

## PARKS AND IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE

*More time spent in parks and green spaces can help individuals fight against mental health issues like depression, anxiety and stress. Making sure that all people have access to parks and outdoor programming is a critical way to increase these positive effects on health and quality of life for your community.*

### THE FACTS

- » People living more than 1 kilometer away from a green space have nearly 50 percent higher odds of experiencing stress than those living fewer than 300 meters from a green space. Respondents who do not report stress have more than 50 percent higher odds of visiting a green space at least a few days a week than those reporting stress. Results also showed that the more often respondents visited green spaces, the less stress they experienced.<sup>1</sup>
- » Several studies have confirmed that separation from nature is detrimental to human development, health and well-being, and that regular contact with nature is required for good mental health.<sup>2</sup>
- » Scientists in the Netherlands found that people who lived in residential areas with the fewest green spaces had a 44 percent higher rate of physician-diagnosed anxiety disorders than people who lived in the greenest residential areas. The effect was strongest among those most likely to spend their time near home, including children and those with low levels of education and income.<sup>3</sup>
- » Physician-diagnosed depression was 33 percent higher in the residential areas with the fewest green spaces, compared to the neighborhoods with the most.<sup>4</sup>
- » People who lived in close proximity to natural space had significantly improved mental health up to three years after their move. Compared to pre-move mental health scores, individuals who moved to greener areas had significantly better mental health recorded three years after the move.<sup>5</sup>



## THE FACTS

- » Individuals reported less mental distress and greater life satisfaction when they were living in greener areas.<sup>6</sup>
- » A strong body of evidence suggests that physical activity in green spaces has stronger mental health benefits than physical activity in non-green spaces.<sup>7</sup>
- » Use of green spaces is associated with decreased health complaints, improved blood pressure and cholesterol levels, reduced stress, improved general health perceptions and a greater ability to face problems.<sup>8</sup>

## SOURCES

- <sup>1</sup> Making the Case for Designing Active Cities, Active Living Research (Stigsdotter, 2010), 2015
- <sup>2</sup> Making the Case for Designing Active Cities, Active Living Research (Maller, 2008), 2015
- <sup>3</sup> Making the Case for Designing Active Cities, Active Living Research (NRPA Report, 2010), 2015
- <sup>4</sup> Making the Case for Designing Active Cities, Active Living Research (NRPA Report, 2010), 2015
- <sup>5</sup> Making the Case for Designing Active Cities, Active Living Research (Alcock, et al, 2013), 2015
- <sup>6</sup> Making the Case for Designing Active Cities, Active Living Research (White, 2013), 2015
- <sup>7</sup> Making the Case for Designing Active Cities, Active Living Research (BoP consulting, 2013), 2015
- <sup>8</sup> Making the Case for Designing Active Cities, Active Living Research (King's Fund, 2013), 2015

