



## GrayIsGreen

### Who are we?

**Gray Is Green** is an online gathering of older adult Americans aspiring to create a green legacy for the future. As environmentally conscious elders, we respond to a generational call: to co-create a future of economic justice, ecological sustainability and social justice.

We hold next generations of humans in mind and consider the future of ecosystems and other species. We are alert to the historic challenges facing our planet. And we are aware of the question arising from descendants generations hence:

*What did you do, when you knew?*

### What do we do?

We aspire to embrace our eldership, living beyond consumerism and ageism. **Our Curriculum for Gray-Green Living** offers a variety of ways to join—and re-engage with—this elder movement.

We offer a periodic newsletter, a speaker's bureau, online resources, a [Facebook page](#) for relevant updates. In partnership with congenial organizations, we serve as a central clearinghouse of ideas and communications for older adults interested in greening their lives, learning about sustainability, advocating for sound public policy, being creative stewards or grandparents, emerging as elders, and mentoring young people.

*We invite **you** to get involved!*

[www.grayisgreen.org](http://www.grayisgreen.org)

## Community Resilience Parks and Equity

### Benefits of Parks

A growing body of research<sup>1</sup> indicates that parks and other urban greenspace, such as street trees and community gardens, have many different benefits for those living around them<sup>2</sup>. Access to nature increases physical activity and reduces recovery time from injuries. It can reduce stress and make people feel happier and healthier. Parks also increase property values and the economic status of neighborhoods by attracting business and tourism, and bring communities together. And of course, trees and greenery help with carbon reduction and save energy on cooling in the summer.

### Barriers

Despite the many benefits of parks, there are some barriers which can reduce or prevent people's access to parks. Simply distance is the biggest barrier. When you live farther away from a park, you are less likely to use it. Often, public transportation<sup>3</sup> is not set up to service parks, which makes it difficult for low-income families who rely on buses and subways. Additionally, if parks are perceived as unsafe, they will not be used by families and children for recreation. These problems can be addressed by park programs. In terms of creating new parks, often the cost will prevent local governments from creating them, despite the fact that in the long term they are economically beneficial<sup>4</sup> to the surrounding neighborhood.

### Inequities

While most cities don't have enough parks, not everybody is equally affected. Members of minorities often have much less access to urban parks. In Los Angeles<sup>5</sup> white neighborhoods enjoy 31.8 acres of park space for every 1,000 people, compared with 1.7 acres in African-American neighborhoods and 0.6 acres in Latino neighborhoods. Neighborhoods with the lowest income often have the least access to parks.

Meanwhile, parks can actually be especially helpful to low-income families, as they can provide opportunities for recreation at no cost. Low-income and minorities are less likely than their wealthy peers to get the recommended physical activity, and parks are shown to increase both the amount and the quality of exercise. Even when government funding is acquired to create parks, these poorer communities are less likely to receive funding, even though they need the parks more.

### Strategies for Change

There are several strategies to increase equal access to public parks and other greenspace. As parks are most often government run, you can communicate with your local representative to try to implement standards to measure equity in the allocation of resources. When discussing creating new parks,

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## Community Resilience: Parks and Equity

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prioritize low-income and minority neighborhoods, or simply start with the areas that have the least access to parks. Joint use of public land between schools and parks can help cut costs when resources are scarce. Park programming can keep parks safer to encourage use of parks that are already there. Keeping parks public, rather than privatizing them, allows for more oversight by communities and

more accountability to make sure parks benefit all. Using existing abandoned lots is cheaper and can alleviate the problems caused by these neglected spaces, while unlocking existing potential.

There are several ways to find funding for parks,<sup>6</sup> including ballot initiatives, developer extractions, and grants from private funds. Other organizations, such as the

Community Greenspace Program at Yale<sup>7</sup> provide training, materials, and technical advice on how to convert abandoned space in the city into community gardens or other urban greenspace.

1 [http://pub.epsilon.slu.se/8995/6/annerstedt\\_m\\_120824.pdf](http://pub.epsilon.slu.se/8995/6/annerstedt_m_120824.pdf)

2 see *Resource Sheet Urban Greenspace and Human Wellbeing*

3 <http://www.mapjustice.org/images/LosAngelesENGLISH.pdf>

4 <http://cityparksalliance.org/why-urban-parks-matter/economic-value>

5 [http://www.eastshorepark.org/benefits\\_of\\_parks%20tpl.pdf](http://www.eastshorepark.org/benefits_of_parks%20tpl.pdf)

6 <https://www.tpl.org/creating-and-funding-parks>

7 <http://environment.yale.edu/uri/programs/community-greenspace>



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