Planting Connections:
How Urban Gardens Enhance Community Participation

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Jubilee Gardens

- Youngstown, Ohio
- Briar Hill region
- Only community gardening organization in Youngstown that owns land, machinery, and has a paid employee
- Space for 32 gardeners on approximately 2 acres
Research Question

Does participation in community gardening lead to participation in other community projects or programs?
Thesis

By analyzing qualitative interviews with gardeners at Jubilee Gardens, this study examines how participation in urban agriculture creates networks between participants that leads to their involvement in other community projects and programs.
Literature Review

- Popularization of Local Agriculture:
  - Shinew, Glover and Parry (2004)
  - Macias (2008)
  - Premat (2005)
  - Wakefield, Yeudall, Taron, Reynolds and Skinner (2007)
  - Guthman (2008)
Literature Review

- Creation of Community Networks
  - Andreatta (2008)
  - Armstrong (2000)
  - Hollander, Pallagst, Schwarz and Popper’s (2009)
Literature Review

- Impact of Community Gardens on Neighborhood
  - Alkon and Norgaard (2009)
  - Armstrong (2000)
  - Blair, Giesecke and Sherman (1991)
  - Voicu and Been (2006)
Theory
Community development theory

Tamas (2000)

- Systems & Subsystems
- Boundaries
- Open vs. Closed Systems
- Communities as Networks
Methodology

- Face-to-Face qualitative interviews
- 15 Open ended questions
- 12 Participants, 6 male, 6 female
- Ages 46-66, average 54
- 7 inner-city residents, 5 suburban residents
- Strengths/Weaknesses
Findings

Participant Experience in Jubilee Gardens

Table 1: Origins of Participant Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invited by Friend</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Advertisement</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited by Family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended Event at Garden</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (N=12)</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Well, I still garden at my home but I like the idea of helping people who don’t have their own gardens and don’t have much knowledge about it and as a gardener you always have extra food so I like being able to give it away and give it to people. So, and to promote green space. I like that idea. You know, so the land has some use and also to help, especially younger generations, just to get an idea about what gardening is.”
“Through Jubilee Gardens I got involved with the Men’s Garden Club and through the Men’s Garden Club I have met a number of people as well. We are going to an event they are having tomorrow at Mill Creek Park. I am getting to meet more people. We don’t have a big social circle, just with work and not having money to go out and socialize very much, so this gives us a good socialization that we hadn’t had for a while because of our financial situation. So I have enjoyed it because I have gotten to meet a lot of people that I may not have met otherwise.”
“My work in community gardening at Jubilee has led to participation with other organizations such as Lien Forward, which does land reclamation; GTECH, a similar organization in the Pittsburg area, and NEOFoodWeb.org, which is an organization working on many different food issues in northeastern Ohio. I have also become aware of a number of organizations that are leading the way, the best example being GrowingPower.org, Will Allen’s organization in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which I was able to visit in October, 2009.”
Discussion

- Personal relationships have a strong influence over the activities in which people get involved in.

- As community connectedness increases, levels of involvement in community activities increase also.

- Lasting effects on children
Discussion

- Most of the projects and programs participants got involved in were related to greening the community.

- Those that had lived longer in the Youngstown community and participated in the Jubilee Community for the longest period of time were the ones that were more involved in the community.

- This attitude may indicate that a majority of gardeners at Jubilee Gardens have a strong sense of commitment to the community, which may explain their initial involvement in community gardening.
Thank You!

QUESTIONS?