



Green Spaces and their Connection to Wellbeing

JEANINE COHEN, MTPI ASSOC RICS

Jeanine Cohen is a seasoned property manager who has written 'The Property Manager's Guide to Green Space Management' a forthcoming handbook and resource to be published shortly by TPI.

"We can't underestimate the significant value and well documented benefits of green spaces on our mental health & wellbeing". Shelley Jacobs, Business Psychologist and Director of Michael Laurie Magar Ltd.

If you have access to a garden, a park, or other green space close by you will know that nature has the power to improve your mood.

This can include plants with a diversity of colours, textures, scents and shapes, gently flowing tall grasses, trees in leaf or with winter bark interest, soothing sounds of a trickling water feature, wind chimes fostering serenity or bird feeders rewarding with birdsong.



Sometimes where green spaces are limited, benefits can also come from the nurturing of houseplants, or even growing bulbs or herbs inside in pots when there is no garden or access to a green space. This may be in the space you work in, be this in an office or in your home.

If we can improve the wellbeing benefits to ourselves by having a closer connection to nature, green spaces or plants, as property professionals we can also rethink and start to take even small measures to restore and beautify the surroundings of the spaces we manage for the benefit of our residents and ourselves.

The importance of greening up spaces in the built environment that we manage, or in fact ensuring that the existing green spaces are nurtured and cared for cannot be underestimated in beneficial rewards to the residents living there.



Of course it is not easy when there are budget constraints or residents are concentrating on other building fabric or mechanical plant failures. However, the long term economic benefits to a building when its green spaces are maintained properly are proven. The forward planning and budgeting of correct and steadier costs of maintenance carried out by suitable contractors will result in less catastrophic

loss and one off larger expenditures. Living in greener and well maintained surroundings increases the likelihood of improving social cohesion and provides more satisfaction to residents.

The positives of greening up our Urban spaces, creating or restoring gardens, planting trees, green roofs, living walls, resulting in healthy environments can reap rewards in reducing carbon emissions, less pollution and cleaner air and help to reduce building temperatures. Greening up spaces and planting trees can also help with shade, habitat, bio-diversity, reduce flooding risks to the built environment and promote wellbeing.



Growing a greener economy is also linked to the growth of ornamental horticulture and landscaping in the UK. Hit badly by Brexit and later Covid lockdowns, British nurseries, farms and landscaping companies have struggled with the ability to find qualified professionals and workers and investment subsequently affecting the capacity

to grow vital native trees, ornamental plants or even food.

This industry is at an important crossroads and its continued growth can only be beneficial to the economy of this country, to enable it to home grow sufficient trees or shrubs to replace lost specimens affected by invading pests and diseases and continue to enhance our surroundings.

If your surroundings are green or you live near enough to a green space it is more likely that you will achieve physical exercise regularly promoting your wellbeing than if you live surrounded only by concrete.

Green spaces have a role in encouraging greater social cohesion, benefit directly to social capital, wellbeing, physical and mental health. (And that of our children) A recent UK study found that access to and the use of green spaces is vitally important in reducing stress and establishing a community in that area. In Sheffield, where 61% of the city is green space, research has found that 83% more individuals engaged in social activity in green spaces as opposed to sparsely vegetated or concreted ones. Crime in areas with extensive green space is reduced especially where social cohesion encourages more community.*

We need to plan for the future of the built environment, to safeguard existing nature, thereby the prevention of floods and overheating, and working to promote the wellbeing of not only residents, but all living things.

The alternative and future for this country is the further loss and concreting of valuable green spaces, the subsequent property management of many more concrete jungles whether city centre high rises or developments built in suburban/countryside areas and which we fear will have a very limited effect to further reduce urban heating or flooding, negating the capture of carbon, and which will not reduce carbon footprints, or prevent pollution.

These builds would further remove residents and their children from the simple positive life affirming connections and wellbeing afforded by green spaces, trees, living water and birds and cause further loss of vital habitats.

References:

* Source: Growing a Green Economy – The importance of ornamental horticulture and landscaping to the UK

[Foresight Factory & The Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable Group](#) - Published by Oxford Economics 2024

Further reading:

[The science of wellbeing](#) is an article discussing the features and elements that can go into a green space to improve mental health and wellbeing.