

# Sustainable Schoolyards



Schools are centers for learning and growing—for children and the surrounding community. This exhibit illustrates some of the outdoor classroom concepts, ecological teaching tools, and creative play ideas that can be easily replicated in almost any schoolyard in America.

Explore our exhibit and learn how Sustainable Schoolyards grow interconnectedness and sense of place, while promoting healthy active living and smart growth. Children, teachers, parents, and communities can design and maintain these assets together.

We hope you will take home to your schools and communities some of the ideas and examples you see here. Enjoy!



## **Friends of Smart Growth & Sustainable Communities**

We are a diverse group of national organizations that have come together to create this exhibit. Learn more about the organizations actively working for smart growth and the greening of America by visiting [www.sustainableschoolyard.org](http://www.sustainableschoolyard.org).

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Friends of Smart Growth & Sustainable Communities would like to thank Bay Tree Design, Inc. Photos © Sharon Danks | American Farmland Trust | American Planning Association Concern, Inc. | National Association of Realtors™ | National Association of Counties The Cloud Institute for Sustainability Education | The Conservation Fund | Smart Growth Network

# From Schoolyards to . . . Livable Communities

## What Makes a Neighborhood a Great Place to Live?



Work, school, shops, parks, and places to meet friends are all nearby; walking or biking is the easiest way to get there; and the mix of uses creates a buzz of activity most hours of the day.

People live above the shops or in nearby affordable homes. Market values are protected by all the community has to offer.

Wide sidewalks are lined with healthy trees and dotted with flashes of flowerbeds. Fresh healthy food, grown on nearby farms, is plentiful at the weekly farmers' market, and featured at local eateries. Wouldn't you want to live here?



WWW.PEDBIKESIMAGES.ORG/DANBURDEN



# From Schoolyards to . . . Active Communities

A **green schoolyard** is an ideal place to attract students and nearby residents on foot or bike. When schools are located in the same neighborhoods as the children they serve, they become centers of their communities—places where people go to play, learn, and gather. With the reduced need for driving comes exercise, healthier lifestyles, and reduced greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change—but it doesn't happen by accident.



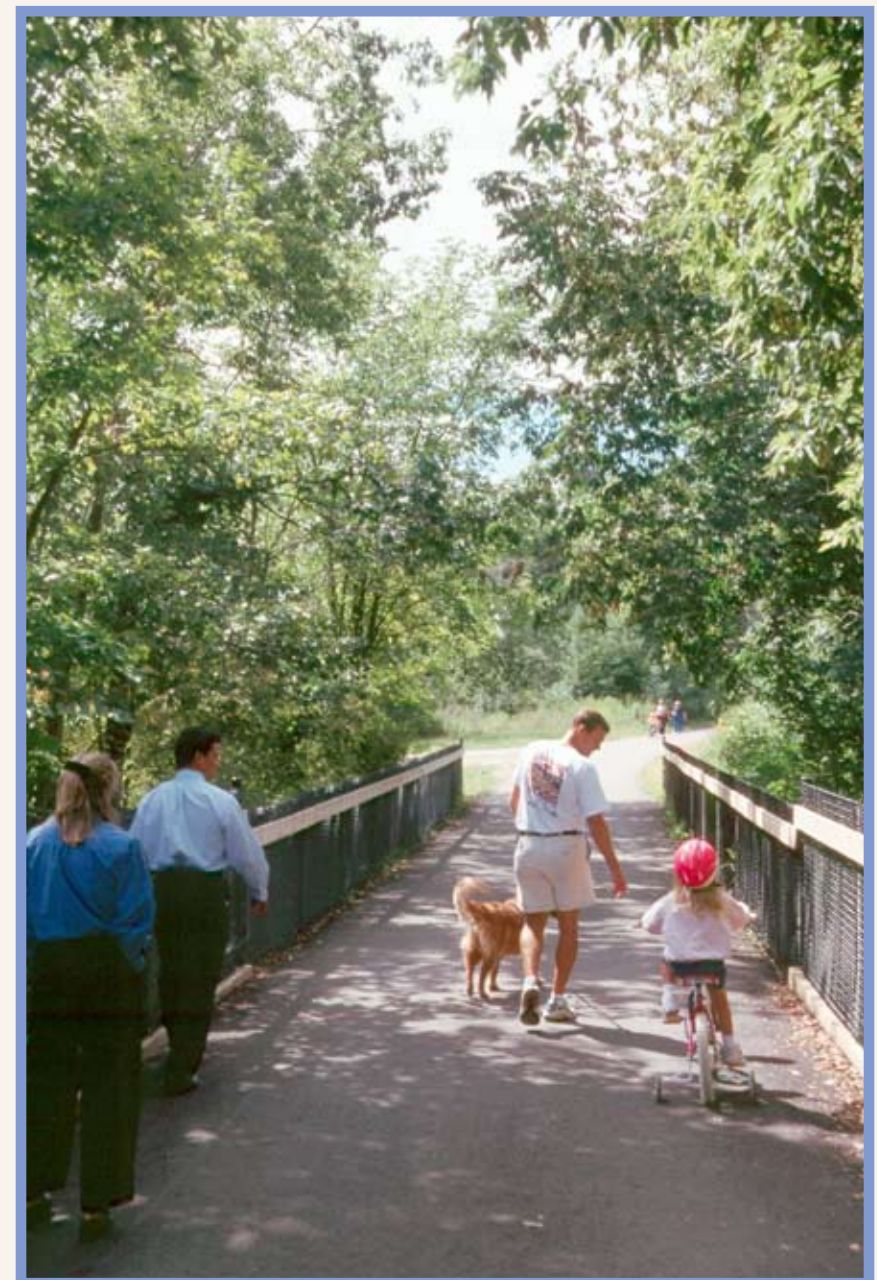
## **Great communities take great planning.**

Neighborhood groups, local government officials, businesspeople, and many others, working together, create the best places to live, work, and play.

The link between peoples' health and community design is very important. Communities can encourage physical activity as a routine part of daily life by:

- emphasizing accessibility and safety for pedestrians
- planning bike lanes and crosswalks
- creating parks and other public spaces within neighborhoods
- designing places that are inviting and comfortable for all

**Do you live in an active community? How many places are within a half-mile of your home? Is there a park or recreation area nearby? Are there sidewalks and bike lanes for you to use?**



**Get involved and help make your community healthier and more walkable.**

# From Schoolyards to . . . Green Communities

The joy of the children playing at this schoolyard remind us that natural areas, parks and green spaces are essential for our health, both mental and physical.

**We need green communities.**

In the past, many children went out their back doors to freely experience nature. All too often, children today are alienated: communities frequently lack unstructured open space for kids to wander in; landowners fear lawsuits from children climbing trees; and kids engage in video games more often than in free, imaginative play.

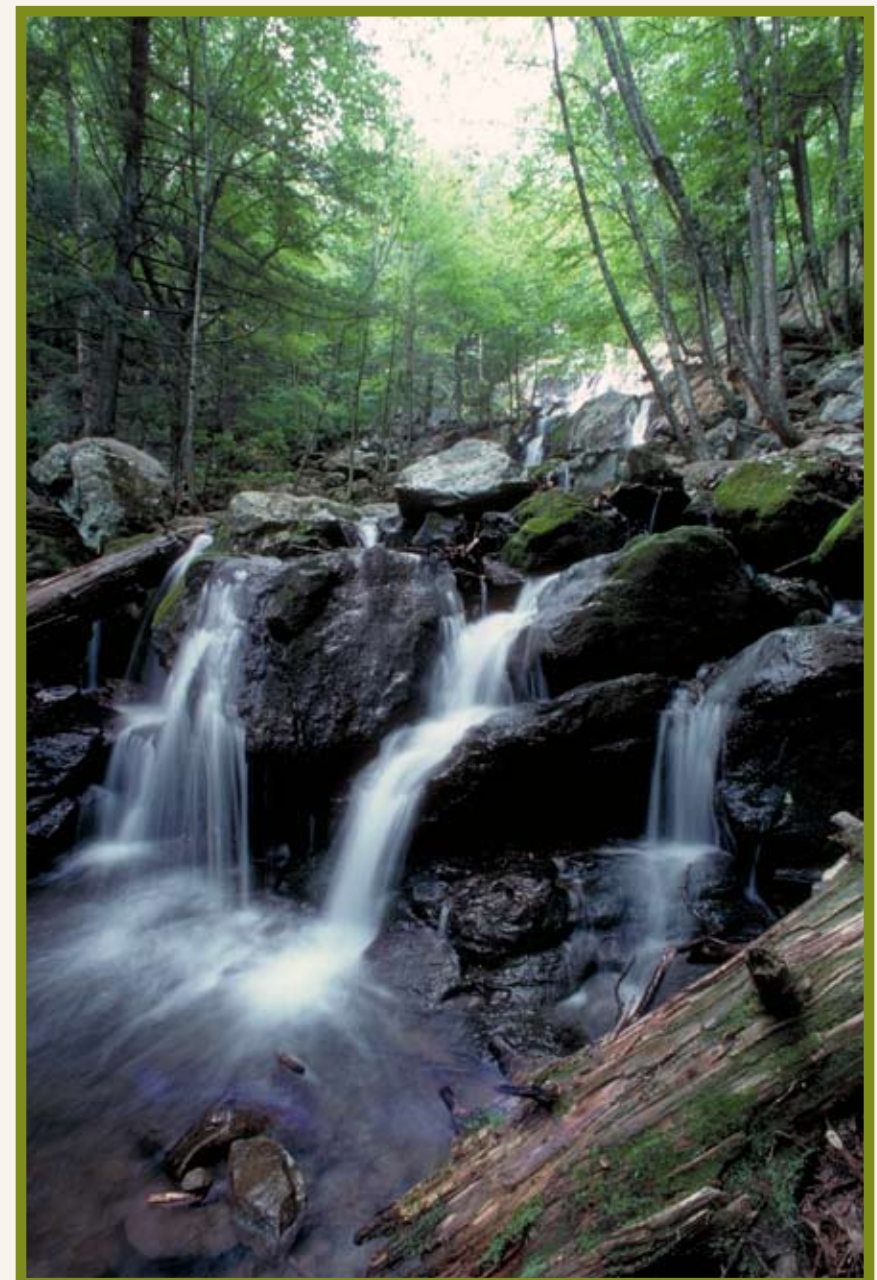
**Children of all ages need access to nature for exercise, exploration, stress relief, and a sense of wonder and discovery.**

Natural and green areas provide essential services such as clean air and water, wildlife habitat, food production, and recreational outlets. This “green infrastructure,” a network of interconnected green spaces, is a community necessity. Like public utilities, green spaces work best when connected to each other and to neighborhoods.

Care for your community by increasing green space and linking parks and natural areas together. Make sure you plan, protect, invest in, and manage natural resources, farmland, and green spaces to keep your community green for children and adults.



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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTO

**Care for your community by increasing green space.**

# Sustainable Schoolyard [www.sustainableschoolyard.org](http://www.sustainableschoolyard.org)

## Mission

Schools are centers for learning and growing – for children and community members. This schoolyard exhibit illustrates principles of ecological design, interconnected natural systems, the use of natural and recycled building materials and other green building practices, renewable energy systems, environmentally responsible water systems, local wildlife habitats, and edible gardens.

The schoolyard design illustrates the ways in which a typical elementary school can use its schoolyard as a rich outdoor classroom, filled with interdisciplinary educational tools that serve curricula ranging from art and music, to science, math, nutrition, healthy living, and community building. It includes areas designed for outdoor creative play, using natural materials and open-ended play elements that encourage children to be imaginative. All components exist in schoolyards around the country and can be easily replicated.

## Project Team

### Friends of Smart Growth and Sustainable Communities – [www.sustainableschoolyard.org](http://www.sustainableschoolyard.org)

Friends of Smart Growth and Sustainable Communities include the following organizations: American Farmland Trust, American Planning Association, Concern, Inc., National Association of Realtors®, National Association of Counties, The Cloud Institute for Sustainability Education, The Conservation Fund and the Smart Growth Network. They have formed this coalition with the intent to demonstrate healthy schoolyards as key elements of green, active and sustainable communities. The planning and installation of this green schoolyard was done with minimum carbon footprint.

## Components

Virtually all the structural material is reclaimed, salvaged, recycled, local and green material, largely from local organizations, Community Forklift and Treincarnation. All the structures were built, painted and installed onsite by volunteers.

Architect – Fritz McDougall, Round Vanduzer Architects, [www.rvarchitects.com](http://www.rvarchitects.com)

Bird houses – Peralta Elementary School students

Carved wooden bench – Salvaged Osage Orange and Mulberry wood. Woodworkers - Rodger Smith/Guy Cohen

Dragon Drum – Soundplay, [www.soundplay.com](http://www.soundplay.com)

Dragon 'throne' – Ed Raduazo, local natural builder

Kids cutouts – local artists Kris Swanson and Claudia McElhaney, [www.kriswanson.net](http://www.kriswanson.net)

Landscape architect – Kim Scott, KESDesign, [www.kesdesign.com](http://www.kesdesign.com).

Bay Tree Design, Inc. – Berkeley, CA ([www.baytreedesign.com](http://www.baytreedesign.com))

Mosaics on carved wooden bench – City Arts, Byron Peck and students from the Duke Ellington School for the Arts

Pond – Lilipons, [www.lilipons.com](http://www.lilipons.com)

Rain barrel, perennials, and fruit trees – American Plant, [www.americanplant.net](http://www.americanplant.net)

Rain chain – Glen Echo Hardware

Seedlings – Rappahanock County Farm-to-Table students and The Farm at Sunnyside, Washington, VA

Signs – American Planning Association and the National Association of Realtors

Solar pump – The Rahun Institute, [www.rahun.org](http://www.rahun.org)

Sunflowers on fence – Rosa Parks Elementary School students (see photo at school entrance)