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Creative Placemaking and Community Safety: Addressing Crime in Riverdale Park

COURSE

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PALS

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ABOUT PALS

The Partnership for Action Learning in Sustainability (PALS) is administered by the National Center for Smart Growth at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD). It is a campus-wide initiative that harnesses the expertise of UMD faculty and the energy and ingenuity of UMD students to help Maryland communities become more environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable. PALS is designed to provide innovative, low-cost assistance to local governments while creating real-world problem-solving experiences for University of Maryland graduate and undergraduate students.

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Abstract

This project explores how creative placemaking can serve as a strategy to reduce crime rates and foster community connection in Riverdale Park, Maryland. Despite a general decline in crime across Prince George's County, the public remains concerned about crime in Riverdale Park, particularly youth involvement in carjackings and violence. The town center, though rich in potential and local assets like small businesses and a farmers market, lacks inclusive, green, and welcoming public space. Our research focuses on how creative placemaking can activate this space to promote safety and belonging.

The resulting recommendation is for a recurring community arts event that offers youth safe, creative alternatives to crime. Using a mixed-methods approach, we conducted a literature review, case study analysis, and interviews with stakeholders, including local business owners, law enforcement, urban planners, and arts council representatives. Our findings suggest that community-centered design, cultural engagement, and environmental enhancements can reduce crime and support youth development.

While our study is limited by its short timeline, lack of long-term impact data, and gaps in community input, the recommendations are grounded in local voices and evidence-based practices. By activating Riverdale Park's underutilized spaces, this project aims to foster social cohesion, elevate community identity, and lay the groundwork for sustainable, arts-driven revitalization.

Introduction

Problem Description

Riverdale Park is a town in Prince George's County, Maryland, situated between the University of Maryland and Washington, D.C. The town's location between a large public university and the nation's capital has made it host to shifting populations, and the community's demographic makeup has changed significantly over the past few decades. The community boasts significant diversity, with a population that is 22.6% white, 21.9% Black, and 52% Hispanic or Latino (United States Census Bureau, 2023).

While crime rates across the United States and Maryland have been decreasing, the public's perception is that the crime rate is increasing (Gramlich, 2024). Prince George's County and Riverdale Park follow this trend: crime in Prince George's County fell by 9% from 2023 to 2024 (Prince George's County, 2025), and crime is not an overarching concern among residents and business owners in Riverdale Park, but certain instances of violence and drug use have raised the alarm among county and town officials and residents (J. Walch, March 31, 2025). Juvenile crime is also of particular concern, with juveniles accounting for over half of all carjackings in Prince George's County (Aziz, 2023, p. 6). Much of the crime occurs a couple of miles east across the Anacostia River, but its residual effects and the involvement of the community's youth have pushed the town to seek initiatives that may provide young people alternatives to engaging in criminal activity (J. Walch, March 31, 2025).

The site chosen for this project is Riverdale Park's town center. It is a space with immense potential; however, it lacks the open, green, and inviting infrastructure that supports meaningful community engagement. While the area has abundant parking, it doesn't offer a true "third space"—a place outside of home or work where people can gather, socialize, and feel a

sense of belonging. This gap in public, accessible space makes it harder to build the kind of connections and social cohesion that help prevent crime and foster a safer community.

At the same time, the town center isn't starting from scratch. It already hosts a vibrant farmers market and is surrounded by small, locally owned businesses—assets that provide a foundation for thoughtful placemaking and economic revitalization. Additionally, there are several vacant storefronts and underused spots throughout the town center that present opportunities for creative reactivation and small-business incubation.

There are also amenities and third spaces that are noticeably missing, such as a coffee shop, a local bookshop, and other informal gathering spaces that support daily community life. By reimagining underutilized spaces not only as places for art and gathering but also as catalysts for economic inclusion, Riverdale Park can build a safer, more connected, and more vibrant future. This project aims to build on what is already there by activating the space through the arts and creating more intentional opportunities for residents, especially youth, to feel ownership and pride in their community.

Gap in Research and Study Motivation

One of the primary gaps in our research is the lack of location-specific data, particularly concerning crime and economic conditions in Riverdale Park. This limitation stems from the fact that such detailed data is rarely collected for small, localized areas. To address this, we conducted interviews with community members and stakeholders to gather firsthand insights.

Another limitation is that, while we researched national and international examples of creative placemaking, we didn't conduct a long-term study or impact assessment. Although we can point to existing evidence that shows arts and green space can reduce crime or foster community, we cannot directly measure or prove that those same effects will happen in Riverdale

Park. We worked to combat this with additional research and by looking for varied perspectives in both our literature and interviews.

An additional limitation is the timing of our project. Because we worked on a relatively short timeline, we could not see the long-term outcomes or sustainability of the recommended interventions. Community change, especially in reducing crime or strengthening social bonds through placemaking, takes time. We worked within a semester, which gave a snapshot—but not the full picture—of how initiatives can play out in the long run. We intentionally centered community voices and highlighted flexible, scalable ideas that could evolve with continued investment.

We are also aware that, while we did our best to engage with local perspectives, there are still voices we didn't hear from. For example, we couldn't conduct in-depth surveys or host public forums, so much of the input came from one-on-one conversations or smaller meetings. That means our understanding of community priorities is limited or skewed based on who we spoke with. Moving forward, more inclusive engagement, particularly with youth, renters, and non-English-speaking residents, would help ensure that future placemaking efforts reflect the full diversity of Riverdale Park.

Finally, though the town center has great bones (open space, community gathering spots, walkability), we still don't know exactly how *all* members of the community use those spaces. We want to ensure that our proposal is accessible, inclusive, and reflects what residents want and need.

Research Question

Given these gaps and limitations, the project is grounded in a central research question: How can arts-based placemaking in Riverdale Park's town center serve as a strategy to reduce

juvenile crime and foster community connection? By investigating local needs and stakeholder insights, we aim to recommend a feasible, scalable intervention, such as a recurring community arts event, that reflects Riverdale Park's diversity, encourages youth participation, and strengthens neighborhood safety and identity.

Project Objective

To address the research question, this report will design and recommend a recurring community arts event that offers local youth safe, creative alternatives to crime, while activating underutilized public space in Riverdale Park. In a conversation with Sherri Bryant-Moore, the Director of Development & Community Grants at the Prince George's Arts and Humanities Council (PGAHC), she emphasized the potential of creative placemaking to reshape public spaces in ways that foster safety, connection, and pride. The Riverdale Park town center, the focus site, lacks accessible green or open space, but it does offer meaningful opportunities for renewal. The area is full of underutilized parking lots and minimal communal gathering spaces, yet it is also home to small businesses and a seasonal farmers market that already attract local foot traffic.

PGAHC's mission centers public art as a driver for equity and community resilience, using the National Endowment for the Art's "Our Town" theory of change model that uses arts-based interventions to activate neglected areas, strengthen social bonds, and build safer, more welcoming neighborhoods. This approach shaped our thinking and reinforced why this site makes sense for the project.

Methodology

We used three methods of data collection and analysis: a literature review, stakeholder interviews, and case study analysis.

Literature Review

In a review of 24 academic, peer-reviewed journals and articles, as well as data sources specific to the chosen site, we examined placemaking, urban planning, crime prevention, the arts, public health, and cultural studies.

Many sources affirmed the idea that green spaces and urban design play significant roles in preventing crime. More than one study concluded that environmental improvements are linked to decreased criminal activity, particularly in underserved neighborhoods. Many of these studies included actionable recommendations and strategies for implementing designs that increase safety in public spaces.

These sources also explore the connections between the arts, cultural engagement, and youth behavior, emphasizing the importance of engaging directly with the communities affected by placemaking initiatives, collaborating with various partners and sectors within and outside of the community, and crafting solutions that are specific and localized. The research shows that public perception, stakeholder dynamics, and socioeconomic factors shape how crime is addressed and the success of placemaking efforts.

Overall, the literature review provided a comprehensive and expansive overview of how to effectively use creative placemaking as a method of reducing crime in a way specific to Riverdale Park.

Interviews

We interviewed relevant stakeholders, both inside and outside of Riverdale Park.

In the neighborhood, we began with local business owner Jimmy Spiropoulos, whose family has lived and owned property in Riverdale Park for decades. Spiropoulos provided insight into how local business owners interact with one another and the community, their safety concerns, and how they see residents and visitors interacting with and using the town center's public spaces. He also shared his family's view of how the neighborhood has changed over time, emphasizing that it has become safer (J. Spiropoulos, March 9, 2025).

An interview with Sergeant Walch at the Riverdale Park Police Department was another crucial source of information. He clarified that, while Riverdale Park's town center didn't see major crime, crime is prevalent right across the Anacostia River near Kenilworth Avenue (J. Walch, March 31, 2025).

Mario Miller is the Regional Manager for the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission's (M-NCPPC) Parks and Recreation Department, and covers College Park, Berwyn Heights, College Park Youth Services, and Prince George's Plaza. He described the M-NCPPC's youth programming, including weekly nighttime events for teenagers on weekends, larger quarterly events at parks in his region, and specific summer events. His staff's challenges include updating activities to make them more appealing to youth in the post-COVID-19 era, circulating information about events on social media, and providing activities that could support youth and set them up for success (M. Miller, May 2, 2025).

Interviews with Daniel Sams, who manages the Planning Assistance to Municipalities & Communities program, and Sherri Bryant-Moore, Director of Development and Community Grants at the Prince George's Arts and Humanities Council, gave further information on arts and placemaking specific to Riverdale Park. Sams highlighted the evolving identity of Riverdale Park, which separated from the broader Riverdale area in the early 2000s to become a distinct,

small municipality. He noted the community's strong sense of pride and emphasized that, particularly following the pandemic, Riverdale Park is beginning to see significant development in its town centers (D. Sams, April 1, 2025).

Bryant-Moore emphasized Riverdale Park's town center as a key site for placemaking. She pointed out the area's abundant parking lots and the lack of green, communal "third spaces" as an opportunity for transformation. She stated that creating spaces where art and community engagement can flourish not only enhances vibrancy but also improves public safety by encouraging passive surveillance, which she described as the "more eyes on the street" effect (S. Bryant-Moore, April 26, 2025).

Case Studies

Our primary case study looked at Bryant Park, a popular green space and example of creative placemaking in New York City. In their study, the authors used social media reviews to assess perceptions and user experiences of urban public spaces. They analyzed user-generated content from platforms like Yelp and Instagram to identify recurring themes, sentiments, and keywords that reflect how people interact with and feel about the park. Their findings noted that users consistently praised the park's greenery, open lawns, trees, and thoughtfully landscaped areas as key contributors to its appeal. These natural elements not only provide aesthetic value but also offer a sense of calm, escape, and relaxation within the dense urban environment. Moreover, the green space was associated with feelings of safety, comfort, and social cohesion, especially when paired with amenities like seating, events, and walking paths. While some concerns were raised about crowding and commercialization, the overall sentiment underscored the essential role that accessible, well-maintained green spaces play in promoting mental well-being, social interaction, and urban vibrancy. The study ultimately argues that insights

drawn from social media can help urban planners better understand the lived experiences of park users and more effectively design green public spaces that respond to community needs (Song, 2020).

A similar case study was based in South Africa and examined ten years of crime and land use data across that country to explore the relationship between green space and crime rates. After controlling for socio-demographic factors, researchers found that a 1% increase in green space was linked to a 1.2% decrease in violent crime and a 1.3% decrease in property crime. However, no significant association was found with sexual crimes. The study emphasized the need for further research, including experimental studies, to better understand the causal mechanisms behind these associations and to consider factors such as race and income inequality, which may influence both green space distribution and crime reporting. Overall, the findings support urban greening as a strategy for crime reduction but emphasize that the design and accessibility of green spaces also matters (Zander, 2022).

Table 1, below, from ScienceDirect, is based on data from 2010 to 2019 in South Africa. As noted above, it shows that total green space was associated with lower violent and property crimes, although there was no association with sexual crimes. The study table found that for every 1% increase in total green space, there is a 1.2% decrease in violent crime (0.7 to 1.7%; 95% confidence interval). It also emphasized that these effects are especially felt in urban areas.

Table 1. Summary statistics of crime, green space and covariate variables used in the analysis.

Variable	Mean	Min	Max	Standard deviation
Property crimes (# per 100,000 citizens)	1017	22	76,413	2705
Sexual crimes (# per 100,000 citizens)	126	0	3641	149
Violent crimes (# per 100,000 citizens)	910	34	54,239	1728
Green space: total cover (%)	78.59	9.18	99.54	17.26
Green space: tree cover (%)	13.02	0.06	68.79	13.05
Distance to park (km)	12.89	0.00	102.92	12.55
Area (km ²)	1065.00	1.90	19,487.25	1784.99
Population	50,785	183	376,540	55,498
Population density (people/km ²)	1039	100	32,819	2677
Unemployment (%)	9.50	0.32	37.58	4.53
Youth (% aged 16 to 30)	28.03	5.48	49.45	5.22
Education (% with matric certificate)	0.27	0.00	1.72	0.24
Income per capita (ZAR per month)	2589.98	276.28	21,964.52	2788.65
Income inequality (coefficient of variation of income per capita)	0.83	0.21	3.18	0.30
Agricultural land (%)	12.64	0.00	83.18	16.08
Industrial/commercial land (%)	2.97	0.00	78.74	6.72
Informal settlement (%)	0.93	0.00	41.53	3.14

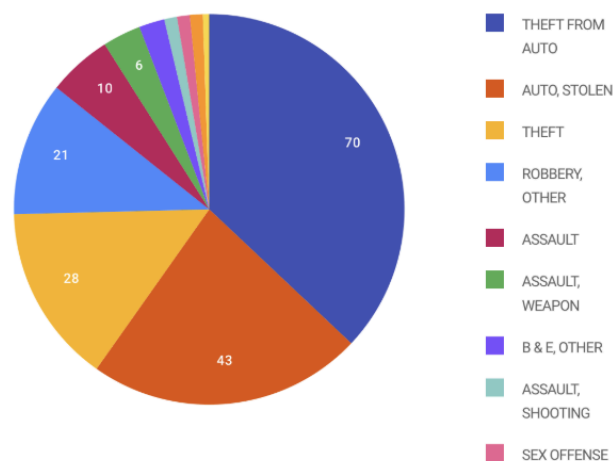
The study “Arts and Cultural Engagement, Reportedly Antisocial or Criminalized Behaviors, and Potential Mediators in Two Longitudinal Cohorts of Adolescents” examines crime among youth, particularly the relationship between arts participation and antisocial or criminalized behaviors. Utilizing data from two UK-based longitudinal cohorts, the study found that engagement in arts and cultural activities was associated with a reduced likelihood of engaging in antisocial or criminalized behaviors. This relationship was partially mediated by factors such as improved emotional regulation, increased social connectedness, and enhanced cognitive development. The findings suggest that fostering arts participation among adolescents

may serve as an effective strategy for promoting positive behavioral outcomes and preventing antisocial behaviors (Bone, 2022).

Findings

Crime in Riverdale Park

Within Prince George’s County, the Riverdale area ranks 33rd highest in violent crime out of the county’s 70 beats – beats are the patrol areas that the county is divided into (Prince George’s County, 2025). In 2024, stolen cars, thefts from vehicles, and theft were the most common forms of violent crime (the chart excludes domestic violence and vehicle accidents).



Violent Crime in Riverdale,

When speaking to the Riverdale Park Police, however, the department shared that Riverdale Park’s town center was not a crime hotspot (J. Walch, March 31, 2025). The department highlighted cases of drug use, assault, and homicide that occurred a couple of miles away from the town center across the Northeast Branch of the Anacostia River, specifying East-West Highway and Kenilworth Avenue as hotspots.

Juvenile crime in the county is a growing issue. Carjackings have become an incident of particular concern over the past few years, and juveniles accounted for over half of carjacking arrests in Prince George’s County in 2023 (Aziz, 2023, p. 6). The Riverdale Park Police

Department noted that the town center's train station and ample parking space made it a location that could attract illicit juvenile activity or delinquency (J. Walch, March 31, 2025).

When addressing crime in Riverdale Park, it's important to consider crime statistics trends and the police department's understanding of the area. In accounting for both viewpoints, it's important to understand crime from a regional rather than town-focused perspective and that growing concerns of juvenile delinquency are addressed.

The Role of Placemaking

As part of preexisting placemaking efforts, Prince George's County Parks and Recreation under the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission runs programming across the county that targets youth and children. This programming consists of free recreation events, such as Zumba and sports tournaments; academic, arts, and sports classes (both free and for a fee); and summer and after-school programs. Larger recreational programs are hosted in different parks in Riverdale Park, College Park, and Berwyn Heights, one or two times during the summer and about once a quarter, drawing between 100 to 200 patrons. There remains a need, however, for more free, frequent, youth-centered programming that goes beyond recreational activities to draw at-risk youth away from criminal activity.

Daniel Sams noted that Riverdale Park, like many communities, faces a complex balance between growth and maintaining its character. While the area is not widely recognized as an arts hub, there are some artistic elements, such as those in the Bear Square shopping area near the Riverdale Park station. Despite the limited presence of large-scale arts projects, there is strong support for creative placemaking as a tool for revitalization.

An effort of the 2006 Gateway Arts District Sector Plan was to rebrand Riverdale Park and neighboring towns like Hyattsville as arts destinations, encouraging the integration of art

into development and community spaces. Yet, broader challenges remain. Redevelopment is difficult due to limited space, and while residents want improved housing, there is concern that increased development could be disruptive in existing residential areas. The community is navigating how to grow in a way that meets these competing priorities.

Riverdale Park has untapped potential, including underutilized spaces and parking lots that could be repurposed to serve community needs. The area has evolved significantly since becoming a municipality in 1998, and there is a growing sense that meaningful development is taking place. The emergence of new town centers, particularly after the pandemic, signals that Riverdale Park is beginning to experience a period of growth, with creative placemaking at the forefront of this transformation.

Arts in Placemaking

Creative placemaking is a tool for cultivating social and economic development and can be effective when it focuses on community needs and collaboration. Creative placemaking projects should foster partnerships and cross-sector collaboration, vital to ensuring that the product is successful and benefits the community. A National Institutes of Health study found that more arts and cultural engagement was associated with fewer reportedly antisocial or criminalized behaviors (RACBs). Similarly, more arts and cultural engagement was associated with more negative attitudes towards RACBs.

From conversations with the client, we gathered that there isn't necessarily a gap in the arts in Riverdale Park. Rather, all the resources exist to bring the community together; the goal is to increase engagement by using and enhancing the many communal spaces in the town center. There are two or three open spaces that could be used as parks and for gathering, streets for the

farmers market, restaurants, a yoga studio, and a bike path that attracts people from all over the area.

In discussions with the PALS team and a Riverdale Park local, we realized these spaces could be elevated. For example, a local band could play on farmers market days. The goal is to create more reasons for the community to come together in person. There is also vacant real estate that could bring more business, potentially retail, to the area.

Bryant-Moore pointed out that creative placemaking can be a key driver of public safety, civic pride, and economic vitality. The “Our Town” model shows how arts interventions build social cohesion and activate underutilized spaces. She emphasized that Riverdale Park’s town center, with its surplus parking lots, local businesses, and farmers market, is an ideal site for arts-led revitalization. She highlighted the importance of ongoing, community-led arts programming that encourages youth engagement.

Arts programming—such as public performances, rotating exhibitions, and hands-on workshops—not only beautifies a space but builds relationships, fosters belonging, and increases foot traffic, which naturally discourages crime. Programs like Mount Rainier, Maryland’s “Art Lives Here” initiative, show that arts-led pop-ups and performances can transform public perceptions of safety, boost local businesses, and create momentum for community development. PGAHC has successfully partnered with organizations like Artbae, LLC to deliver youth-focused arts programs across the county. Bryant-Moore encouraged us to think beyond one-time events and focus on sustainable, flexible programming that evolves based on what the community needs.

Creative placemaking also offers the potential for layered community benefits beyond youth engagement. By integrating civic programming into arts events, such as voter registration

drives, public health workshops, or small business showcases, the town center could serve as a platform for community-wide engagement. These integrations allow arts events to evolve into multipurpose community touchpoints, increasing their relevance, sustainability, and long-term public value. This approach also supports broader municipal goals by building bridges between youth programming, public health, and local economic development.

Discussion and Recommendations

Discussion

The findings support the use of interactive, community-driven arts programming as a meaningful strategy to build relationships, promote belonging, reduce violence, and bolster community togetherness. The main recommendation, an art and music series in Riverdale Park, directly addresses the core research question of how to foster social cohesion and engagement among community youth. By emphasizing youth voice, visibility, and leadership, this monthly, arts-based placemaking initiative allows young people to serve as participants and co-creators of public space and cultural programming.

This recommendation aligns closely with the client's broader goals of youth empowerment, community building, and increased access to the arts. Through partnerships with the Prince George's Arts and Humanities Council, local schools, and farmers markets, the proposal leverages existing community infrastructure to create inclusive and sustainable opportunities for cultural expression. It also advances policy priorities around equitable placemaking, intergenerational engagement, and local artist support, making it highly relevant to both organizational and municipal contexts.

However, several limitations and considerations for future exploration remain. The long-term sustainability of the program will depend on consistent funding and resource allocation; further planning should explore diverse funding streams, including grants, sponsorships, or municipal support. Additionally, ensuring broad and representative youth participation will be critical. Attention should be given to accessibility, safety during nighttime programming, and culturally responsive outreach to engage youth across diverse backgrounds. Finally, developing an evaluation framework to assess program success over time would strengthen the initiative's ability to evolve and scale effectively. Some of those determinants could be the success of social cohesion, leadership development, and overall community satisfaction.

The findings and the recommendation point to a promising model for youth-centered placemaking, with strong potential to meet the client's goals and contribute meaningfully to community development in Riverdale Park.

Recommendation

Primary Recommendation: A Nighttime Art and Music Series in the Park

Timeline: Programming one to two times per month, with potential to increase in frequency

What: Fostering social cohesion among youth in Riverdale Park through a recurring, nighttime arts-based placemaking program that centers youth voice, visibility, and vitality. Local artists, musicians, bands, writers, poets, and other creatives would be brought in for monthly workshops in the park or other town center venues between 8pm and 12am for youth and young adults.

Policy Summary: This series would feature youth-led art installations, music performances, digital media showcases, and cultural food vendors, designed in collaboration with local youth

through pop-up planning labs and peer-led curation teams. It can also provide youth with leadership experience in organizing these monthly events.

Implementation: Implementing the art and music series would begin by establishing a planning committee composed of local youth, community leaders, and representatives from the Prince George's Arts and Humanities Council (PGAHC). One full-time Youth Community Coordinator would be hired and housed in the Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation, with supplemental support from two part-time staff. These staff would oversee student internships and youth leadership, logistical operations regarding location and partners, and other tasks as needed.

Ideally, another facet of this project would be to create monthly planning labs in accessible community spaces such as libraries, community centers, or schools, where youth can co-design programming, select themes, and curate artists and performances. The Youth Community Coordinator would partner with the local farmers market to coordinate event dates and locations, encouraging cross-promotion and integrating cultural food vendors to enhance the experience. Local artists, musicians, writers, and poets would be engaged through PGAHC's network, and artists would be paid stipends for leading interactive workshops and performances.

Additional partners would include Prince George's County Public Schools, the Town of Riverdale Park, the Riverdale Park Police Department, local businesses situated in and around the town center, and other nonprofit and community groups in the town. It would also be beneficial to create youth leadership roles, such as event coordinators, outreach liaisons, and marketing interns, offering mentorship and hands-on experience. The event would be promoted widely through schools, social media, and community bulletin boards to ensure inclusive participation. As the initiative grows through outreach, rapport, and sustainability, it could be

implemented more frequently (up to once a week) or even expanded beyond Riverdale Park into similar communities with the intent of bridging community divides across Prince George's County.

Additional Recommendation: Integrating Civic and Community Services

To build on the strengths of the art and music series, we recommend incorporating cross-sector programming into monthly events. This might include inviting public health educators to host wellness sessions, collaborating with voter outreach groups to register residents, or creating space for local entrepreneurs to promote and sell goods. These additions enrich the content of each event and support broader aspects of civic life. Strengthening partnerships across town departments and community organizations can make the series more inclusive, meaningful, and impactful in the long term.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Increased youth engagement and civic leadership
- Enhanced social cohesion and sense of place
- Greater foot traffic and economic spillover for local businesses
- Positive shifts in perceptions of public safety
- Integration between communities on both sides of the Anacostia River

Evaluation and Metrics for Success:

1. Youth Engagement and Leadership

- Track the number of youth participants, planning lab attendees, and leadership roles filled.
- Conduct pre- and post-event surveys on youth involvement and leadership roles within the community and their homes.
- Collect testimonials and conduct short interviews with youth participants.

2. Community Participation and Social Cohesion

- Track event attendance, repeat visitors, and diversity of attendees (age, background).
Use feedback surveys to measure changes in sense of belonging, safety, and trust in community spaces.
- Monitor social media engagement (event hashtags, shares, and sentiment analysis).

3. Economic Impact and Business Engagement

- Survey local businesses on event-day foot traffic and revenue changes.
- Track the participation of local vendors, artists, and entrepreneurs in community gatherings over time.

4. Public Safety Perception

- Conduct pre/post-event surveys with residents about perceived safety in Riverdale Park's town center.
- Gather qualitative feedback from police and community leaders on neighborhood activity and safety trends.

5. Long-Term Impact

- Review data quarterly to identify trends in youth participation, community cohesion, and business engagement.
- Use results to adjust programming and secure funding from public and private sources.

By building on PGAHC's existing arts infrastructure and community partnerships, this initiative can turn Riverdale Park's town center into a hub of creativity, connection, and public safety, both for youth and the community at large.

Conclusion

An arts and music series in Riverdale Park's town center will provide the town's youth and community at large a sustainable, youth-driven initiative that has the potential to take existing infrastructure and transform it into a vibrant community gathering space. By partnering with local stakeholders, from nonprofits to local businesses, this strategy harnesses the power of creative placemaking to foster youth leadership, strengthen social cohesion, and deter juvenile crime. By capitalizing on the town center's potential and updating current youth engagement practices, gaps in juvenile crime prevention can be addressed, and the people of Riverdale Park can enjoy a revitalized space while supporting the next generation.

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