**How do we better engage Grove users and others in understanding and advocating for green space in Rochester?**

Washington Grove’s 26 acres of old growth forest is a “green lung” for the surrounding area, storing CO2 and through photosynthesis providing we humans with oxygen. It, as do all stands of trees, also moderates climate heating, creating an oasis of relative cool during hot spells. Yet it thrives only through volunteer activity. We seek city and county policies that see the value of trees and green space generally to mitigate climate change, but also to promote human health and well-being. We also seek to promote behaviors that take advantage of green space.

Forest bathing or Shinrin-yoku (‘Shinrin’ means forest and ‘Yoku’ stands for bathing) has its origins in Japan. This practice of immersing oneself in nature in a mindful way, benefits one’s physical, mental, emotional, and social health. Time spent in Washington Grove attending to the surrounding nature and unplugged from media offers these benefits, but green space in general promotes greater health.

Those who live in green neighborhoods are less likely to have high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease as well as other health benefits – e.g. better birth outcomes, better immune functioning, enhanced healing after surgery.[[1]](#endnote-1) Daily contact with nature can reduce mortality rates; studies have shown that these can be cut in half with greener neighborhoods.[[2]](#endnote-2) Green space has also been linked to mental health benefits such as recovery from mental fatigue and reduced stress, which has been documented through environmental psychology.[[3]](#endnote-3) Higher levels of neighborhood green space have also been associated with significantly lower levels of symptomology for depression, anxiety and stress, after controlling for a wide range of confounding factors. “Greening” could be a potential population mental health improvement strategy in the United States. [[4]](#endnote-4) As little as 10-20 minutes 2-3 times a week of sitting or walking in a diverse array of natural settings significantly and positively impacted defined psychological and physiological markers of mental well-being for college-aged individuals.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Time in green spaces such as Washington Grove is also associated with better learning outcomes. Being outside in a natural environment can improve memory performance and attention span by twenty percent.[[6]](#endnote-6) In a large cross-sectional study of 59,754 Chinese children, attendance at schools or kindergartens in greener areas was associated with lower odds of having attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder symptoms.[[7]](#endnote-7)

Trees and green space aren’t equally spread around Rochester. A recent study found that as a result surface temperature in formerly redlined neighborhoods in Rochester are on average 8.82 degrees F warmer than those in the city’s highest-rated ones.[[8]](#endnote-8)

How can The Friends of Washington Grove communicate the importance of green space and spending time in green space to our community using the media at our disposal (web site, Facebook, Instagram) in a graphic manner that communicates to a wider audience than does written reports on the research? *American Forests*, for example, has recently created a web site from which anyone can search for the Tree Equity Score which provides a snapshot of information about environmental, climate, demographic, and health data, and assigns a “Tree Equity Score” for each census block in America’s cities[[9]](#endnote-9). **Are there approaches or electronic graphics that a *Eureka* team can provide for us that will expand and enhance the ways in which we communicate this information to those we contact?**

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6. Retrieved from: <https://ellisonchair.tamu.edu/health-and-well-being-benefits-of-plants/> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. [Bo-Yi Yang, PhD1](https://jamanetwork.com/searchresults?author=Bo-Yi+Yang&q=Bo-Yi+Yang); [Xiao-Wen Zeng, PhD1](https://jamanetwork.com/searchresults?author=Xiao-Wen+Zeng&q=Xiao-Wen+Zeng); [Iana Markevych, PhD2,3,4](https://jamanetwork.com/searchresults?author=Iana+Markevych&q=Iana+Markevych); et al. “Association Between Greenness Surrounding Schools and Kindergartens and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Children in China,” JAMA Netw Open. 2019;2(12): e1917862. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.17862 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
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9. Rochester information is at <https://www.treeequityscore.org/map/#11/43.1886/-77.6175> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)