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Community Solutions

# BEAUTIFICATION TODAY, SAFER TOMORROW

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**HOW TO CREATE SAFE AND CARING COMMUNITIES**  
A project book for your neighbourhood

At Crime Prevention Ottawa, we believe that 'people power' can help prevent crime and keep our communities safe. When neighbours work with neighbours, great things happen.

This booklet is for residents, community groups and businesses who want to make a difference in our communities. It features eight community-based projects from Ottawa and beyond. Some are designed to create safer spaces and welcoming environments. Others strive to bring people together to work toward a common goal. In each case, neighbourhoods become safer and stronger thanks to communities that care.

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Crime Prevention Ottawa extends our sincere appreciation to:

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**Local Area Planning – Where Community, Neighbourhood Safety, Beautification and Action Meet:** Shannon Hanson

**From Trashed to Treasured – Park Redevelopment:** Jo-anne Caldwell

**Community Gardens – Reaping Connectedness and Safer Communities:** Sue Bramley, Terri O'Neill and Rosemary Tayler

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**Safety Through Community Pride:** Gail Mcquire and Dan Wright

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## The ABCDs of building stronger neighbourhoods (or Asset-Based Community Development)

The most successful community development projects are focused on the neighbourhood, based on its strengths and they're driven by the community.

*Neighbor Power* author, Jim Diers, believes that stronger neighbourhoods are built through projects that use a community's assets—namely, people and their passion for the place they call home. Here are his top 7 tips for engaging your community:

1. **Have fun.** To engage your community, make it fun for everyone. Avoid meetings. Plan your projects—and make them happen—in a way that feeds everyone's passion for building a better neighbourhood.
2. **Start where people are.** Go to where they live, on their street, and be sensitive to language and culture. Start with their networks, instead of trying to bring them into yours. Reach out to associations and groups.
3. **Focus on people's passions.** Ask your neighbours, "What's your hope for the community? What are you passionate about?" Don't try to convince them to care about things that are important to you.
4. **Let them see results.** To keep your community engaged, show them the impact they're having and the change they're creating. They will come to understand that through collective action, they can make a difference.
5. **Do not sit on your assets.** Focus on every individual's strengths and gifts: their head, heart and hands. Recognize that while everyone has needs, they also have incredible gifts. Lead them by stepping back and letting them take on small roles. They will eventually grow into bigger roles to lead the community.
6. **Recognize and celebrate.** Give recognition to those who make a difference. Lift them up so others can see what's possible.
7. **Share stories.** Inspire your community through other people's stories. What motivates communities are stories about people like them who have created positive change through their efforts.



# Project 1: Local Area Planning – Where Community, Neighbourhood Safety, Beautification and Action Meet (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan)

## THE IDEA

The City of Saskatoon wanted to get residents, business owners and others actively involved in shaping their neighbourhoods and creating safer spaces.

## WHAT THEY DID

They established a local area planning (LAP) process. LAP gives residents an active role in determining their neighbourhood's future. Residents, business owners, property owners, community groups and others partner with the City to develop goals and strategies for their community's long-term success. The issues can change by neighbourhood, but typically include land use, traffic, heritage, vacant land, parks and recreation and municipal services. All Local Area Plans have identified neighbourhood safety as a concern and have included it as part of the LAP process. Volunteers:

- conduct risk assessments, safety audits and surveys.
- develop strategies for addressing safety issues within their communities.
- apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to create safer spaces.

## THE RESULTS

This community-driven process gives residents and local partners active roles in creating stronger communities and improving neighbourhood safety. They created local plans to gauge both real and perceived safety concerns, and to develop recommendations for action, including improved safety measures, signage, mural artwork and community clean-ups.

## HOW YOU CAN DO IT TOO

- Plan a meeting in your neighbourhood to form your local area planning committee.
- Discuss and prepare a vision for what you want your community to be. Remember to fit your vision within your city's policies and programs.
- Talk about the condition of your neighbourhood. What problem areas do you want to address? What can you do better?
- Identify the main issues and agree on them.
- Set goals for your community and outline strategies for achieving them.
- Using this information, write your local area plan.
- Adopt the local area plan and implement the strategies in it.
- Monitor your progress and evaluate your approach. Update the local area plan as you achieve milestones.

[www.saskatoon.ca](http://www.saskatoon.ca)



## Project 2: From Trashed to Treasured – Park Redevelopment (Renfrew, Ontario)

### THE IDEA

The Town of Renfrew took a close look at some serious problems—garbage dumping, drug and alcohol use, and loitering in public parks—and decided to build a community team to develop solutions.

### WHAT THEY DID

- **Skate park:** They turned part of a large park into an ‘all wheels park’ for young people, who no longer skateboard or ride bikes on steps, ramps and rails at churches and businesses. They treat the park as their own, keep it clean and welcome everyone.
- **Community garden:** They converted a community park into a vegetable garden to reduce the number of people taking part in illegal activities, such as selling and buying drugs. The garden now serves as a learning corner for children and a source of nourishment for the community.
- **Positive spaces:** They opened an off-leash dog park and they’re planning to add flower and herb gardens in more spaces around town.

### THE RESULTS

Renfrew’s success is built on small groups of people who took ownership over ‘mean spaces’ and turned them into ‘pristine places.’ The Town listened to community-minded people and came up with a plan. The impact has been phenomenal and the changes are noticeable. Residents take pride in their neighbourhoods. Parks are now destinations for good things and there are long-term plans to keep developing positive spaces.

### HOW YOU CAN DO IT TOO

- Seek locals interested in turning areas into positive places for the community.
- Contact your local Councillor and City officials to partner with them and get advice.
- Brainstorm ideas and listen to everyone’s suggestions.
- Form a planning group for each project.
- Choose the best sites for improvement.
- Prioritize the projects based on volunteers and long-term gain.
- Plan and develop each project.
- Develop a long-term strategy for addressing other problem areas in your community.

[www.town.renfrew.on.ca](http://www.town.renfrew.on.ca)



## Project 3: Community Gardens – Reaping Connectedness and Safer Communities (Ottawa, Ontario)

### THE IDEA

Create stronger community connections to prevent crime and increase people’s feelings of safety.

### WHAT THEY DID

The Community Gardening Network of Ottawa (Just Food), the City and local residents have been working together since 2004 to build an action plan and community gardens. Each community plans and leads their own garden project. Locals grow produce, edible berries and food perennials—giving them access to healthy, affordable food.

### THE RESULTS

There are 35 gardens in Ottawa, all located on property owned by school boards, churches, universities, Ottawa Community Housing, Community Health Resource Centres and the City. More community garden projects are underway. Each brings diverse members of the neighbourhood together to gather, connect and work toward a common goal.

### HOW YOU CAN DO IT TOO

If you want to build your own community garden in Ottawa, here’s how it works:

- Contact the Community Gardening Network of Ottawa (CGN).
- If you want to establish a community garden on City land, the CGN will connect you with the City’s Community Garden Liaison to plan and implement your project.
- The Liaison will:
  - engage other City services that may be needed to implement the plan, including Parks and Recreation, Realty Services, Public Works and others.
  - help get access for your garden space on City land.
  - coordinate soil testing for your new garden.
- The City provides funding for new gardens and to enhance existing gardens. Funds are administered in collaboration with the Community Gardening Network.

[www.justfood.ca/community-gardening-network](http://www.justfood.ca/community-gardening-network)



## Project 4: Community Engagement Projects (Mississauga, Ontario)

### THE IDEA

Get the community involved in combatting graffiti, vandalism and undesirable behaviours.

### WHAT THEY DID

To create a sense of community pride, the City of Mississauga installed murals to help deter graffiti and criminal activity. They engaged local youth in the project, giving them a chance to volunteer and get practical experience outside of the classroom.

### THE RESULTS

Mississauga now has 23 underpass murals throughout the City. The areas are free of graffiti and are no longer used as hangouts. People have commented on how much safer they feel using the underpasses. Colourfully painted garbage cans have replaced the litter, and a local skate park is now a fun, vibrant spot that skateboarders designed and painted. There is renewed pride in all these places.

### HOW YOU CAN DO IT TOO

- Identify areas for improvement and beautification in your neighbourhood.
- Talk to local residents and ask them what problems they would like to see addressed.
- Take pictures of specific sites that need attention.
- Recruit volunteers and come up with an action plan.
- Engage local youth in your project.
- Create projects (murals, garbage cans, painted skate parks) that reflect your neighbourhood.

[www.mississauga.ca/portal/residents/preserveourparks](http://www.mississauga.ca/portal/residents/preserveourparks)



## Project 5: Safety through Community Pride (Ottawa, Ontario)

### THE IDEA

Improve common areas to beautify them and to make everyone feel safer. This builds community pride.

### WHAT THEY DID

Apartment tenants worked with Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) officials to create a safety plan. Using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, they added gardens, improved landscape features and involved surrounding neighbours to get involved in the changes others inspired. CPTED has four main approaches:

- natural surveillance to make it easier to see people;
- access control, which uses fences, borders, lighting and other means to mark off public and private space;
- territorial reinforcement to give users ownership over the property and to limit access for people who are not authorized to be there; and
- maintenance, which is the simple idea that a well maintained property is less inviting to vandalism and crime.

### THE RESULTS

The tenants took ownership over their environment and used it to enhance their safety. Working with OCH Community Safety Officers, they report suspicious people and activities. They are using their shared spaces more. These places are now a priority.

### HOW YOU CAN DO IT TOO

- Ask other residents and key partners to get involved in your project.
- Identify the crime and disorder problems in and around the site.
- Analyze the surroundings based on crime problems and potential criminal opportunities.
- Consider potential approaches to redesigning the space using CPTED principles.
- Develop preventive or corrective plans for improving the site.
- Make the changes and monitor how people use the new, improved space.
- Evaluate the impact on crime, resident surveillance, interaction and territoriality.

[www.och.ca](http://www.och.ca)



1. A tree was pruned to improve effectiveness of outdoor lighting at night.
2. The height of a fence was reduced to improve visibility and reduce the risk of the area becoming an entrapment point.
3. Tenants created flower gardens, which are now a source of community pride.

## Project 6: Graffiti Solutions (Ottawa, Ontario)

### THE IDEA

Promote a graffiti-free Ottawa using a 'prevent it, report it, remove it' approach. Leverage the City's graffiti sub-culture to combat the problem by getting them involved.

### WHAT THEY DID

The City's Graffiti Management Strategy was developed to respond to the graffiti problem. It promotes a clean, safe and beautiful city by reducing visible graffiti. This, in turn, creates greater community pride and economic prosperity for residents and businesses.

### THE RESULTS

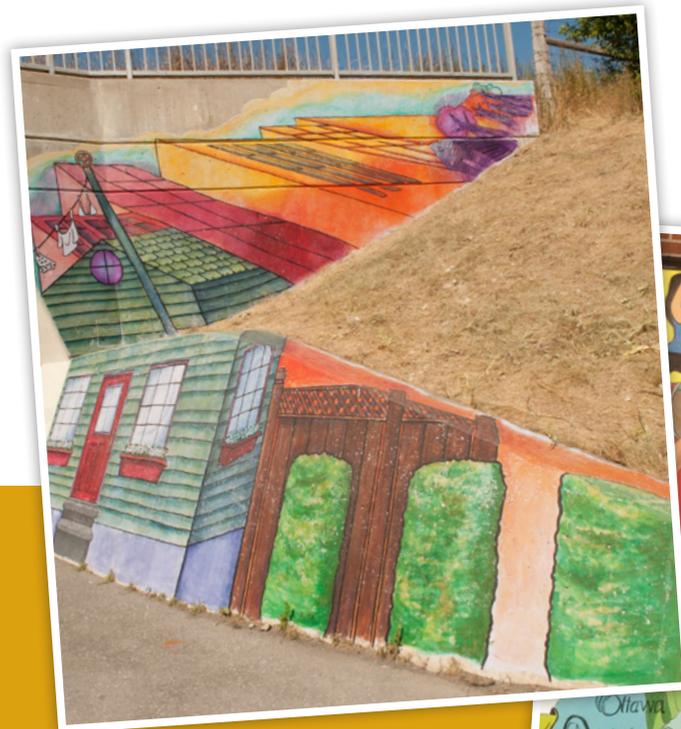
In 2012, the City of Ottawa removed over 40,300 pieces of graffiti at a cost of \$1.6 million. The strategy encourages people to take pride in their neighbourhoods and to participate in graffiti reduction efforts. The strategy also supports artists and creative expression by giving them access to legal graffiti walls, community art programs and murals.

### HOW YOU CAN DO IT TOO

Residents, neighbourhoods and the City can work together to combat graffiti and make our public spaces more beautiful and inviting. Here's how:

- **Education:** Build awareness about how to prevent and remove graffiti.
- **Eradication:** Remove graffiti quickly and efficiently.
- **Empowerment:** Maximize available resources and relationships.
- **Enforcement:** Apply municipal, provincial and criminal code laws when necessary.

[www.ottawa.ca](http://www.ottawa.ca)



## Project 7: Make a Place for People – Dundonald Park (Ottawa, Ontario)

### THE IDEA

Inspire people to take action by transforming under-used neighbourhood places into vibrant, inclusive, welcoming and safe areas.

### WHAT THEY DID

Make a Place for People aims to tap into the imaginations of the diverse people who participate in Dundonald Park's existing volunteer and community-run programs. Together, they created a vision and cultivated a culture of community participation in the space, emphasizing that everyone is welcome. They consulted with individuals and community organizations to enhance the park with activities.

### THE RESULTS

The community brought the park to life through early education programs, seniors' outreach, hula hoop lessons, Chinese line dancing, movie nights, gardening, music in the park, neighbourhood picnics and many other healthy outdoor activities. The community uses the park more often, and Dundonald Park is a healthier and safer place for all people.

### HOW YOU CAN DO IT TOO

- **Plan:** Work with your project partners to identify who should participate. Develop an engagement strategy.
- **Assess:** Evaluate the site. Look at 'hardware' (physical infrastructure) and 'software' (uses, activities and management).
- **Talk:** Involve the community through activities such as workshops, focus groups, interviews and on-site conversations. Use social media, get children to draw pictures of what they want to do in the park, and ask youth to take photos of spaces they want to fix.
- **Develop:** Create a vision and action plan. Collect and analyze information in a report that reflects the community's vision of the space.

[www.8-80cities.org/images/tools-community-reports-articles/dundonald-park-report.pdf](http://www.8-80cities.org/images/tools-community-reports-articles/dundonald-park-report.pdf)



## Project 8: Beats on the Streets (Ottawa, Ontario)

### THE IDEA

Use small-scale programming and special events to bring life and attention to public spaces, giving locals the chance to take back their streets and feel safer in their community.

### WHAT THEY DID

Ottawa's ByWard Market Business Improvement Area (BIA) works with businesses and residents to run programs and events which are designed to increase feelings of safety and community pride. These include:

- **Street Ambassador program:** Trained staff to give directions, tourist information, first aid and general assistance.
- **Busker program:** Licensed over 100 buskers at 12 locations in the market, providing more eyes on the streets. Buskers are limited to one hour per spot.
- **Kindness Meters and 'Have a Heart, Give Smart' program:** Collected \$15,000 to cover the costs of moving people off the streets. The program has helped with 100 moves.
- **Events:** Stew Cook-off, Auto Classic, Easter Egg Hunt, Oktoberfest, Christmas programs, Aboriginal Experience, Nuit Blanche (all night arts celebration), Canadian Tulip Festival and much, much more.

### THE RESULTS

By organizing special programs and events, and by involving the community, the ByWard Market BIA has made the streets safer. The Ambassador program recorded 455 negative contacts in 2012 (compared to 895 in 2006).

### HOW YOU CAN DO IT TOO

- Work cooperatively (BIA, community association, businesses and neighbours) to create an action plan.
- Consider establishing a Safety and Security Committee to make recommendations and set the direction for your community's safety plan.
- Identify the programs and activities that will make a difference.
- Choose a champion, or lead, for each initiative.
- Bring others on board to implement. This might involve getting sponsorships from local businesses, special permits from the City, support from your City Councillor, and 'people power' from volunteers with talents you can use to make your events and programs successful.

[www.byward-market.com](http://www.byward-market.com)



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