



# Green Space, Social Networks and Crime



**A study conducted by**

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# **Why Study Green Spaces and the Interactions Between People?**



**Social ties matter.  
They are the glue  
that binds  
individuals  
together to form a  
community.**



## **When neighborhood ties are *strong*, residents:**

- Help each other
- Protect each other
- Feel empowered to take action

## **Green spaces might inhibit crime because they:**

- Bring people together outdoors
- Lessen mental fatigue, irritability, and impulsiveness



**Greener  
residential  
spaces**



**Stronger  
neighborhood  
ties?**

**Lower Crime  
Rates?**





## Barren spaces

- disliked
- feared
- unused







## Green spaces

- liked
- feel safer
- well used





**Yet removing greenery to deter crime is a common practice.**

**Dense woods and shrubs can conceal criminal activity.**





# Research Study #1: Community and Green Space

## The Robert Taylor development in Chicago



Low level of vegetation



High level of vegetation (green)

## Method

- 145 heads of households were interviewed about socializing, knowing neighbors, sense of community, and social ties
- Common areas were rated for quantity of vegetation.





# Results

**Do greener spaces result in stronger social networks?**

**Greener  
residential  
spaces**

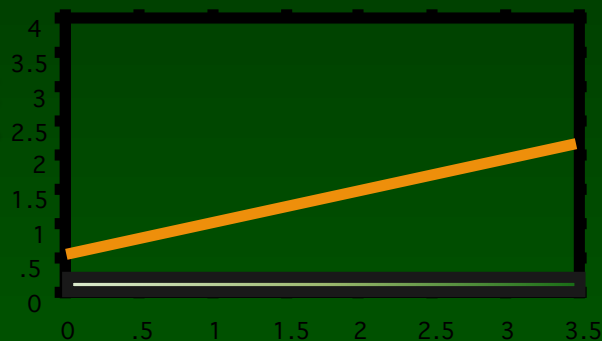


**Stronger  
Neighborhood  
Ties?**



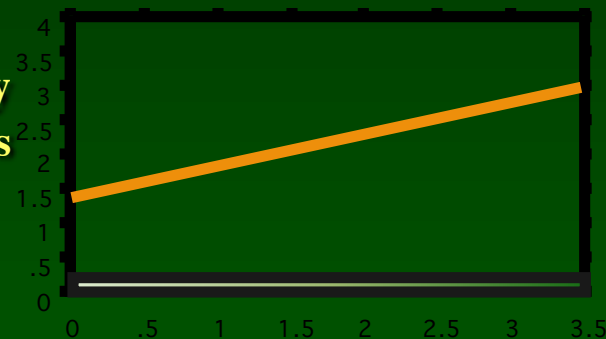
# Yes! Greener spaces lead to stronger neighborhood ties

**Socializing  
at Taylor**



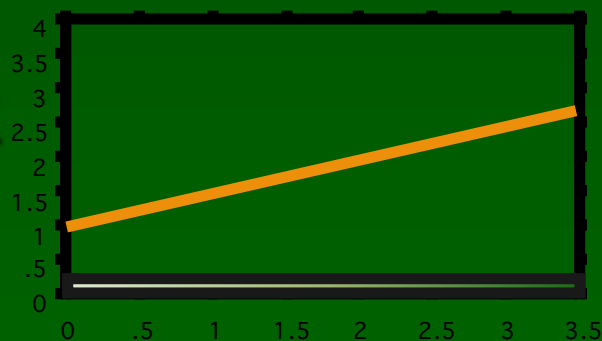
**Greenness of common spaces**

**Nearby  
neighbors**



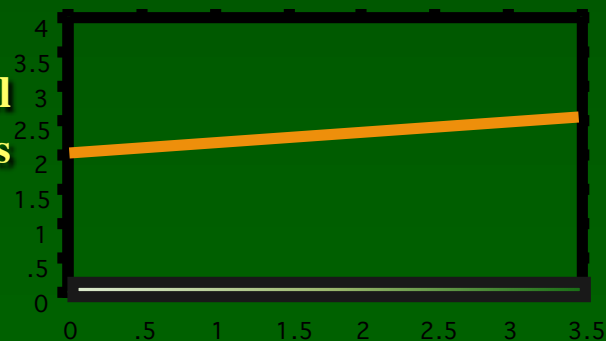
**Greenness of common spaces**

**Local sense  
of  
community**



**Greenness of common spaces**

**General  
social ties**



**Greenness of common spaces**



# Research Study #2: Crime and Green Space

## The Ida B. Wells development in Chicago



low level of vegetation



high level of vegetation

## Method

- Police reports from 98 buildings were collected.
- Building common areas were rated for quantity of vegetation.



# Results

**Do greener spaces result in fewer crimes?**

**Greener  
residential  
spaces**



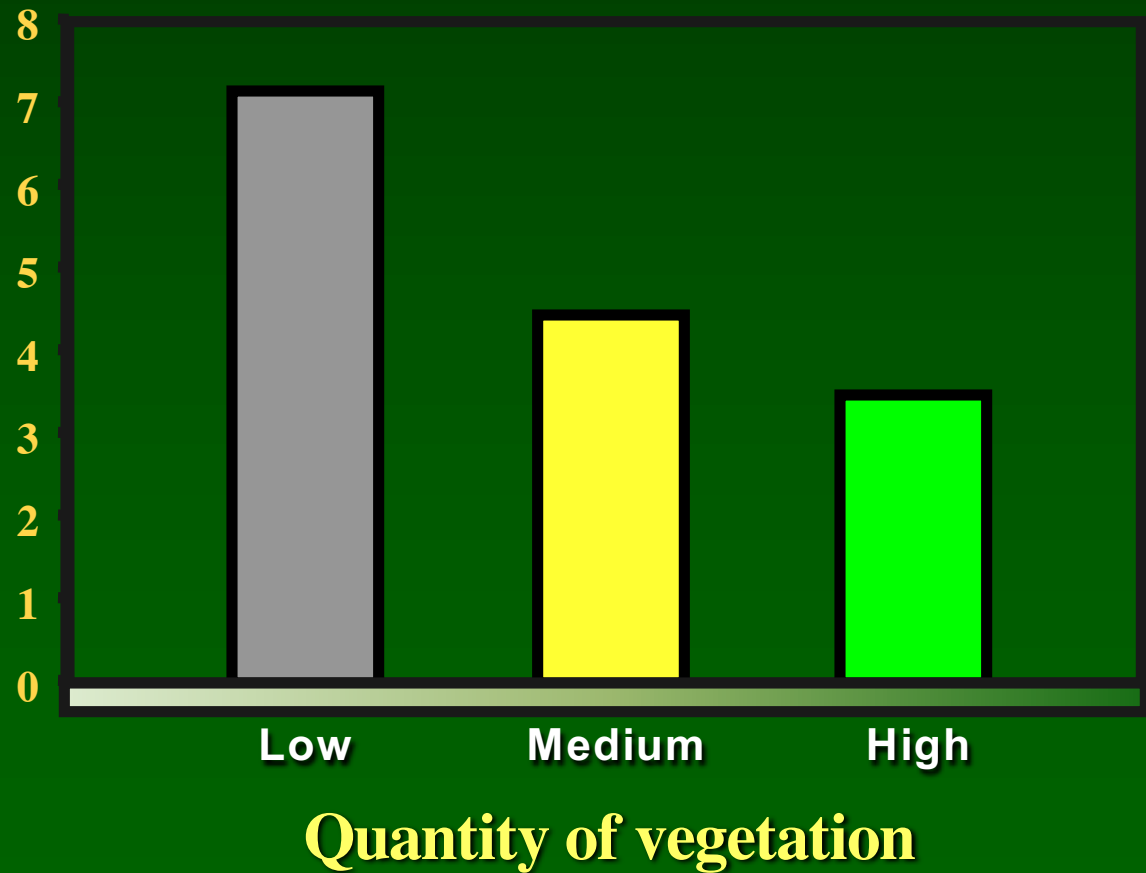
**Fewer Crimes?**





**Yes! Buildings with more vegetation had fewer crimes**

**# of crimes  
overall**





# Conclusions

- Green common spaces lead to strong neighborhood social ties and promote social networks.
- Social networks affect health by improving collaboration and the transmission of knowledge.
- The more vegetation a building has, the fewer crimes – fewer property crimes, fewer violent crimes, and fewer crimes overall.



# Ideas for policymakers, city planners, developers, and building owners

- Include green spaces in urban developments.
- Plant trees close to buildings.
- Involve neighbors in tree planting.
- Think twice before removing trees or vegetation for security reasons
- Landscape buildings with vegetation that does not block views





**Caring for trees means  
caring for people!**





# To share this information with others

- Copies of this presentation and other, written materials for nonscientific audiences may be obtained at [<www.lhhl.uiuc.edu>](http://www.lhhl.uiuc.edu)
- To quote this information in print, please consult the original scientific journal article:  
Kuo, F.E., Sullivan, W.C., Coley, R.L., & Brunson, L. (1998). Fertile ground for community: Inner-city neighborhood common spaces. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 26(6), 823-851.  
Available at [www.lhhl.uiuc.edu](http://www.lhhl.uiuc.edu)



# Other questions?

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