



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**End Community Violence Now and Operation West Laurel
Launch Sussex County Peace and Prosperity Project with
\$93,000 Grant from Healthy Communities Delaware**

Through the revitalization of neglected public spaces and other physical improvements, Sussex County will regain a sense of safety, dignity, and health

LAUREL – Today, [End Community Violence Now](#) (ECVN) Delaware and Operation West Laurel (OWL) announced that they have secured a \$93,000 grant from [Healthy Communities Delaware](#) (HCD) to launch the Sussex County Peace and Prosperity Project. The grant will be used towards implementing Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Strategies such as prioritizing physical improvements that directly address environmental contributors to violence.

ECVN and OWL will work side by side with local residents to lead a participatory planning process focused on enhancing and reclaiming key public spaces throughout West Laurel. The vision is to create vibrant, welcoming, and well-maintained gathering places that reflect the pride and spirit of the community. Through community beautification events, building of community gardens, and resident-designed public art, the initiative hopes to facilitate community engagement, and healing.

"The Sussex County Peace and Prosperity Project reflects our commitment to supporting the West Laurel community," said Lauren Footman, Executive Director of ECVN. "Together, we are collaborating with residents to design and enhance public spaces that foster connection, safety, and joy."

CPTED works to discourage undesirable behavior and criminal activity through the proper design and effective use of the built environment. [Studies have shown](#) that CPTED strategies and implementation have been able to reduce crime and improve public safety by more than 60 percent. This includes:

- Designing landscapes that allow clear, unobstructed views of surrounding areas;
- Improving visibility with lighting or transparent building materials;
- Strategically designing streets, sidewalks, building entrances and landscaping to physically obstruct or guide access by people and vehicles; and
- Supporting the "Broken Window Theory" that one "broken window" or nuisance, if ignored, will lead to others and ultimately to the decline of an entire neighborhood.

"We know that West Laurel is full of resilient, committed neighbors who care deeply about our community," said Amy Handy of Co-Founder, of Operation West Laurel. "This project gives us the chance to turn that commitment into action—creating a space that families can enjoy, children can feel safe in, and everyone can be proud of. It's a step toward long-term peace and prosperity for our neighborhood."

The Sussex County Peace and Prosperity Project officially launched on July 27 at New Zion United Methodist Church in Laurel, Delaware. At the community meeting, West Laurel residents – including Mayor Carlos Oliveras – were introduced to the initiative and invited to share their input through a community survey.

Over the next 10 months, ECVN and OWL will host interactive workshops on the basics of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), Advocacy 101 to support residents in effectively engaging government for sustainable solutions, and community resiliency and healing through nature and connection. These sessions, together with community design meetings and town halls, will ensure residents remain central to every decision, help shape the final designs for revitalized public spaces, and provide ongoing opportunities for input. The next community beautification event is **Saturday, September 13, 2025 at 10 am starting at New Zion United Methodist Church located 1042 West 6th Street in Laurel, Delaware**. This project is made possible through support from Healthy Communities Delaware.

Residents can still complete the community [survey](#) to share their feedback and perspectives on safety and neighborhood priorities.

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End Community Violence Now (ECVN) is the state of Delaware's community-based Office of Violence Prevention. This public-private partnership seeks to break the cycle of violence through coordinated and sustained investments in evidence-based programs. This includes community engagement and education campaigns, policy advocacy, stakeholder strategy, as well as offering technical assistance and grant-making support to local organizations on the ground doing the difficult, but necessary work. ECVN envisions a future where all Delawareans are safe from the rising threat of gun violence.