

From Gangs to Growing Healthy Food: Environmental Justice through Urban Gardens

*Denver's Semillas de
Esperanza (Seeds of
Hope) Project*



Eric Kornacki and Rigoberta Menchú Tum



Gang Marks on a House

Photo taken by Semillas De Esperanza Youth Leadership Team

"Graffiti is ugly and it is really bad that gang members would tag on a house to mark their area of town. This relates to my life because I live in this area and it makes all the houses look ugly. I wish there weren't so many gangs in this neighborhood, it is unsafe and the graffiti is everywhere. We can write a letter to try to change the law so that teens can't buy spray paint"-Francisco Vasquez



Photo taken by Semillas De Esperanza Youth Leadership Team

Broken Fence

"I noticed this broken fence was just outside the day care. It makes me feel like neither people in the neighborhood nor the city cares about Westwood enough to make it look good. Its unsafe-what if a kid is running and gets tangled in it? We should ask someone to take it down."

-Orlando Reyes

No Place to Play



Photo taken by Semillas De Esperanza Youth Leadership Team

I see a basketball in a busy street. It's sad that kids in our neighborhood don't have anywhere to play, so they play near the streets. Those kids could really get hurt. This is a problem because this puts kids in danger. A way to fix this is to build more parks or recreation centers so that kids can have somewhere safe to play.

-Daniel Almanzán

Why is this our only choice?



Photo taken by Semillas De Esperanza Youth Leadership Team

“Why are we offered only junk food? This is at the only store in the area, a convenience store. From the time we walk in, all that is offered is unhealthy snacks. There are no grocery stores in the community so we shop here. It shows that they don’t care about the health of the community, only our money.” -Daniel Almanzán

Be Careful When You Walk



Photo taken by Semillas De Esperanza Youth Leadership Team

“This is a broken sidewalk that is right in front of a day care center on Morrison Road. This road is a main street in our neighborhood and people walk by this everyday. Someone can fall and get hurt. What if a mother was pushing her baby in a stroller and hurt her ankle on this sidewalk? The problem exists because nobody cares to fix it. We can call the City of Denver or the property owners and tell them that they need to fix this” -Angela Saiz

Violence Prevention

“Reality and perceptions of violence are justifications for people not being outside, not letting children outside, and not walking to places that they normally would.”

<http://www.preventioninstitute.org/component/jlibrary/article/id-267/127.html>

Effects of Nature on Crime

Kuo, Sullivan / VEGETATION AND CRIME 355

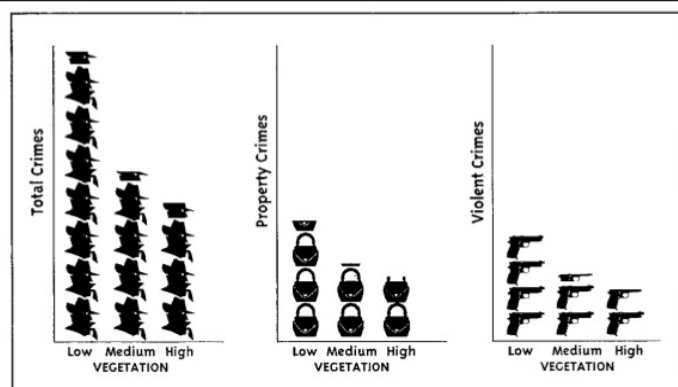


Figure 3: Mean Number of Crimes Reported Per Building for Apartment Buildings With Different Amounts of Vegetation (each icon represents one reported crime)

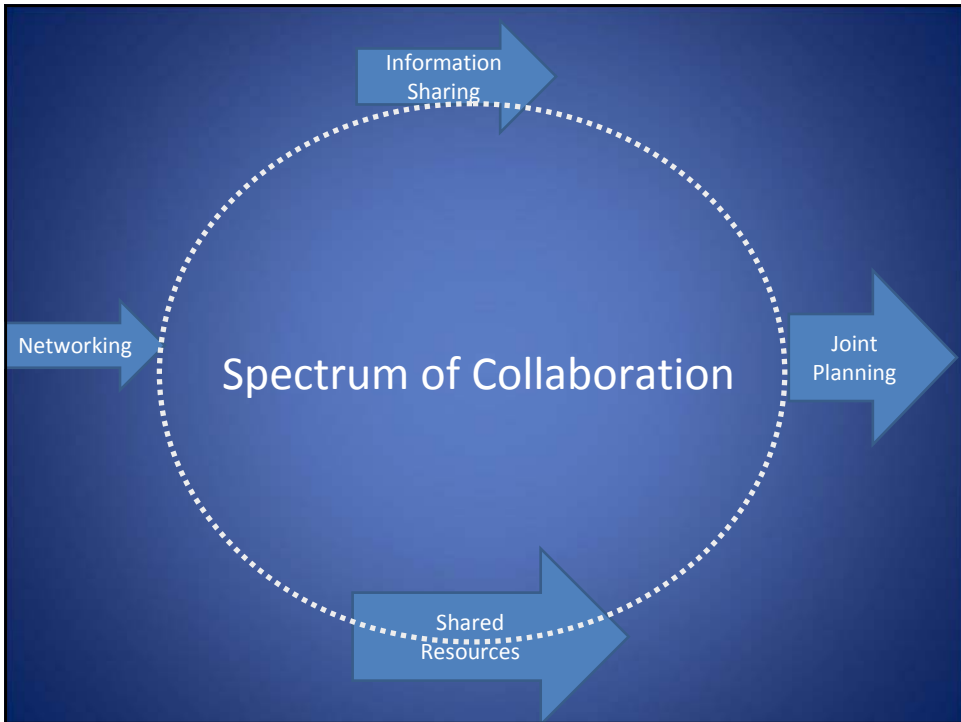
Learning Objective:

- project outcomes and lessons learned from bringing together a multi-sectoral, interdisciplinary partnership

Primary Partners

- Gang Rescue and Support Project (GRASP)
- Revision International
- City Council District 3
- Sisters of Color United for Education (SOCUE)
- LiveWell Westwood
- Denver Public Health (DPH)





Outcomes Continued

- Community Engagement
 - 80 Gardens, Urban Farm, Orchard
 - 3 Mural Projects
- Policy
 - Denver wide
 - Organizational (Partners)
 - Denver Public Health
- Media/Promotion
- Funding/Sustainability

Community Engagement



Policy

- Alcohol Density Reduction
- Organizational
 - All organizations practicing focused efforts on Violence Prevention
 - Integration with Justice System, Safe Routes to School, Safe Passages of Gang Reduction Initiative of Denver, Economic Development, Parks and Recreation and Emergency Room visits at Denver Health
 - Programming and allocation of resources

Media/Promotion

- Presentations
 - APHA 2010 and 2011
 - Smart Growth Conference 2010
 - Crime Prevention and Control Commission
 - Mayoral Candidate Forum
- Newspapers/website/video clips
 - Denver Post
 - 7 news (backyard gardens)
 - Photo voice
 - YouTube

Funding/Sustainability

Fruit Tree 101 Project (orchard at the urban farm)

Colorado Health Foundation Funding to expand backyard garden program

STRYVE: Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere

Denver Foundation (Strengthening Neighborhoods Program) and Urban Land Conservancy

Youth Trash Clean-up Campaign, Transformer Box art project, Bus Bench art project, and partner organizational policies

Resources

- www.preventioninstitute.org
- <http://nnhvip.org/> National Network of Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs
- www.safeyouth.org
- www.semillasdewestwood.org



Keep In Touch!



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