

EJ program helps a Detroit community get the greenspace they want

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What do you see on your way to school? Vacant homes? Fire-damaged buildings surrounded by debris? Empty lots that have become illegal dumping grounds for household appliances and other waste? This is the landscape surrounding the Universal Academy in southwest Detroit. The landscape is dangerous and ugly. It contributes to negative attitudes about the community. But what if you wanted to do something to change that?



Every two years, EPA offers several Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving, or EJPCS, Cooperative Agreements to community groups energized to make positive changes in the local environment. The agreements provide up to \$120,000 for community groups to implement effective local solutions.

The 2014 award recipient in Region 5, the Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision Project is using the EJPCS funding and the collaborative problem-solving model to clean up illegal dumping sites in the community. In the last six months, three sites were identified and assessed for improvement. SDEV hosted three neighborhood cleanup days to begin preparing the sites for development into greenspace and gardens for the community. Using

the Collaborative Problem Solving model, the group leveraged a number of resources including:

- Volunteers from the community and Universal School students.
- EPA grant funding and support for soil testing.
- Detroit Land Bank Authority for legal access to abandoned lots.
- In-kind donations of dumpsters, cleanup supplies, trees and plants.

SDEV is off to a great start. The Office of Environmental Justice accepts EJPCS proposals in odd numbered years. Know of a community organization that might be interested in this opportunity? Send them over to www3.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/index.html for more information. Join the EJ listserv and stay up to date.

