a positive change in the environment can discourage criminal behavior, and make residents of the area feel much safer 7.

The studies they conducted have contributed to proving this statement to be true. The vacant lots in a town in Delaware were cleaned up, and that alone was considered to be one of the most effective strategies to improving the community’s environment and reducing crime. It was reported that there was a “20% overall decrease in calls to police from parts of the town that received location-specific treatments” 7. It was also reported that, in addition to minor crimes, less acts of tagging, vandalizing and littering were committed in outdoor spaces containing natural elements/ plant species than in plant-less spaces.

3.6 Concerns about green spaces

The addition of green spaces has not, however, been considered to be socially beneficial in entirety. Some have found the addition of plants in public spaces as disruptive and an attribution to crime when present in an urban landscape, and although it may be much more pleasant visually, it does not contribute to social order. According to the University of Washington’s report, many have voiced concerns about green spaces actually being favorable to criminal activity. It brings up an important point about visibility. It is less likely that criminal activity will take place in plain sight, and there have been certain instances, where the addition of green spaces have created more cloistered areas to conduct illegal activities. In which case, yes, it does in fact have the potential to harm the society more than benefiting it. The solution to this problem is simply good design. Plant placement is/ should never be done arbitrarily.

There was a similar study done that specifically looked at the crime spill-over from a greenway extending five miles through Boston, MA, because of the concern that there would be more crime conducted in the area. The study looked at a two-year period. After this time, it was reposted that “no significant increase in crime was found for those living next to the corridor. In fact, there was less crime, as compared to houses bordering quiet commercial streets, and significantly less crime than for those buildings abutting a busy arterial street” 7.
It is not simply the addition of a tree or two that contribute to safety to a community. A considerable number of other participating elements allow a community to become safer. For instance, daylight plays a huge role in security. In the same report, civilians reported that there was more of a positive attitude toward park safety during the day, but there was a low impression of safety by nighttime. This is most likely because at night, unless additional lighting is has been put in place, there is less exposure and therefore, a greater chance that crime will go unnoticed.

Another element that contributes to security, and is perhaps a derivation/association with sunlight is the number of people out during different times of the day. Ordinarily, more people are out and about during daytime hours, and, contrastingly, by nighttime, most people have withdrawn into their homes. Because there are less people outdoors at night that can report discrepancies, it is more likely that illegal activity can take place without counter action being taken.

Usability is another variable that could be of concern in terms of public green spaces. Spaces that are underutilized by the community can be considered ideal for criminal activity. This is rationalized very easily; if there are less people that come to this space, there are less people likely to report witnessing a crime. The best solution for this particular issue is to create programmatic green spaces. For instance, when you think of a playground, there are always children at some point or another in the park, along with a guardian, to whom the safety of the children is of high value, and thus, it is impractical to commit crimes in the presence of park-goers.

All of these issues, in one way or another, are concerns of the need for, and the ability to provide surveillance. This is because, “Considering built design, surveillance is achieved when the setting allows intended users to see or be seen while ensuring that intruders will be observed as well”. The best way to deal with the issue of surveillance is by designing spaces in a way that considers all of these concerns simultaneously.

Green Spaces in Urban Cities

A number of issues have been associated with urban areas. One major concern in such an environment is poor air quality due to the imbalance of the ratio of carbon dioxide being released into the air versus the amount of oxygen being produced. This is because carbon is being emitted into the atmosphere from excessive automobile usage, as well as the many factories in the region that release carbon dioxide and other harmful substances into the air, some of which gets absorbed and stored in the soil. This is also because of the deficiency of oxygen producing organisms in urban areas. Rain in an urban area provides a number of problems as well, one of which is flash flooding, which occurs when a city is covered almost entirely by impervious surfaces. Subsequently, pollution and harmful toxins and aggregates from those surfaces are carried into near water bodies. These are only a few problems occurring in urban areas, but these are symptoms to a much bigger issue: for too long, cities have been designed in a manner that require them to consume more than they can produce, depleting resources. The city can therefore be classified as unsustainable.

3.7 Sustainability

For humans, “sustainability is the long-term maintenance of well being, which has environmental, economic, and social dimensions, and encompasses the concept of stewardship,
the responsible management of resource use. Human sustainability interfaces with economics through the social and ecological consequences of economic activity.\(^\text{11}\)

In order for a city to move toward being more sustainable, it would have to decrease the volume and rate of consumption of food/energy/non-renewable resources, to decrease the use of dependence on vehicles, and increase the number of green spaces, which will, in turn, create more permeable surfaces and increase air quality. Sustainability also provides social and societal benefits in addition to environmental and economical benefits. Such benefits include the unification of members of the community, an increase of citizens taking part in outdoor activity (which has often been associated with better health), an increase in environmental consciousness, and an overall increase in quality of life.\(^\text{8}\)

The costs to creating a more sustainable environment are relatively short term in comparison to the benefits. Such costs include high initial cost, long periods of time before progress is evident, and questions of feasibility. Although they are all important costs, the last point, the level of ambition versus the level of realism, is something that really needs to be considered.

3.8 Demonstrations of Sustainability in Urban Environments

Green roofs:

This may very possibly be the first thing that comes to mind when the word “Sustainable” is said. It is, in fact, true that green roofs are sustainable. Granted, it is usually an artificial process (specific soil mixes or synthetic growing medium, filters, and membranes), the final product is successful. It provides an area of vegetation that aids in the sequestration of carbon, the production of oxygen into the atmosphere, and the conversion of a surface from impermeable to permeable, creating less storm water run-off. The concept is seemingly simple, but, more than that, is provides multiple answers to the problems of urban cities. This answer is the most popular and the most ideal\(^\text{10}\).

…To an extent. Perfect as the idea is, however, there is a flaw; many people desire green roofs without questioning the feasibility. There are two kinds of green roofs, one intended for human occupancy, and one not intended for human occupancy, both of which are load bearing structures, which means that—and it is often the case that, if a building was already built, it was not done with the intention of building a green roof, and therefore, will not be able to accommodate the extra weight. There have been instances where calculations have been done, and have determined that the building can support a green roof for non-human occupancy, as it bears less weight, but even then, it is a dangerous endeavor, because the minimum weight bore by even the meekest roof top garden is 30 pounds per square foot, which most buildings could not support. In other words, if the design of a new building is in place, adding a green roof would pose little conflict, but it’s highly unlikely that a building that has already been constructed could hold a green roof\(^\text{10}\).

Green Walls:

The concept is similar to green roofs and solves the same problems, but maintaining a green wall is often complicated and involves the use of various hydroponics, airoponics and aquaponics, and is, consequently, a very expensive program to maintain. Research on this concept is still taking place, and, although they have been successful at a smaller scale, larger scaled demonstrations of green walls are still in the experimental phase\(^\text{9}\).
Greenways:

“A greenway is a long, narrow piece of land, often used for recreation and pedestrian and bicycle user traffic, and sometimes for streetcar, light rail or retail uses”, according to Wikipedia.

The issue that arises with greenways is that the site needs to be something that isn’t being utilized for another function (i.e. you cannot knock down dwellings to put up a greenway), and large stretches of unused land in an urban area is scarce. Additionally, it needs to be a space that is usable, accessible, and safe.

Parks:

Two types of parks that are frequently used in urban spaces are community parks and pocket parks. Community parks are public parks that serve a large area in the city (i.e. Madison Square Park services the Flatiron District). A pocket park usually tends to serve a much smaller area, accessible to people within closer vicinity, extending as far as a city block, and is situated in an empty lot, or a lot that is too small to serve any other substantial facility.

Pocket parks and community parks are great for urban settings because, in addition to responding to all of the criteria for creating a more sustainable environment, the public space created can serve multiple functions and host a number of types of events, both providing more community based activities and saving the city money simultaneously.

Things to consider when choosing if/where such a park can be built include accessibility, site conditions, and safety. It is important to note that, because they are more open, community parks are considered to be safer than pocket parks as a whole.

Urban Agriculture/Community Gardens:

A community garden is a public space utilized as a garden, maintained by city locals. It is used to produce fruits, vegetables, herbs, and a diverse range of plants. Social benefits include public functionality, fraternity between members of the town or city by creating more interaction between people (as opposed to being isolated), and increased outdoor activity, which increases health, along with the consumption of healthier foods.

Service Project

(AK) Our service project focuses on spreading awareness of community gardening in relation to a decrease in crime rates. This project specifically is involved with researching the benefits of community gardening from a social perspective. We have prepared ‘how to’ manuals for the Boys and Girls Club of Jersey City in an effort to get children excited on cleaning up the neighborhood and creating a better environment for their home. We have approached this by researching where the most vacant lots are in Jersey City and educating citizens by reaching out to Boys and Girls Clubs with newsletters and ‘how to’ manuals on the best and easiest way to begin community gardens. The goal of this project is to ultimately change the outlook of a city through sustainable architecture via community garden by spreading awareness of the benefits of gardening for society. Other goals that will be reached are to connect with the residents of Jersey City on a more personal level and ask them what they want and their ‘ideal’ situation is. This will be done by surveying the land and talking to people along the way. On a recent trip to Jersey City I have found that many residents are more inclined to speaking with people who know the
area well not just city officials who work there, or planners that are surveying the land for business and not asking the residents what their ideal is.

REFERENCE


Letter submitted to the Hudson Reporter

(LD)

To Whom It May Concern:

In this letter, I wish to address the matter of sustainable design a somewhat inferior priority in your county. I believe it is because the general public living in Hudson County are unaware of the benefits of green spaces. As a Rutgers University student studying Landscape Architecture, I am aware of these benefits and am a strong advocate of sustainable design practices in architecture and planning.

There are, of course, multiple measures that can be taken in order to create more sustainable cities, but there are a few key project types that can be implemented at low costs. Such methods include community gardens, pocket parks, and demonstrational parks. These spaces are socially, economically, and environmentally beneficial. In many of the cities in this county, issues associated with urban cities needs to be addressed. By creating green spaces, more oxygen is produced in the city and more carbon is sequestered, eliminating excess carbon dioxide in the air, as well as other harmful green house gases, which is much needed in the environment. In terms of social benefits, not only do urban spaces promote more physical and social activity between members of the community, but also urban agriculture is beneficial specifically, because it provides healthy foods in urban areas and while simultaneously educating children about obesity and health risks associated with it, as well as the importance of nutritional health.

Additionally, many studies have been conducted and proven to reduce crime rate in urban areas. Although the statistics alone are promising, civilians have noticed a decrease in drug and gang activities in greener areas, and people felt safer living in close vicinity to trees/ vegetation. Perhaps this is because green spaces are suggestive of a space more conducive to social well-being.
As mentioned earlier, constructing green spaces as a means to sustainability, among many other methods, is relatively cheap, especially in comparison to installing solar panels and wind turbines, for instance, and there is much more to gain. The best part is that this doesn’t have to be done at a large scale; having small groups of individuals become motivated to live in a more sustainable manner is more than sufficient. Getting together with a neighbor or two and creating a community garden is an amazing first step to a more sustainable county.

Best,

Lissa D

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**Letter Submitted to Jersey Independent**

(AK)

To Whom It May Concern: We are a team of Rutgers University planning and design students studying sustainable architecture and how it can be incorporated into our cities today. We have recently found that New Jersey is the number one culprit of urban sprawl especially moving south. Old towns that have a diversity of mixed use retail and residential dwellings do not have the problem of keeping itself sustainable since on an economic and environmental point of view these towns are able to keep themselves running. Our concern is with cities and towns in New Jersey that do not acquire these characteristics, especially the places that do not have green spaces and open spaces. Green spaces are of course an environmentally friendly way to solve the problem of the many toxins that we breathe. Especially in urban cities, green spaces such as green roofs, vertical gardens and community gardens are able to greatly reduce the urban heat island effect. The urban heat island effect is when the tar and concrete, the main ingredients of buildings and streets in cities absorb heat. This increases temperatures of the overall cities and contributes to global warming. By putting in pocket parks, and green spaces, the urban heat island effect can be tackled about two degrees at a time. Not only do green spaces environmentally help a city but also has its social benefits. Green spaces are beneficial to cities because they allow residents, who in this case are urban dwellers, an opportunity to explore recreation. Green spaces can also single handedly reduce crime and take care of a city.

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**Newsletter Sent to Boys and Girls Club of Jersey City**

(AK)

We are a group of Rutgers University students majoring in Environmental Planning and Design who care a great deal about the environment. This is a very important topic because in the long run if two aspirers are unable to save the environment who can? My partner and I have done extensive research on the impacts of community gardening in an urban area. The benefits of
A community garden is a piece of land that is used for mass gardening. This means that several folks from a neighborhood can come together and garden. Community gardens are an important part of community development because it can aid the community physically, in that it produces fresh air. It improves urban areas economically in that if residents are able to gain access to fresh produce they will be able to sustain the community by allocating their money into other necessary aspects of the community. This will allow residents from low income neighborhoods to be in control in terms of gaining access to fresh and healthy products.

Why is community gardening beneficial for a place like Jersey City?

Jersey City is one of the busiest and densest areas of New Jersey. It has high concentrations of buildings which directly impacts the temperature of the city by creating urban heat islands which is described by the urban heat island effect. The urban heat island effect occurs when open spaces are replaced by the infrastructure of a city such as roads replacing what could be natural green spaces. This is when the concrete and other artificial things of the city become heated. According to the EPA, “on a hot sunny, summer day, the sun can heat dry exposed urban surfaces such as roofs and pavements to temperatures 50-90°F, hotter than the air, while shaded or moist surfaces often in more rural surroundings remain close to air temperatures.” This causes the temperatures of the city to become higher than the natural temperature which in turn adds to global warming.

Education in regards to the heat islands is important because we need to find solutions on how to alleviate the heat islands and in the long run, global warming. Community gardens are beneficial to society because they not only provide accessibility to fresh produce right may be the answer to appeasing the effect of the heat islands.

The direct benefits of community gardens are that it improves overall appearance of an area as well as improving air and soil quality. One of the most obvious direct benefits is that the lot and the growth of the produce itself are much healthier than when there is a concrete lot present. Much of these deteriorated lots before they became community gardens are heavily polluted covered with asphalt, debris and overgrown weeds. The building of a community garden will also improve the soil quality. The vegetation of fruits, vegetables and flowers that the garden will provide will help improve the air quality in urban areas that often have limited plant growth. There will be a reduction in carbon dioxide and an increase in oxygen improving the air quality in the landscaped areas than other areas of the city because the leaves, twigs, and other plants will filter the air. An open / green space in urban areas allows ventilation and air flow in the city. One of the most satisfying benefits of community gardening is having access to locally grown foods.

Benefits to the Social Environment

At the most elemental level, the community gardens will provide improved health in these low income areas is a benefit in itself. Participation in activities such as this will create close connections one another and acquaint themselves with diverse cultural experiences of neighbors while creating depth to their own. Community gardens provide avenues to human interaction that creates a sense of community formed through bonding while working in the garden.

Community gardens have also done the deed of improving public health in urban areas. There is more malnutrition not because of the low production of food but the quality of
distribution. Several corporate grocery stores have moved out of urban areas which have left unreasonably priced convenience stores. It is very hard to find proper produce with only bodegas and convenience stores as the prime food sources for urban areas. This is causing fast food chains to build and target low income areas. The diet has become high in fatty and processed foods. Many children living in housing projects have a diet of chips, bread, candy bars, soft drinks and corn dogs. Community gardening can empower those interested in filling their dietary needs. Working in the gardens provides energy exchanging between people. There is also a level of enjoyment of an aesthetically pleasing garden. Along with providing food for the community gardens come back into touch with their cultural roots. This causes diversity which in turn creates a great sense of community. Many times gardeners come from completely different backgrounds and do not speak the same language, through community gardening; since people see one another on a regular basis begin to develop a sense of closeness and familiarity with one another.

Lastly, community gardens aid in crime prevention. Crime has been greatly reduced because of the quality of life of urban dwellers has increased. There has been an increase number of owner occupied dwellings, more personal income, rent increases in areas surrounding community gardens. The collaboration between community gardens and crime rates is perception. Perception of less neighborhood crimes is occurring because there is more positive activity occurring where there are community gardens. Residents of the community gardens areas perceived their neighborhoods to be safer because of these gardens.

http://www.epa.gov/
How to Start a Community Garden for Crime Prevention

By Amna Khan and Lissa Dieye with Dr. Julie Fagan
What is a community garden?

A community garden is a piece of land that is used for mass gardening

- main purpose is to provide fresh produce to those in urban areas

- improves air quality of urban areas

- inadvertently reduces urban heat island effect as a green space does
The Benefits of Community Gardening

• Improves air quality
• Reduces urban heat island effect
• Absorbs storm water runoff
• Increased air circulation
• Lowsers temperatures around the green space
• Contributes to close knit communities
• Increases positive activity in the neighborhood

• Leadership skills are enhanced
• Appease mental health of those living in urban environments by actually just looking at ‘green’
Starting a Community Garden

Step 1: Get Some Volunteers!

Determine if there is truly a need to build a community garden

• Observe local convenience store activity and ask yourself is this the only means of food shopping for these residents?

• Discuss what type of garden it will be, fruits, vegetables, flowers? What is needed the most?

• Organize participants into task forces

• Obtain a lease from the owner of the site
Step 2: Choose a Site!

Several aspects of choosing a site must come into consideration

• Must identify owner of the land
• Soil Toxicity Analysis
• Find out past uses of the site for contamination analysis
• Lease agreements must be followed and thoroughly researched
Step 3: Must Prepare the Site!

How do we do this?

- Clean the Site
- Implement design
- Organize volunteers
- Organize and gather resources
- Divide plot to make it easier for gardeners
- Layout perimeters
- PLAN PLAN PLAN!!
  - Workday
  - Arrangement for plowing

"By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail."
Benjamin Franklin
Step 4: Organize the Garden

- Membership conditions?
- How will plots be assigned?
- How to deal with possible vandalism
- Will the gardeners meet regularly?
- How will we choose the next care taker of the garden?
- What are the rules?
- Will the gardeners be provided with their own tools?
- Will there be cooperative activities such as turning soil and taking necessary actions for changing seasons?
Step 5: Learn about Insurance!

Find out about all insurance policies regarding lot

Two tips: you should probably be working with an agent from a firm which deals with many different carriers (so you can get the best policy for your needs) and you will probably have better success with someone local who has already done this type of policy or one that works with social service agencies in the area.

http://communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php#insurance
Step 6: Setting up Structured Organization

Often times community gardens are run through informal organizations and are successful. But the best way to sustain this concept is to create a structured organization to delegate tasks more effectively.
Step 7: Manage the Gardens - I will:

• Pay a fee to cover expenses
• To planting in my garden in my given time slot
• Keep weeds and invasive plant growth at a minimum
• Keep trash and litter out of the plot, as well as from adjacent pathways and fences.
• Be considerate of other plots in terms of not planting crops that will shade neighboring plots
• Cooperate in the cleanups of the garden.
• Be held accountable of my actions in the garden
• Report any suspicious activity happening in the neighborhood around the garden
• Be respectful towards fellow gardeners.
Step 8: Troubleshooting

• Dealing with the possibility of crime such as vandalism in the neighborhood

• Create awareness and publicity for the garden via signage

• Buffer the area using a fence

• Create open invitations to the garden; those excluded from the garden may possibly vandalism the area
Crime Prevention and Green Spaces

Crime has been greatly reduced because of the quality of life of urban dwellers has increased. There has been an increase number of owner occupied dwellings, more personal income, rent increases in areas surrounding community gardens. The collaboration between community gardens and crime rates is perception. Perception of less neighborhood crimes is occurring because there is more positive activity occurring where there are community gardens. Residents of the community gardens areas perceived their neighborhoods to be safer because of these gardens.
Why should Jersey City incorporate green spaces and community gardens into the neighborhood?

- A green space can prevent crime in that it produces positive activity in the streets.

- This induces neighborhood watch groups to become more aggressive and higher visibility and surveillance in an urban area.

- This reduces vandalism in urban areas and creates a more pleasant atmosphere.
What are some possibilities?

- Incidences of vandalism and graffiti occur 90% of the time in spaces that are barren. While only 10% in sites with vegetation in a community.

- Public housing buildings with greater amounts of vegetation had 52% lower total crime rates, 48% had fewer property crimes and 56% fewer violent crime than buildings that had less vegetation.

- A survey of 31 urban sites in a California community found that 90% of the incidents of vandalism or graffiti occurred in areas without plantings compared to 10% in landscaped areas.

- Studies of residential neighborhoods found that property crimes were less frequent when there were trees in the right of way and more abundant vegetation around a house.

- Comparing similar buildings (within Chicago public housing), 145 women were asked to recall aggressive and violent behaviors within their household. Those who had trees and grass cover outside their apartments reported significantly less aggression against their partners than did those living in unlandscaped areas.
What else can a community garden do?

• In a study of community policing innovations, there was a 20% decrease in calls to police from the parts of town that received location specific treatments. Cleaning up vacant lots was one of the most effective treatment strategies.

• Vegetation can be managed to create a reassuring environment, reduce fear, and increase citizen surveillance and defensible space.

• The public judges communities having ‘green’ (vegetation bordered) roads more positively, with ratings of visual quality for an adjoining city or town increasing as the amount of roadside vegetation increases.
Meeting of Interested People (i.e. neighbors, friends, elementary schools)

Form a Planning Committee

- Funding/ Partnerships Branch
- Youth Activity Branch
- Communications Branch
- Construction Branch

Identify Resources

- Horticultural Societies
- Garden Clubs
- Cooperative Extensions

- Parks Department
- Horticultural Information
- Local Seed Providers

- America the Beautiful Fund
- Bedsding Plants
- Local Nurseries

Approach a Sponsor

- Religious Bodies (i.e. Churches, Mosques, Synagogues)
- Private Companies
- Schools (i.e. elementary, middle, and high schools)

- City Parks and Recreation Department

Choose a Site:

- in order to do so correctly, you need to consider the following:
  - Measure of Sunlight
  - Water Availability
  - Contaminants (i.e. from brownfield sites and superfund sites)
  - Land Ownership

- Lease Agreement and determine if public liability insurance is needed

Prepare the Site

- Recruit Volunteers
- Design

Organize Garden

- Plot Arrangements
- Plot Availability
- Plot Assignment

- Storage of tools and materials
- Plan for Potential Children spaces, where younger members can tend to the garden at a slower pace

Help Members Get in Touch with One Another

- Email List
- Bulletin Board
- Telephone Tree

- Other ways of communication that will strengthen your community

CREATING A COMMUNITY GARDEN