

## CHANDLER PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN

The main objective of the grant received from the Community Foundation of Southeast MI (CFSEM) was to conduct a collaboration amongst stakeholders in the 48213, 48214, 48215, 48205, and 48224 zip codes to address the healthy food insecurity within the previous mentioned zip codes. Other purposes were to increase awareness of the importance of eating healthy food; promoting productive and constructive activity for youth on Detroit's Eastside; fostering entrepreneurship amongst youth and families, and fostering the intergenerational relationships. The first step was to identify a subject matter expert in abating food insecurity and garden development. Then facilitating focus groups with residents in various communities within the catchment area. The Chandler Park Conservancy (CPC) took the lead on the project and identified Keep Growing Detroit (KGD) whose mission is to create a food sovereign city where most of the produce consumed by Detroiters are grown in the city by residents.

Keep Growing Detroit went out to Chandler Park and collected several soil samples in various parts of the park to determine the soil quality and the most feasible location to develop a community garden. They then sent the samples to University of Massachusetts Extension to analyze the samples.




In the meantime, Chandler Park Conservancy and Keep Growing Detroit hosted four community meetings with residents in the Chandler Park, Ravendale, and Parkside communities as well as a separate session with the youth, parents, and leadership of the Detroit Police Athletic League team Detroit Titans. The purpose of these

meetings was to share the conceptual master plan for Chandler Park and gauge the interest of residents in participating in a community garden. There were approximately 80 stakeholders who participated in the focus groups including 15 youth. We also conducted a tour of five urban community gardens in Detroit which varied in size and purpose. From the community gatherings, the shared vision was created: *The Chandler Park Community Garden conceptual design is a community designed and operated space that is productive, inviting, and full of fruits and vegetables which promotes healthy eating. The space is not only easily accessible but it fosters intergenerational relationships and generates new recreational and economic opportunities for residents.*

From the soil analysis, the decision for the garden size was determined to be .6 acres. After the tour CPC and KGD facilitated three more focus groups to glean information from residents about design and planting options. KGD develop 3 potential designs based upon the information residents provided and presented each. There was a final design, and growing plan developed and presented to the residents.

## Results/Outcomes

The project objectives per the grant proposal were:

1. **Increase the availability of, and access to fresh food on Detroit's Eastside:** 32 residents participated in classes and networking to learn how to garden. The participants of the Chandler Park Garden Club received seeds and transplants of their choice to grow in their home gardens and technical support for starting home gardens. Also, a seminar on vegetable gardening 101 was conducted via Michigan State University Extension. This was to start preparing resident gardeners for operating the community garden.  

2. **Increase awareness of the importance of eating fresh and healthily cooked foods:** Several classes were conducted to educate residents on healthy foods, diseases associated with unhealthy diets and alternative cooking methods.
3. **An enhancement in productive and constructive activities for youth on Detroit's Eastside:** the youth who maintained involvement have parents or relatives who have interests in gardening and work with them on this project.
4. **A trained group of youth who understand the food security chain and the basics of food entrepreneurship:** The garden has been designed to support a youth entrepreneurship program. The entrepreneur component will be worked out with Keep Growing Detroit and Genesis Hope CDC once we secure the funding to build the garden.
5. **The provision of fresh free food on Detroit's Eastside:** The Chandler Park Conservancy fundraising committee and CPC staff is actively seeking funding for the development of the community garden. Upon completion of the community garden free provisions will be given to members of the garden club and local residents.
6. **An increase in the number of family-owned garden plots on Detroit's Eastside:** Of the participants who participated in the focus groups there were six families who were first time gardeners and started their own home gardens.

## **Lessons Learned**

1. Educating residents about the importance of healthy eating in an urban community has challenges. Most residents didn't know what a food desert is. We need to include basic nutrition and healthy cooking classes.
2. Gardening as a constructive activity amongst youth is challenging. To have youth involvement there needs to be an interactive gardening component. Youth like to see an immediate return on investment.
3. There are a lot of residents in the community are very knowledgeable about gardening and want to share their knowledge.
4. Some residents underestimated what goes into the development, building and maintenance of a community garden. This process has increased their understanding.

## **Future Plans**

Chandler Park Conservancy has organized the Chandler Park Community Club garden which consists of approximately 30 residents from the 48213 zip code. There has been and will continue to be educational assistance as it relates to gardening, blue/green infrastructure, and other topics the garden club decides upon. There were several individuals who took part in the MSU Master's gardener training which was a 16 week course and they will facilitate future meetings and outreach. Chandler Park Conservancy fundraising committee and staff are actively looking for funding opportunities for the Chandler Park Community Garden.

## **Financials (See attached budget)**

The grant monies were utilized to develop a conceptual community garden design and site plan. The plan developed by stakeholders and Keep Growing Detroit includes an elaborate garden design, one-year operating budget, and a detailed planting schedule. The costs for a CPC staff person to facilitate community engagement, outreach, and marketing for the community engagement meetings was included. Additionally, soil assessments were conducted to identify potential sites for the community garden. Finally, scholarships were awarded to residents to participate in the Michigan State University Master Gardener's 16-week class and refreshments were provided at all community engagements.

## **How this grant helped improve the quality of life in your region**

This project helped to improve the quality of life for participants by providing an opportunity for residents with different levels of gardening experience to network and share knowledge. To give new gardeners the confidence and skills to start their own gardens. To experience the benefits of fresh out of the garden produce, and address food security in the community. As a result some residents have included more vegetables into their diet.

# Chandler Park NeighborHUB Community Hoop House Project.

A few years ago the Chandler Park Community participated in a project to increase awareness on issues related to food security, eating healthy food, and the barriers that come with both. The community-based project team came to several conclusions, among their recommendation included the establishment of a community garden. The concept of the garden is to grow fruits and vegetables with and for the community, teach residents how to prepare produce, and take advantage of intergenerational relationships that were built during the planning process. The garden would also be a place to build a sense of community, a space to have A dialogue on community issues, and a space to share information.

We are proposing creating the first phase of the community garden. In this case, a NeighborHUB that is centered on a community garden by establishing a hoop-house to grow produce year-round. The NeighborHUB/community garden will be a place to grow produce to distribute to those who volunteer in the garden and for our most vulnerable neighbors, like seniors and those with restricted mobility. We found in some of our research, that some people don't know how to prepare what might come straight from a garden. We are partnering will a chef from a local catering business to teach residents how to prepare what comes out of the garden. We also plan to set up a farmers market to sell products to help sustain and expand the garden.

If you would like to get involved, contact Yvette Bass-Pullom at [yvettejoy.cpc@gmail.com](mailto:yvettejoy.cpc@gmail.com) or 313-499-1956.





# Chandler Park NeighborHUB Community Hoop House Project.



Sample Hoop House