

Positive Influences of Youth Volunteering in Greening Activities
on Youth Development and the Community

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Presented at the University of Michigan - Flint
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Public Health

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Acknowledgements

I would like to take the time to acknowledge a few individuals that have helped me through this applied public health project (capstone). First, I would like to thank Dr. Gergana Kodjebacheva for being my first mentor on this project and taking the time to explain things which I did not fully understand and keeping up to date of my progress during this capstone. Secondly, I would like to thank Susan Franzen for allowing me to conduct the Adult Leader Interviews that the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center is working on. Your input has been invaluable, and your advice has been impeccable, both personally and professionally. Last, but not least, I would like to thank my husband and sons for patiently and lovingly being by my side through the last journey to finish my MPH degree.

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Abstract

Background: During this applied public health project, greening activities performed by the Clean & Green program within the city of Flint, Michigan were examined to determine the influence of the engagement of youth volunteers in greening activities on positive youth and community change. **Methods:** The Adult Leader Interview was developed by the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) as a tool to measure qualitative data. The qualitative data in this research is characterized and interpreted from the interviewee responses who were contacted via phone, email, or text message to set up an in-person interview. The Adult Leader Interview included 15 questions specific to developing a better understanding of how the Clean & Green groups interact and engage the youth in greening activities around the Flint community as well any positive influence of the engagement. The interview information was analyzed using a qualitative approach through grounded theory. **Results:** The 15-question Adult Leader Interview constructed by the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center was administered among seven Clean & Greens groups. Interviewees stated that the greening volunteer activities helped build confidence, develop work ethic, build pride, and cultivate leadership among youth. Positive community change was also noted through involvement of youth in their own neighborhood rather than use of professional services. **Conclusion:** The sample size of seven Clean & Greens groups imposed limitations on the amount of qualitative data obtained. Although the project faced data limitations due to the small sample size, the data that were successfully collected from the completed interviews contributed to our understanding of the positive influences of youth engagement in greening activities.

Introduction

During this applied public health project, greening activities performed by the Clean & Green program within the city of Flint, Michigan were examined to determine the influence that the engagement of youth volunteers may have on the development of youth and the community. The research also indirectly implies if engagement in greening activities may contribute to the reduction in violence. Violence, the intentional use of threatened or actual physical force or power, is a persistent cause of death and disability among adolescents, particularly among racial and ethnic minorities living in racially segregated areas with concentrated disadvantage (Eisman, Lee, Hsieh, Stoddard, & Zimmerman, 2018). Youth violence has been reported to concentrate in urban environments, which are characterized by high rates of poverty and low socioeconomic status. Past direct behavior-based change programs have been largely unsuccessful and unsustainable when conducted because of the lack of consideration for the environmental context in which these behaviors occur. A more successful and effective method must be replicated and sustained in communities to reduce youth violence.

Researchers have reported some characteristics that are generally associated with better outcomes among youth, such as socioeconomic status (SES) and academic achievement. These characteristics may contribute to selection bias in studies investigating organized activity participation (Eisman, Lee, Hsieh, Stoddard, & Zimmerman, 2018). Lack of maintenance on vacant neighborhood lots is associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress for nearby residents (Heinze, et al., 2018). Overgrowth of grass and dense brush offer hiding spots for criminals and space for illegal activities. The belief is that intervention to vacant lot parcels will result in more improvements of nearby properties, decreased stress response, more social interaction, and less youth violence. The expectation is that the youth-engaged greening of vacant

lots can have greater effects than the professionally greened sites because they will have more community ownership along with positive youth development skills.

Overview of Youth Violence in the United States

Youth Violence Prevention: Local Public Health Approach, is an article that addresses the significant public health problem of youth violence. Youth violence is characterized by violent acts or behaviors that range from bullying to assault and can result in serious injury or death (Tibbs, et al., 2017). Exposure to violence can have a lifelong impact, especially on children and adolescents, whether they are the perpetrator, victim, or witness to violence (Tibbs, et al., 2017). In 2015, a total of 4891 adolescents aged 10 to 24 years were victims of homicide, and exponentially more adolescents are affected physically and mentally as a result of violence (Tibbs, et al., 2017). The health and well-being of a community is directly affected by violence. Violence prevalence increases the risk of other poor health related issues. Youth violence also has an ecological influence that affects families and communities and contributes to premature death, disability, and the overall burden of violence (Tibbs, et al., 2017). Communities who experience increased youth violence also suffer from economic consequences. Youth homicides and assault injuries cost approximately \$18.2 billion in health care and productivity loss (Tibbs, et al., 2017). The economic impact surrounding the increased violence also contributes to a decrease in property values, which leads to the decrease in allocation towards these communities. The decrease in allocation also contributes to the interruption of social services. Advances in public health, such as those documented in the “Ten Great Public Health Achievements in the 20th Century,”² are an indication that public health has the power to make change, prevent injury, and save the lives of citizens (Tibbs, et al., 2017). The unintended consequences and widespread impact of youth

violence make it a critical public health issue (Tibbs, et al., 2017). Youth violence can be addressed by understanding prevention measures on a community level.

Youth Violence Presence in Flint, Michigan

Although, youth violence in the United States has decreased over the last decade, youth violence persists at high levels in communities affected by unemployment, decreased population, and blighted neighborhoods. When there are economic hardships present in a community, police, fire, and social services are decreased while home foreclosures increase. When residents perceive a rise in crime, they change their behavior by avoiding dangerous locations or moving out of neighborhoods, further reducing informal social controls and organization (Morrel-Samuels, Zimmerman, & Reischl, 2013). One-quarter of teenagers and young adults surveyed in the emergency room of a hospital in Flint, Michigan, said they had a firearm at home or carried it in public (Morrel-Samuels, Youths at Risk of Violence Say They Need Guns for Protection, 2013). The No. 1 reason they had a gun was to protect themselves or feel safer, the youths said (Morrel-Samuels, Youths at Risk of Violence Say They Need Guns for Protection, 2013). The organization is working with children and teenagers in Flint, with a focus on preventing the kind of violence that resulted in a 13-year-old boy being charged with murders of his brother and the brother's girlfriend there last month (Morrel-Samuels, Youths at Risk of Violence Say They Need Guns for Protection, 2013). In the same week, a 13-year-old girl there was charged with attempting to kill her older sister (Morrel-Samuels, Youths at Risk of Violence Say They Need Guns for Protection, 2013). The fact that the youths in this study thought "it was OK to hurt someone if they hurt you," and the fact that they were more likely to drink or use drugs than people who didn't own guns makes it more likely that someone would be injured or killed with a firearm, the study authors say

(Morrel-Samuels, Youths at Risk of Violence Say They Need Guns for Protection, 2013). Youth violence in Flint, Michigan is amongst the highest in the nation.

Despite Flint, Michigan once being one of the most affluent cities in the United States, it is now faced with the hardships due to the withdrawal of the auto industry that has caused a prolonged economic decline. It has the unfortunate distinction of having the highest rate of violent crime in the nation (Morrel-Samuels, Zimmerman, & Reischl, 2013). Despite these challenges, Flint's citizens are determined to restore the city as a center of education, culture, and commerce (Morrel-Samuels, Zimmerman, & Reischl, 2013). Reaching this goal will be dependent on creating safe and healthy communities within Flint where children and families can thrive. Programs that create opportunities for youth to develop confidence, interact with role models, and address community needs are expected to promote healthy youth outcomes (e.g., academic achievement, decision making) and to reduce negative outcomes such as violent behavior (Morrel-Samuels, Zimmerman, & Reischl, 2013). The Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center was created to encompass such programs to reduce these negative outcomes among communities and the youth.

Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center

The Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) is funded by a grant from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. MI-YVPC is based at the University of Michigan School of Public Health to conduct research on youth violence prevention approaches, collect and analyze surveillance data, and foster relationships with local community partners to help develop, implement, and evaluate promising prevention efforts (Our Research: Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center, 2018). Implementation and evaluation of strategies to prevent youth violence through the MI-YVPC is carried out by partnering with universities, economic development organizations, health departments, hospitals, police departments and community-based

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organizations. From 2010-2015, MI-YVPC evaluated a multi-pronged approach to reduce violence and create a supportive and healthy environment for youth, ages 10-24 in Flint, Michigan (Our Research: Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center, 2018). There were six intervention programs led by community organizations to reach both low and high-risk youth, focusing on the 3 main factors: the individual themselves, the relationships they have, and the Flint communities in which they reside.

Deemed overwhelmingly essential given the current state of Flint's communities, MI-YVPC has been funded through the year 2020 to ensure core research is developed in Flint, Michigan. The aforementioned "core research for the 2015-2020 funding cycle expands on our work in Flint by studying the effects of vacant property improvements on violence, property crimes, and intentional injuries in three U.S. cities: Flint, Michigan, Youngstown, Ohio and Camden, New Jersey" (Our Research: Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center, 2018). MI-YVPC will also focus on attracting the youth in maintaining vacant properties in the community neighborhoods through greening activities. In addition to our core research, our faculty and staff lead survey, intervention and evaluation research related to violence prevention, school safety, and positive youth development (Our Research: Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center, 2018). The work that MI-YVPC develops will build on programs that are in place to research the beneficial effects that greening activities have on the health and safety of the Flint community.

Genesee County Land Bank Authority and the Clean & Green Program

According to the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA), urban decline in Flint, Michigan increased due to how Michigan handled the tax foreclosure process. The tax foreclosure process kept tax returned properties off the tax roll, out of circulation, and in limbo for up to seven years. In 1999, the Michigan State Legislature created a new, streamlined system for returning tax-

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reverted properties to productive use (P.A. 123 and a subsequent P.A. 258), which changed the way foreclosed properties were handled by giving outright ownership to the local County Treasurer after only two and a half years (History: Genesee County Land Bank , 2018). Communities were able to start to invest, recover, and reconstruct their neighborhoods with the new process in place. The Genesee County Land Reutilization Council (LRC) was created in 2002 and in 2004, after the State of Michigan passed the land bank legislation, the LRC became what is known today as the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA). The GCLBA uses the amended tax law as a constructive community development tool: avoiding the potential neglect or misuse that comes from selling land at auction, the County is able to acquire abandoned land through the foreclosure process and determine the best use of that land (History: Genesee County Land Bank , 2018). The GCLBA's main objective is to restore the community by the removal and redevelopment of neglected properties, which is accomplished by creating green spaces, assembling land for new residential and commercial development, and transferring properties to adjacent homeowners.

A program that supports one of the main objectives of the GCBLA is the Clean & Green program. The program began in 2004 as the Land Bank sought to partner with community-based organizations in order to advance community-based capacity, neighborhood health, youth engagement, the reuse of vacant land, and the Land Bank's relationships with the community (Clean & Green Program, 2018). At the heart of community engagement are block clubs, schools, churches, neighborhood associations and local non-profits. These community engagement resources have successfully developed an effective network of nearly 90 community-based organizations who have participated in Clean & Green since the program has been in place. Between 2004 and 2017 more than 3,800 area residents have participated in Clean & Green, including more than 1,750 total youth, 750 of which are directly employed by the GCBLA.

These community-based organizations maintain concentrated clusters of vacant properties on a seasonal basis. Each participating group receives a stipend for its maintenance work, much of which is used to employ local youth in improving their neighborhood conditions (Clean & Green Program, 2018). To become eligible to participate in the Clean & Green program, the community-based organization must submit an application. The application process starts in January with the number of groups selected dependent upon annual funding. The season kick off for the Clean & Green groups is in April, each group is required to maintain 25 vacant properties between the season kick off and the season end. The season for the Clean & Green program typically comes to an end in late October or early November. Each Clean & Green group who participates will receive a cash stipend to support its work. The value of the stipend for each group depends on the number of vacant properties the group maintains and equates to \$20 per property visit (Clean & Green Program, 2018). Since its conception, the GCLBA has been successful in accomplishing their objective to quickly and efficiently utilize vacant properties in Flint, Michigan while also meeting the goal of engaging youth in greening activities. The Clean & Green program through the GCLBA, along with Flint's community support, was critical in the effort to complete the initiatives laid forth during its installation.

Collaboration of Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center and Genesee County Land Bank Authority

The Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) and the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA) have formed a partnership to foster collaboration among their respected resources. The GCLBA's role in stabilizing neighborhoods has helped revitalize the Flint community, while MI-YVPC has worked to engage residents, both the youth and adults, to maintain the vacant properties. The supply of properties surpasses the Genesee County Land Bank

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Authority's (GCLBA) ability to immediately address all the vacant lots, which provides a unique opportunity for the Clean & Green group programs to implement a youth violence based experimental design. Community groups interested in participating in Clean and Green are chosen based on their previous experience with community work, inclusion of youth, plan for the identified space, and ability to leverage resources. The collaboration of the GCLBA and Clean & Green speaks for itself in regard to engaging youth, with over 200 youth participating during the 2014 season alone.

Literature Review

In this next section, literature reviews on the impact greening of vacant lots has on both the community and community health, as well as on youth violence will be discussed. *Greening Vacant Lots to Reduce Violent Crime: A Randomized Controlled Trial* is an article of research that discusses the resident's perception of the vacant lots that they live near. This study examined the difference in perceptions on greened or maintained lots versus vacant unmaintained lots. The next article *Neighborhood Blight, Stress, and Health: A Walking Trial of Urban Greening and Ambulatory Heart Rate* used the same maintained versus unmaintained vacant lots, but instead of recording the residents' perception, a body response in the form of heart rate was examined during questioning. The final article for the literature review is *Community Engagement in Youth Violence Prevention: Crafting Methods to Context*. This study examined greening and community engagement techniques of three different youth violence centers in three locations. The three locations included Robeson County, North Carolina, Denver, Colorado, and Flint, Michigan. For this literature review I focused on the information presented on Flint, Michigan since this is also the selected study location for the applied public health project. In the following paragraphs these

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three articles discussing three different types of studies relating to the greening effects on perception of violence, physical well-being, and youth violence will be examined closer.

Community violence influences an individual's mental and physical health, this in turn leads to a public health problem. Caring for the environment in which people habitat has shown to decrease violence and increase mental and physical well-being. According to *Greening Vacant Lots to Reduce Violent Crime: A Randomized Controlled Trial*, preventing violence requires understanding the people living in a hot spot, but also understanding how the physical environment in a hot spot may promote or retard violence (Garvin, Cannuscio, & Branas, 2013). This section of the applied public health project will discuss the research written about youth violence and greening activities effects on public health.

Greening Vacant Lots to Reduce Violent Crime: A Randomized Controlled Trial, is an article written about a randomized controlled trial of greening vacant lots to exam the effects on local resident's perception of safety and disorder, as well as police reported crime. Vacant lots are often overgrown with unwanted vegetation and filled with trash, making them attractive places to hide illegal guns, conduct illegal activities such as drug sales and prostitution, and engage in violent crime (Garvin, Cannuscio, & Branas, 2013). The randomized greening activity interventions included cleaning vacant lots, planting grass and trees on the lots, and the building of wooden fences around the perimeter of the vacant lots. There was the intervention site, which consisted of two vacant lot clusters, and the control site which did not consist of any interventions. In order to be eligible for the study, the participant had to live in the surrounding two blocks of the randomly selected vacant lots, be 18-65 years in age, and able to walk without difficulty or assistance. Participants in the study were blinded to the effect of the greening intervention by being told that the study was about perceptions of safety and violence in their neighborhood. The

baseline and follow-up to the study protocol consisted of an in-home survey and qualitative interview. The survey and interview were followed by a walking interview around the neighborhood that brought participants past the vacant lots in the study.

Overall, 29 participants completed baseline interviews, and 21 participants completed 3-month follow-up interviews (Garvin, Cannuscio, & Branas, 2013). The study showed similar rates of participation at both the intervention and the control vacant lot sites. Unadjusted difference-in-differences estimates showed a non-significant decrease in the number of total crimes and gun assaults around greened vacant lots compared with control (Garvin, Cannuscio, & Branas, 2013). People around the intervention vacant lots described feeling safer after greening activity interventions were performed compared with those living around control vacant lots. There was a significant amount of vacant land (abandoned homes or vacant lots) at both the intervention and control sites (Garvin, Cannuscio, & Branas, 2013). In conclusion, the study found that greening activity interventions can change the perception of one's physical environment. A better outlook on one's physical environment has been proven to lead to a reduction in youth violence. Although this study showed a nonsignificant reduction in crime rate, it is important to note that the study was only conducted over a 3-month interval. A much longer study may capture a reduction in crime rate as matters of perception of one's environment tend to have farther reaching implications than the limited time frame in which the study was conducted.

In comparison to the study on perception that greening activities on vacant lots help reduce crime, the article *Neighborhood Blight, Stress, and Health: A Walking Trial of Urban Greening and Ambulatory Heart Rate* exams the effect of greening vacant lots and the body's response. It is found that exposure to unkept vacant lots is associated with negative health outcomes. Although complex social and economic factors broadly explain the relationship between neighborhood

blight and health, limited experimentation with biological outcomes has been conducted in real-world settings (South, Kondo, Cheney, & Branas, 2015). By exploring the body's stress response, the impact of neighborhood blight and the effects of greening activities have on health can be examined. The body's stress response is a protective mechanism when an individual is exposed to surrounding stressors, which can include their environment. Basic structural improvements to blighted neighborhood environments, such as "greening" vacant lots, offers a promising and sustainable, yet underused, solution to such stressors (South, Kondo, Cheney, & Branas, 2015). During the study, two clusters of vacant lots in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania were selected to either have the standard greening treatment intervention or no greening treatment intervention, which was used as the control. The standard greening treatment intervention is suitable, reproducible, and low-cost. The intervention involved cleaning the vacant lots of debris, planting grass and trees, and installing wooden fences on the lots. Residents living within 2 blocks of the study vacant lots were eligible to participate in the study. The study included 12 participants on a self-paced, prearranged walk in their neighborhood, which included the intervention site as well as the control site. This took place both before and 3 months after the greening treatment intervention sites and the control sites.

During the study written in *Neighborhood Blight, Stress, and Health: A Walking Trial of Urban Greening and Ambulatory Heart Rate*, heart rate was used as the marker for the stress response. Heart rate has a direct link to acute stress and dynamic change in response to stressors, and it is easy to measure in the field (South, Kondo, Cheney, & Branas, 2015). A continuous measure of the participants heart rate was collected during the walk around the greening intervention sites and the control sites in the study. The heart rate was measured by a device called the Garmin Forerunner, which has an enabled heart rate built in monitor. Overall, 12 study

participants completed the pre- and postintervention walks, 7 at the greening site and 5 at the control site (South, Kondo, Cheney, & Branas, 2015). The study's results showed statistical significance between the greened intervention treatment sites and the control sites, with a heart rate that was -5.6 bpm at the greened site. The results from the -5.6 bpm indicate that the proximity to the greened intervention treatment sites decrease the heart rate of the individual, compared to the in-view proximity to a controlled or non-greened site. This study adds real-world experimentation and much needed biological plausibility to a body of literature indicating that structural changes to urban environments, such as vacant lot greening, may be an effective mechanism for improving health (South, Kondo, Cheney, & Branas, 2015). In conclusion, the study found that the greening intervention treatment was a simple and relatively inexpensive intervention. The health benefits of reducing blight in neighborhoods contributes to the reduction of the body's stress response and improvement in the individuals physical condition.

Finally, in the next section youth violence and intervention techniques will be addressed. Although greening activities on vacant lots and the stress responses towards greening activities is as equally important to understand the foundation, the main focus of this applied public health project, preventing youth violence will now be discussed. *Community Engagement in Youth Violence Prevention: Crafting Methods to Context*, is an article that exams the use of Youth Violence Prevention Centers (YVPCs) and engaging with community members. Youth Violence Prevention Centers are used to reduce youth violence in defined high-risk communities through implementation and evaluation of comprehensive, evidence-based prevention strategies. The implementation and evaluation of these evidence-based prevention strategies can take place in both rural and urban settings. In this article, three centers that operate in very different contexts: a rural county in North Carolina, a suburban area of Denver, Colorado, and an urban setting in

Flint, Michigan were used. The geographic areas served by the three YVPCs described in this article differ in size, population, and racial and ethnic composition (Morrel-Samuels, Bacallao, Brown, Bower, & Zimmerman, 2016). The North Carolina Center for Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention (NC-YVPC) operates in Robeson County, which is largely rural and has a very diverse population of American Indians, African Americans, Latinos and European Americans (Morrel-Samuels, Bacallao, Brown, Bower, & Zimmerman, 2016). The Colorado Academic Center for Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention (CO-YVPC) serves the Montbello neighborhood of Denver, this neighborhood is home to large Hispanic and African American populations (Morrel-Samuels, Bacallao, Brown, Bower, & Zimmerman, 2016). The Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) focuses on an approximately two square-mile area of Flint, MI, the population in the MI-YVPC intervention area is predominantly African American (Morrel-Samuels, Bacallao, Brown, Bower, & Zimmerman, 2016).

Specifically, for this applied public health project, Flint, Michigan was the main focus summarized from this articles content. The MI-YVPC uses trust, transparency, communication, and commitment to demonstrate the principles of community engagement with community partners. MI-YVPC also provides details on barriers and starting factors that influence implementation, describe lessons learned from working with youth violence prevention alliances, and provide recommendations when applying community engagement principles to youth violence prevention. From 2010 to 2015, the MI-YVPC operated in a defined neighborhood of the city to support six violence prevention programs at the individual, family and community levels (Youth Empowerment Solutions, Fathers and Sons, Sync, Targeted Outreach Mentoring, Clean and Green, and Community Mobilization) (Morrel-Samuels, Bacallao, Brown, Bower, & Zimmerman, 2016). Flint residents were more likely than others in their county to participate in collective activities

such as neighborhood beautification projects, crime watches, or other actions with neighbors to address neighborhood problems (Morrel-Samuels, Bacallao, Brown, Bower, & Zimmerman, 2016). The MI-YVPC took advantage of its data collection efforts to promote its effectiveness and potentially engage residents in its interventions. The MI-YVPC incorporated this by using local research assistants during the summer months to rate property parcels. The local research assistants wore identifying MI-YVPC shirts and carried brochures to hand to residents that contained information about the prevention center. During this phase of the data collection MI-YVPC learned about the local resident's concerns and priorities as it pertained to their neighborhood.

MI-YVPC worked alongside community groups and organizations that had well-known track records in the Flint community, thus demonstrating a commitment to building local capacity and sustainability. The MI-YVPC also employed staff from the Flint community whenever possible and benefited from their individual experiences and perspectives. The Center built on existing community assets by supporting several local organizations that took the lead on program implementation: The GCLBA Clean and Green program engaged neighborhood groups to maintain and improve vacant properties (Morrel-Samuels, Bacallao, Brown, Bower, & Zimmerman, 2016). Data collected by the MI-YVPC was shared within the Flint community and supported strategic planning processes through the health department, as well as Flint's Master Plan. Their initiatives and investments focused on youth violence prevention, improved capacity, provided local investment, and promoted sustainability in the community.

Lastly, this section will go through the limitations to the studies discussed above. The *Greening Vacant Lots to Reduce Violent Crime: A Randomized Controlled Trial* study about the difference in perceived safety around greened maintained lots versus unmaintained vacant lots, reported that residents felt significantly safer once the lots were greened and maintained. The

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limitations to this study was the evidence in a non-significant decrease in the number of total crimes and gun assaults occurring around both the maintained and unmaintained vacant lots. Although the study showed some decrease in crime and a significant increase in the perception of being safe, because of the short amount of time the study was conducted over, a larger controlled study would need to be performed to investigate the link in greening properties and the significant decrease in gun violence. *Neighborhood Blight, Stress, and Health: A Walking Trial of Urban Greening and Ambulatory Heart Rate* a study about the change in heart rate when residents passed by both maintained and unmaintained vacant lots, had many limitations to the study. The first limitation in the study was the actual stress response, which was increased heart rate. The study did not consider any underlying cardiovascular issues of individuals. Although there was a change in the stress response based on the type of lot being observed, more research on the individual's overall health may be necessary in future studies. The second limitation to the study was the fact that only people who lived close to the vacant lot sites were used in the study, while this may be good in recording a change in heart rate response, outside residents could have provided additional information on physical stress response when observed maintained versus unmaintained lots. The study provided a real-world glimpse into stress response reactions of heart rates due to observing greened maintained vacant lots and unmaintained vacant lots, but a further study into underlying cardiovascular issues in participants along with the use of outside residents to the sites would provide more evidence in the increase or decrease in stress response to different vacant lot parcels. The final literature review *Community Engagement in Youth Violence Prevention: Crafting Methods to Context* examined the use of a youth violence center in Michigan, specifically focused in the city of Flint. This study observed the use of communication through collaboration with community members to engage with youth to decrease crime and increase positive productivity.

The limitation noted in this study is the need for future research in a larger sample of partnerships to understand the dynamics of community engagement in youth violence to further the emergence of youth violence community coalitions.

Significance of Capstone and Objectives

Youth violence is a major public health issue for individuals and communities. The proposed applied public health project is a blend of issues involving youth violence and environmental health. An Adult Leader Interview designed by the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) will be used to interview community members who belong to Clean & Green groups through the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA) in Flint to assess their support for greening initiatives, their perceptions about the social and organizational networks necessary for successful greening programs, and experience working with the youth on these greening activities. We will ask how they have engaged youth in greening activities and the role the organizations played in developing meaningful relationships and leadership with the youth in their community. Questions about the advantages, disadvantages, as well as the pros and cons of working with youth will be addressed. The Adult Leader Interview will also ask the Clean & Green groups about the role they see greening may have for violence prevention and suggestions they have for the necessary infrastructure in both community and institutional support for encouraging other communities to develop youth oriented greening strategies. This will be done through conducted interviews, transcription of notes for each Clean & Green group, and qualitative analysis to look for overall trends and themes within the interviews.

There will be two objectives in this applied public health project. The objectives will be achieved and summarized using The Adult Leader Interview, which was developed by the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) as a tool to measure qualitative data.

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The MI-YVPC developed this style of interview to track trends and themes of the relationship and youth engagement with the Clean & Green groups in the Flint community. The Clean & Green groups will be able to contribute to the applied public health project objective through The Adult Leader Interview because the members work directly with youth in the community who come from all backgrounds, including those susceptible to youth violence.

A goal is to analyze the responses from the Clean & Green groups who work with a different given number of youths to determine if the interactions with the youth contribute to positive youth development skills. A goal is to also determine any positive community changes.

- Were the youth participants paid or volunteer?
- Were the youth involved in planning the work you are doing this season? If so, how were they involved in planning?
- Did any of the youth lead parts of the work? If so, could you describe what they did?
- What are the advantages of involving youth in your work?
- Could you describe any specific ways that adult participants have assisted the youth participants outside of your work on the vacant lots. Some examples might be providing information about jobs, education, or community resources. Another example might be providing transportation or help with items that the youth need.
- Did you provide any training for the youth who are working with you? If so, could you please describe it?
- What suggestions do you have for other organizations that would like to involve youth in improving and maintaining vacant properties?

Demonstrated Competencies

Core Competencies

- *Evidence-based approach to public health* by selecting qualitative data collection methods appropriate for the improvement of youth violence prevention.
- *Policy in public health* as it proposes strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships to influence youth violence prevention.
- *Leadership* in fostering collaboration and guiding decision-making through the assessment of community needs by way of ecological framework.
- *Inter-Professional practice* collaboration between Genesee County Land Bank and the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center.
- *Systems thinking*, planning and management to promote health through the assessment and design for the population in need, in this case the youth.

Track Competencies

- *Develop and deliver a variety of health communication strategies, methods, and techniques to promote behavior change.*
- *Create and evaluate quality improvement principles.*

Throughout this applied public health project five core foundational competencies and two track competencies were selected to best match the proficiencies being gained from the project. The first foundational competency, evidence-based approach to public health, was achieved through the interviewing process of this applied public health project. The qualitative data was collected from the interviews conducted with the Clean & Green groups in hopes to get a better understanding of the interactions the community has with the youth. The data expectations are to shed light on any correlation between greening activities and youth violence. This skill allows

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healthcare administrators to access community problems and goals by actively listening to community members. Evidence-based approach is also an essential skill for healthcare administrators because of patient safety and quality of care delivered to patients, which in turn cuts down on healthcare costs. The second foundational competency, policy in public health was chosen because in this applied public health project there are many stakeholders and coalitions that were built. Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YPVC) defined its vision of decreasing youth violence through greening activities, which the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA) and Clean & Green groups collaboration help to target and deliver. The relationship between the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) and the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA) along with the individual Clean & Green groups demonstrates a partnership to influence the betterment of a community, in particular the youth. It is beneficial for a healthcare administrator to have a strong and resourceful working relationship with the community to shape public health, share visions with stakeholders, and bring policy to vision.

The third foundational competency, leadership aids in fostering the collaboration between the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC), the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA), and the Clean & Green groups it supplies funds to care for vacant lots. The Clean & Green groups help the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA) by guiding decision making to better assist the community's ecological framework in the sense of what lots needs to be maintained and to what degree. Healthcare administrators are leaders in promoting patient centered care and that leadership is critical when building a team of public health professionals to meet a goal. The fourth foundational competency, inter-professional practice, again touches and extends upon the second foundational competency on the collaboration and

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partnerships ability to perform effectively. This fourth competency was chosen to also include individuals that make up the team more so than the teams or organizations themselves to encourage questioning of practices and implement problem solving. Healthcare administrators are put in place to prevent errors, improve the patient's experience, and provide better overall patient outcomes. This cuts down costs and inefficiencies in the practice. The fifth foundational competency, systems thinking, is demonstrated through the planning and collaboration between MI-YVPC and GCLBA through the assessment of youth involvement in the Clean & Greens groups. Healthcare administrators hold a strong position that allows for implementation of structural and cultural success are patient centered care.

Lastly, there were two track competencies chosen for this applied public health project. The first track competency is to develop and deliver a variety of health communication strategies, methods, and techniques to promote behavior change. This competency comes from the health education track but applies to this project and can be developed for the health administration side of public health. The strategies, methods, and techniques developed from health communication can be evaluated and administrated into policy to benefit, encourage, and promote a healthy behavior change for the overall better health of the population in need. A healthcare administrator must be an effective communicator to provide the best care to patients and increase their day to day operations in their work setting. The second track competency chosen is create and evaluate quality improvement principles. The quality improvement principles in the case of the greened vacant properties created by the Clean & Green groups is the increased overall community happiness. With vacant lots being cared for and greened, there is a decrease in blight, which has been shown to improve morale of the community surrounding the vacant lots. Quality improvement helps the healthcare system to be more data driven, which reduces errors,

inefficiencies, and unessential processes in the healthcare practice. These are all essential skills for healthcare administrators delivering care for a greater public health outcome.

Methodology

The Adult Leader Interview was developed by the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) as a tool to measure qualitative data. The qualitative data in this research project are characteristics identified and interpreted from the interviewee responses. The Institutional Review Board deemed the research exempt because the Adult Leader Interviews (HUM00113959) were no more than minimal risk. The Adult Leader Interview included 15 questions specific to developing a better understanding of how the Clean & Green groups interact and engage the youth in greening activities around the Flint community.

To obtain interviews from members of the Clean & Green groups, a signup sheet was created. Signup sheet, along with an informational half sheet containing interviewer contact information was passed along to the Genesee County Land Bank Authority's (GCLBA) Community Planner. The Community Planner displayed the signup sheet and informational half sheet during check pickup days for the Clean & Green groups. The GCLBA scheduled once a month check pickup for Clean & Green groups which started in May and ended in September. The signup sheet was displayed for the Clean & Green group member to sign up for the Adult Leader Interviews at their leisure. The introduction of the signup sheet was presented on June 29, 2018 for the third check pickup of the season. The signup sheet slots were filled with 30 members from different Clean & Green groups volunteering to participate in the interview. Since this seemed to be a successful day in attaining group member sign ups, no other check pickup days were used to display the signup sheets.

The data from this research was organized and interpreted into trends and themes that tie into the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center's (MI-YVPC) research on greening activities in the Flint community. A deductive approach was used during the analyzation of the qualitative data for this research. The deductive approach involved using the 15 questions from the Adult Leader Interview as a guide in grouping trends and themes of the interviewee responses. During phase 1 of recruitment for the Adult Leader Interviews that took place during check pickup day in June, 30 members from different Clean & Green groups signed up to participant in the interview. Of the 30 members that signed up during phase 1, 6 members from different Clean & Green groups were able to be contacted and agreed to complete the interview. During phase 2 of recruitment for the Adult Leader Interview, that took place during the End of the Season Celebration Dinner, 6 members from different Clean & Green groups signed up to participate in the interview. Of the 6 members that signed up during phase 2 and contacted only 1 member from a Clean & Green group was contacted and agreed to complete the interview. The group that was contacted during phase 2 of recruitment was Group 7.

The last effort to gain enough Adult Leader Interviews for the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) research was done at the last event the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA) holds for the Clean & Green program. The last event is the End of the Season Celebration Dinner. During this dinner, Clean & Green groups, along with individual members, are recognized for the participation and achievements in the Flint community. The End of the Season Celebration Dinner was held October 30, 2018 from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm. The event took place at the Mott Community College's Event Center, table space allocated to the MI-YVPC to set up and recruit participants for interviews as they signed into the event. During the End of the Season Celebration Dinner 6 different members from Clean & Green groups signed up to be

contacted for the Adult Leader Interview. Only one member that signed up during the event was not on the original signup sheet collected on June 29, 2018.

Results

The expectation of the applied public health project is that greening will increase empowerment for the youth, which in turn may lead to fewer police incidents and injury, improvements in nearby properties, increased social capital, and more positive neighborhood intergenerational interaction. Youth empowerment can be reached through positive youth developmental skills. It is also expected that youth-engaged greening through the Clean & Green program initiative established by Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA) will have stronger effects compared to professional greening. These expectations were shaped into an objective for this applied public health project, which is to determine the effectiveness that the engagement of youth volunteers may have on the reduction of youth violence.

The Clean & Greens group were organized by the number of youth participants they had involved in their greening activities in 2017 and their youth engagement ranking. This list was put together for the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center's (MI-YVPC) Adult Leader Interview by the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA). Within the list is the number of youths involved in the year 2017 along with the various rankings or youth engagement: very high >10 youth, high 4-9 youth, moderate 1-3 youth, and none. The first Clean & Green group utilized 10 youth in 2017 and 10 youth in 2018, the group was ranked as having "very high" youth engagement. The second Clean & Green group utilized 4 youth in 2017 and 5 youth in 2018, the group was ranked as "high" in youth engagement. The third Clean & Green group utilized 180 youth in 2017 and 52 in 2018, the group was ranked as "very high" in young engagement. The fourth Clean & Green group was not on the list with 2017 youth participant numbers. Group 4

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utilized 6 youth participants in 2018 and was ranked as “high” in youth engagement. The fifth Clean & Green group was utilized 12 youth in 2017 and 8 in 2018, the group went down in rank from “very high” to “high” youth engagement. The sixth Clean & Green group was also not on the list with 2017 youth participant numbers. Group 6 utilized 15 youth participants in 2018 and was ranked as “very high” in youth engagement. The seventh and last Clean & Green group interviewed with The Adult Leader Interview utilized 8 youth in 2017 and 4 youth in 2018, the group ranked “high” in youth engagement. The Adult Leader Interview was collected from all seven Clean & Greens groups and compiled into a tables that characterizes the data recorded. The following tables illustrate the percentage of youth engagement, the characteristics of how the Clean & Green groups identify themselves, percentage of men and women who responded to The Adult Leader Interview, and qualitative data of The Adult Leader Interview.

Table 1: Percentage of Youth Engagement of Clean & Green Groups Interviewed

Very High >10 Youth	42.9%
High 4-9 Youth	59.1%
Moderate 1-3 Youth	0%
None	0%

Table 2: Characteristics of Clean & Green Groups by Percentages

Church Group	42.9%
Neighborhood Group	28.6%
Non-profit	28.6%

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Table 3: Percentage of Men and Women Response to The Adult Leader Interview

Men	71.4%
Women	28.6%

Table 4: Qualitative Data of The Adult Leader Interview with Clean & Green Groups

1.Can you tell me how long you've worked with _____ community organization and how you got involved?	Church Community Group in Neighborhood
2.What is your role in the organization? Officer? Volunteer? Other?	Founder President Board Member
3.Could you describe the work you are doing this season with the _____ program?	Cleaning lots Cutting Grass
4.What do you think is going well with your work so far and why?	Beautification of Neighborhood
5.Have you encountered any barriers to your work, and if so, how have you tried to overcome them?	Funds to Pay Volunteers for Encouragement Illegal Dumping

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6.How did you recruit the youth who are working with you?	Word of Mouth Neighborhood Block Clubs Church
7.What is the age range of the youth? About how many youth were involved in total?	12-18 Years Old 4-52 Youth
8.Were the youth participants paid or volunteer?	Paid
9.Did you provide any training for the youth who are working with you? If so, could you please describe it?	How to Use Equipment (Including Maintenance) Pick up Trash
10.Were the youth involved in planning the work you are doing this season? If so, how were they involved in planning?	No Planning This Season If They did Plan it had to do with Gardening
11.Did any of the youth lead parts of the work? If so, could you describe what they did?	Lead Work for Themselves Once They Were Shown What to do

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12. What are the advantages of involving youth in your work?	Develop Work Ethic Build Pride and Leadership
13. What are the barriers or challenges of working with youth on this kind of project?	Commitment Patience Dependability
14. Could you describe any specific ways that adult participants have assisted the youth participants outside of your work on the vacant lots. Some examples might be providing information about jobs, education, or community resources. Another example might be providing transportation or help with items that the youth need.	Transportation Job Referral
15. What suggestions do you have for other organizations that would like to involve youth in improving and maintaining vacant properties?	Involve More Youth Keep Them Motivated Use Incentives

The data from The Adult Leader Interview was organized in the table above to show trends and themes that are relevant to the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center's (MI-YVPC) research on the greening activities in Flint, Michigan and the youth engagement during these activities. A deductive approach was used during the analyzation of the qualitative data for this research. The deductive approach in this applied public health project involved using the 15 questions from the Adult Leader Interview to characterize the interviewee responses. Seven questions were pulled from The Adult Leader Interview to answer the two study goals of the applied public health project. The next paragraph will state the research questions within the Adult Leader Interview used to answer the goals.

First, to determine if interactions with the youth contribute to positive youth developmental skills research questions 8, 10, 11, 12, and 14 were used. Question 8 asks if the youth participants were paid or volunteers. While there were some youth participants that volunteered, most of the participants were paid. The payment of youth participants contributes to positive youth developmental skills by aiding with the ability to manage money and develop work ethic. Question 10 asks if the youth participants were involved in planning the work done by the Clean & Green groups this season. Most of the Clean & Green groups did not include planning, but the ones who did included youth participant planning in gardening. Youth participants planning gardening activities contributes to positive youth developmental skills by teaching the youth how to self-sustain their own food. Self-sustained food can be used for consumption, a community garden, or as a means for making extra money through the sale of self-grown produce. Question 11 asks if any youth participants lead any parts of the work the Clean & Green groups did this season. The youth were able to lead work for themselves once they were properly shown, trained, and learned what to do. This leads to positive youth developmental skills by adding more responsibility to the

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youth participants. The added responsibility signals that the youth have developed a skill set, which reinforces work ethic and self-worth, and have developed the skills needed for their future volunteer and job endeavors. Question 12 asks what advantages there are to involving youth participants in greening activities. The Clean & Green groups found that the youth developed work ethic, built pride, and cultivated leadership. Work ethic, self-pride, and leadership are all positive youth development skills and lay a great foundation for the youth participants future actions. Question 14 asks to describe specific ways that adult participants have assisted youth participants outside of the work on greening activities. The overwhelming answers to this question were transportation and job referrals. Offering transportation to the youth participants contributes to positive youth developmental skills by providing a “go to person”, someone they can trust and will help them accomplish goals they set for themselves. Referring youth participants to jobs outside of the greening activities builds youth confidence, broadens their job sector capabilities, and strengthens the intergenerational relationships between youth and elders, thus contributing to positive youth developmental skills.

Secondly, whether youth engaged greening of vacant lots can have a greater effect than professionally greened lots because of community ownership over greening activities research questions 9 and 15 were used. Question 9 asks if any training for youth participants were provided. How to use and maintain equipment along with proper trash pickup were the training provided by the Clean & Green groups to the youth participants. The use and maintenance of equipment by youth participants can have greater effects on greening activities on vacant lots than professionally greened lots by providing the youth with skills they can take into their own lots and neighboring lots adding to the beautification of the community, improving the youth community involvement and adding to their self-worth as a community member through community ownership. Question

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15 asks what suggestions the Clean & Green groups had for other organizations that want to involve youth participants in improving and maintaining vacant lots. The answers given were to find ways to involve more youth, keep the youth motivated, and use incentives. The want and need for the intergenerational relationships and involvement in the community from community elders with the youth contribute to community ownership, thus enabling the youth to have a greater effect on greening activities versus professionally greened lots. Keeping youth participants busy and out of unwanted trouble helps build onto community beautification and ownership. The youth participants find a purpose and skillset when they are kept motivated. The use of incentives helps both the Clean & Green groups as well as the youth by showing that when work is done there is an “award”, whether that be the feeling of community pride and ownership or monetary. This concludes the results section of the applied public health project. In the next section there will be a discussion about the results as well as the link between the objective and research questions.

Discussion

In summary, the Adult Leader Interview designed by the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) and conducted with the Clean & Green groups led to solid qualitative data pertaining to youth engagement in the Flint community. Although only seven Clean & Green groups were interviewed, most had very high youth engagement. The Clean & Green groups interviewed were members of the Flint community who had an established past in maintaining vacant lots, community members from churches, and community youth engaged groups. The church members and community youth engaged groups branched out to include greening activities, through the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA). There were many returning Clean & Green groups from the previous year data collection from the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA), but there were two new groups added that had very high

youth engagement. Despite the wide range of Clean & Green group backgrounds, the majority answered the research questions with the same answers as it pertained to youth engagement. Only one Clean & Green group moved to a different youth engagement ranking, which was Group 5 who went from very high to high youth engagement. This applied public health project not only focused on the Clean & Green groups, but also on youth engagement and youth violence similar to other studies conducted in research.

Comparingly, this applied public health project and *Greening Vacant Lots to Reduce Violent Crime: A Randomized Controlled Trial* both look at the greening activities of vacant lots and the perception of crime. Like the study conducted in *Greening Vacant Lots to Reduce Violent Crime: A Randomized Controlled Trial*, the Clean & Green groups also have to reside in a specific area, that area being Genesee County. Although in the *Greening Vacant Lots to Reduce Violent Crime: A Randomized Controlled Trial* study, the participants were 18-65 years old and were given a baseline in-home survey, both studies include a qualitative interview. The *Greening Vacant Lots to Reduce Violent Crime: A Randomized Controlled Trial* study consisted of 29 baseline interviews and 21 participants over a three month follow-up, while the applied public health project had 7 participants from 7 different Clean & Green groups and was conducted over of a 5 month period with no follow-up. In conclusion, the *Greening Vacant Lots to Reduce Violent Crime: A Randomized Controlled Trial* study found that greening activity interventions can change the perception of the physical environment resulting in a reduction of crime. The same conclusion can be drawn from this applied public health project as it relates to the reduction of youth violence.

This applied public health project can also be compared with the *Community Engagement in Youth Violence Prevention: Crafting Methods to Context* research. *Community Engagement in Youth Violence Prevention: Crafting Methods to Context* focused on youth prevention centers and

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community members in three different locations, with one of the locations being Flint, Michigan. The study focused on the principles of community engagement with community partners and applying the principles to youth violence prevention. The study through the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) partnered with well-known community members that built sustainability, supported strategic planning processes, and were implemented in Flint, Michigan's master plan. The conclusion of this study showed through collaboration there could be capacity improvement, local investment, and promotion of sustainability within the community. The study through the MI-YVPC that this applied public health project covers worked within the Flint, Michigan community, while focusing on Clean & Green groups youth engagement using youth participants on greening activities and the benefit towards decreasing youth violence. The Clean & Green groups involvement in the Adult Leader Interview was granted from the collaboration that the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) has with the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA). The collaboration of these two groups emphasize the dedication there is toward positive youth engagement within the Flint community.

The objective and research questions that were covered in this applied public health project demonstrate that greening activities can lead to an intervention on youth violence. The intervention is conducted through community lead greening activities for youth in Flint, Michigan. Greening activities, as specified in the above literature reviews, can change the perception of one's physical environment and has be proven to reduce youth violence. One's physical environment in this case, being youth engaged in Clean & Green greening activities within the Flint community. The findings during The Adult Leader Interview were that 57.1 % of the Clean & Green groups ranked high (4-9 youth) for their youth engagement. This is compared to 42.9% ranking very high (>10 youth), 0% moderate (1-3 youth), and 0% for no youth. The characteristics were split between

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neighborhood groups (28.6%) and non-profits (28.6%) but were mostly made up of church organizations (42.9%) that made up the Clean & Green groups. The Adult Leader Interview was typically men (71.4%) respondents compared to women (28.6%) respondents. These findings were added to the results section above The Adult Leader Interview qualitative data to give more in-depth perspective of the characteristics that make up the Clean & Green groups.

In response to The Adult Leader Interview most of the participants had the same answers to the questions. Question 1 asking how they got involved with the organization most answers were from community engagement in the neighborhood or through a church. Question 2 asked what their role within the organization was and most were prominent members such as founder, president, or board member. Question 3 asked to describe the work taking place this season, which has responses like cleaning the vacant lots and cutting the grass. Question 4 asked to describe what is going well with the work and question 5 asks if they have encountered any barriers to their work. The overwhelming response to what was going well was the beautification of the neighborhood, the barriers were funds to pay volunteers for encouragement and the illegal dumping that take place on the vacant lots. Question 6 asks how they recruit the youth they work with, many of the Clean & Green groups responded with word of mouth, neighborhood block clubs, and church. Question 7 asks for the age range and total number of youths involved with the Clean & Green group. The age range was between 14-18 years old and the number of total youths ranged from 4-52 individuals. Question 8 asked if the youth volunteered or were paid for their time, most were paid for their time with the Clean & Green groups. Question 9 asked if any training was providing for the youth, most of the training consisted of the use and maintenance of lawncare equipment along with how to properly pick up trash. Question 10 asked if youth were involved om planning any of the work and question 11 asked if the youth lead any parts of the work. The youth did not

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plan much in the season with the Clean & Green groups outside of gardening, but they did lead themselves in work duties once the skills were mastered. Question 12 asks if there are advantages to working with the youth and question 13 asks of the barriers or challenges. The response from the Clean & Green groups was that the advantages are the youth were able to develop work ethic and build pride in leadership, but the disadvantages were the lack of commitment, patience, and dependability from the youth. Question 14 asks of specific ways adult participants assist youth participants outside of the Clean & Green groups. There were many responses to this question such as resume building, clothing, and food, but most of the responses included transportation and job referrals. Question 15 asks for any suggestions the Clean & Green groups may have for other organizations who wish to involve youth in improving and maintaining vacant properties. The Clean & Green participants stated the best way to involve more youth is to keep them motivated and use incentives. In conclusion the applied public health project demonstrates Clean & Green groups interactions with the youth contribute to positive youth development. The applied public health project also illustrates that youth engaged greening of vacant lots can have a greater effect than professionally greened lots because of community ownership over greening activities.

Other studies pointed out in this applied public health project focused on many different community engaged groups or individual community members. During this applied public health project, the Adult Leader Interview was conducted with Clean & Green groups who work directly in their neighborhoods and community with youth from their community. All different types of groups were interviewed, some that strictly did lawn care and maintenance, some were churches, and some were community organizations, but they all signed up as a Clean & Green group with the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA) to include greening activities for their community. This applied public health project was unique in the fact that it leaned more towards

health education but allowed for the application and expansion of healthcare administration skills. Skills like the act of silence and actively listening allowed for responses from Clean & Green groups to The Adult Leader Interview to be recorded. This project allowed for increased strength in interviewing skills, follow-up discussions, and engagement with community members in Flint, Michigan to develop. Engaging with the community and patients is pertinent to a healthcare administrator in order to gain a better understanding of community health needs and priorities. By forming relationships with key community members important public health desires and decisions will be met.

Future research in the area of greening activities with youth participants and youth violence could include more interviews. Conducting more interviews with the Clean & Green groups in a phased process during check pick up scheduled times could increase the amount of responses that can be then characterized and used in research. Allowing youth participants with consent from different Clean & Green groups would allow for another, inside perspective. The interview could be tailored to ask youth about greening activities as well as perception on youth violence in their area or in general for their age group. The implementation of interviews conducted with youth participants would further assist in answering other objectives and give more concrete evidence for the effectiveness that the engagement of youth volunteers may have on the reduction of youth violence.

Implications

The implications of this applied public health project are to change the perception of youth when it pertains to community involvement. Communities can benefit from youth getting involved in greening activities. The benefits include a decrease in neighborhood blight, youth violence, and the intergenerational gap. By including the youth in community greening activities, communities

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may obtain extra low-cost help and energy to combat blight within their neighborhoods. Decreasing neighborhood blight as cited earlier has been shown to increase perception of mental and physical well-being of residents surrounding the greened areas. Decreasing youth violence will not only contribute to increased positivity and well-being for adolescence, it will also contribute to an overall greater public health outcome. Closing the intergenerational gap between established neighborhood residents and the youth will continue to build the overall constructive outlook for communities and public health in general.

Decreasing youth violence using volunteering for greening activities not only has positive overall public health implications, but also positive implications for health professionals such as healthcare administrators. Healthcare administrators are problem solvers, they use studied knowledge, data, and ethical considerations to find solutions based on community needs. If the community suffers from increased youth violence, an intervention method can be put in place to combat youth violence. If the community has a low prevalence of youth violence, a preventative measure would be beneficial. Healthcare administrators who can identify this relevant public health problem can implement strategies, funding, and policies that will increase youth involvement within both rural and urban communities who deal with different levels of youth violence.

This applied public health project demonstrated the want and need for youth involvement in community activities such as greening vacant lots around the city of Flint, Michigan. The participants in this project expressed the benefits not only the youth gain, but also their organization and communities gain by having the extra help and use of new minds on community activities. The conversation revolving around youth activity was very positive and welcoming. The Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) along with the Genesee County Land

Bank Authority (GCLBA) will continue to benefit from the research and exploration of the use of youth volunteers participating in greening activities has on youth violence.

Limitations

The limitations to this research was mostly due to the lack of response during the recruitment of interviews with the Clean & Green groups. There was a total of 30 Clean & Green groups to sign up for the Adult Leader Interview, but out of those 30 groups, only 7 groups were successfully interviewed. The main problem was getting the groups to respond to email and voicemail during recruitment. Out of the 30 groups only one Clean & Green group declined to be interviewed. The interview may have been declined due to the member being from out of town. There were three other groups that seemed interested in an interview, but did not respond with any times they were available to either meet in person or conduct a phone interview. One Clean & Green group that was contacted stated they thought they were signing up for a playground to be built and did not fully understand that they were signing up to be contacted to participant in the Adult Leader Interview. Lastly, an interview was set in place with a Clean & Green group, but this interview was not conducted because of cancelation at the time the interview was scheduled. There was no further communication with the member or organization due to lack of response to calls and voicemails.

Overall, the lack of communication with the Clean & Green groups resulted in low Adult Leader Interviews conducted. This result may have been slightly different if instead of just a signup sheet during phase 1 at check pick up, the signup sheet along with physically being there to reach out to the groups took place. Although during phase 2 of recruitment being physically there to recruit Clean & Green groups for The Adult Leader Interview took place, this event also resulted in a low output of recruitment for interviews. During phase 2 of recruitment members from

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different Clean & Green groups acknowledged that they received a call or voicemail for recruitment, but the lack of follow through was still present. This may have been due to the amount of workload these groups have with clearing and maintaining parcels for the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCBLA).

In the end, a suggestion for better communication and follow through resulting in more Adult Leader Interviews would be more community lead engagement opportunities. Community engagement can be in the form of working more closely with the GCLBA during the check pickups or any occasion where the Clean & Green groups would be present. Another form of community engagement would be physical outreach to the groups themselves. Many are from churches and neighborhood block clubs, attending meetings to get to know the people and their cause may yield better communication.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the limitations to this applied public health project reduced the amount of the Adult Leader Interviews obtained from the Clean & Green groups, but the input that was collected from completed interviews contributes to the implications of the project. The seven interviews that were collected contain valuable information about the pros and cons to using youth volunteers on greening activities. Randomized controlled trials of vacant lot greening are now needed to provide the best evidence to urban planners and city officials interested in greening as a strategy to prevent violence (Garvin, Cannuscio, & Branas, 2013). These randomized controlled vacant lots as being demonstrated by the Genesee County Land Bank Authority (GCLBA) and the Clean & Green program are keeping youth in the Flint community busy, thus decreasing youth violence and increasing overall community health. The evidence from this applied public health

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project along with past and upcoming research, can help support low-cost, sustainable, and reproducible public health interventions on youth violence.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center Brochure

Partners

University of Michigan
School of Public Health
School of Medicine
School of Nursing

University of Pennsylvania
Penn Injury Center
Urban Health Lab
Cartographic Modeling Lab

Rutgers University
School of Public Health
School of Criminal Justice

Flint, Michigan
Genesee County Land Bank (Lead Organization)
Genesee County Health Department
Flint Police Department
Hurley Medical Center

Youngstown, Ohio
Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corp.
(Lead Organization)
Mahoning County District Board of Health
Youngstown Police Department
St. Elizabeth Medical Center
Mahoning County Land Bank

Camden, New Jersey
Coopers Ferry Partnership (Lead Organization)
City of Camden
Camden County Department of Health and Human Services
Camden County Police Department
Camden Special Services District
Cooper University Hospital
New Jersey Tree Foundation

U. S. Forest Service

Center for Community Progress

National Association of County and City Health Officers

"If we take care of abandoned, empty lots in our cities, clean them up and create space for positive social interaction, we can help create safer streets."

—Marc Zimmerman, MI-YVPC Director

MI-YVPC Project Sites



Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center
1415 Washington Heights
Ann Arbor, MI 48109
<http://yvpc.sph.umich.edu>




MI-YVPC
Community Engagement and Revitalization
<http://yvpc.sph.umich.edu>



What We Do

The Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) is studying the effects of improving vacant properties on violence, property crimes and intentional injuries in three U.S. cities: Flint, Michigan, Youngstown, Ohio and Camden, New Jersey.

The Center works with community organizations that are engaging residents in caring for properties in their neighborhoods by mowing, planting gardens, or other greening activities.

Our multi-phase, 5-year study will explore the effects of community-engaged greening strategies on violence and identify best practices for implementing these strategies in other communities nationwide.

The Center is a collaboration among University of Michigan, University of Pennsylvania, Rutgers University, economic development, land use, law enforcement, public health and community organizations.

MI-YVPC is funded by a grant from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U01CE002698).

Our Strategy

Our work builds upon previous research that indicates that caring for vacant properties can have beneficial effects on the health and safety of residents.

We are testing a novel approach that brings together three promising approaches to violence prevention:

- **Empowering** youth and adults to create change in their communities and improve their physical and social environments
- **Greening** activities, such as mowing and planting gardens, to revitalize neighborhoods and reduce crime and violence.
- **Creating Busy Streets** to provide safe spaces for residents to connect and communities to thrive

We will use the results of our study and lessons learned from a nationwide survey to develop a comprehensive guide for communities interested in developing greening programs to prevent violence and create safe and vibrant neighborhoods.



Our Communities

Our partner communities have established programs that engage youth and adult residents to care for and repurpose vacant lots.

Flint, Michigan

In Flint, the Genesee County Land Bank Clean and Green program supports innovative community groups and organizations in cleaning, maintaining and beautifying vacant properties. Clean and Green currently involves more than 50 community organizations and over 200 youth. The program maintains over 3,400 vacant properties.

Youngstown, Ohio

In Youngstown, the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC) has repurposed nearly 300 vacant lots for gardens, side lots, native plantings, and green space through both targeted land reuse programs and citywide competitions.

Camden, New Jersey

In Camden, the Cooper's Ferry Partnership brings together public and private organizations to effect sustainable economic revitalization. The CFP supports a vacant-lot greening and maintenance initiative.

Contact Us

Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center
UM School of Public Health
1415 Washington Heights
Ann Arbor, MI 48176
(734) 647-0219

michiganyvpc@umich.edu
Visit us on the web: yvpc.sph.umich.edu

Appendix 2: Clean & Green 2018 Season Schedule

2018 Season Schedule



- **February 23:** Submit completed application
- **April 11 or 12:** Attend Season Kick-Off
- **April 27:** Stipend #1 Advance
Turn-in Liability Release Forms and Signed MOU
- **May 18:** Complete Round of Service #1
Turn-in Report #1
Receive Check #1
- **June 8:** Complete Round of Service #2
Turn-in Report #2
Receive Check #2
- **June 29:** Complete Round of Service #3
Turn-in Report #3
Receive Check #3
- **July 20:** Complete Round of Service #4
Turn-in Report #4
Receive Check #4
- **August 10:** Complete Round of Service #5
Turn-in Report #5
Receive Check #5
- **August 31:** Complete Round of Service #6
Turn-in Report #6
Receive Check #6
- **September 21:** Complete Round of Service #7
Turn-in Report #7
Receive Check #7
- **Fall 2018:** Attend End of Season Celebration!

Appendix 3: Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center Informational Half-Sheet for Clean & Green Groups and Adult Leader Interview Sign-up Sheet

Youth Violence Prevention Center
Adult Leader Interview

The purpose of the interview is to learn more about the work each organization has done with enlisting the youth's help with the Clean & Green program. Your participation in the interview may help other organizations that would like to involve youth in revitalizing neighborhoods

Each interview is approximately 15-20 minutes.

Questions or Concerns:

Danielle Moore 810-471-8129 (cell) Dblasdel@umflint.edu (email)



Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center

Appendix 4: Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center Adult Leader Interview

Youth Violence Prevention Center

Adult Leader Interview

Date of interview _____

Name of community organization _____

I'm [name] from the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about the work that your organization has done with the ___Clean & Green___ program, and how you have involved youth in caring for vacant properties. The interview should take about thirty minutes. We will not identify you by name in any publication or report that results from this study, but questions may be used in the Land Bank's final report. If any of the questions do not apply to your organization, or you would prefer not to answer, just let me know and we will skip to the next question. Your participation in the interview may help other organizations that would like to involve youth in revitalizing neighborhoods.

1. Can you tell me how long you've worked with _____ community organization and how you got involved?
2. What is your role in the organization? Officer? Volunteer? Other?
3. Could you describe the work you are doing this season with the _____ program?
4. What do you think is going well with your work so far and why?
5. Have you encountered any barriers to your work, and if so, how have you tried to overcome them?
6. How did you recruit the youth who are working with you?
7. What is the age range of the youth? About how many youth were involved in total?
8. Were the youth participants paid or volunteer?
9. Did you provide any training for the youth who are working with you? If so, could you please describe it?
10. Were the youth involved in planning the work you are doing this season? If so, how were they involved in planning?
11. Did any of the youth lead parts of the work? If so, could you describe what they did?
12. What are the advantages of involving youth in your work?
13. What are the barriers or challenges of working with youth on this kind of project?
14. Could you describe any specific ways that adult participants have assisted the youth participants outside of your work on the vacant lots. Some examples might be providing information about jobs, education, or community resources. Another example might be providing transportation or help with items that the youth need.
15. What suggestions do you have for other organizations that would like to involve youth in improving and maintaining vacant properties?

Use of Youth Volunteers Participating in Greening Activities on Youth Violence

Appendix 5: Clean & Green Groups Adult Leader Interviews

Youth Violence Prevention Center

Adult Leader Interview

Date of interview 6-29-18Name of community organization Group 1

I'm [name] from the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about the work that your organization has done with the Clean & Green program, and how you have involved youth in caring for vacant properties. The interview should take about thirty minutes. We will not identify you by name in any publication or report that results from this study, but questions may be used in the Land Bank's final report. If any of the questions do not apply to your organization, or you would prefer not to answer, just let me know and we will skip to the next question. Your participation in the interview may help other organizations that would like to involve youth in revitalizing neighborhoods

1. Can you tell me how long you've worked with Group 1 community organization and how you got involved? **This is the 5th year. I went to a meeting after I seen flyers.**
2. What is your role in the organization? Officer? Volunteer? Other? **I first was the Vice President, now I am the President.**
3. Could you describe the work you are doing this season with the Clean & Green program? **We maintain 60 properties, 30 each time for a cut and 30 at discretion to cut.**
4. What do you think is going well with your work so far and why? **We have been mowing for 4 years and everyone knows we are doing it.**
5. Have you encountered any barriers to your work, and if so, how have you tried to overcome them? **We have an organized person who cuts majority of the lawns. This person stepped out without notice. He said he'd do it, but has not. I contacted the landbank and found help from other Clean & Green program people to utilize until help can be found.**
6. How did you recruit the youth who are working with you? **Word of mouth through adult center and block club.**
7. What is the age range of the youth? About how many youth were involved in total? **About 10 youth at different times ranging for 8-17 in age.**
8. Were the youth participants paid or volunteer? **Both paid and volunteers. If they cut the grass they are paid, street clean up every month is volunteer.**
9. Did you provide any training for the youth who are working with you? If so, could you please describe it? **Yes, hoe to use equipment. The older kids use motorized (14 and older), younger kids pick up yard and rake if needed.**

Use of Youth Volunteers Participating in Greening Activities on Youth Violence

10. Were the youth involved in planning the work you are doing this season? If so, how were they involved in planning? **Not this season, but in previous years we ask them what they'd like to see in a neighborhood.**
11. Did any of the youth lead parts of the work? If so, could you describe what they did? **They lead trash pick up, we tell them what we need and they pick it up.**
12. What are the advantages of involving youth in your work? **They live in the neighborhood, they put the sweat equity in and less likely to mess up. They also spread the word to friends. They build skill they previously didn't have, and it helps to narrow the intergenerational gap. Many adults are less afraid to work with the youth and the youth know they can approach adults that may be pertinent to their life.**
13. What are the barriers or challenges of working with youth on this kind of project? **Commitment in varying levels. They don't all show up at the same time and do not see building of skills as having value.**
14. Could you describe any specific ways that adult participants have assisted the youth participants outside of your work on the vacant lots. Some examples might be providing information about jobs, education, or community resources. Another example might be providing transportation or help with items that the youth need. **Written referral letters, offering to go to court, taught skills in building computers, and offered classes in aquaponics.**
15. What suggestions do you have for other organizations that would like to involve youth in improving and maintaining vacant properties? **Use the youth, they can teach adults as much as we can teach them. We can support each other. We need to do more partnering as Clean & Green program because there is no connection other than orientation end of the year. organizations could share their experiences.**

Use of Youth Volunteers Participating in Greening Activities on Youth Violence

Youth Violence Prevention Center

Adult Leader Interview

Date of interview 7-18-18Name of community organization Group 2

I'm [name] from the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about the work that your organization has done with the Clean & Green program, and how you have involved youth in caring for vacant properties. The interview should take about thirty minutes. We will not identify you by name in any publication or report that results from this study, but questions may be used in the Land Bank's final report. If any of the questions do not apply to your organization, or you would prefer not to answer, just let me know and we will skip to the next question. Your participation in the interview may help other organizations that would like to involve youth in revitalizing neighborhoods

1. Can you tell me how long you've worked with Group 2 community organization and how you got involved? **7 years in the program. Got involved through Genesee County alliance pastoral organization.**
2. What is your role in the organization? Officer? Volunteer? Other? **Chairman for projects at the church and secretary for pastor's alliance.**
3. Could you describe the work you are doing this season with the Clean & Green program? **Selected as a pilot program with 115 parcels to maintain. 2 adults, 7 new high school students that are maintaining the project. Gardening and youth involvement cleaning more areas, we have cleared 350. We make intergenerational connects so adults feel safe when children are around, this involves garbage pickup and water use.**
4. What do you think is going well with your work so far and why? **Commitment, working with the Flint Chamber Teen Quest youth are designated to do outside work, learn landscaping, gardening, and tools (if old enough). The youth have pride with clean up.**
5. Have you encountered any barriers to your work, and if so, how have you tried to overcome them? **Keeping the equipment up because of constant repairs and maintenance of lots. Problems with dumping, a lot will get cleaned up and then a house will get emptied out. The city will come and remove debris. There have been problems with youth and adult altercations leading to gunfire. The use of a liaison officer through land bank to survey the area while working has helped.**
6. How did you recruit the youth who are working with you? **Flint Chamber Teen Quest, relatives, neighborhood, and church through members.**
7. What is the age range of the youth? About how many youth were involved in total? **Ages 14 ½-19. 8 every year, 2017 we had 12.**

Use of Youth Volunteers Participating in Greening Activities on Youth Violence

8. Were the youth participants paid or volunteer? **Paid youth, school program job fair selected first or second semester. They go through a 10 week training, write resumes, and interview. Youth either work outdoors only or have other jobs.**
9. Did you provide any training for the youth who are working with you? If so, could you please describe it? **On the job training. They do a biweekly schedule for 8 weeks.**
10. Were the youth involved in planning the work you are doing this season? If so, how were they involved in planning? **No, they come in June after school.**
11. Did any of the youth lead parts of the work? If so, could you describe what they did? **Pick designs for lots, crew leaders (1 youth man and 1 youth woman), and then there is a person responsible for pictures, recording what is done for the week, and list of supplies needed.**
12. What are the advantages of involving youth in your work? **First job for most of the youth so the develop work ethic. Use hands, ears, and eyes to do tasks this allows them to be responsible for the part. Benefits in learning and building pride in work.**
13. What are the barriers or challenges of working with youth on this kind of project? **Wearing uniforms, they have to wear uniforms for public and learning identification.**
14. Could you describe any specific ways that adult participants have assisted the youth participants outside of your work on the vacant lots. Some examples might be providing information about jobs, education, or community resources. Another example might be providing transportation or help with items that the youth need. **Providing transportation to youth's home and being a reference for army, navy, and jobs.**
15. What suggestions do you have for other organizations that would like to involve youth in improving and maintaining vacant properties? **It is important to have equipment like extra blower, rakes, and weed whackers. Keep them busy and let them have some say. Clean ups are a good way to meet with the community. There are benefits to using the school program to provide funds and it is a good sign when you can get the kids to come back if they have not aged out.**

Use of Youth Volunteers Participating in Greening Activities on Youth Violence

Youth Violence Prevention Center

Adult Leader Interview

Date of interview 7-19-18Name of community organization Group 3

I'm [name] from the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about the work that your organization has done with the Clean & Green program, and how you have involved youth in caring for vacant properties. The interview should take about thirty minutes. We will not identify you by name in any publication or report that results from this study, but questions may be used in the Land Bank's final report. If any of the questions do not apply to your organization, or you would prefer not to answer, just let me know and we will skip to the next question. Your participation in the interview may help other organizations that would like to involve youth in revitalizing neighborhoods

1. Can you tell me how long you've worked with Group 3 community organization and how you got involved? **9 years, since the start of the program. Got involved going to church.**
2. What is your role in the organization? Officer? Volunteer? Other? **Treasurer, sit on the board and run construction program.**
3. Could you describe the work you are doing this season with the Clean & Green program? **Maintaining 100 lots. Clean up, grass cut, trim, board up houses, and create simulated doors and windows.**
4. What do you think is going well with your work so far and why? **Engaging 20 young men Monday through Friday. They have joined church and engaged in spiritual relationship. 300 properties weekly cut and Clean & Green every 3 weeks, sometimes more frequently.**
5. Have you encountered any barriers to your work, and if so, how have you tried to overcome them? **Not enough funds to pay youth or volunteers to engage more youth. Overcame this by finding more funds, paying next season, or putting them in construction program.**
6. How did you recruit the youth who are working with you? **Engage people in community, recruiting from word of mouth or friends, and referrals.**
7. What is the age range of the youth? About how many youth were involved in total? **14-26 years old, started with 12 and almost 50 people have went through the program.**
8. Were the youth participants paid or volunteer? **Paid**
9. Did you provide any training for the youth who are working with you? If so, could you please describe it? **clean & Green full time landscaping supervisor trains.**

Use of Youth Volunteers Participating in Greening Activities on Youth Violence

10. Were the youth involved in planning the work you are doing this season? If so, how were they involved in planning? **Yes, panel of 4. Youth asked where would you like to see the community. You teach them that they are not doing this for me, they are doing this with me.**
11. Did any of the youth lead parts of the work? If so, could you describe what they did? **Yes, they got a supervisor position that gives pride when they know they are leading.**
12. What are the advantages of involving youth in your work? **One day they will be responsible, leading the city. They learn how to treat people, share community building, and train them to change the future.**
13. What are the barriers or challenges of working with youth on this kind of project? **No work ethic, they don't see dad coming home, come from single mothers, live on their own, or have been locked up. Working on soft skills like learning how to wake up on time. Transportation and also barriers, you have to show love and grace.**
14. Could you describe any specific ways that adult participants have assisted the youth participants outside of your work on the vacant lots. Some examples might be providing information about jobs, education, or community resources. Another example might be providing transportation or help with items that the youth need. **resume building, job referral, transportation in partnership with community foundation, and act as consoler.**
15. What suggestions do you have for other organizations that would like to involve youth in improving and maintaining vacant properties? **Give them a chance. Because of barriers we give up, they expect us to. We don't give up, think outside the box and reward when it pays off. Push them, don't give up, encourage them.**

Use of Youth Volunteers Participating in Greening Activities on Youth Violence

Youth Violence Prevention Center

Adult Leader Interview

Date of interview _____ 7-20-18 _____

Name of community organization __ Group 4 _____

I'm [name] from the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about the work that your organization has done with the _Clean & Green___ program, and how you have involved youth in caring for vacant properties. The interview should take about thirty minutes. We will not identify you by name in any publication or report that results from this study, but questions may be used in the Land Bank's final report. If any of the questions do not apply to your organization, or you would prefer not to answer, just let me know and we will skip to the next question. Your participation in the interview may help other organizations that would like to involve youth in revitalizing neighborhoods

1. Can you tell me how long you've worked with __ Group 4__ community organization and how you got involved? **Since 1995 through community work.**
2. What is your role in the organization? Officer? Volunteer? Other? **Executive Director**
3. Could you describe the work you are doing this season with the _Clean & Green___ program? **Maintaining vacant properties.**
4. What do you think is going well with your work so far and why? **Maintaining lots for safety and cut down on eye sores.**
5. Have you encountered any barriers to your work, and if so, how have you tried to overcome them? **Nonstructural blight and big trees with no man power to remove them. We reach out to the land bank to remove them.**
6. How did you recruit the youth who are working with you? **Mott summer youth program, residents, and Baker College youth organization.**
7. What is the age range of the youth? About how many youth were involved in total? **4 to 5 youth 16 years old and up. Youth younger than 16 pick up paper and sticks and prepare the lawns to be mowed.**
8. Were the youth participants paid or volunteer? **Paid**
9. Did you provide any training for the youth who are working with you? If so, could you please describe it? **yes, we show them how to walk the lot before mowing, how to oil and gas the mower, mow in a straight line, and use different equipment.**
10. Were the youth involved in planning the work you are doing this season? If so, how were they involved in planning? **No**

Use of Youth Volunteers Participating in Greening Activities on Youth Violence

11. Did any of the youth lead parts of the work? If so, could you describe what they did? **Yes, they lead all work once shown how to.**
12. What are the advantages of involving youth in your work? **Pride and ownership.**
13. What are the barriers or challenges of working with youth on this kind of project? **Dependability.**
14. Could you describe any specific ways that adult participants have assisted the youth participants outside of your work on the vacant lots. Some examples might be providing information about jobs, education, or community resources. Another example might be providing transportation or help with items that the youth need. **none**
15. What suggestions do you have for other organizations that would like to involve youth in improving and maintaining vacant properties? **Find youth that live in the neighborhood so they can keep up the work.**

Use of Youth Volunteers Participating in Greening Activities on Youth Violence

Youth Violence Prevention Center

Adult Leader Interview

Date of interview 7-23-18Name of community organization Group 5

I'm [name] from the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about the work that your organization has done with the ___Clean & Green___ program, and how you have involved youth in caring for vacant properties. The interview should take about thirty minutes. We will not identify you by name in any publication or report that results from this study, but questions may be used in the Land Bank's final report. If any of the questions do not apply to your organization, or you would prefer not to answer, just let me know and we will skip to the next question. Your participation in the interview may help other organizations that would like to involve youth in revitalizing neighborhoods

1. Can you tell me how long you've worked with Group 5 community organization and how you got involved? **18 years, I founded the organization.**
2. What is your role in the organization? Officer? Volunteer? Other? **President and Founder**
3. Could you describe the work you are doing this season with the ___Clean & Green___ program? **Keep kids off the streets, instilling work ethic, understanding job necessity, and a feel of work.**
4. What do you think is going well with your work so far and why? **They understand the process of work and a good days work. They get pride with work and an honest days pay instead of evil.**
5. Have you encountered any barriers to your work, and if so, how have you tried to overcome them? **No, we started working with land bank in May, we supply those who are left work.**
6. How did you recruit the youth who are working with you? **Different schools like Northwestern, Southwestern, Hamady, and Bendle. Elementary students flower gardens, they are from different schools.**
7. What is the age range of the youth? About how many youth were involved in total? **7th to 12th grade we have 15 kids that switch out every couple of weeks. Elementary age there are 12-17 kids.**
8. Were the youth participants paid or volunteer? **Some paid and some volunteer. They are allowed to volunteer on paid days also and volunteers don't have to put in full time.**
9. Did you provide any training for the youth who are working with you? If so, could you please describe it? **Train on cutting the grass, handling the lawn mower, weed whacker, blower. We show them how to use safety glasses and gloves during safety classes.**

Use of Youth Volunteers Participating in Greening Activities on Youth Violence

10. Were the youth involved in planning the work you are doing this season? If so, how were they involved in planning? **They are involved in gardening, they go to the land bank properties and pick what they want plant at around 70-80 properties.**
11. Did any of the youth lead parts of the work? If so, could you describe what they did? **No, different fathers lead so that everyone understands how to be lead under authority. Business is ran by business and with standards.**
12. What are the advantages of involving youth in your work? **Teach them work ethic, leadership, and pride.**
13. What are the barriers or challenges of working with youth on this kind of project? **Some youth get discouraged because we start early, no work after 12 or 1 because its hot. Getting them up at 6 and be done by 10 can be a challenge.**
14. Could you describe any specific ways that adult participants have assisted the youth participants outside of your work on the vacant lots. Some examples might be providing information about jobs, education, or community resources. Another example might be providing transportation or help with items that the youth need. **Get the boys involved in learning about themselves. Start with their attitude, preparation, and make them prepared for a day with a good attitude and understanding for self-control.**
15. What suggestions do you have for other organizations that would like to involve youth in improving and maintaining vacant properties? **Get more kids and more dads involved. Have standards and guidelines to use with the youth and also give incentives when they deserve it.**

Use of Youth Volunteers Participating in Greening Activities on Youth Violence

Youth Violence Prevention Center

Adult Leader Interview

Date of interview 8-2-18Name of community organization Group 6

I'm [name] from the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about the work that your organization has done with the Clean & Green program, and how you have involved youth in caring for vacant properties. The interview should take about thirty minutes. We will not identify you by name in any publication or report that results from this study, but questions may be used in the Land Bank's final report. If any of the questions do not apply to your organization, or you would prefer not to answer, just let me know and we will skip to the next question. Your participation in the interview may help other organizations that would like to involve youth in revitalizing neighborhoods

1. Can you tell me how long you've worked with Group 6 community organization and how you got involved? **11 years, talked with the pastor to work with the land bank in order to get the neighborhood cleaned up.**
2. What is your role in the organization? Officer? Volunteer? Other? **Ordained elder and volunteer**
3. Could you describe the work you are doing this season with the Clean & Green program? **Cleaning lots such as picking up litter and keeping the front of blighted homes clean to prevent dumping. Weed whack and maintain lawns 7 times a year and maintain the community garden in the back of the church.**
4. What do you think is going well with your work so far and why? **The neighborhood is more appealing, safer, and creates a better atmosphere for the whole section. Working together to make the whole community better.**
5. Have you encountered any barriers to your work, and if so, how have you tried to overcome them? **Greatest barrier is illegal dumping. We put up signs to let them know we are watching and contact Loretta Speed to report it. The plastic bottles are also a problem since the water crisis, and there is no incentive for people to pick them up because of no deposit.**
6. How did you recruit the youth who are working with you? **We recruit through the church, word of mouth through friends, high schools and colleges.**
7. What is the age range of the youth? About how many youth were involved in total? **Ages 13-17 and about 6 total youth.**
8. Were the youth participants paid or volunteer? **Paid summer work.**

Use of Youth Volunteers Participating in Greening Activities on Youth Violence

9. Did you provide any training for the youth who are working with you? If so, could you please describe it? **Yes, on hand training with lawn mowers and gardening. We watch them and teach them how to get better.**
10. Were the youth involved in planning the work you are doing this season? If so, how were they involved in planning? **The youth can make suggestions on areas once they work the yards and garden. Monday's are for going over projects for the week that they can work into their schedules.**
11. Did any of the youth lead parts of the work? If so, could you describe what they did? **No, they lead themselves by handling their own stations, but not each other.**
12. What are the advantages of involving youth in your work? **They feel like they are giving back by making a change and getting paid for it. It helps the youth by being constructive, getting them to come on time, and being able to see their own work.**
13. What are the barriers or challenges of working with youth on this kind of project? **Patience, you have to have it because some don't want to be there.**
14. Could you describe any specific ways that adult participants have assisted the youth participants outside of your work on the vacant lots. Some examples might be providing information about jobs, education, or community resources. Another example might be providing transportation or help with items that the youth need. **We try to help with all needs such as clothing and food. We provide breakfast every morning, help them find what they are interested in, set up workshops, create bank accounts, and teach them how to save and manage money. We also work with 10 different church's and co-op's with other organizations to get youth involved with projects.**
15. What suggestions do you have for other organizations that would like to involve youth in improving and maintaining vacant properties? **Make sure that you take the time to get to know them, work with them, make them feel a part of it. Don't use them as day laborers, let them know that you care for them and teach them that the work they're doing helps the community. Enjoy one another and teach them that they are a part of life. Show them you care about them and they are learning life skills.**

Use of Youth Volunteers Participating in Greening Activities on Youth Violence

Youth Violence Prevention Center

Adult Leader Interview

Date of interview 11-12-18Name of community organization Group 7

I'm [name] from the Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about the work that your organization has done with the Clean & Green program, and how you have involved youth in caring for vacant properties. The interview should take about thirty minutes. We will not identify you by name in any publication or report that results from this study, but questions may be used in the Land Bank's final report. If any of the questions do not apply to your organization, or you would prefer not to answer, just let me know and we will skip to the next question. Your participation in the interview may help other organizations that would like to involve youth in revitalizing neighborhoods

1. Can you tell me how long you've worked with Group 7 community organization and how you got involved? **It was my brother's business, I used to help with paperwork. He passed away, so this is my first year running the club.**
2. What is your role in the organization? Officer? Volunteer? Other? **I consider myself an CEO, Officer, Overseer. The business is in my name, but I am new to it so I am getting coached by other members.**
3. Could you describe the work you are doing this season with the Clean & Green program? **We clean up and cut grass for 45 overgrown lots.**
4. What do you think is going well with your work so far and why? **There are a lot of vacant lots and houses. Now that they are mowed they are better looking, you can see things are not have to worry about things being in the tall grass.**
5. Have you encountered any barriers to your work, and if so, how have you tried to overcome them? **On one lot someone dumped stuff on, we could not get a dumpster in time. People dumping is a barrier, it holds you back from working. It's like they do not care.**
6. How did you recruit the youth who are working with you? **We recruit through family, word of mouth, and neighborhood kids. We have kids talk to their friends and people they know. We tell them it will add to their portfolios.**
7. What is the age range of the youth? About how many youth were involved in total? **We had 4 youth involved ranging from 12-18.**
8. Were the youth participants paid or volunteer? **Volunteer, they were family or neighborhood kids.**

Use of Youth Volunteers Participating in Greening Activities on Youth Violence

9. Did you provide any training for the youth who are working with you? If so, could you please describe it? **We showed them how to use a weedwhacker, push mowers, rakes, and how to pick up trash. They did not use the riding lawnmowers.**
10. Were the youth involved in planning the work you are doing this season? If so, how were they involved in planning? **No, not this season, but next season.**
11. Did any of the youth lead parts of the work? If so, could you describe what they did? **No**
12. What are the advantages of involving youth in your work? **They have youth, more stamina, more ideas, open minded, and think outside the box to get things done.**
13. What are the barriers or challenges of working with youth on this kind of project? **Keeping them motivated, they get frustrated easily, and keeping positive thinking going for them. It takes work, it does not happen overnight. You have to make a game out of it like treat them with McDonald's or pizza reward.**
14. Could you describe any specific ways that adult participants have assisted the youth participants outside of your work on the vacant lots. Some examples might be providing information about jobs, education, or community resources. Another example might be providing transportation or help with items that the youth need. **One guy knows a lot of people, he talks to the youth and lets them know who is hiring and gives them ideas for jobs.**
15. What suggestions do you have for other organizations that would like to involve youth in improving and maintaining vacant properties? **Keep them motivated, they tune you out, so you have to make it appealing and use fun ways to get involved. Include their input, games, and rewards.**