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

Community Resilience
Urban Greenspace and Human Well-Being

The Challenge of Cities

Humans have a deep emotional need to connect with nature. This desire, labeled biophilia by biologist E. O. Wilson[1], makes living in cities difficult. Cities fundamentally require urban landscapes to function – the concrete streets, buildings and infrastructure that we are all familiar with. Yet this means that living in a city, away from the nature that we so crave, takes a toll on people.

Greenspaces can act as an antidote to the distance from nature that cities cause. Greenspaces are places of greenery within cities, including parks, street trees, and community gardens. These little sites of nature and greenery are ways of incorporating the natural world into urban areas, without replacing them.

Health Benefits

Beyond the emotional benefits of having access to green spaces, research has been done on the health benefits of having access to nature. A large body of data[2] supports the idea that access to parks and street trees improves many parts of our daily lives, including mental health, stress levels, and increased longevity. The beneficial effects of physical activity increase when these activities are done in parks. People also self-report as being healthier when they live in closer proximity to urban greenspaces, and often recover more quickly from surgery.

Property Benefits

Along with the numerous health benefits outlined above, greenspaces also have a positive effect on the economic status of a community[3]. Trees and neighborhood-scaled parks increase the property values of nearby houses. As a result, the town can levy higher property taxes, which in turn pays for the original cost of putting in the trees or creating the park, including maintenance. Other savings come in the form of costs saved on sewage infrastructure, since more precipitation can be absorbed naturally into the undeveloped ground. Greenspaces also provide a possibility for increased revenue from tourism.

Energy Benefits

On top of the health and economic benefits of urban greenspaces, the ecological benefits of trees[4] and other greenery are long-standing. Trees have cooling effects that can significantly decrease energy bills and help the temperature regulation of a neighborhood, encouraging people to spend more time outside in the summer. Trees also absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen, a function which is always useful in our struggle against climate change. As we plant trees in our neighborhoods for the health benefits and for the prosperity they can bring, we are also doing a small part to ensure our grandchildren and their children have clean air to breathe.

Community Benefits

Urban parks can bring communities together. While vacant spaces are often associated with increased crime in a neighborhood, coming together to turn a vacant lot into a neighborhood park empowers communities. Parks are associated with lower rates of crime[5], and they help reduce urban sprawl. Revitalizing urban parks can create jobs and promote social health as well. In areas with new parks, the vacancy rates of the surrounding area drops dramatically. The economic, environmental, and health benefits of parks and urban greenery are able to help heal the ailing communities within our cities.

1   http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/nature/conversation-eo-wilson.html
2   http://pub.epsilon.slu.se/8995/6/annerstedt_m_120824.pdf
3   http://cityparksalliance.org/why-urban-parks-matter/economic-value
4   http://www.asla.org/sustainablelandscapes/Vid_UrbanForests.html
5   https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm_Crime.html

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