

REVITALIZING COMMUNITIES TO PREVENT YOUTH VIOLENCE

The Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center
(MI-YVPC) at the University of Michigan

YOUTH VIOLENCE

YV
PC

PREVENTION CENTERS

“If you can transform a community to show that people care, create places where they want to interact and make it look nicer, more positive activities will occur and the more negative activities will decline because there’s too many people watching, too many people who care.”

— **Dr. Marc Zimmerman,**
Principal Investigator

The University of Michigan’s Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) is one of five CDC-funded National Centers of Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention (YVPCs) that works to reduce youth violence through research and evaluation of innovative approaches. MI-YVPC has evaluated a number of approaches that apply principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to prevent violence. These approaches promote positive social activity and the safe use of spaces through enhanced visibility, improved design, and proper maintenance. One approach currently being evaluated by MI-YVPC is “greening”—such as mowing and planting community gardens on vacant properties — to reduce youth violence, property crime, and violence-related injuries.

HOW IT WORKS: SAFE PLACES & BUSY STREETS

The goal of the MI-YVPC’s greening approaches is to mobilize residents to engage with one another and rebuild their neighborhoods to encourage positive social interactions and community development. The approaches test the hypothesis that, by caring for and maintaining vacant properties, youth violence and crime will decrease as positive connections with neighbors and pride in the community increase.



Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury
Prevention and Control

By partnering with community-based organizations, MI-YVPC supports communities to address violence and crime by beautifying and reinvigorating their local neighborhoods. MI-YVPC assists in these efforts by:

- helping organizations quantify the results of “greening” efforts to show that they are effective and to leverage additional support for continuing the work
- motivating residents to maintain their neighborhood, which creates a sense of pride and ownership among the community
- gaining the trust and support of donors for materials and equipment to continue the upkeep, and ultimately,
- expanding to other high-burden neighborhoods to lower the risk for youth violence.



WHY “GREENING” WORKS

The success behind CPTED rests on the shoulders of residents and local entities taking the needed steps to transform their own communities, which have been plagued by fear, crime, and disinvestment, into a safe space they are proud to live. As such, MI-YVPC has found that connecting youth and residents to their communities through property maintenance promotes positive activities and builds relationships.



“With these intervention programs, kids are learning. They’re learning about crime; they’re learning about their communities; they’re learning about themselves; and what kind of adult they want to become.”

— Dr. Marc Zimmerman,
Principal Investigator



MI-YVPC'S IMPACT

Current Work

To measure the success “greening” has on youth violence prevention, MI-YVPC designed a research evaluation with local organizations that are implementing CPTED approaches. MI-YVPC administers surveys at critical points throughout implementation of activities to assess knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. The results of these surveys and police and hospital data serve as reference points to measure the changes different types of “greening” have on social processes, crime, and violence before and after implementation. MI-YVPC uses the information collected from these “greening” efforts to sustain and continue building positive community relationships and environments.

Past Work

MI-YVPC previously implemented and evaluated a comprehensive youth violence prevention approach. This approach included multiple programs with CPTED activities, including Youth Empowerment Solutions (YES) and Clean and Green. YES promotes positive development among youth by empowering them to change their physical and social environments. A 16 week curriculum includes activities that focus on leadership, cultural identity, community

assessment, program planning and resource mobilization, and opportunities for meaningful community involvement. Clean and Green is a land trust program that engages neighborhood residents and community organizations in the beautification and maintenance of vacant parcels.

Evaluation results showed neighbors reported increased communication with one another, lower amounts of victimization, lower levels of fear and crime, and overall increased neighborhood satisfaction.

From 2010-2015, MI-YVPC showed a **38% decrease in youth assault-related injuries** from those seeking treatment in a local emergency room.

Further, youth in the intervention area were **25% less likely to be victims of a violent assault** than youth in a comparison area without the interventions.

“Five houses in our immediate neighborhood were renovated and all of these, including the gardens we have been maintaining, are beacons of health and hope and have absolutely inspired neighbors around us to begin doing things on their own property.”

— Resident of Flint, Michigan

Involvement from 2016-2017



Ultimately, the goal of MI-YVPC is to empower communities to reinvest, reconnect, and reinvigorate their neighborhoods through “greening” activities to create an environment full of growth and positive influence, thereby decreasing youth crime and violence. For this to happen, it will require commitment and dedication from residents, police departments, hospitals, city management, and other community-based organizations to work together to build up their communities, and, in the process, build up each other.



“If kids are engaged and get a chance to have some control and feel some power in the project, they will own it. It becomes their space that they want to defend, rather than participate in crime in that area.”

— **Dr. Tom Reischl,**
Evaluation Director

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Visit The Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC):
yvpc.sph.umich.edu/

Visit CDC’s Youth Violence Prevention Center: cdc.gov/violenceprevention/YVPC/

