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USGBC-LA Selects Watts-Based Local Healing Space for Survivors of Violent Crime as 2022 Legacy Project

June 21st Garden Volunteer Day is Open to All

LOS ANGELES (June 15, 2022) Adding nature to urban spaces can be a game changer - it can raise life expectancies, speed physical healing, treat PTSD, and increase civility. The Reverence Project's Survivor's Healing Garden, located in the heart of Watts, is a big step in aiming to achieve these outcomes, as well as address environmental issues driven by climate change.

Located adjacent to four housing projects and with a goal of providing local healing services through wellness, the [U.S. Green Building Council-Los Angeles](https://www.usgbc-la.org/) (USGBC-LA) has selected the garden as its 2022 Legacy Project. The first volunteer day at the garden will be held on Tuesday, June 21, 2022, from 10:00am-1:00pm at 1673 East 108th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90059. [Registration](#) is encouraged.

The Survivor's Healing Garden will serve as a local place of reflection and gathering for survivors of violent crime, confronting the lack of local wellness options. Project leader Oya Sherrills envisions filling the 3150 sq. ft. outdoor space with native California foliage, meditative trails and art installations to serve as foundations for individual and community restoration.

"Just fifteen minutes in nature can uplift health," states Sherrills. "For years, The Reverence Project has driven survivors 45 minutes to an hour to reach green spaces and wellness services. During the pandemic, this wasn't an option. We all need nature in our communities that people can easily walk to.

"In addition to the survivors of violent crime, we also want all the residents of Watts, including our neighbors without homes, to benefit from the space's serene beauty and edible foliage," says Sherrills.

Launched in 2016 to help empower local individuals and organizations in implementing programs that nurture sustainability and social equity within their respective neighborhoods, USGBC-LA annually provides a regional 'legacy project' \$20,000 in funding--along with design, strategy and project management support, and member volunteers. The Legacy Project Committee strives to select a project that is community-supported, has an educational and sustainable focus, is replicable, and serves a variety of socio-economic conditions.

A long-time equity issue across Los Angeles (and other cities) is that of green space - where it exists and where it is absent. As an example, the community of Watts has just 0.65 parks per 1000 residents. This dearth of park space is amplified by a "hard" built environment, one with very little streetside greenery. As a result, Watts experiences temperatures 4.7°F degrees

hotter than the city average, a significant number considering the drought and extreme heat conditions exacerbated by climate change.

Ben Stapleton, USGBC-LA Executive Director, notes, "This project provides the opportunity for our investment of funds, time, and expertise to have an outsized impact on the resilience of the community's residents and the region's environment. While private investments cannot catch up to inequities in public funding, we are hopeful our work here builds more awareness and connects with people in the community while showcasing the importance of helping Watts draw its fair share of public funds as well."

The project will support training Watts residents in the value of urban greenery and in methods of civic engagement to help secure further project funding. Activities will include building out a community space that includes hardscape and softscape design and construction, as well as planting of native plants, herbs and food. Educational signage is also planned.

In support of the above goals, during the June 21st event volunteers will:

- build raised bed garden containers for local vegetables and fruits
- pot and plant native California herbs and flowers
- beautify; facility painting, create signage, facility mosaic

Additional volunteer dates are:

Thursday, July 28th, 9am-12pm

Saturday, August 27th, 9am-12pm

Tuesday, October 25th, 9am-12pm

"The Legacy Project is an important hands-on opportunity to help foster equity citywide through USGBC-LA's core values of sustainability, resilience and community," states Katie Freeze, Legacy Chair, and sustainability manager for Leading Edge. "We were inspired by the opportunity to help create a place of peace and resilience where Watts residents will find sanctuary."

Past impactful Legacy Projects include the EcoTech Makerspace in Gardena (2016), the Veggie Bus Project in South Central LA, the EcoUrban / Arroyo HS garden in El Monte, the Boyle Heights Resilience Hub (2021) and more. **For more information on this year's Legacy Project and the June 21st event**, please visit the [Legacy Project page](#). If you'd like to contribute to this project or any other sponsorship support, please email ben@usgbc-la.org.

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About U.S. Green Building Council-Los Angeles

USGBC-LA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization committed to creating a prosperous and sustainable future within one generation. Our mission promotes sustainability in Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties' built environment by delivering access to knowledge, resources, recognition and networking. (www.usgbc-la.org)