COMMUNITY URBAN GREENING: CURBING DISORDER AND BUILDING
ASSETS—THE CASE OF FLINT, MI

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ABSTRACT

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Community urban greening activities are increasingly used as a strategy to revitalize postindustrial urban space. While critical scholars, such as urban political ecologists (UPE), suggest these initiatives legitimate a retreat of the state and deepen urban inequality, community development scholars argue that community benefits emerge from such activities. This dissertation proposes a middle ground between these divergent perspectives by examining multiple aspects of community urban greening as a development strategy. Using research questions derived from both UPE and from the Community Capitals Framework (CCF), which focuses on community asset building, I compare case studies of five community groups in Flint, MI taking part in community urban greening projects. Findings illustrate that while community urban greening strategies may be undertaken within a constricted political structure, residents believe there are many localized benefits involved with greening. Many of the projects work to make up for the reduction in city services that has taken place as a result of municipal devolution. Despite these positive findings, this case also offers examples of varying success in relation to urban greening and highlights certain variables associated with community greening sustainability. This research contributes to timely discussions on repurposing vacant land and revitalizing neighborhoods in postindustrial cities. While this is a very salient issue in Flint, similar strategies are being used across the country as a way to adjust to shrinking municipal budgets.

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INTRODUCTION

The Rise of Urban Greening

In recent decades the prominence of urban greening programs has been on the rise both in conjunction with rapid urbanization in metropolitan areas of the developing world (Zhou and Wang 2011) and with the decline of postindustrial cities in the West (Schilling 2011; Wiechmann and Pallagast 2012; Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012). Additionally, heightened public awareness of environmental problems such as climate change and the rise of the environmental justice movement have also spurred an increase in implementing greening in order to create a more just society (Perkins 2009; Eckerd 2010; Bowler and Buyung-Ali 2011; Wolf 2012). These greening initiatives include expanding greenways and parks, river reclamation, urban forestry, urban farming, and urban gardening. Social scientists and urban planners have argued that initiatives like these have multiple social, economic, and environmental benefits. These include providing access to fresh and local food, education on gardening and greening, a setting for social interaction and exercise, as well as developing sites for the production of essential ecosystem services such as air filtration, noise reduction, and storm water drainage and treatment (Wolf 2012). Furthermore, in postindustrial shrinking cities such as Detroit, Michigan and Youngstown, Ohio, where there is an abundance of vacant land, these strategies serve as opportunities to positively transform urban landscapes that have been left behind by industry (Logan and Schilling 2008).

In the context of the postindustrial setting many of these cities face additional challenges as a result of deindustrialization including population decline, high

unemployment and poverty rates, social hardships, and increasing crime. With limited municipal budgets and a lack of business investment many of these cities and community groups within them, have turned to urban greening as a strategy to mitigate the effects of deindustrialization and the many local problems that it creates (Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012). As such, urban greening initiatives such as expanding parks, adopting lots, and urban gardening are often viewed by multiple stakeholders as part of a broad solution for a set of complex and highly interrelated social, economic, political, and environmental issues.

The idea of urban greening and community based greening activities often draws fourth romanticized images involving the shared maintenance of park space, children playing, and the cultivation of local food. Within the era of heighten awareness of environmental pollution and global climate change, these activities are generally taken as a "self-evident good" that is supported by policy makers and community members alike (Ogawa 2009). This is especially true in shrinking city environments where vacant land is in abundance and often the vastest asset. While there is evidence to support the positive claims on the attributes of urban greening as a strategy to mitigate the long-term effects of deindustrialization, greater interrogation of these programs is needed. Specifically, critical scholars point out that these greening activities are often built with a neoliberal framework that emphasizes community self-improvement as opposed to holding local government and power structures accountable for urban inequality.

Goal of the Dissertation

The main goal of this research is to investigate both sides of the debate surrounding urban greening projects as a community development strategy. Current

arguments on urban greening are often presented in a very disparate fashion, with little thought to the "middle ground" that can develop from greening or the factors that may need to be present for greening success. On one hand, community urban greening projects are viewed as very empowering for local communities. In contrast, some scholars, while sometimes acknowledging the empowering aspects of community urban greening, suggest that these strategies work to deepen urban inequality and legitimate a retreat of the state in relation to caring for public spaces.

I investigate these broader issues through a comparative case study in Flint, Michigan. I argue that urban greening activities in the city of Flint are embedded within a neoliberal ideology and shared governance structure that highlights the importance of individual responsibility and meritocracy in relation to neighborhood revitalization and community empowerment. This ideology comes as a result of Flint largely being neglected within the larger economic system as a result of deindustrialization.

Despite this critique, I also suggest that the process of urban greening contains many benefits, one being that residents view greening activities as a tangible means to address disorder conditions. Furthermore, I suggest that the benefits entailed in greening may actually be more important than the greening itself through the development of key assets such as social and political capital. As a result, I suggest that the very structural focused Urban Political Ecology analysis is made more holistic by including an analysis of the potential for community empowerment imbued with community urban greening strategies at the local level. I refer to this as "Empowered UPE" and attend to this task by utilizing the Community Capitals Framework, a systems perspective that analyzes the growth of community assets through investments into multiple types of community

capital. To investigate these ideas further, I broadly address the two research questions outlined below (additional sub-questions are outlined in the literature review).

1) How do local organizations and institutions support and promote community urban greening in the city of Flint?

2) What kinds of benefits do participants perceive to be associated with engaging in urban greening as a process?

These research questions are geared toward understanding the prominence of urban greening in the city of Flint as they focus on investigating the source of urban greening programs and the various benefits that actual participants perceive to accompany participation in urban greening activities.

Selection of Frameworks

I have selected Urban Political Ecology (UPE) as one guiding framework for my dissertation research as the ultimate goal of UPE is to investigate the development of highly uneven environments and to illustrate the inextricable link between the urban and nature (Swyndegouw and Heynen 2003). Furthermore, this framework allows us to understand the different choices that communities make about the "natural" environment within the local political, economic, and social context (Robbins 2004). In essence, the UPE framework focuses on understanding issues of inequality, access, and support in relation to urban space and local communities. I use this framework and the concept of neoliberalism (often engaged with by political ecology scholars) to interrogate the political, social, financial, and economic landscape in the city of Flint, in relation to the support and promotion of community urban greening projects across the city.

The second framework I use stems from the community development field and explicitly focuses on the development of local assets as a way to empower community residents. The Community Capitals Framework (CCF), as a heuristic tool has shown great success within rural communities struggling to survive within the modern era dictated by high technology and industrial farming (Emery and Flora 2006). The essential contribution of the CCF is it is a framework that illustrates from a systems perspective how the investment in one community asset can help to grow additional assets that may not appear at the surface to have anything to do with the investment in the original asset. In this sense, I utilize this framework to understand the benefits that Flint residents find spurring from urban greening projects.

These two frameworks at first appear to be contradictory their approach and scale of analysis. The UPE framework is poignantly critical by examining the broad scale intention behind and access to power in relation to land use decisions. The CCF, on the other hand, is much more positive in nature by postulating that all communities have assets, no matter their position within the lager socioeconomic context, and also by focusing what can be developed from community support and investment into existing assets. More broadly speaking, research that utilizes the CCF in rural areas also acknowledges that rural communities are in the position they are in due to large-scale structural change and social and environmental inequality that is highlighted by political ecology scholars. Despite the differences between the frameworks, I suggest that they actually complement each other in a unique way.

UPE highlights the macro processes of urban political relations and the broader social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental context of service delivery

configurations being created in the ever-changing urban environment. The critical lens entailed in this perspective highlights the pitfalls that are associated with urban greening and shared governance strategies that are at play in cities across the nation. Mainly, critiques from this perspective would suggest that current arrangements are not suitable for promoting the conditions of equitable social and environmental development and that supporting such programs also supports and reinforces a retreat of the government in terms of financial and social responsibility.

In contrast, the CCF illustrates the community capacity that can be developed within a constrained urban environment marked by marginalization and lack of resources. It is this capacity that can in turn empower residents and may give them the resources to demand responsibility from the state. As such, these two frameworks provide a nice way of viewing both the macro level issues while also centering on specific, localized impacts and responses to large scale social and environmental problems and the decisions made about these issues within a shrinking city context.

I attend to investigating my questions through these frameworks with an ethnographic field study that centers on five community sites within the city of Flint. Two of these sites center their greening activity on community gardening, while two focus explicitly on greenspace maintenance and beautification. One site combines both gardening and greenspace maintenance strategies. The next chapter sets the stage for my research by examining the structural conditions of Flint, Michigan. It is these conditions that have led to the prominence of community urban greening across the city.

CH.1 FLINT, MI: THE POSTERCHILD OF INDUSTRIAL DECLINE

This research examines the maintenance of vacant lots, public park space, and the creation of community gardens within a shrinking city that is in the midst of economic crisis as indicated by the presence of an emergency financial manager. With the lack of funds to attend to basic greenspace maintenance, partnerships between local community groups, private institutions, and non-profits are encouraged as a means to maintain and develop greenspace within local communities. This strategy known as "shared governance," has been identified as accompanying the rise of the neoliberalization of the American economy, which focuses on devolution and privatization of services as well as an ethic of personal responsibility or citizenship.

These partnerships not only save the municipality money, but also essentially place the responsibility of the maintenance of greenspace within the hands of local populations. Critical urban ecology scholars have heavily critiqued this strategy as a result of the potential for the development of uneven urban landscapes that it entails. Namely, they suggest that leaving the maintenance of public spaces to shared governance arrangements is likely to maintain urban inequalities as those social groups that already have social advantages will have more resources to be able to maintain and beautify public spaces, while marginalized populations will have less access to resources due to historical disinvestment. These scholars also suggest that placing community development through urban greening within the hands of residents also legitimates a retreat of the state in relation the provision of service and the maintenance of public space.

Despite these critiques, research also indicates that community greening can be viewed as a "stepping stone" to growing community empowerment and developing additional community assets. The research presented here suggests that community based urban greening efforts in the city of Flint are viewed by residents as an tangible way to attempt to help make up for the reduction of multiple city services as a result of population decline and fiscal crisis. Primarily, community urban greening is viewed as a way to improve the physical environment in a way that can work to prevent further disorder conditions and may also work to deter crime. Residents also indicate that this greening work improves the level of social trust within the neighborhoods, which can work to increase community social interaction within a context that is marked by high crime rates. Residents perceive this increase in social interaction as an element needed to build additional community assets or to pursue other community development efforts. In this sense, greening activities are taken on essentially out of necessity in an attempt to maintain a positive quality of life, but can also work to have empowering effects for those participating in greening and living in the area.

Flint, Michigan

Flint, Michigan was selected as the site for this research for a variety of reasons. Primarily, the city has approximately 22,000 vacant and abandoned lots, which results in miles of open greenspace (Fonger 2013). Secondly, there are numerous organizations, initiatives, and grant programs throughout the city that promote urban greening activities. While this is not uncommon in postindustrial cities in Michigan and throughout the Midwest, conducting research in Flint provides an opportunity to understand the process of urban greening in a mid-sized city, as compared to a larger city such as Detroit where

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much of the research on urban greening has stemmed from. Finally, the site location offered a convenience sample due to previous research that I have been involved in throughout the duration of my graduate career.

As a former hub of the industrial Midwest, the city of Flint has moved in and out of national spotlight for many decades, usually recognized for some adverse event or ranking. Most notable was the closing of several General Motors Co. (GM) plants in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which culminated in the loss of thousands of lucrative industrial jobs. This deindustrialization was made a national topic of discussion with filmmaker Michael Moore's 1989 documentary *Roger and Me*, which detailed the loss of the GM jobs, the subsequent consequences of these losses for the city, and Moore's failed quest to meet with GM CEO, Roger Smith. An outcome of deindustrialization not as apparent in the film was the mass out migration that the loss of industrial jobs spurred. Since 1960 when the city was at its peak population of 200,000 residents, Flint has lost over half of its population and now resides at fewer than 100,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2013). The combined consequences of deindustrialization and the depopulation of Flint have resulted in somewhat of a "perfect storm" of economic, political, social, and environmental problems. I look closer at each of these issues below.

In some respects, Flint is an outlier in terms of the extreme set of social, financial, political, and ecological problems that have accompanied deindustrialization. While other rustbelt cities have dealt with similar issues many of these cities such as Pittsburg, PA, Buffalo, NY, and Milwaukee, WI have seen gains in financial and population recovery. These gains are largely attributed to early investments into the diversification of local

economies as well as a lack of a housing bubble and bust[1] during the recent recession (Florida 2011). Alternatively, cities like Detroit, Flint, and similarly sized Youngstown, Ohio remain in the midst of turmoil, suggesting that not all rustbelt cities currently have the capability to transform and adapt to the conditions of the new global economy. In cities like Flint basic municipal services and resident amenities become the grounds for the creation of additional social problems.

For instance, the overgrown nature of abandoned lots and parks has been attributed to increasing crime and social disorder in cities under similar conditions such as Detroit (Dick 2007). While this may not be a common occurrence in all cities, Flint provides an interesting case in relation to resident mobilization in regard to manipulating greenspace as a way to improve social order. While the manipulation of public space is not a new concept within planning or urban literature, the Flint case provides us an opportunity to examine this manipulation in relation to the access to, control over, and maintenance of greenspace, concepts that have seen little attention outside a few critical urban political ecology analyses. Additionally, these greenspace maintenance projects have been conducted by grassroots groups and partnerships between local citizens and institutions, highlighting the neoliberal shared governance strategy. By focusing this strategy within the most acute of circumstances, we can see both limitations and successes of this strategy in regard to the struggle to completely transform urban environments without direct state intervention. As such, Flint may be an outlier, but the lessons learned can still be applied to urban communities across the nation that are grappling with issues in relation to unequal development and access to greenspace and

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[1] As housing prices did not rise substantially in these cities there was less of an impact

the complexities of shared governance, an ever increasing strategy for urban environmental maintenance (Perkins 2009).

Economic Issues

The city of Flint has struggled financially for many years since the loss of thousands of auto related industrial jobs. The reduction in available positions and opportunities has forced many workers away in search of jobs and the city has seen a steady population decline since 1960. In 1990 the population stood at 140,761 and in 2000 it had dropped to 124,943 and in 2013 the population fell under the 100,000 mark (U.S. Census Bureau 2013). The drastic loss of city residents has greatly reduced tax revenues and has culminated in a long lasting massive budget deficit that reached its high in 2002 at $30 million and topped out at $19 million for the 2013 fiscal year (Longley 2013).

This loss in revenue has instigated a domino effect, which impacts many aspects of the quality of life in Flint. The shrinking tax base has forced the cutting of city budgets for fundamental services such as city landscaping, trash pick-up, and more importantly adequate police and fire protection. Both of these services have seen deep cuts. For instance, in 2010 Mayor Dayne Walling laid-off 57 police officers and 23 firefighters, leaving an equivalent of about 1 police officer per 1,000 residents (Miller 2010). Additionally, rate increases in essential utilities such as water have angered citizens. In 2011, water rates were increased by 25%[2] with city officials stating that population

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[2] In July of 2012 the State of Michigan Appeals Court dismissed a lawsuit filed by Flint City Council President, Scott Kincaid. The court did not find the 25% increase in water rates to be unconstitutional according to the Michigan constitution. In September of 2012 Kincaid appealed the ruling and is awaiting a hearing at the Michigan Supreme Court (Longley 2012).

decline was forcing them to charge current residents twice the amount in order to pay for the water system (Longley 2012).

While the loss of lucrative blue-collar jobs is often bemoaned as the main reason for the economic and social turmoil in the city, broader structural economic forces have also contributed to the current economic reality of Flint. In this sense it is important to keep in mind that the shared governance structure that has developed around greening initiatives is reflective of changes both in federal and state fiscal policies. These policies have been identified as having devastating impacts on local municipalities in relation to union labor, local service delivery, and tax increases (Harvey 2008; Krinsky and Simonet 2011; Miller and Hokenstad 2014).

These changes have been ushered in with federal fiscal policies that have slowly moved away from providing for welfare services, thus putting increasing pressure on state governments to make up for the loss of federal support (Harvey 2005). This was even more salient within the wake of the 2008 economic crisis and the great recession, where both federal and state governments took part in deep revanchist cuts supporting public services in the hopes of balancing local budgets (Krinsky and Simonet 2011).

Perhaps the most devastating outcome of the neoliberal turn and "trickle down" effect that it has had on local governments and economies is the reduction of state revenue sharing. This fiscal policy supports local governments through states giving municipalities, villages, townships and counties a portion of sales tax each year. In Michigan, these funds are dispersed through two payments. The constitutional portion represents a per capita payment that results in 15% of the 4% sales tax collected in each area. While the statutory payment is figured by a formula that is meant to account for the

differing needs of communities in relation to infrastructure and services, despite

population (Michigan Municipal League: Revenue Sharing Fact Sheet 2014).

Historically revenue sharing has been a large part of municipal government

budgets, coupled with the monies gleaned through residential property tax. Miller and

Hokenstad (2014) describe the decline in revenue sharing and the loss in property tax due

to the foreclosure crisis and the great recession as the "one-two" punch for knocking out

local economies. This has led some economists to argue that had revenue sharing been

enacted as it is outlined in the state constitution, that cities such as Detroit, Flint, Pontiac,

and Benton Harbor would not have faced the financial turmoil to its current extent

(Kliene 2013). This is seen in data that highlights the reduction of funding to

municipalities within the years leading up to and following the financial crisis. For

example, Michigan cities missed out on 6.2 billion dollars between the years of 2003 and

2013. The city of Flint lost 54.9 million by the end of 2014. These funds would have been

more than enough to make up for the city's budget deficit and bonded debt combined

(Oosting 2014). The trend is similar for nearby Detroit as well.

Coupled with the general decline in revenue sharing is the fact that in the state of

Michigan statuary payments have been replaced with the Economic Vitality Incentive

Program (EVIP), which came into effect under Public Act 63 in 2011. This program

requires that municipalities or other bodies seeking revenue sharing funds must meet a set

of standards to qualify for the state dollars. These standard areas include accountability

and transparency, the consolidation of services, and an un-funded accrued

liability/employee compensation plan (Michigan Department of Treasury).

Conservative politicians in particular often tout the consolidation of city-county

services as a means to reduce taxes, save money, and increase the efficiency of city

services such as police and fire protection. Despite this claim, research has illustrated that

the outcome of the consolidation of services between cities or cities and counties in

relation to efficiency is average at best and does not make any major improvements (Carr

and Feiock 2004). In a city like Flint where response times for public services are

severely inefficient it is hard to imagine that anyone would be in favor of a system that

may make services even less efficient due to the distances between the municipality and

surrounding areas.

A common means for austerity is to raise taxes on local populations in order to

maintain adequate service delivery in the face of recession. Miller and Hokenstad (2014)

illustrate the inequality within this system by discussing two very demographically

different Ohio municipalities. The predominately white and more affluent community

was able to raise taxes by .5% to continue present police and fire services, while the other

less affluent community was not able to raise taxes simply because residents where

already at the brink of what they could pay. This leaves communities in a scramble

referred to as "grant hustling" to meet citizen needs (Miller and Hokenstad 2014).

The same can be said for the city of Flint. Residents are already strained in what

they can pay in taxes and often do not have any large assets to fall back on. Due in large

part to the great recession and foreclosure crisis many residents across the city owe much

more on their homes then they are actually worth. While this phenomenon was

recognized across the country, it is magnified within a city that already contained

thousand's of vacant lots and abandoned homes, further reducing the value of property within the city.

Examples of soaring prices and tax hikes within the city to maintain services are readily seen, but residents lament that these services are subpar at best. In early 2014, the emergency financial manager cut ties with Detroit, Flint's previous water source. The city had been charging Flint approximately twelve million dollars annually for water. In lieu of Detroit water, the city is joining other county efforts to build a water pipeline to Lake Huron. In the meantime seven million dollars was invested to restore the Flint Water Treatment plant in order to use water from the Flint River as the municipal water source. Residents were briefly hopeful that the new source would reduce bills, but then learned that the money saved from switching to the Flint River would be invested into the local water infrastructure and not saved by consumers (Profitt 2014).

Similar problems are found in relation to police and fire services. In the fall of 2012 voters passed 6-mill tax increase that was meant to increase spending and thus retain more officers on the street. The city was forced to put the millage on the ballot after its application for the Federal SAFER grant was denied. The loss of this funding put 36 police and 19 fire fighter positions in jeopardy. Though residents were happy to retain these positions many were dismayed that tax dollars could not go to employ more police officers and fire fighters in the hopes of improving safety and reducing response time gaps (Ridley 2014).

These are examples of the city attempting to make up for austerity (in part the result of the loss of revenue sharing and population decline) through tax increases. For other "non-essential" services such as the maintenance of public greenspace shared

governance is viewed as a solution to picking up the slack for services no longer provided

by the municipality. Since this is discussed in great detail in other chapters, I will not go

into great detail here. But it is notable that this shared governance strategy for greenspace

maintenance is a phenomenon that is sweeping the country, again reflecting the impacts

of the larger structural shifts in economic and social policy and the spreading of

neoliberalism.

Political Issues

Municipal financial troubles are deeply coupled with political issues in the city.

As a result of the enormous budget deficit emergency financial managers (EFM) have

been placed in charge of all city political and economic business twice within the last

decade. This first occurred in 2002 when the deficit reached an all-time high and again in

2011 when the Michigan governor appointed an emergency financial manger to the city

under the state's new and controversial law.[3] Flint residents are divided on the EFM take-

over as some see the utility of the manager and the need to balance the budget, while

others, mostly African American residents, view the takeover as a parochial step

backward in the democratic process. The city has also had four different EFMs between

the years of 2011 and 2015.

Most of the cities in Michigan that have been taken over by an EFM have a

majority Black population and in other nearby cities such as Pontiac the EFM law has

been discussed in explicitly racial terms. For instance, in 2011 Fred Leeb, Pontiac's first

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[3] This action has also been taken in other cities and school districts around the state such
as Pontiac, Benton Harbor, and Muskegon Public Schools. A 2012 public referendum on
the law found it be unconstitutional, despite this a new bill passed in the lame duck
session of the Michigan legislature that reinstated the power of the EFM's with little
change.

financial manger expressed that some citizens were trying to portray the image that "he was the master sent from Lansing to control the plantation" (Holeywell 2012). While Flint also shares a majority Black population by a mid-margin (56.6% Black and 37.4% White in 2010) Flint residents have not been as explicit in regard to the racial divide on the EFM issue, although cursory local observations suggest that some communities feel more strongly about the issue than others. Regardless of the racial composition, Flint residents are extremely limited in their abilities to seek political change through their elected officials, as the mayor and councilpersons have no municipal power under the state emergency financial manger law.[4]

Social Issues

Financial struggles and population decline have had great impacts in terms of the rise of social problems in the city of Flint. Unemployment is high in the city usually matching the overall state average. In December of 2009 the unemployment rate peaked at 15%. In 2013 it stood at about 9.4%, higher than the national average of 8.1%. Poverty rates are also above average with 26.4% of the population below the poverty line. In comparison, only 15.1% of Americans on average were below the poverty line in 2011 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). The number of children receiving free and reduced lunch in the city is also staggering with 57% of all children in the Genesee Intermediate School District qualifying for the program. Additionally, the loss of population has closed numerous schools throughout Flint and in the fall of 2012 the district began its school year without a functioning middle school in the entire city (Brown 2012).

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[4] Although nearly all the states have EFM laws, Michigan is unique in the fact that the state appointed official has more power than democratically elected officials (Holywell 2012).

The loss of income, opportunity and municipal revenue for essential services has been accompanied by increasing crime rates and social upheaval for residents remaining in various Flint neighborhoods. Due to a lack of viable opportunities many of Flint's youth have turned to gang activity and the selling of elicit goods such drugs and weapons as a way to make a living within the city (AlHajal 2012). Within the last five years Flint has been cited within the top five of the FBI's most violent cities index and in 2011 was ranked number one. These ranking are illustrated in the high number of crimes such as murders and home invasions throughout the city. Non-violent crimes such scrap metal theft are also an enormous problems often after the illegal burning of homes but also from homes that are still inhabited.

Environmental Issues

Environmental contamination in Flint is an enormous problem. Within the city limits there are 2,000 + acres of auto industry related brownfields, which cannot be repurposed without EPA regulated cleanups, due to the high density of toxic materials that these sites contain. Flint is also the home to one of the nation's largest brownfield sites, the former GM compound known as Buick City. Estimates for cleaning up the 210-acre site are around $33,000,000 (Environmental Protection Agency 2010).

In addition, the mass out migration of the city's population has left thousands of abandoned and unkempt homes throughout the city. These homes pose multiple hazards and public safety risks, as they are usually older homes, which contain toxic materials such as lead and asbestos. As a result, strict and costly precautionary procedures must be taken during the demolition process, which poses an enormous problem for a city that is deeply in debt and contains nearly 7, 000 vacant homes. In addition, the abandoned

homes add to the city crime problem, as they are havens for illegal activity and are very frequently the target of arson.[5] The burning of homes contributes to multiple safety hazards such as declining air quality and hazardous holes and rubble that is left behind after the burning. Multiple residents have cited they have witnessed children playing in these areas.

In sum, these complex problems have ramifications for the city as a whole, but also have left some Flint neighborhoods in states of near disrepair. However, despite these hardships, groups and communities in Flint are seeking ways to improve their neighborhoods in ways that transform the social and ecological landscapes. Through grassroots neighborhoods action with support of local institutions these residents are seeking opportunities to implement positive community changes that challenges the outcomes of uneven urban environments and the negative images surrounding the city as the most dangerous place in the United States and the murder capital of America. Most notably much of this action has culminated in urban greening strategies as a way to combat both ecological issues as well as social and financial problems.

Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation is composed of eight chapters. Chapter one is comprised of the discussion outlined here. Chapter two addresses the literature in relation to defining urban greening, the growing prominence of and benefits of urban greening through the lens of the Community Capitals Framework (CCF), and urban greening in shrinking cities. I also discuss urban greening in conjunction with critiques from the UPE framework. Here I

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[5] In 2010 alone there was a record 51 suspected arson fires just between the months of March and May, with the total number for the year reaching a staggering 250 (Harris 2011).

review work by scholars who have critiqued urban greening most commonly through an analysis of greening in relation to neoliberalism, an ideology and economic policy that focuses on reducing state welfare activities in support of a focus on individual responsibility (Harvey 2005). Chapter three discusses the methodology for this research and the process in which data was collected and analyzed. Here I also introduce each of my case study sites.

Chapters four through seven serve as the substantive chapters in which I address the findings in relation to my research questions. Finally, chapter eight offers conclusions and areas for future research. I suggest that community based greening projects in Flint may be embedded within "spaces of actually existing neoliberalism" as a result of the city's lack of capacity to maintain essential services, but the process of greening cannot be discounted. Rather, this process supports the development of additional assets that are imperative for community revitalization, including the development of political capital that can be leveraged to possibly resist and contest future neoliberal policy measures.

Despite these benefits, city leaders, practitioners and grant giving bodies should be cognizant of the potential for the development of uneven urban landscapes as the shared maintenance approach to urban greening is viewed as reinscribing the neoliberal project and urban inequality and has the potential to leave some communities behind. In addition, even though community development spurred from urban greening can contribute to building a positive quality of life, important structural issues such as the cost of water and the adequate provision of safety services must be attended to in order to truly transform the city of Flint.

I first center on describing and defining the concepts of urban greening and community urban greening. I next offer a brief review on literature in regard to city shrinking as urban greening activities are often seen as tangible way to mitigate some of the large-scale effects of city shrinking. In order to understand the prominence of urban greening initiatives within the shrinking cities around the globe, it is important to understand why city shrinking occurs and some of the consequences of city shrinking. Following my review of city shrinking, I center on critiques of community urban greening initiatives posed by scholars working within the UPE framework. In short, the literature presented here is meant to link the relationship between global structural forces based in capitalism, city shrinking, urban inequality, and urban greening.

This foundation is critical to understanding the processes and outcomes of urban greening in the city of Flint. The latter part of this chapter highlights literature on research question two in regard to some of the benefits reported to be associated with urban greening through the organization of the community capitals framework and the development of community capacity.

Defining "Urban Greening" and "Community Urban Greening"

The concept of urban greening has roots in various theoretical perspectives and social movements as the efforts entailed in urban greening activities are imbued with a multitude of purposes. Rickenbacker (2012) suggests that the main paths to urban greening stem from the environmental justice movement, urban ecology, and the development of social capital in relation to community context and participation. Urban

greening can be viewed as compatible with or as a branch of the environmental justice movement in that it is often a goal of urban greening projects to bring safe, usable greenspace to typically marginalized populations within the urban core. Additionally, the environmental justice movement has been successful in redefining the concept of environment to anywhere humans "live, work, go to school, play, and worship" (Bullard 2005). In viewing clean and safe greenspace as a civil right, urban greening initiatives attend to this mission.

The goals of urban ecology also mesh well with urban greening as the strategic manipulation of urban greenspace works to improve urban soil and habitats, while also reclaiming vacant and underused space. This goal is especially useful in postindustrial shrinking cities where vacant land is in ample supply.   Like the environmental justice movement, urban ecology scholars disregard the artificial separation between humans and the environment and focus in on how human action impacts "nature" within urban space (Young 2009). As such this perspective essentially bridges the social aspect of the environment with its physical ecological make up. Political ecology theorists add to this body by highlighting the often contested and political ways in which decisions are made about the environment. This is discussed in more detail below.

Due to its various theoretical underpinnings, urban greening is a vast and often elusive term that captures multiple types of cultural, ecological, and engineered processes upon greenspaces within urban areas and includes everything from urban forestry, community gardens, parks and open spaces to urban farming and urban stream

reclamation[6] (Perkins 2009; Wolf 2012). In the most general sense urban greening has

been defined as "embracing the planning and management of all urban vegetation to

create or add values to the local community" (Nilsson et al., 2007:93). Following from

this umbrella term, community greening has been defined in several ways. An early

definition of community greening, provided by Breslav (1991), highlights the social and

political processes embedded within ecological projects.

> [Community greening] has a social and political context. It is an essential, often grassroots activity that derives from and bridges the environmental, civil rights, and horticultural movements of the 1960s. It is undertaken, in part, to encourage feelings of empowerment, connectedness, and common concern among the settlement's human residents and visitors (Westphal 1999:4)

> Focusing more explicitly on the urban environment Tidaball and Kransey (2007)

define urban community greening as the

> leadership and active participation of city residents who take it upon themselves to build healthier sustainable communities through planning and caring for the "socio-ecological spaces" and the associated flora, fauna, and structures (Tidball and Kransy 2007:152).

Building upon these definitions, I suggest that urban political ecology (UPE) is useful for

understanding the processes involved within urban greening projects, as UPE (stemming

from its parent framework of political ecology) helps us to understand how communities

respond and act upon the environment within a specific political and economic context

(Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003; Robbins 2004). This perspective is useful for

analyzing both of the forgoing definitions, which hold emphasis on citizens actively

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[6] This research will focus primarily on two main types of urban greening found within the literature: urban gardening and greenspace redevelopment through the form of greening parks and public open space. The reason for this focus rests on the prevalence of these two urban greening strategies within the case study location. The research also focuses explicitly on community based greening projects.

participating in greening initiatives as the essential focus of the greening. Although

Tidball and Kransy (2007) suggest that urban residents "take it upon themselves" to

improve the socio-ecological environment, the literature below will highlight how this is

increasingly by way of partnerships between community residents and local institutions

and organizations. As such, this definition may be too simplistic as it negates the

governance structures and institutional partners or broader political context that may

promote citizen based urban greening, particularly in a shrinking city setting where

traditional municipal authorities lack the resources to maintain greenspace.

Urban Greening in Shrinking Cities

Critical population loss of many mature cities in North America and Europe has

been cited as one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. Although reasons for city

shrinking are numerous, the rise of the globalized economy, deindustrialization, and the

post socialism era are highlighted as critical factors (Genske and Ruff 2006). Martinez-

Fernandez et al., (2012) discuss "shrinking cities as the spatial manifestation of a global

process accompanying the establishment of a "new regime of accumulation" (Martinez-

Fernandez et al., 2012: 218). Similarly, Harvey (2005) articulates that postindustrial

shrinking cities are the physical and geographical space in which "creative destruction"

occurs as a result of the contradictions of capitalism, highlighting the notion that capital

must always seek new markets and as a result older markets become "unplugged" from

global finance networks (Castells 2000; Sassen 2007; Martinez-Frenandez et al., 2012).

A shrinking city is defined as "an urban area—a city, part of a city, an entire

metropolitan area or a town—that has experienced population loss, economic downturn,

employment decline and social problems as symptoms of a structural crisis (Martinez-

Fernandez at al., 2012:214). In this regard some shrinking cities can be discussed as existing within a state of social, financial, political, and ecological disaster. As such, urban greening initiatives are often viewed as potential strategies to mitigate the devastating effects of population decline which include numerous environmental, social, economic, and political problems (Alexander 2004; Logan and Schilling 2008; Hasse 2008; De Sousa 2010; Hollander 2010; Schilling 2011; Weichmann and Pallagast 2012). One of the most publicized examples of urban greening in a shrinking city is that of the initiatives taking place in Detroit, Michigan, where mile long swaths of formerly industrial land is being converted for urban agriculture purposes (Millington 2013).

The prominence of community urban greening strategies in shrinking postindustrial cities seems to be threefold. First, a dearth of research (detailed below) indicates that urban community greening has multiple beneficial and often empowering effects in communities that have been typically marginalized by society. The potential social benefits accrued through urban greening projects serve as a catalyst to address pervasive social problems such as high crime and unemployment rates and disorder conditions that are often found within shrinking cities. Secondly, as a result of population decline shrinking city governments are often strapped by huge budget deficits, which make it difficult for them to adequately provide basic municipal services such as greenspace maintenance. As such, community based programs (funded largely through philanthropic foundations) essentially "employ" citizens to take action to transform their own ecological environments. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, shrinking cities contain vast amounts of under used, unkempt, and often environmentally contaminated

land (Wiechman and Pallagast 2012). This land poses multiple challenges for city officials and residents alike (Logan and Schilling 2008; Schilling 2011).

In terms of the economic market, vacant land, industrial brownfields, and abandoned structures are a burden for cities as they represent a loss in tax revenue (Alexander 2004; Hollander 2010). In this regard, the motivations for repurposing these lands to functional and hence profitable use lie in desires to increase capital through attracting additional investments to a given area. However, in many shrinking cities this is much easier said than done due to the vicious cycle of social disorder and economic problems that often accompany the decline of economic capacity and population in cities.

Disorder is defined as the presence of vandalism, litter, graffiti, abandonment, illegal activities such as public drinking and drug use, panhandling, prostitution, public harassment and loitering (Geis and Ross 1998; Sampson and Raudenbush 2004; Skogan 1990). Using systemic observational procedures at the neighborhood level Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) have found disorder conditions to be highly correlated with concentrated poverty levels, similar to those that are likely to be found in degraded shrinking cities. Skogan (1990) makes the distinction between two general categories of disorder: social and physical. Social disorder includes the indicators listed above that are human behavior activities such as loitering and drug use, while physical disorder refers to tangible indicators such as trash and abandoned buildings. While these are important distinctions between the types of disorder, research suggests that these differences matter very little in terms of people's responses to disorder conditions. In general, signs of disorder often espouse negative feelings about an area and reactions to these feelings commonly entail either fight or flight responses (Hancock 2001; Skogan 1990).

Previous urban research indicates that disorder conditions have enormous impacts on residents' feelings of fear and has illustrated that these perceptions contribute to an individual's psychological and social well-being (Austin, Furr, and Spine 2002; Perkins and Taylor 1996). The presence of disorder in neighborhoods is associated with a lack of trust for neighbors and social isolation both conditions that can result in or accompany fear (Ross 1993; Austin, Furr, and Spine 2002). Disorder also contributes to feelings of fear as it indicates a loss of social control within a neighborhood (Austin et al. 2002). Even if residents are not personally victimized, the signs of disorder signify harm. Disorder gives the appearance that the people in the area are not concerned with standard public safety and the typical agents of public order and social control, commonly the local government and city services, are not able to control local problems. In essence, residents may feel a sense of abandonment entailed with mistrust and fear (Sampson et al., 1997; Ross, Mirowsky, and Pribesh 2001).

These feelings of mistrust and fear among local residents can lead to social isolation and decreased social interaction or opportunities to build community social capital (Ross, Mirowsky, and Pribesh 2001; Austin et al., 2002; Schilling 2011; Wolf 2012). This cycle can create more social problems as residents retreat from maintaining vigilance in their neighborhood through informal social control measures. In consequence, often entire areas become taken over by crime, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy in relation to the negative reputations of shrinking cities as places of violent dystopia. As such, scholars suggest that urban greening initiatives may work to aid these social issues (resident fear and distrust) through collective action surrounding urban

greening, while at the same time addressing issues in relation to the abundance of vacant land in declining postindustrial cities (Wolf 2012).

Urban greening can also work to improve local collective efficacy as the beautification of the built environment implies that the community is a cared for place, which has the potential to make residents more trusting of their neighbors and can lead to increased social interaction. This point is supported by previous research that indicates higher levels of resident collective efficacy are correlated with lower levels of disorder and crime (Sampson and Raudenbush 1999).

Many of the social benefits of urban greening in shrinking cities are similar to those outlined below in relation to greening in general, including improved health and well-being as well as individual and social group growth (Shilling 2011; Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012). Some initiatives specific to shrinking cities include the demolition of derelict of housing stock as a way to convert vacant properties into greenspace in the hopes of attracting new investments (Birge-Liberman 2010). Additionally, the demolition and cleaning of these often over grown and "wild" properties has been shown to increase residents' perceptions of safety as a result of increased visibility with the neighborhood (Johansen, Neal, and Gasteyer 2014).

This increased visibility fosters an informal surveillance system comprised of additional resident "eyes on the street," which can potentially deter criminals from contributing to disorder (Jacobs 1961; Hynes and Howe 2002). This type of informal surveillance is especially important in shrinking cities where the budgets for traditional authorities such as police and fire services have been drastically cut and crime rates are typically high. Moreover, in some locations urban greening initiatives have been shown

to reduce the incidence of crime. For example, a study in Philadelphia, PA has linked urban greening programs to reducing the incidence of gun violence over a ten-year period, increasing perceptions of safety, and potentially encouraging greater community cohesion (Badger 2011). Similarly, according to the Los Angeles Police Department a grassroots greening initiative in one LA neighborhood has been linked to reducing the crime rate by 30% (Tracy 2009).

In relation to combatting the cycle of fear in shrinking cities, community based greening initiatives that actively engage residents through participation in greening projects have been promoted as a way to increase trust and social capital among neighborhood residents. These actions can potentially lead to increased social interaction especially when a new community space is formed as a result of greening project (Wolf 2012). Additionally, there is reason to suspect that individual greening initiatives in terms of "adopting lots" and maintaining vacant properties could also have a "contagion effect" which encourages others residents to follow suit (Galster 2010).

Urban Political Ecology

Political ecology is an analytical framework that is useful in illuminating the macro processes at work that led to the deindustrialization of Flint, MI and the current governing processes within a particular political environment marked by a lack of civic power and abandonment. Political ecology (PE) takes as starting point that the environment and ecosystems are political in nature and that all decisions, uses, and outcomes surrounding the environment have various consequences for multiple groups. As such ecological and social transformations of the urban environment are never neutral (Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003). Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003) build on PE with

their discussion of Urban Political Ecology (UPE). UPE has contributed to PE in general by asserting that "urban" itself is a process of socioecological change. In this regard urban political ecologists view urban as "nature" and seek to abolish the dichotomy separating "city" and "country." In opposition these researchers view the "environment of the city—both social and physical—as the result of historical and geographical processes of the urbanization of nature" (Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003: 900). This point is rather salient in the shrinking city setting where scholars often talk of a "return to nature" (Haase 2008). In contrast, within the UPE framework this reoccurring transformation of the environment represents the processes and contradictions of capitalism as nature is inherently embedded within the industrial landscape. As such, postindustrial city decline is not a reclamation of nature but rather the construction of new urban spaces as a result of these contradictions (Millington 2013). In this regard, through a historical materialism and radical tradition the goal of the UPE framework is to "expose the processes that bring about highly uneven urban environments" (Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003: 906).

Much of the critical scholarship that has focused on community urban greening initiatives (i.e. park reclamation projects, vacant lot and brownfield development, and urban gardening) has centered on a critique of neoliberalism in relation to urban greening as a spatial and temporary fix to the contradictions of capitalism (Birge-Liberman 2010), the devolution of the state, and "role out" economics (Peck and Tickell 2008; Harvey 2005; Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012). Neoliberalism as a theoretical perspective views unregulated markets as the primary way of achieving economic growth and individual freedom (Harvey 2005; McKendry 2008). As such, neoliberal policy seeks to enhance the function of free markets by decreasing or eliminating government regulations, restricting

public welfare services, celebrating the inherent virtues of individualism and meritocracy, and increasing financial gain through place based comparative advantage (Peck and Tickell 2002; McKendry 2008). The rise of neoliberalism and these major policy prescriptions have had major consequences for cities, especially those that are deemed to be shrinking (Perkins 2009).

Brenner and Theodore (2002) view cities as being central instances of where the process of neoliberalization is most readily visible. They refer to this as analyzing the spaces of "actually existing neoliberalism." They suggest that the process of neoliberalization (particularly in relation to its "roll-out" configuration) is a dynamic and contested process that develops within the intricacies and complexities of local environments. Furthermore, they suggest that current neoliberal arrangements and the social service delivery experiments they entail are often a response to the contradictions of prior configurations of neoliberalism associated with the policy measures of the Reagan era.

In relation to the urban greening literature there are at least three main consequences of neoliberalism that can be attributed to the rise of greening as a community development strategy within spaces of "actually existing neoliberalism" and in particular shrinking cities. These include the devolution of the state, the advancement of urban entrepreneurialism, and the rise of personal responsibility and social control through neoliberal ideology (Pudup 2007; McKendry 2008; Perkins 2009; Perkins 2010; Birge-Liberman 2010; Perkins 2011; Martinez-Ferandez et al., 2012). I discuss each of these consequences in turn below.

The term urban entrepreneurialism, a concept first developed by Harvey (1989), signifies a shift from urban municipal managerialism to focus on place-based competition to attract capital investments to a given locality (McKendry 2008). Under the system of urban entrepreneurialism various strategies are employed as a way to entice capital development in cities. These include offering financial incentives and tax breaks to corporations, investing in consumption-oriented developments, and redeveloping built spaces as a means to attract capital investments. Historically, this latter strategy has been seen in the form of waterfront redevelopment projects such as Detroit's famed "Renaissance Center." This strategy was also employed in Flint with the constructing of Water Street Pavilion and "AutoWorld" an automotive themed amusement park (Lord and Price 1992). Unfortunately these redevelopment projects failed to reinvent Flint and Detroit as clean and desirable places to live and work and as such failed to bring large-scale investments to these shrinking cities.

In relation to greening, several scholars suggest that urban greening and sustainability programs represent the newest form of urban entrepreneurialism (While et al., 2004; McKendry 2008). McKendry (2008) notes that cities across the nation are striving to be, "the greenest city in the USA" as a way to attract new high green technologies. In this regard urban entrepreneurialism and greening the neoliberal city is a process that can be "understood as part of the wider regularization (or normalization) of the social-ecological contradictions of capitalist urbanization" (McKendry 2008:13). Cities undertaking sustainability and greening programs are attempting to manage and address the social, ecological, and economic contradictions of capitalism and previous neoliberal policy prescriptions. The problem, however, with striving to be the "greenest

city" in order to compete for high green technology or institutional presence is that there are only so many resources and not every city can win (McKendry 2008). This idea is highly visible in cities like Flint, where earlier pro-growth and urban entrepreneurialism agendas have largely failed, leaving the city in a spiral of social and environmental decay.

The second main consequence of neoliberalism in relation to urban greening entails the devolution of municipal governments and the rise of public and private partnerships to address social needs. Often referred to as the "shadow state" or "governance beyond the state" this concept has only recently been studied in relation to the urban ecological environment (Marwell 2004; Perkins 2009). Perkins (2009) investigates this relationship through a comparative case study of greening projects in the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He argues that in addition to the shadow state, Gramsci's concept of "shared governance" (similar to Swyngedouw's (2005) concept termed "governance beyond the state") better explains the situation regarding the maintenance of urban environments that has largely been divorced from municipal government authorities due to the austerity of neoliberalization. He suggests that this idea fits well with the reduction of other welfare services as historically parks and greenspaces have been viewed as public goods that should be provided to citizens (Taylor 2009). Building on Gramsci's discussion of consenting to hegemony, Perkins (2009, 2010, 2011) argues the shared governance of the shadow state (state governments, local governments, non-profits, public sector) by way of community volunteerism acts as the consent to the neoliberal hegemony as the acts of volunteerism legitimate the state's retreat from social responsibility.

This latter point relates to a third major consequence of neoliberalism in relation to urban greening initiatives. As a result of the state no longer being held accountable for providing goods and services, such as adequate and safe greenspace, local populations become personally responsible for improving their neighborhoods. Perkins (2009) suggests that consent for neoliberal hegemony through volunteerism is made possible through the ideology of the non-profit sector and grassroots organizations that links volunteerism with the neoliberal concept of citizenship, which differs greatly from the entitlement rhetoric of the Keynesian era. In contrast, this notion of citizenship promotes the idea of personal and community responsibility through service and labor. These instilled values are meant to create a mechanism to compensate for the loss of once government provided services (i.e. the parks and recreation department, adequate police and fire protection, fair housing). This same concept is also found in literature critiquing community gardening projects. Pudup (2007) argues that the rise of community gardens can be seen as "organized projects specially designed as spaces of neoliberal governmentality, that is, spaces in which gardening puts individuals in charge of their own adjustments to economic restructuring and social dislocation through self-help technologies centered on personal contact with nature." (Pudup 2007:1228).

In essence, through the neoliberalization of the city marginalized populations are responsible for making up for their own disadvantage due to historical social disinvestment.

In addition, Ogawa (2009) found in a comparative case study of gardening programs in Iowa that greening programs are likely to exhibit the traits of neoliberal policy, though some participants resisted the ideology by refusing to participate in a

garden that was meant to be community based development. Ogawa (2009) suggests that this refusal to participate speaks the critiques by scholars who suggest that community urban greening legitimates the retreat of the state in relation to urban development.

Other researchers have focused on the development of shared governance and growth of neoliberalism through privatization of public park space and the rise of park conservancies to maintain both parks maintenance and programming. There is ample evidence of this strategy in New York City in relation to Central Park, the Brooklyn Bridge Park, Hudson River Park, and High Line Park (Krinsky and Simonet 2011; Ulam 2013).

Each of these public spaces has a conservancy or "friends of "blank" group that is working to manage the public space. Oftentimes these conservancies are given lofty donations by New Yorkers with very much political and social clout. This raises concerns among critical scholars who suggest as a result of private funding and donations that public spaces become grounds for meeting the interests of the elite due to the monies they have invested in the space (Krinsky and Simonet 2011). In addition, research indicates that those well-known parks that tend be within elite neighborhoods are in much better condition that those that reside in middle to lower class neighborhoods and that typically receive most of their little funding from the municipality. The city government in New York actually supports the use of conservancies and friends of groups as the Parks and Recreation Budget has been cut for the last five consecutive years and due to budget restrictions city parks employees have been cut by 30% (Ulam 2013). In the city of Flint there is no functioning city parks and recreation department, so jobs have not been cut

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recently, but the outcome is the same. Alternative labor sources are needed to complete the greenspace maintenance work.

This is often seen in volunteerism through "friends" groups or neighborhood associations, but also with the use of "workfare" labor. This idea refers to social groups that are required to volunteer their time in relation to receive welfare benefits. Krinsky and Simonet (2011) illustrate the irony of this system in relation to their work on the New York City case. As well paying city jobs that contain important social benefits are cut (i.e. parks and recreation department positions) more people seek social services either due to unemployment or the lack of sufficient funds from other non-union service sector jobs. This is often seen in the privatization of park space when city governments cut maintenance positions as a means to reduce spending.

Either through volunteer labor or workfare labor the turn in the way that public park or vacant space is being maintained in both New York City and Flint is viewed by Krinsky and Simonet (2011), as one of the key projects of neoliberalization. This essentially builds on the idea that citizens must be held personally responsible for the maintenance of public space and also for their own financial and social success despite any structural forces that may have impacted their current social, political, and financial status.

For some critical scholars such as Perkins (2009), Harvey (2005, 2008), and Pudup (2007) this project is essential for the long-term maintenance of neoliberalization. Success for maintaining one's own welfare and public space is not merely promoted, it is tied to the very definition of citizenship, suggesting that if one does not work to improve their own lot or own "public" space then they are working against the idea of what it

means to be American. While other scholars suggest that volunteerism and shared governance of greenspace maintenance can be very empowering in relation to urban land use decisions it is still coupled with an ethic of personal responsibility as cities become less responsible for public space.

Critiques of Urban Greening

Like many other types of development, urban greening initiatives are often uneven and unclear in terms of where they occur, their overarching goals, and their scope of impact. Perkins (2010) has illustrated that large-scale greening developments such as those in New York City and Chicago based in growth coalitions between the city and private developers usually usurp the efforts of very successful small grassroots groups working on smaller scale greening. This has typically occurred in community gardening organizations where local residents have started gardens on vacant lots to which they hold no formal title. These properties are then often sold to developers (Pudup 2007; Perkins 2010). This phenomenon highlights another downfall of the "shared governance-citizenship-volunteer" model for urban greening. Under this model citizen groups must always be re-mobilized and organized for each project. In other words it may be difficult to keep people engaged when no one specifically is responsible for the upkeep of parks and other greenspaces. Efforts to keep greening initiatives sustainable may falter due to lack of resources, (based in competitive grants) inequality, and injustice in cities.

Second, some scholars suggest that the shared governance strategy is reminiscent of the "positive environmentalism" era, in which elite populations used parks and greenspace as a tool of social control to dictate the actions and behavior of working classes and minority groups (Perkins 2010; Birge-Liberman 2010). For instance, Taylor

(2009) highlights how historically park rules imposed certain behavior upon working classes by prohibiting activities such as drinking and certain sports. Contemporarily, urban greenspace projects with heavy emphasis on democratic participation may be used to "pacify or discipline potentially unstable class-based and racially motivated politics that threaten capitalist urbanism" (Perkins 2010:264). This idea can also be seen in relation to critics' assertions that urban greening programs are promoted as a way to instill the values of neoliberal ideology to minority and poor classes through community labor.

Perkins (2009) cites programs in his Milwaukee case study that are meant to train volunteers to be personally responsible and to steer them away from public assistance by promoting a "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" mentality, despite the historical and pervasive legacy of racism and disinvestment that often effects inner city populations. Similar critiques have been made of other greening and gardening strategies that are promoted to "cultivate" and "grow" better citizens (Pudup 2007; Birge-Liberman 2010). In this regard the neoliberal hegemony is both promoted through the volunteer programs themselves but also enforced upon workers through participation. Similar strategies have been used in Flint. The use of jail labor (through work release programs), workfare, and student labor has been documented in relation to working on urban greening initiatives.

In relation to scale, Perkins (2009) argues that shared governance urban greening strategies will probably fail to get beyond the racism embedded in the social structures that are associated with the previous state led models of greenspace management. Even if small grassroots groups are successful these small-scale victories are likely not enough to overcome deep racism and inequality problems across whole cities. Finally, groups that

are successful often represent small "communities of self-interest" who have devoted members and leaders that make success tenable. As such, those places that do not have strong community ties, may find less opportunity to create positive community change through urban greening. In addition, Perkins (2009) suggests that those groups who are successful at fighting injustice in their own neighborhoods may be doing so to the detriment of others outside their neighborhood by not holding the state accountable and reinforcing neoliberal hegemony. Perkins (2009) argues, "these strategies absolve government from direct intervention in social and environmental service provisions for society's poorest citizens while reproducing the culture of human and environmental marginalization via personal accountability" (Perkins 2009:403).

In sum, the UPE perspective outlines three important questions in relation to this case study and the potential for community greening to be a major driving force for urban redevelopment in Flint, Michigan.

1)   What type of political structure is governing and promoting the use of urban greening as a community development strategy?

2)   Do community based urban greening projects legitimate the retreat of the state in relation to public space maintenance by promoting greening through neoliberal citizenship ideology and the use of volunteerism and workfare labor?

3)   Does community urban greening based in a shared governance structure result in the development of uneven urban landscapes?

Urban Greening and Potential for Empowerment

Despite the forgoing critiques there are many laudable reasons why urban greening initiatives are celebrated in cities across the U.S. For instance, Pudup (2007), McKendry (2008), and Perkins (2009) recognize that real and positive environmental, social, and public health change happens through this activism and that marginalized groups are often empowered by taking action to redesign the urban environment in ways that can work to create a more just society. Specifically, through the lens of the environmental justice framework, urban greening programs are envisioned in large part to be a grassroots response to the unequal exposure of urban minority groups to environmental toxins and the unequal distribution of access to urban amenities such as trees, flowers, greenspace, and fresh food. This organizing provides a catalyst for marginalized populations to empower themselves in the face of social, political, and economic disinvestment.

In addition, Perkins (2010) suggests that neoliberal shared governance strategies do have the potential to promote equal participation and democracy in relation to transforming urban space. This idea is far from the top-down municipal decision making strategies of the past. Previous decision making processes have historically neglected minority populations and have often resulted in devastating and unjust outcomes as with the case of the urban renewal projects of the 1960s (Highsmith 2009).

Furthermore, what can be developed from urban greening projects embedded in shared governance may go well beyond the beautified space in terms of developing additional assets that can be used to empower local populations within the neoliberal shrinking city context (Larner and Craig 2005; Roy 2011; Rickenbacker 2012). Examining this potential, Roy (2011) argues that there is a "counter-weight" to the

neoliberal urban environmental governance structure found within grassroots activism. In a case study of Milwaukee's urban greenspace management, Roy (2011) finds that local residents simultaneously resist neoliberal trends while also growing the opportunities to further challenge neoliberal policy. This works suggests that the critiques of urban greening as a development strategy are too simplistic and negate the dynamic ways in which neoliberalism is operationalized and contested by local populations within the urban environment.

Roy (2011) and Larner and Craig (2005) draw this conclusion by identifying three main ways that residents and nonprofit organizations challenge the neoliberal tide through greenspace maintenance and local activism. First, nonprofit organizations that work with residents are "conscious agents" with their own socio-environmental goals that have the capacity to leverage and manipulate state limitations in order to serve their own interests. It is in the interest of these organizations to stay closely aligned with the state (while working on behalf of the public) in order to affect policy and promote resistance. Secondly, this resistance can be seen in grassroots mobilization that mirrors the goals of the environmental justice movement noted above. Groups focusing on urban greening often dedicate energies to improving landscapes within historically marginalized communities. In essence, these groups work within the bounds of the neoliberal environment to challenge the development of uneven landscapes that has been ushered in with creative destruction and neoliberalization. Thirdly, Larner and Craig (2005) highlight how the partnerships between community groups and other nonprofit organizations are also instrumental in professionalizing activist roles and are creating an

era of "inclusive" environmental governance, again referring the potential for empowerment created by the very nature of the neoliberal urban policy system.

Due to these points on the potential for empowerment and the argument that residents are not just passive receptacles of neoliberalism, drawing from the work of Rickenbacker (2012), I argue that urban greening projects offer an important "intermediary" step that works to foster elements, such as collective efficacy and community capacity, needed for community revitalization. Specifically, I analyze the assets developed as a result of investment in relation to greening activities and suggest that building these assets is an act of empowerment among marginalized populations within a shrinking city. These civic actions may be within a neoliberal context but are actions that cannot be discounted.

Community urban greening strategies have been lauded in scholarly and popular news outlets for their potential to achieve positive community outcomes in terms of personal, social, political, ecological, economic, and built transformations both within small local settings and the city scale at large (Hynes and Howe 2002; Westphal 2003; Wolf 2012). Generally speaking, this support stems from a long well accepted conventional wisdom that greenspace in one's daily life improves both physical health and mental well-being (Westphal 2003; Wolf 2012). I now turn to highlighting the benefits of greening through the lens of the seven community capitals as identified by Emery and Flora (2006).

The community capitals framework (CCF) is a heuristic model that focuses on the development of existing community assets as a way to further develop additional community assets and leverage needed resources. This model is similar to other

development frameworks that identify key characteristics needed for a vibrant

community or successful development project, including social capital, human capital,

physical or built capital, natural capital, and financial capital (Rickenbacker 2012). The

CFF adds to this list by offering cultural and political capital. I address each of these

capitals in relation to urban greening projects below.

Social Capital

Social capital is a hotly debated concept that has been defined many ways in

within the social sciences. Emery and Flora (2006) define social capital as a sense of

mutual trust, collective identity, norms of reciprocity and working together toward a

shared future. Similar to the concept of social capital is the idea of community capacity.

Chaskin (1998) defines community capacity as:

> Community capacity is the interaction of human, organizational, and social
> Capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve
> collective problems and improve or maintain the well being of a given
> community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized
> efforts by individuals, organizations, and the networks of association among them
> and between them and the broader systems of which the community is a part.
> (Chaskin 1998:4).

In this definition, Chaskin (1998) specifically references the interactions of various

community capitals as the process that works to develop capacity.

There is also a distinction made between bonding and bridging social capital.

Bonding social capital refers to the relationship building that occurs in communities such

as neighborhoods, while bridging social capital refers to crosscutting ties that connect

members of one community to members of another (Paxton 1999). While bonding social

capital is important for developing relationships and trust in a neighborhood setting, some

theorists argue that it does not necessarily lead to social action, but rather it lays the

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ground work for bridging social capital, which may be more powerful in terms of garnering the additional resources needed for social change (Larson et al., 2004).

Social capital or community capacity has been recognized as a major outcome entailed in community greening initiatives. Greening projects can work as a springboard for increasing community social interaction. Hanna and Oh (2000) observed creating a sense of community and creating relationships to take on additional community issues to be one of the main results of community greening. In an assessment of the social impacts of urban greening projects in Boston, Rickenbacker's (2012) research illuminated that urban greening participants interact more and feel more trusting and closer to their neighbors and less fearful of crime in their community.

In relation to the two types of social capital, Brown's (2012) analysis of community gardening in Fargo, North Dakota highlights the growth of both bonding and bridging social capital. Personal relationships were forged that might have otherwise not without the social space created by the garden. In addition, people from diverse backgrounds connected outside their typical circles of interaction spurring the relationships needed to leverage bridging social capital (Brown 2012). In this sense, greenspace also works as an area to include populations in social interactions that might otherwise be excluded. Seedland et al., (2009) have also found that urban park space and forests are also an important mechanism for social inclusion among immigrant youth populations. Additional studies have also shown that the expansion of greenspace has can further work to increase social interaction by merely providing a venue for community activity (Maas et al., 2009; Glover 2004).

Participation in urban greening has also shown to help to socially heal the wounds inflicted by the trauma of war and disaster. Specifically, Westphal (2003) highlights the city based urban greening employment initiatives that were introduced following the Rodney King riots in Los Angeles in 1992. These initiatives were an attempt to provide collective opportunity to marginalized populations and to heal the wounds of overt and structural racism through contact with the natural environment. Similarly, Tiball and Kransey (2007) highlight the use of raised bed community gardens both as food access and social healing mechanisms following the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and also note the "Soweto Mountain of Hope" in Johannesburg South Africa, which is a therapy community garden that also serves as memorial for AIDS victims.

Built Capital

Built capital refers to the infrastructure of a given environment, including buildings, roads, bridges, water systems and other human made or manipulated spaces such as sports fields and parks (Emery and Flora 2006). Built capital is essentially important for the development of other capitals as it provides the physical space for social interaction, skills training, and development. Without built capital communities may struggle to develop, but according to the CCF model, investments in other community assets can also support the development of built capital.

Literature on urban greening has found that altering the built environment through greenspace maintenance is important for creating a positive quality of life in the urban environment. Built capital not only creates space for social interaction, it may also create a space that deters certain undesirable activities and behaviors often found within degraded urban areas. Specifically in relation to literature on disorder, research has found

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that disorder conditions have enormous impacts on residents' feelings of fear and has illustrated that these perceptions affect an individual's quality of life as it relates to both personal and social wellbeing (Chappell et al., 2010). As such, working to alter disorder conditions through manipulation of the built environment by way of urban greening may work to improve community member's sense of safety, and may also work to deter criminal activity as the manipulation of the environment triggers the image that the area is a cared for space (Johansen et al. 2014). Rickenbacker (2012) argues that residents who participate in greening initiatives also report feeling safer, despite no actual decline in crime rates.

Political Capital

Political capital is also another vital community asset that can be developed from investments into greenspace. Political capital is inherently related to an individual or group's access to power and resources (Emery and Flora 2006). Political capital is used to influence power brokers, legislation and regulations, and leads to having the ability to enforce regulations or hold those who have the power accountable. When communities have high political capital they are able to make collective demands and take part in social action that works toward benefiting their local environments (Emery and Flora 2006). In this sense, political capital is an asset that occurs at multiple scales. Power can be in the form of actually being the "decision-maker" but also at a smaller scale in the form of social organization in an attempt to influence the decision makers, regardless of success.

Several studies on urban greening address the development of political capital as a result of community greening projects. In a study of New York plot gardens, Chitov

(2006) illustrates that the social ties that were grown among Puerto Rican immigrant groups through participation in gardening helped participants to address issues in other areas of life such as finding better jobs and demanding better schooling for their children. Rickenbacker (2012) has found that the participatory process entailed in greening and the social ties that are formed as a result of that process were essentially more important than the outcome of the greening project. Additionally, she argues that as community groups came to see themselves as connected to the city power structure and having a role within that structure they took part in additional activism relating the improvement of their community.

Essentially, political capital is fostered, as the physical space of the park or garden itself becomes an incubator for community political awareness and possibility. Drawing from the famed phrase of C. Wright Mills (1959), Blok and Meilvang (2015) analyze how the lines of "personal troubles" and "public issues" are blurred, contested, and justified in relation to Copenhagen brownfield development. They argue that the urban planning around green space and sustainability come to "spur new critical activities that seek to render place based attachments to urban ecologies relevant to common concerns" (Blok and Meilvang 2015: 2). In other words, to borrow from another famous phrase, through greenspace development, the "personal can become political," as residents make the links between their personal lives and local environments and larger structural problems such as poverty and racism. This very recognition is at the heart of the environmental justice movement, which seeks to ensure equal access to safe and productive greenspace among all urban populations (Rickenbacker 2012).

Financial Capital

Financial capital is often thought of as the key resource for any community development initiative. It refers to the both the public and private resources that are present and able to help a community to build capacity, support development efforts, and encourage entrepreneurship (Emery and Flora 2006). The money that is invested to support the development of other capitals can essentially be converted into financial capital.

There is not a lot of research that highlights urban greening as a springboard for large-scale economic development. Rather, monetary investment into urban greening is more indicative of a stepping-stone to grow other capitals. However, there may be some small-scale group and individual financial advantages to community urban greening projects, particularly in relation to urban gardens. Community urban gardens can be a potential site for addressing food security issues and also making small, cottage based profits through selling produce and value added agricultural products (Barthel et al., 2013). Financial capital can also be further invested and saved if less money is spent on securing food. For example, Hanna and Oh (2000) highlight in a review of Philadelphia community garden programs that in 1994 alone, Philadelphia's 501community vegetable gardens produced $1,948,633 worth of fruit and vegetables and in that year a total of 2,812 families (12,093 individuals) were involved in the vegetable gardens throughout the city (City Farmer: Urban Agriculture Notes 1999).

Additionally, large-scale urban greening programs are often a centerpiece of city planning in postindustrial cities planning for shrinking as opposed to growth. In these plans, investment capital is geared toward reclaiming and cleaning greenspaces in the

hopes that improved greenspace will attract new users, businesses, and green technology (Lovell 2010).

Human Capital

Human capital refers to the abilities and skills of people that are learned or used to develop community. This includes accessing information, training, and other resources from outside of the community. Human capital can be gained from both formal and informal education settings (Emery and Flora 2006).

Human capital is often discussed within greening literature as an important outcome in relation to community based greening projects. Skills such as landscape maintenance, learning to use a variety of tools, learning how to plant, manage, grow, and harvest a variety of plants are just a few of the human capital developments associated with urban greening initiatives (Wolf 2012; Hynes and Howe 2002; Hanna and Oh 2000). Hanna and Oh (2000) also identify gardening sites a space for individual and community value formation and a way for urban residents to reconnect with nature. It is this aspect of gardening, in relation to a reliance of a focus on gardening as a way to instill good work habits or the development of personal responsibility has been critiqued by scholars who suggest that greening initiatives reflect neoliberal urban policy (Pudup 2007; Perkins 2009).

Natural Capital

Natural capital may seem like most obvious asset developed from investments into community greenspace, but as previous discussions have highlighted the natural amenities provided are just one benefit of urban greening. Natural capital is defined as

those assets that are specific to a geographical location that include natural amenities, natural beauty, climate, natural resources, and biodiversity (Emery and Flora 2006).

Environmental scholars have cited the many ecological benefits to urban greening in terms of the potential development of ecosystem services that such strategies encourage. Wolf (2012) defines ecosystem services as "those conditions and processes through which natural ecosystems, and the species that inhabit them, sustain and fulfill human life" (Wolf 2012:3). In the urban setting, greening strategies have been linked to providing some of these services. These include improving air quality through foliage gas exchange and mitigating the urban heat island effect through planting trees, bushes, and grasses. The maintenance of greenery can improve water quality by increasing the amount of vegetation in soil, which reduces runoff and can work to control nonpoint source pollution through vegetation maintaining water pollutants (Wolf 2012). Additionally, within the context of resiliency framework Tidball and Kransey (2007) suggest that urban greening helps to foster ecological resilience both through the presence of biological diversity in community greenspace.

On the social side of natural capital, research has shown that the presence of environmental amenities has a positive psychological effect. Specifically, studies have indicated that greenspace amenities such as flower beds, maintained grasses, and trees by their presence alone have the power to increase urban dwellers' life satisfaction, restore calmness in the midst of the bustling city, and reduce irritability and mental fatigue (Kaplan and Kaplan 1990). Observational studies of urban children have also found that those who reside in heavily greened areas play more often and more "creatively" than those who don't. Likewise, children were also found to have higher levels of

concentration after moving from non-green areas to more heavily greened locations (Taylor et al. 1998; Wells 2000; Hynes and Howe 2002) Additionally, national surveys have indicated that access to greenspace is one of the largest predictors of neighborhood satisfaction in the urban setting (Fried 1982, Vemuri et al. 2011).

Cultural Capital

Finally, cultural capital is illustrative of the way in which people "know" their social world. Cultural capital includes knowledge, language, epistemology, food and traditions. Cultural capital is something that is passed down from generation to generation-through legacy and is kept alive through practice (Emery and Flora 2006).

Cultural capital is discussed within greening literature mainly in relation to community gardens through discussions on the legacy of urban agriculture and the history of community gardens. The birth of community gardens largely comes from times of political uncertainty, food shortages, and war. Known as "liberty" and "victory" gardens, the first urban gardens were used to help families make ends meet and to support the war effort during World Wars I and II. Following WWII and the flight of urban residents into the suburbs, the popularity of community gardens largely waned, until the postindustrial period, which ushered in thousands of acres of underused urban land (Hynes and Howe 2002).

In relation to shared cultural traditions, Barthel et al. (2013) suggest that community gardens are very useful in supporting collective memory or the "memories and knowledge shared by a distinct social group." Barthel et al. (2013) suggest that this collective remembering is very beneficial to both people and the environment in regard to urban food production.

Urban allotment gardens, the artifacts they contain and the social processes they enable, serve as collective mnemonic devices for transferring long-term social-ecological memories of how to grow food and successfully navigate food shortages when cities become divorced from the global economy in times of crisis. Feedback loops between social groups and ecosystem processes in allotment gardens continually reinforce such knowledge while also transforming the urban system in which they are embedded by creating locally adapted organisms and landscape features. This knowledge and these practices serve to renew and reorganize the capacity of urban social-ecological systems to generate food and associated ecosystem services that regulate food production. (Barthel et al., 2013: 15).

Research also indicates that there is a particular cultural construct developing around urban gardening in relation to African American populations and agentic food provision in the face of structural racism. In a case study of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, White (2010) illustrates that grassroots activism surrounding gardening and agricultural production challenges the government's capacity to supply healthy and culturally relevant foods to marginalized population. Activists suggest that rejecting the industrial, patriarchal, and racist food system is one step forward needed in the broader social revolution. Some of these ideas are highlighted on the Detroit Black Food Community Security Network and D-Town Farm Webpage.

"The Detroit Black Community Food Security Network is a coalition of organizations and individuals working together to build food security in Detroit's Black community. Our mission is to build self-reliance, food security and food justice in Detroit's Black community by influencing public policy, engaging in urban agriculture, promoting healthy eating, encouraging co-operative buying, and directing youth towards careers in food-related fields" (D-Town Farm Website)

While the cultural legacy of urban gardening has been viewed mostly within a positive light, there is some anecdotal evidence of backlash related to the activities among minority populations in relation to the historical legacy of slavery and sharecropping.

Despite these critiques the history of urban gardening and food justice movement also reflects the goals and efforts of radical civil rights movements (Alkon and Mares 2012).

Finally, cultural capital development can also be seen in more general urban greening projects in relation to the transmission of values in regard to treatment of greenspace and the cultural activities that take place in greened areas such as parks. These physical spaces become the sites for sharing traditions and culture through social interaction and the collective building or preservation of the green space (Hynes and Howe 2002).

In summary there is no shortage of support for community urban greening and urban greening activities in general. Scholars highlight how these initiatives have multiple positive benefits for individuals, communities, social groups, and the ecological environment. Given this vast body of support it is no surprise that urban greening strategies have been increasingly implemented as a way to address both social and ecological problems posed by deindustrialization and city shrinking. Urban greening activities offer a relatively low cost investment that can work to reclaim vacant and underused greenspace. As such, the forgoing literature within the frame of the CCF provides a nice grounding for a subset of questions in relation to the community impacts of greening initiatives within the Flint case study.

1) What benefits do participants perceive to be associated with community urban greening projects?

2) What factors contribute to community urban greening project success?

3) Can urban greening projects create the conditions necessary to challenge future neoliberal policy?

These questions, along with the questions outlined above in relation to UPE are operationalized in chapter three and discussed at length in chapters four, five six, and seven.

Conclusion

In sum, the UPE framework and neoliberal critique of urban greening initiatives reminds us that these activities are going on with a politically and fiscally strained environment and therefore reflect the outcome of previous policy and land use disasters within the space of "actually existing neoliberalism." While at the same time the benefits associated with community greening, according to ample research illustrate how these projects work as a catalyst to build assets among local groups who are also fiscally and politically constrained. By operating within a neoliberal political climate imposed by deindustrialization and the neglect of the state, local community groups may actually start to build the tools needed to contest future neoliberal policy measures. While local community urban greening projects are certainly not dismantling neoliberal policy or overtly challenging current political structures, they may be reflective of a reinvigoration of community engagement. This is seen in the process of urban greening in relation to the assets and benefits that can be gleaned from greening. This process of community development, spurring from greening projects, cannot be discounted. As such, this research will focus on answering broader urban greening questions by examining local community action in Flint, MI. I investigate the shared governance structure that promotes urban greening activities, how urban greening labor is accomplished, and if greening activities have the potential to create uneven urban landscapes within the city. Conversely, I also address community benefits associated with greening, factors that

contribute to community greening success, and the additional assets built from greening

that may be used to challenge power arrangements.

CH. 3 METHODOLOGY

This research is comprised of an in-depth ethnographic field study composed of multiple methods. These methods include a comparative case study, participant observation, semi-structured interviews with greening participants and key informants at greening resource provider/broker organizations, and an analysis of greening organization materials. Each of these methods was appropriate for conducting research in Flint, MI. My own experience with conducting research in the city has led me to believe that qualitative research methodologies provide richer data in relation to community greening projects as opposed to a methodology like surveying. This is in large part due to a research fatigue felt by Flint residents. As such the development of deeper personal relationships that can be established through engaging with residents and participating in community events allowed for residents to feel more comfortable with my presence. This is a common strategy undertaken by ethnographers seeking to understand the intricate workings of particular cultures and organizations (Berg 2009).

Comparative Case Study

To investigate greening as a process in the local community context, I compared five Flint, MI community groups focusing on urban greening projects. For the purposes of this research "community" is being conceptualized as a small subset of actors working collectively toward specific socio-environmental goals. Following from the work of Bridger and Alter (2009) and their conceptualization of "community as network" (Wilkinson 1991) urban greening activities are better conceptualized as "fields of social interaction." This formulation may be more appropriate in socially and economically

degraded Flint communities where the lack of repetitive long-term interaction and lack of trust among some residents makes the explicit development of social capital a difficult venture, though this research does illustrate that community greening can work to grow social capital ties. This conceptualization also attends to the fact that the number of people focusing on greening activities in each community group I analyze are quite small, though urban greening is often a centerpiece of the community organization even if not all members are involved.

A comparative case study is defined as "a set of multiple case studies of multiple research entities for the purpose of cross-unit comparison" (Berg 2009). In general, Berg (2009) suggests case studies enable researchers to generate better understanding, insight, and ability to theorize about a broader context, an idea that is similar to Geertz's (1973) concept of "thick description." As such, the comparative case study within my ethnographic methodology provided for an appropriate and effective way to address broad questions such as "What factors contribute to community urban greening success?" through smaller and localized analyses. Additionally, coding interviews with the indicators provided by Urban Political Ecology assumptions and the Community Capitals Framework enabled themes, concepts, and conclusions to be drawn from each case that can assist in theory building (Fernandez and Lehmann 2005).

The comparative case study methodology was selected as a main aspect of my ethnographic study for several reasons. Primarily, previous investigations on urban greening initiatives and programs have utilized this approach and have yielded results that reflect a deep understanding of the main problems and positive outcomes associated with urban greening (Westphal 2003; Pudup 2007; Perkins 2009; Perkins 2010; Eckerd

2010). Despite the previous use of case studies to investigate questions in relation to urban greening, I believe this method is an appropriate way to continue to understand the critical implications of greening projects. This methodology is appropriate as Flint may represent the "ultimate" case in relation to urban greening and the use of shared governance as way to transform social and ecological environments. As noted chapter one, the information that can be gleaned from the Flint case certainly applies to other cities, even those that do not contain such extreme conditions. As such, I have used findings from these previous case studies to develop questions (see above) in relation to the issues and impacts of urban greening within the city of Flint. Finally, Berg (2009) suggests that comparative case studies often yield more robust findings as the conclusions and theory that are derived from analyses are based on multiple analyses as opposed to a single case. This can help in some ways to increase the generalizability of the research.

Analysis of Organizational Materials

Analysis of organizational materials was undertaken as means to lay a foundation in relation to understanding the process of urban greening in the city of Flint. I did this by investigating the goals of several prominent organizations that support greening initiatives in some capacity. Organizations included the Genesee County Land Bank, *edible flint*, the City of Flint (master plan), Hurley Medical Center, the Ruth Mott Foundation, and the Genesee County Chapter of Habitat for Humanity. These institutions were selected based on a variety of factors including prominence of the institution in the city, activity surrounding urban greening projects, and research accessibility in relationship to existing contacts and partnerships. As such, these organizations do not represent an exhaustive list of the institutions either funding or supporting urban greening

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in the city of Flint. Taking on such an analysis was beyond the scope of this study. Rather the institutions identified here are meant to be a sub-sample of organizational urban greening work. Despite this, the sample does include the two "flagship" greening organizations: Genesee County Land Bank and *edible flint*.

Specifically, I aimed to understand the 1) mission of each organization, 2) its contribution to community urban greening in the city of Flint, 3) and to understand each organization's role in the shared governance structure. A variety of materials were analyzed including program flyers and organizational websites. This information was attained from attending neighborhood association meetings in the city of Flint and through reviewing materials posted publically online.

I specifically focused on thematic schema that centered on pulling information relevant to the questions identified above (See Appendix 1. for the research instrument guiding this portion of data collection). As I was not looking for information to prove or disprove any theory or assumption, the data gleaned from this process represents an accurate overview of the organizations as they relate to urban greening (according to the perspective of the organization). In other words, information provided from this process stems from a reviewing of materials and was not selected to support any one argument. This analysis helped me to develop a set of themes that was used to construct the questionnaire for the organizational key informant interviews.

Semi-Structured Organizational Key Informant Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were an appropriate methodology for this research for several reasons. First, they allow for a level of flexibility in regard to the researcher asking questions beyond those outlined in the questionnaire. The additional probes that

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were used following interview questions provided me with additional insights that might not have been acquired through the use of a strict structured interview. Additionally, this type of interviewing methodology allows the researcher to ask and structure questions based on his/her assumptions about the participant. In this regard, I asked questions in a manner intended to make it easier for participants to understand (Berg 2009). Interviews with urban greening program administrators and participants helped me to answer questions regarding the individual social benefits of greening projects.

Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with personnel from each major institution selected for the study (one interview per institution[7]). Key informants from greening organizations represent a convenience sample as I had access to these informants through attending neighborhood association meetings in the city of Flint or through my own volunteering with local organizations. While the group selected is a convenience sample, all of the informants are very suitable for addressing questions about the promotion and structure of community urban greening. Each informant is heavily involved with assisting community groups interested in community urban greening projects and illuminating the urban greening process. Due to this role, I believe the informants selected are the best representation from each greening organization in relation to the purposes of this study. The table below summarizes the organizational key informant interviews.

Table 1. Institutional Interview Key Informants

Organization	Informant	Title	Responsibilities
Ruth Mott Foundation	Kathy Banks	Program Officer	Reviews beautification grant applications, assists in awarding grants.

[7] All interview participants were given an Informed Consent letter. See Appendix 2.

Table 1. (cont'd)

Genesee County Land Bank	**Quianna Fields**	**Community Outreach Coordinator**	**Shares information with local community groups about land bank programs, assists community members with program application.**
edible flint	Amy Smith	Community Food Systems Educator with Michigan State University Extension,	Coordinates the Garden Starters Program. Community relations point of contact person.
City of Flint	Rory Watts	Associate Planner	One of two associate planners (under a lead planner) working on the drafting of the "Imagine Flint" master plan. Attends neighborhood association meeting to inform residents and to gather community input on the plan.
Genesee County Chapter of Habitat for Humanity	Bill Haworth	Community Outreach Coordinator	Implement community development initiatives in the Habitat focus areas.
Hurley Medical Center	Amanda Clark	Community Outreach Coordinator	Community contact person for community programs

Interviews with institutional officials helped to me attend to a list of questions developed from the Urban Political Ecology literature (1: What type of political structure is governing and promoting the use of urban greening as a development strategy, 2: Do community based urban greening projects legitimate the retreat of the state in relation to relying on volunteer labor to maintain greenspace, and 3: does the urban community greening result in the development of uneven urban landscapes?

In order to illicit responses related to these broader questions, I asked participants questions related to the development and funding of the organization and about partnerships with other organizations within the city *(Political Structure),* questions that related to community participation and volunteer labor *(Retreat of the State),* and

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questions that detailed information on participant selection and the sustainability of greening programs *(Uneven Development)*. For a full review of the interview instrument and an operationalization of the urban political ecology constructs please see Appendix 3.

Some of the questions in the key informant interviews mirror some of the questions that I sought to answer in my review of the organizational materials. This analysis in combination with the interviews allowed me to see the goals and mission of each organization from differing vantage points. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Four of the interviews we conducted over the phone for the convenience of the participant, while two were conducted in person. Interview data were coded and analyzed using Nvivo 10 software. For a list of key themes used to analyze the institutional interviews see Appendix 7.

Participant Observation

Participant observation, a methodology commonly associated with ethnographic research, was very suitable to my research (Berg 2009). Participant observation at neighborhood association, project meetings, work days, and social gatherings assisted me in developing relationships with Flint residents while also allowing me to see into their social world. During these activities I took notes or jottings as appropriate. When I could not take notes, I used a voice recorder (during breaks) to dictate memos for later note taking. Following each intensive participant observation session I used the dictations and mental notes to write in depth ethnographic field notes. When appropriate I assigned themes to the notes as tool for later analysis. Field notes were later coded and analyzed using Nvivo 10 software (Emerson et al., 1995). See Appendix 6 for a list of themes that guided the analysis of field notes.

Participant observation helped me to answer questions regarding the types of programs that certain groups engage in as well as the group and individual level benefits and difficulties surrounding urban greening. This methodology also assisted me in a gaining a general understanding of the some of the issues and particular social norms that accompanied the specific neighborhood setting. Throughout my data collection period from May 2013 through August of 2014, I spent approximately 200 hours conducting participant observation through volunteering and attending neighborhood group events at the five case sites as well as events hosted by greening institutions such as *edible flint*. These hours are in addition to three years of previous research in two of the case study sites.

Semi-Structured Interviews with Greening Participants

In addition to greening institution key informant interviews, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with residents participating in neighborhood greening projects.[8] These interviews attended to research question two: what benefits to residents perceive to be associated with community urban greening projects? In addition, these interviews were structured around the community capitals model and centered on greening questions relating to each of the seven community capitals outlined in the table below (See Appendix 4. for the interview questionnaire). Indicators for each capital were drawn from the extensive literature review on the social impacts of community greening projects outlined in chapter two.

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[8] Most participants were actually residents of the neighborhood. Three participants from the Hawthorne Community Garden did not live in the area.

Table 2. Community Capitals Framework and Indicators

Community Capitals	Community Greening Indicators
Built capital—housing stock, industrial stock, transportation, water and wastewater infrastructure, parks space	Park space, gardens, benches, maintained neighborhood homes and buildings
Natural capital—natural assets, ranging from air quality to biodiversity and open space;	Open greenspace, park space, trees, water bodies
Social capital—networks of trust and reciprocity; Bonding social capital – links to people of the same place and/or background Bridging social capital – links to people or groups of different place or background	Resident trust and social interaction. Neighborhood activities and events, neighborhood association participation. Partnerships between community groups and greening organizations. Leveraging resources through partnerships
Political capital – access to financial and other resources through the political process;	Neighborhood associations, block clubs, gaining additional neighborhood resources, participation in the political process
Cultural capital—worldview and attributes or assets associated with the community;	Block parties, festivals, neighborhood events, relationship to local food production
Human capital – skills, knowledge and abilities;	Greenspace maintenance knowledge, learning to use new tools and how to plant. Community organization knowledge. Grant writing knowledge.
Financial capital—available monetary resources – investment capital	Housing values, profits from urban greening, attaining additional financial resources through greening efforts

As such, these interviews helped me to capture participant perceptions about urban greening in relation to indicators such as crime, empowerment, and social capital. Interviews with community urban greening participants were also useful in answering sub questions developed from the community urban greening literature organized by community capital in chapter two. These include: What factors lead to community urban greening success and can community urban greening projects create the conditions necessary (through the growth of collective efficacy and social capital) to challenge future neoliberal policy?

Throughout the research period I conducted 28 interviews with community greening participants. As participating community groups were generally small and not all members participated in greening projects this number nearly represents a total of all participants at each case site. One participant refused to take part in an interview and another was unable to due to illness. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes to an hour. Interview participants were established from my relationships developed at each case site or greening organization. I scheduled interviews while volunteering or attending meetings. A snowball or convenience sampling procedure was also used in several instances to attain additional participants, as residents would suggest that I speak with additional community members who were not present on a particular day when I was volunteering (See Appendix 5. for snowball sampling letter). When this occurred I would give residents a letter that explained who I was, why I was contacting them and how I was referred to the particular participant.

Table 3. Greening Participants

NORTHERN HILLS

Name	Age	Gender	Race	Household Income	Housing Tenure	Years of Tenure
Mr. Carson	72	M	W	+25,000- 40,000	Own	30+
Roger	56	M	W	100,000	Own	23
Kate	60	F	AA	+40,000 -70,000	Own	9
Mr. Titan	59	M	AA	+40,000 -70,000	Own	28
Miss Eva	78	F	AA	+25,000- 40,000	Own	43
Arlene	55	F	AA	+25,000-40,000	Own	25

SOUTH PARK

James	00	M	W	70,000	Rent	15
Mrs. Forester	63	F	W	40,000	Own	37
Mr. Forester	63	M	W	40,000	Own	37
Rhonda	61	F	W	-15,000	Own	38
Mike	56	M	W	+25,000 -40,000	Own	3
Marnika	31	F	AA	-15,000	N/A	N/A

Table 3. (cont'd)

Brenda	**73**	**F**	**W**	**-15,000**	**Own**	**26**
Buffy	63	F	W	+15,000-25,000	Own	23

HAWTHORNE

Bernice	53	F	W	70,000	Own	N/A
Dorothy	58	F	W	100,000	Own	N/A
Sandra	46	F	W	+40,000-70,000	Own	N/A
Miles	47	M	AA	+40,000-70,000	Own	N/A

POOLMAN HEIGHTS

Pastor Martin	59	M	W	00	Own	4
Carter	50	M	W	+15,000-25,000	Own	20
Kyle	56	M	W	+15,000-25,000	Own	7
Corrina	71	F	W	-25,000	Own	5
Carlyle	55	M	W	-40,000	Own	5

BOWER STREET

Mr. Ronald	63	M	AA	-15,000	Rent	3
Troy	40	M	AA	-15,000	Rent	14
Ms. Anna	00	F	AA	00	Own	23
Mr. Lenny	55	M	AA	-15,000	Own	20
Ms. Shanda	53	F	AA	+25,000-40,000	Own	10

Interviews usually took place face to face at greenspace sites. On a few occasions participants invited me to their homes or to conduct the interview at a café or restaurant. Four of the interviews took place over the phone for the convenience of the participant. All interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and coded using Nvivo 10 software (See Appendix 6. for a list of themes guiding interview analysis). The chart below indicates the number of interviews in each case site (institutional interviews not listed).

Table 4. Community Interviews

Name	Type of Greening	Block Group Population	Income- Median Household	Race	Housing Units/ Occupancy	Interviews
Bower St Garden	Community Garden (individual)	646	$24,000	98% Black	278/462 Occupied	5
Hawthorne Hospital Community Garden	Institutional Community Garden	445	$30,000	75% Black 25% White	128/445 Occupied	4
Poolman Heights Neighborhood Association	Community Garden- Blight Removal	616	$29,000	74% White 11% Black	374/531 Occupied	5
Northern Hills Neighborhood Association	Park Maintenance- Blight Removal	385	$28,000	90% Black 10% White	167/222 Occupied	6
Franklin Park Business and Resident Association	Park Maintenance- Blight Removal	969	$30,000	70% White 20% Black 10% 2 or more races	378/507 Occupied	8

Data Analysis

Data analysis largely consisted of a theoretical thematic analysis that included multiple rounds of coding, memoing, and theme selection (Braun and Clarke 2006). Nvivo 10 software was used to organize, code, and analyze all data. Additional coders were not included in the coding process. As such, statistics to improve code reliability were not conducted as part of the data analysis.

During the first round of coding (open/initial coding), I sought to develop as many codes as possible, even those outside what I presumed I would find based on my background knowledge. In this sense coding was both an inductive and theoretical

process. Following open coding, I wrote initial memos to investigate analytical themes. I then selected themes based on open coding and memos. Priority was given to reoccurring themes and those that I thought to highlight key differences and similarities between the case sites. After theme selection, I sorted field notes/transcript questions on the basis of themes then completed and in-depth focused coding process. It is in this phase of the analysis where I broke themes down into sub codes, as illustrated with the beatification example in Appendix 7. Following focused coding, I wrote integrative memos where I linked notes and incidents for organizational purposes and worked to develop theoretical connections between note/interview excerpts (Emerson et al., 1995).

Triangulation

The use of the multiple methods outlined above assisted me in the construction of a reliable dataset. Data was analyzed together according to theme despite unit of analysis. By comparing organizational material and observational data to that of interview data, I was able to view the questions of investigation from differing points of view. Denzin (1978) refers to this process as investigating data from "different aspects of empirical reality." As such, triangulation using multiple methods helps to improve the "objectivity" of qualitative research.

Methodological Limitations

Ethnographic research entails several limitations. Primarily, it lacks broad scale generalizability due to the specificity involved in relation to the context of the study and data collected. Berg (2009) notes, however, that if an ethnographic study is properly undertaken the methodology should generally provide understanding about similar groups and phenomena. In addition, outside of longitudinal studies, this methodology

often only produces a short snapshot in time in relation to a given issue. As such, my results based on a time period of over a little more than a year may reveal major processes involved in and some implications in relation to greening practices but these are likely to shift over time.

Community Sites

In this section I briefly detail how I came into contact with each of my five case study sites and then introduce each site. I include both demographic information as well as information gleaned from my participant observation. I was introduced to each of my field sites through interactions with the GCLB and *edible flint*. Specifically, the GCLB introduced me to the Northern Hills and Franklin Park Neighborhood Associations through my work as a research assistant from 2009-2012 on a project at Michigan State University measuring the social impacts of greening through the maintenance of turfgrass. The GCLB recommended these two site areas to a faculty member within the Department of Plant, Soil, and Microbial Sciences who spearheaded the project. These specific neighborhood associations were suggested, as they were actively pursuing funds and initiatives to implement urban greening. I decided to continue working with both of these neighborhood groups as I had developed a rapport with members of the community and because the urban greening activities going on in the neighborhoods fit into the parameters of my research.

I came into contact with the other three community sites through volunteering with *edible flint*. Throughout the winter and spring of 2013, I put in approximately thirty volunteer hours with the organization in preparation for the growing season. Per recommendations of *edible flint* staff, I volunteered at the Garden Starters Kit

Distribution Day, where I handed out letters to community garden members. The letters indicated who I was, what I was doing, and that I was interested in volunteering at community gardens throughout the summer for my dissertation research. Of the ten letters that I handed out I received three call backs, one from the Poolman Heights Neighborhood Association, one from the Hawthorne Garden, and one from a community garden in Grand Blanc, as this site was out of my study purview it was not considered. The third case site came from a recommendation from a fellow *edible flint* volunteer. I did not come into contact with the contact from Bower Street garden that day, but he had gone through the garden starters program and received a kit for the growing season.

Northern Hills Neighborhood Association

The Northern Hills Neighborhood is a primarily residential neighborhood, lined with sturdy antique housing stock reminiscent of the glory days of Flint's auto industry. The neighborhood is predominantly (90.4%) African American. From 2000 to 2010, population declined from 607 to 385, with 45% of families living below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). In 2000 the Northern Hills neighborhood contained 223 housing units with 85.7% of the units occupied and 14.4 % vacant. In 2010 the number of housing units had shrunk to 172 with 79.7% occupied and 20.4% vacant. In short, this neighborhood is representative of many neighborhoods in Flint, having suffered population loss, poverty, and abandonment.

The NHNA has been active for approximately 10 years, and holds monthly meetings that are open to all residents of the Northern Hills neighborhood. The meetings are advertised throughout the neighborhood on "meeting week" with yard signs and flyers. On average, between 10-15 members attend the monthly meetings, which are

conducted by the association leader, who started the association when she moved to Flint ten years ago. A few other residents maintain official positions in the association such as secretary and treasurer. Residents were appointed to these positions through motions proposed and passed by majority rule at meetings, the typical format through which the NHNA reaches all association decisions.

At the monthly association meetings, members discuss both long-term goals for their neighborhood and more current issues and projects outlined on an agenda prepared by the association leader. These agendas typically build upon main concerns, discussions, and motions proposed at previous meetings. Usually the association's regular "news and notes" discussion revolves around activities in the neighborhood, which often have to do with crime and disorder, such as break-ins, trash dumping, metal stripping, and loitering youth. In order to aid these issues, the members discuss possible solutions and apply for programs and grants that may be applicable to helping improve neighborhood conditions overall. In terms of long-term goals, the association actively pursues implementing aspects of its neighborhood master plan that was created for the association through a local grant as part of the Flint Chapter of the American Institute of Architects' "150 Year Anniversary Celebration." The association is currently working on phase one of the master plan, which involves the maintenance and expansion of greenways both in terms of public space and the converting of vacant lots. The association is working toward these goals through participating in the Land Bank's clean and green program as well as applying for other local beautification grants.

The main "movers and shakers" of the NHNA include the association leader, Kate, an African American woman who is employed in the regional philanthropic

community but also a handful a few other key members who are instrumental in assisting the group in applying for grants and maintaining the neighborhood. These include a retired school principal who ran the now closed neighborhood Elementary School for over 30 years. Mr. Carson is an icon in the NHNA. People of all ages greet him when they see him in the neighborhood, knowing that they had better be on their best behavior or Mr. Carson will be on their case. Mr. Carson has a long activist background as a union representative for Flint Public Schools. His stern-nosed dedication to improving his community through working with local youth can be seen in the activities that he "employs" young men to take part in the neighborhood, namely the cleaning up and clearing of parks and vacant lands. Mr. Carson is in charge of the Resident Blight Brigade, which is a program funded by the U.S. Department of Justice that promotes the rehabilitation of non-violent offenders through community labor. Every Saturday May through October Mr. Carson and a work crew can be found in the NHNA neighborhood or in some other community in Flint working on community projects.

Another active community member is Roger Allen, who works at a local community development corporation. Roger and his wife are very active members in the association, who are constantly volunteering their time to NHNA projects and programs but also other initiatives throughout the city as well. Through his role at the local institution Roger also promotes the improvement of the built capital in the neighborhood by sharing projects and programs promoted by his work place with his neighbors.

Franklin Park Business and Resident Association

The Franklin Park neighborhood is a mix of a working class neighborhood and commercial area on Flint's South end. Unlike many Flint communities the Franklin Park

population has actually increased in recent years. In 2000 the population stood at 810. The 2010 census showed an increase in population at 969 in 2012. Similarly, there was also an increase in housing units between 2000 and 2010, growing from 386 to 507. In 2010, 378 of these units were occupied, reflecting a large percentage of vacancy in neighborhood. Only 195 of the occupied housing units are owner occupied. The population is majority white at 70%, with the second largest group being Black at 20% of the population. The neighborhood medium income is approximately 30,000 annually (U.S. Census Bureau 2000, 2010).

The Franklin Park neighborhood hosts a very active business and resident association known as the FPBRA. James, the association's president, is the director of the neighborhood charter school, who is extremely active in the community. The FPBRA meets monthly for lunch meetings at a local car dealership. Approximately 15-20 regular members attend each meeting, in addition to special guests from around the city that are often invited by the president. The regular members also serve as the main volunteers for neighborhood projects and programs to the extent that they can physically meet the demands as many of the FPBRA members are retired and elderly.

Through the leadership of James[9] and his endless work, FPBRA has been very successful in leveraging resources from both private foundations and local and regional bodies to mitigate the impacts of industrial decline and abandonment. Notably, the FPBRA received a grant in 2010 to employ six full time police officers in the area and in 2013 received a Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grant for 225,000 dollars to

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[9] Franklin Park residents often remark on James' endless dedication to the neighborhood in regard both his time and spending his own personal money on neighborhood projects and initiatives. Some note that they receive emails from James at 3:00 in the morning.

reclaim a local lake and to green the surrounding park area. In addition, to these substantial grants the association has applied for and received countless mini-grants from various institutions used to green the neighborhood.

The cornerstone of the Franklin Park neighborhood is arguably the local charter school that offers both education and community resources through the community school tradition. [10] The school often serves as a community-meeting place for other neighborhood meeting such as the local crime watch group. In addition, the school is at the center of neighborhood greening and beautification programs through the support of James and the labor of school kids who help to maintain vacant lots and the local park through the Land Bank's Clean and Green program. The school also hosts monthly food drives for needy residents in addition to a gamut of holiday related activities such as a free Annual Thanksgiving Dinner.

In addition to its many greening projects, the Franklin Park neighborhood has also been somewhat successful in attracting new business and industry to the area. Most notably, the FPBRA was instrumental in bringing Longate Pharmacy to the area. The new location for the distributional pharmacy brought the opportunity for approximately fifty new local jobs. Through the negotiation process one of the goals of FPBRA was to make Longate a key partner in the neighborhood and thus far this has come to fruition. Longate is an active participant in local activities and representatives often attend FPBRA meetings. Finally, the neighborhood has also been successful in attracting some smaller

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[10] The community school movement was born in the city of Flint in the 1930s, with support from C.S. Mott a local philanthropist. Ironically, the community school idea was posed as a way to address the community economic woes of the depression era (Hiemstra 1997).

scale business to the area. For example, in late 2013 a new bakery opened up in the neighborhood in what was once a pizza shop.

Hawthorne Community Garden

The Hawthorne Community Garden is a community garden project sponsored by a local hospital in the city of Flint. The garden was started in 2009 by hospital staff involved in community outreach initiatives. The goal of the garden was to strengthen the relationship between the hospital and the surrounding community. The garden was also part of local nutrition and fitness program promoting healthy lifestyles to Flint communities, largely stemming from the national trend of community health highlighted in Michelle Obama's "Lets Move" campaign. Initially, the garden was funded by the Mott foundation for the first two years but has since lost funding and is supported through donations and *edible flint*, which supplies a garden starter kit to the hospital staff. The garden sits across the street from the hospital in an area known as the Hawthorne community on a once vacant parcel of land, suggesting that the garden also helps to beautify the area surrounding the hospital.

The garden is run on a volunteer basis, with much of the labor stemming from the garden manager named Bernice, an administrative nurse at the hospital. Prior to each garden season Bernice solicits volunteers through the hospital, people walking by the garden, and other local organizations such as Resource Genesee, a local job training and volunteer placement organization. The majority of the garden volunteers come from the volunteer placement agency and other local groups seeking volunteer hours. After volunteers are composed a garden schedule is produced for both maintenance and harvesting. The garden is gated but not locked in order to keep small animals out of the

garden; as such people are free to enter the garden when volunteers are not present. This is most common around harvest season.

The majority of volunteers in the garden are not from the surrounding community and many do not live in the city of Flint proper. In the summer of 2013, six regular volunteers (including myself) were recorded as participating in garden activities on a scheduled basis. Approximately, ten other volunteers from the local volunteer agency and a local school were also recorded as participating on a non-scheduled basis. The surrounding community, the area in which the garden is *meant* to serve has experienced severe population decline. In 2000 the population of the area was 778 with 337 housing units, by 2010 this had shrunk to 445 with 228 housing units. Currently only 128 housing units are occupied with the majority (82.2%) being renter occupied. The majority of the population of the neighborhood is Black at 74.2%; while the second largest majority is White at 24.9% the median household income for the area is $30,000. (U.S. Census Bureau 2000, 2010).

Poolman Heights Community Garden

The Poolman Heights Community Garden is an initiative of the Poolman Heights Neighborhood Association (PHNA). The neighborhood is located in the northeast corner of Flint and is a community that surrounds former industrial sites such as Flint's massive Delphi complex. The Poolman Heights neighborhood experienced extreme population loss between the millennium and 2010 census. In 2000, the population was 1,107 with 462 occupied of the 531 housing units. By 2010 the population had decreased to 661 with 374 occupied housing units. Tenure in the neighborhood is roughly half and half between owners and renters. The Poolman Heights Neighborhood is largely composed of White

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residents who account for 73.5% of the population, while Blacks account for 11.2% of the population; the remaining population is composed of two or more races. The annual median income for the area is $29,000.

The PHNA has been in operation in some form or another for approximately ten years. The current conglomeration evolved out of a local crime watch group. The association has a traditional organizational structure is led by a local resident named Carter who serves as the president. Another retired resident named Corrina serves as the secretary, and young woman who is a city of Flint planning commissioner serves as the treasurer. Meetings are held in a very official matter, always initiated by the direction of the president who follows an agenda. The meetings are also opened with a reading of the previous meeting minutes. Like the NHNA, the PHNA uses a consensus based voting system to come to agreement on actions involving neighborhood issues and initiatives.

The PHNA garden sits on space along side Poolman Elementary and butts up to Poolman Park. For the last two years the PHNA community garden has been initiated and organized by a local husband and wife who are both ordained pastors. They started the garden to give back to the community from an ecumenical standpoint. They presumed that the majority of the volunteer labor would come from the surrounding neighborhood, but have lamented that aside from a few dedicated members of the PHNA and assistance from young men in Mr. Carson's (NHNA) work release program, they have done the majority of the labor in regard to the maintenance of the garden. There is not an official garden or harvest schedule however they are a few scheduled days of maintenance in the hopes of attracting new volunteers to the garden. The surrounding community is allowed to come in and harvest at their leisure, though the pastors promote the idea that "if one is

going to harvest one should spend at least five minutes weeding." The official start to the garden in 2013 was kicked off with a "planting party" on Memorial Day weekend. Following the party later in the evening the pastors hosted an "old fashioned" tent revival in the community and invited everyone in the neighborhood to attend.

In addition to the garden, residents from the Poolman Heights neighborhood take part in additional greening activities. Primarily, Carter and his older brother Kyle mow and maintain vacant lots and greenery in the area. This work is done with their own resources and is not affiliated with the Clean and Green Program. In the summer of 2013 Carter and Kyle mowed over fifty lots in their neighborhood, many of which are owned by the Genesee County Land Bank, which is supposed to maintain the lots. Carter and Kyle say that they do this work to help the morale of the community and because they believe safety is increased when they maintain the local landscape.

The Bower Street Garden

The Bower street garden was started in 2009 in conjunction with the Bower Street Block Club. The garden and block club were formed by a local African American resident named Ronald Garrison who rented a home on the street. Mr. Ronald is a retirement aged man who is on disability due to severe rheumatoid arthritis in his hands, likely caused by the many physically demanding jobs that Ronald had around the country during his working years, including oil fields in North Dakota, farm fields of Arkansas and fishing boats in Florida. Ronald moved back to his hometown of Flint in the late 1980s were he met and settled down with his longtime partner Miss Darlene. Ronald became interested in starting a block club after learning about community organizing and the gardening programs offered by *edible flint* from the local community development

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corporation. The area surrounding the Bower Street garden is predominately African American as this demographic accounts for 97.15 of the total population of 646 people. The area has experienced moderately extreme population loss since 2000, when the total population was recorded at 1,122 with a total of 477 housing units (394 occupied). By 2010, the number of housing units occupied had reduced to 462 with only 278 occupied. Approximately 65% of the occupied units are owner occupied. The median household income for the surrounding community is just above $24,000 (U. S Census Bureau 2000/2010).

The governance and activity of the Bower Street block club does not follow a traditional organizational structure. There are only two official positions; Ronald is the President and a man that lives next door to the garden is the Vice President. The block club does not have an official meetings and any information that is shared is typically done door to door or by word of mouth. Ronald suggests that this used to be a pretty common occurrence when the block club first started, but fizzled-out some due to Ronald having to move away from the neighborhood because the house he was renting went into foreclosure in 2011. Though Ronald no longer lives in the neighborhood he still maintains a garden on the vacant lot (next to his former house) that he purchased from the land bank every year since he moved.

Prior to starting the garden, Ronald went through the Garden Starters program provided by *edible flint*. He founded the garden in honor of a friend that lived on Bower Street that had recently passed away due to cancer. There is no official set of volunteers for maintaining the garden or planting and harvesting. In fact almost all of the work is completely done by Ronald with little help from the surrounding neighbors, yet Ronald

refs to his garden as a community garden. When Ronald does harvest, he packs-up a variety of vegetables in plastic grocery bags and delivers the bags to residents along Bower Street and also to some homes on surrounding streets and to the clerks at the local party store. I helped Mr. Ronald with this activity during my fieldwork. On numerous occasions we loaded the hatchback on my Pontiac Vibe with grocery sacks of greens, peppers, and tomatoes. I drove slowly down Bower St. and the surrounding area as Ronald followed behind me, grabbing sacks and setting them on the neighbors' front stoops.

Conclusion

In summary, the five case sites that I selected for my comparative case study of urban greening projects in the city of Flint offer a variety of configurations in various areas across the city. Some of the sites explicitly focus on greening as a community development strategy, while others tend to greening as a necessity as a means to improve the safety of the area. Those groups focusing on gardening projects also have varying goals in relation to improving social capital and food security. In the next chapter I focus on answering research question one and investigate the nested resource relationship-shared governance structure that is supporting the greening work of the groups outlined in my case sites.

CH. 4 INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND PROMOTION OF COMMUNITY URBAN

GREENING IN FLINT

In this chapter I address how local institutions fiscally support and promote

community based urban greening initiatives in Flint. Data presented in this section is

based on reviews of organizational materials (websites and flyers) and interviews with

key informants at each organization. This section highlights the organization of funding

for greening and the reasons behind the promotion of urban greening activities in the city

of Flint. In addition this section helps to lay the backdrop in relation to my case study

sites, which represent the community level of where greening actually takes place.

Through this section I aim to illustrate the nested resource relationships and

partnerships between local organizations that allow them to focus heavily on urban

greening initiatives as a community development strategy. To be clear, the work of each

of the bodies below is not going on in a vacuum. Most of the organizations discussed in

this chapter are either partnered with at least one of the other organizations outlined or

some other entity in the city of Flint either at the neighborhood or community wide level.

As such, each section is meant to be read as one piece in a large web or "shared

governance structure" that supports community greening initiatives. The organizations

discussed in this chapter are not reflective of the totality of bodies funding, promoting,

and supporting greening in the city of Flint. Taking on such an analysis is beyond the

scope of this study. Rather the organizations described below are a model of the *Nested*

Resource Relationships for urban service delivery that has arisen due to the

deindustrialization and the neoliberalization of the economy as discussed in chapter two.

Nested Resource Relationships

As indicated in chapter one, the city of Flint has been in the midst of fiscal crisis for the last decade or more, as a result of poor municipal management, deindustrialization, and the reduction of revenue sharing by the state of Michigan. As a result of this crisis and the installation of an emergency financial manager, the city is left with very few resources to fund "non-essential" services such parks and greenspace maintenance. As such, the funding of these activities has largely fallen into the hands of organizations promoting urban greening across the city as a land use and community development strategy. These organizations fund a variety of greening projects, blight elimination programs, and community resource opportunities through securing grants from philanthropic foundations and to a smaller extent the state and federal governments. In essence, organizations within the city that focus on greening procure funds or act as resources brokers to smaller community groups working on urban greening goals. The work of these community groups is required as a result of city neglect in relation to greenspace maintenance.

There is ample research to support the development of similar models of urban service delivery where nonprofit and private organizations are either contracted by governments to provide for services or are privatized all together. These models have been identified by scholars in relation to the United States welfare reform of the late 1990s and the neoliberalization of the global economy (Hoggart 1998; Marwell 2004; MacIndoe 2007). As such, it is no surprise that we see a similar model at work in the city of Flint, in light of this broader international trend but also due to the recent fiscal and structural crisis within the city. Furthermore, this nested relationship has been identified

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among other instances of development within Flint, not just in relation to greening. A similar model is utilized for human development and youth educational programs as well as some social services in relation to work training programs. In sum, as a result of current economic woes and the lack of both political and financial power among city leaders, this model is a primary means for many of the development and services delivery activities to come to fruition. The figure below highlights the nested relationship in relation to how community urban greening activities are funded across the city. A more detailed version of this model is presented in the conclusion of this chapter, which features the organizations and partnerships discussed in the following pages.

Figure 1. Model of Resource Delivery

General Model of Nested Resource Relationships for Service Delivery

- Philanthropic Foundations/ State Support
  - Service Delivery Organization
    - Neighborhood Groups
    - Community Organizations
  - Service Delivery Organization
    - Social Institutions
      - Neighborhood/ Community Groups

While there is certainly a variety of philanthropic funding foundations and service delivery organizations funding greening projects in the city of Flint, for the purposes of this dissertation I focus on a select set of institutions. These institutions were selected for a variety of reasons in relation to research accessibility, but also due the fact that the organizations outlined here are on the frontlines in terms of the promotion of major

greening activities within the city of Flint. In addition to analyzing how these organizations fund greening programs across the city, I also investigate the role of the city supporting these projects, despite its limited capacity to provide the resources needed for greening interventions.

I first detail the role of a major philanthropic player or *resource provider* in the city of Flint, the Ruth Mott Foundation. This organization has been identified as a flagship philanthropic institution in the city of Flint and as funding a large portion of community greening projects across the city, including providing ample support the Genesee County Land Bank, and *edible flint*, the two main *service delivery organizations* or *resource brokers* identified in this study. The other organizations identified in this section represent social institutions or *intermediary service brokers* working to meet community goals through supporting community organizations. Lastly, I identify the city of Flint as a major player in promoting greening through an intensive community master planning process, but highlight how this plan is reliant on the model of nested resource relationships identified above.

Resource Provider: The Ruth Mott Foundation

The Ruth Mott Foundation is a local philanthropic organization named after its founder who was the wife of C.S. Mott, a local Flint icon and General Motors business tycoon. The Ruth Mott foundation has been in operation for approximately fifteen years. The organization works toward meetings its overall goal by serving Flint and Genesee County through three main project areas Beautification, Health Promotion, and Arts and Culture.

The foundation has an ample endowment to work toward these goals each year. In 2013, The Ruth Mott Foundation closed the year with 220 million dollars in assets and had spent 9.62 million in program operations and grants. Of particular interest to this study, are the grants that are made in relation to beautification projects around the city of Flint. In 2011 alone, the organization spent $1,239,026.00 on projects falling under the beautification category. Funds went to a variety of organizations that differ in size and scale including the Franklin Park Business and Resident Association, Kings Karate Farm, Hurley Medical Center, The United Way (Keep Genesee Beautiful), the City of Flint, and Salem Housing.

According to the Ruth Mott Foundation, funds that go toward beautification aim to "create safe, attractive and livable communities." The guiding principles for beautification grants supporting land use, neighborhoods and parks, include "involving residents in planning the kind of community they want to live in, transforming and enlivening public places, offering sustainable solutions to challenges with parks systems and other public spaces, engaging citizen-led efforts to increase community livability and safety, and developing leadership that will support long term change" (Ruth Moth Foundation Webpage: Areas of Funding/Beautification). In this sense the Ruth Mott Foundation is very community centered and aims to promote community growth within the process of urban greening.

Kathy Banks[11], a Program Officer with the Ruth Mott Foundation, has overseen many of the grants given in relation to urban greening and beautification. She notes that over the years the meaning of "beautification" has shifted in order to meet the needs of

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[11] All interview participants have been given pseudonyms.

Flint in relation to current conditions and shifting financial resources. In some cases, beautification can relate just to the stabilization of a neighborhood by providing supplies to board homes or plant flowerbeds. While the organization does serve broader Genesee County, according to Banks the majority of Ruth Mott funds stay within the city of Flint proper.

Specifically in relation to greening, the Ruth Mott foundation has played an instrumental role in supporting greening projects through two major grants, these of course are in addition to the mini grants and programs it supports each year. In 2013, the Ruth Mott gave $100,000 to the city of Flint to support the planning staff for the master planning project detailed below and also gave an additional $27,250 in funds to the Genesee County Land Bank to back their staff labor in relation to the master-planning project (Ruth Mott Foundation Webpage: Grant Database). Ms. Banks herself also serves as a city of Flint planning commissioner and is also on the Master Plan Steering Committee. Through these two roles she acted as the liaison between the Planning Commission and the master planning team.

The second main initiative integral to greenspace maintenance is Ruth Mott's support of the United Way, which essentially funds Keep Genesee County Beautiful, the nation's first affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, a nonprofit striving toward creating sustainable communities. In 2011, the Ruth Mott Foundation gave $389,411.00 to the United Way in support of Keep Genesee Beautiful, to support its Adopt a Park program, which includes various levels of community parks maintenance and interaction (Ruth Mott Foundation Webpage: Grant Database). This organization and its various programs are very important for the City of Flint, as outlined in the discussion of the master plan.

It is through this program that community groups can work to essentially "adopt parks" in order to take some of the strain off of the city as it does not have the capacity to maintain all of the greenspace. Banks also reflected on how when the program was piloted, volunteers were expected to take on the majority of tasks related to parks maintenance, including mowing. According to her, it did not take long to see that this was an unreasonable expectation due to the amount of labor and resources that would be required for residents to maintain 1,800 acres of park space. As such, residents involved in the "adopt a park" program are only expected to take part in basic maintenance such as trash pickup, beautification, and maintaining park infrastructure such as playground equipment and basketball courts.

In addition to supporting local programs and community initiatives, one of Ruth Mott's main funding principles revolves around the importance of collaboration with other groups within the city to support Flint stability and vitality. Of note, are its partnerships with the local Flint Community Foundation and the Genesee County Land Bank. Work with the community foundation is especially important for beautification in neighborhoods, as the partnership has resulted in a streamlined process for local neighborhood associations to apply for small annual beautification project grants. When asked if these partnerships are something that have increased in the last few years, Ms. Banks replied that it was indeed something that they intentionally strived for. In following one of Ruth Mott's key values of "taking the long view," officials at the Ruth Mott Foundation view the development of supportive institutional infrastructure as imperative to the reimagining and the stabilization of Flint.

> Another mechanism that Ruth Mott has been involved with is fostering partnerships around parks. We have worked with Keep Genesee County Beautiful

to try to support their ability to have an Adopt a Park program where they work with city to be a conduit for community groups who want to help take care of their local park because the city itself can't do it all. So by working with neighborhood groups on things like litter pick-ups and the smaller maintenance tasks, they are able to help develop a park plan and over time they are able to start garnering the resources needed to put there park plan in action. Those are other than if you are just a person on your own trying to take care of your park that can be overwhelming, but if there is some structure and tools to help you along with that it can hopefully make the experience a lot more rewarding and effective. It's going to take more than just an institution or just the city to get this kind of work done.

Ms. Banks also shares how collaboration and the building of comprehensive datasets can help the city gain an edge in relation to competing for grant funding outside of the purview of the city or even the state of Michigan.

> Some of the strengths we have going for us were actually built up through the master planning process. I am thinking of for instance a partnership with the Community Foundation where they awarded small grants to a number of different neighborhood organizations to help with housing assessment. So if it was one organization on their own trying to assess every single house, every single structure in the entire city, they couldn't have done it. But with all of those working together they got it done. And it's having that kind of data that allowed us to be really competitive for the Hardest Hit funding that we got. So that's an example of a coordinated mechanism to be able to mobilize a lot of people on a similar task in order to be able to get the work done.

In 2013, the city of Flint was awarded 20.1 million in Hardest Hit Funding, a federal grant meant to assist cities still struggling to stabilize following deindustrialization and the great recession. In comparison to other cities like Detroit, which is comparatively much larger in size and received 52.3 million, the city received a sizeable portion of the funds (Oosting 2013). The money will be used primarily to remove vacant and derelict housing stock across the city, leaving even more empty lots to be greened.

These shared governance and partnership strategies reflect the reliance not just on private institutions in relation to spurring greening development, but also the reliance on

Flint residents and volunteers. This is not necessarily a negative arrangement, considering the community capital growth that can be gleaned from social interaction around a common cause (Westphal 2003). Flint residents working together on issues that are important to them is considered growing and utilizing political capital, within the context of a city that greatly lacks political autonomy due the installment of the emergency financial manager and a long history of top down urban renewal planning. Along similar lines, Tidball and Krasny (2007) illustrate how community groups can utilize urban greening projects as means to build resilience in order to better prepare for the unpredictable nature of environmental, political, and social disasters. On the other hand, this reliance on citizen volunteers highlights the exact critiques of critical scholars who suggest that development within a neoliberal frame is likely to be uneven at best, due to the varying access to resources that each neighborhood has and its capacity to organize for social change (Perkins 2009, 2010, 2013; Pudup 2007; Ogawa 2009; Birge-Liberman 2010).

In sum, the Ruth Mott Foundation is key in providing neighborhood groups and formal organizations the funding to complete projects and initiatives that relate to urban greening in Flint. Greening is viewed by the foundation and city officials alike as a primary means to improve neighborhood infrastructure, community relations, and a general sense of hope and community engagement across the city. These funding and community goals are met through strategic partnerships with other city and county organizations. These partnerships are illustrative of the shared governance strategy that many postindustrial cities and cities at large must rely on as municipal resources shrivel

across the country due to the neoliberal tide of fiscal policy, seen in such actions such as the reduction of revenue sharing in the state of Michigan (Kleine 2013).

Resource Brokering Service Delivery Organizations

Genesee County Land Bank

Many of the urban greening initiatives in the city of Flint are promoted by two main organizations the Genesee County Land Bank (GCLB) and *edible flint* (ef). The Genesee County Land Bank is a quasi-governmental organization that works to maintain and sell vacant homes and lots in Genesee County, particularly in the city of Flint. Despite being affiliated with Genesee County, the land bank is primarily grant funded, with one of the largest contributors being the Ruth Mott Foundation. Occasionally, the organization gets some money from the City of Flint through Community Development Block Grant funds and has also received additional federal dollars for its demolition program through the Hardest Hit program.

When the GCLB formed in 2004 it was a relatively revolutionary idea for dealing with tax-delinquent properties. While the concept of land banking was not completely new at the time, the GCLB represented the largest land bank in the nation. This key role within the land banking movement was thanks in large part to important legislative changes in Michigan that allowed for foreclosed properties to be given to the local county treasurer's office only after two years of abandonment as opposed to the previous four to seven year process. This reduced time period, thereby helped to eliminate land speculation, tax liens against property, and slowed the degradation process. As such, these important changes made it easier for local communities reclaim delinquent properties in order to invest in or repurpose them.

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Of the GCLB's numerous programs, four are explicitly related to community engagement in relation to urban greening activities. These include the "Side lot transfer," "Adopt a lot," and the "Lease a lot" programs and "Clean and Green." In addition, to these programs the land bank also works to maintain vacant properties and to clear trash and debris as funding allows. Since 2009, the GCLB has removed 5 million pounds of trash from vacant properties around the city (County Land Bank Webpage: What We Do). In the summer of 2013 the GCLB had scheduled to mow each of its nearly 5,000 vacant lots once throughout the mowing season. Due to the sheer number of lots that it maintains some areas did not receive their first cut until well into October (Key Informant Interview). As such, it is clear to see why there is still an emphasis on resident participation in regard to greening and maintaining vacant space around the city.

The GCLB is very explicit about focusing on partnerships within the city of Flint in order to work towards development and revitalization. In relation to small neighborhood groups, the Land Bank has key staff members that attend neighborhood association meetings. The land bank also supports neighborhood-centered initiatives. For example, in 2013 the GCLB kicked off a community intensive visioning process for the revitalization of Civic Park, a blighted neighborhood and State of Michigan designated historic district. According to the GCLB it owns 46% of the properties that are on the historic designation register. The GCLB is currently supporting demolition plans for blighted properties in the neighborhood, in the hopes that this will improve the community. On the broader scale, the GCLB has also partnered with entities such as Salem Housing, University of Michigan Flint, and the Ruth Mott Foundation.

Additionally, many of the funds that support land bank greening activities come from local foundations such as Ruth and C.S. Mott.

The three programs that attend to transferring abandoned lots to local residents are fairly similar in nature. The difference between these programs is only found in the location, use allowance, and price of the lot. These include the Side Lot Transfer, Lease A Lot, and Adopt A Lot. The Side Lot Transfer program offers city of Flint residents the opportunity to purchase the vacant lot next to their home or adjacent to their property for a very reduced cost. The idea behind this program is that current residents can expand their yards or maintain the additional space for uses such as gardening. This then ideally puts the land to a functional use and assures maintenance while also increasing tax revenue. In order for the vacant lot to be transferred it must be owned by the GCLB and the property near the lot must be the permanent residency of the purchaser. Residents can purchase the side lot for as little as $100.00.

The Adopt a Lot program is very similar to the Side Lot Transfer. The main difference between these programs is that one does not need to live near the lot they are adopting. Finally, the Lease a Lot program is also similar but entails deeper restrictions as the property is essentially being rented by the resident. According to Genesee County Land Bank Community Outreach Coordinator, Quianna Fields lots can be leased for five-year periods for $1.00 per year. The lot will not be sold during that five-year period as long as it is in use. Lots in this program cannot be built on or fenced in, but can be used for any type of growing or beautification.

Much like the three land transfer programs, the Clean and Green Program (CGP) promotes resident involvement in maintaining greenspace (GCBL owned vacant lots),

CGP pays community groups to maintain and mow twenty-five vacant lots every three weeks throughout the growing season from May to September. Each participating group is paid $3,000.00 for this maintenance. Various types of groups participate in Clean and Green, including neighborhood organizations and block clubs, churches, youth groups, and private businesses. Groups are selected for participation through an application process. The Clean and Green Program is funded by terminal grant funds, and as such not every group that applies to the program is selected. Four criteria are given priority in the selection process, they include 1) strong ties to the area to be maintained 2) creative plans for cleaning and greening land bank lots 3) a commitment to including area youth and 4) experience with greening/beautification work.

In 2012, forty-three groups in the city of Flint participated in the Clean and Green Program, resulting in the maintenance of 1,200 vacant lots every three weeks, equaling approximately 7,200 mowing's. Additionally, over 180 youth participated in the program (Genesee County Land Bank Website: What We Do). As such, through grant funds, the Clean and Green offers a viable way for Land Bank authorities to maintain their vast number of vacant lots while also engaging communities to participate in greening together. However, Quianna Fields noted that as the program has gained popularity the land bank has had to turn some groups a way due to limited resources.

> Well Clean and Green, which has been in place for about 10 years…this year we have about 52 groups participating. I think we either have 12 or 14 new groups this year. It is a competitive process. We had to turn groups away. I can't remember how many applications we got this year, but it is growing and we had to turn groups away. It all depends on how much we have and it also depends on the application…if they have the resources or the people power to do what we ask them to do. So each organization has to be able to maintain at least 25 lots. Each entity is supposed to have their own equipment.

The organization uses a variety of resources and mediums in order to inform and engage

Flint residents so they will take part in Land Bank programs. These vary from

maintaining Facebook pages and a website, to monthly newsletters and hosting

community events. Quianna also plays a great role in engagement through her role as

Community Outreach Coordinator.

> I am out in the community, basically every single day, not all day because I do have to come back here and catch up and do paper work and respond to phone calls and emails. Last year I went to almost 400 community and neighborhood association meetings. I have to keep track for monthly reports that are used for annual reports for our funders. But we also do a lot of community engagement by hosting events in the community. Right now we are partnering with the city of Flint in regard to the blight elimination framework for the next five years.

As noted above in relation to the blight elimination plan, the organization was also very

involved in the city of Flint Master planning process. Ms. Fields is on the Steering

Committee and Christina Kelly, GCLB Planning Director, has been at the table on

committees since the initial discussions on attempting the process.

edible flint

edible flint is a local grassroots and non-profit 501 C3 organization that focuses

on urban greening initiatives, explicitly through the promotion of food gardens. *edible*

flint was formed in 2009 as collaboration between local residents, activists, and public

and private institutions. According the organization's mission statement, the purpose of

edible flint is to "support Flint residents in growing and accessing healthy food in order to

reconnect with the land and each other" (*edible flint* website: history).

The organization is largely funded through support from the Ruth Mott

Foundation and also has a small funding stream from a United States Department of

Agriculture sponsored project examining food access in the state of Michigan. *edible flint*

also makes a small portion of money with revenue gleaned from garden starter kits and training classes. Though this revenue is limited and the organization offers scholarships for those who are unable to pay. Through these funds two full time positions are supported, along with a quarter time allotment for Amy Smith, a Michigan State University Extension Agent, who acts as a point of contact person for the organization. The other positions are allotted for the Garden Starters Program Coordinator and the Garden Starters Training Coordinator and Media Specialist.

edible flint works toward meeting their goals of serving Flint residents through six active work groups that meet on a regular basis. These include: Access and Education, the *edible flint* Co-op, Evaluation, Food Garden Tour, Garden Starters, Growing the Network, and New Roots. The work group most explicitly related to the promotion of urban greening (though the organization is as a whole) is Garden Starters, a training program aimed at providing skills and resources to Flint residents interested in starting food gardens. Near the beginning of the growing season Garden Starters participants and the public have the opportunity to purchase a Garden Starters Kit for $15.00. The kit contains one flat of starter plants and enough seeds to cover a 1,500 square foot garden. The kit includes a vast variety of vegetables and herbs and is also culturally sensitive to the food preferences of many in the Flint community.

In 2012-2013 32 individuals and participated in the Garden Starters program and the organization distributed 300 garden starters kits. The materials from the kit were used to supply individual and community gardens. Gardens are celebrated each year with the *edible flint* annual Food Garden Tour. In 2013, 18 gardens were featured and more than 375 residents attended the tour festivities. Residents can apply to be on the tour each

year. In 2013 there were three tours. One bus tour on the South end of Flint, a bus tour on the North end, and a bike tour along the Flint River. The tours end back at the Flint Farmers Market where local food is served along with live entertainment.

Through a variety of programs and activities *edible flint* works to actively promote food gardening in the city of Flint. According to Amy Smith, Michigan State University Extension Community Food Systems Coordinator,[12] the reason for this is multifaceted. Those at *edible flint* believe that food gardening is both a way to increase the health of local residents but also a way for residents to reconnect and to repurpose land in Flint that has been abandoned due to deindustrialization. As such, urban gardening is viewed as a tangible opportunity to work toward fixing physical, social, and environmental problems.

This view is evident in the organizations extensive involvement in the city master planning process. *edible flint* co-conveners of each work group were involved with the community engagement meetings and various other aspects of the master plan. This is especially true in relationship to pertinent aspects of the master plan such as land use and zoning discussions. Amy also shared how *edible flint* was very pleased that the possibility of gardens plays an important role in reimagining greenspace. She attributed this to the influence of *edible flint*.

> I'd like to think that there was that recognition that this work was already on going and seeing it as an asset to the community. *edible flint* was specifically encouraged to attend so yes I do think there is recognition for the value of it. Community gardening, personal gardening, and urban farms are all part of the landscape now. And it's interesting now even internationally it is recognized that in both Detroit and Flint there are active groups working in urban agriculture. So there is some recognition that we have some stuff going on and I think that folks

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[12] *edible flint* works closely with Michigan State University Extension and is housed within the Flint MSUE offices.

find the community gardening role as something that offers hope, beautification, some measure of security at least on the block that the garden is on because there are people there and present who are demonstrating that they care and are keeping things aesthetically pleasing.

In sum, *edible flint* is a flagship organization working to promote urban greening in the city of Flint, especially in relationship to urban food production. *edible flint* works toward this mission by educating community members and supplying garden supplies and services at a very reduced cost. In addition to this mission, *edible flint* sees community connection as a key goal that underlies the food production in relation to transforming the city of Flint.

Intermediary Resource Brokers

Hurley Medical Center

Hurley Medical Center is a well-known institution in the city of Flint and the surrounding region overall. The hospital was founded in 1908 by business entrepreneur and philanthropist, James Hurley with the mission "to provide a modern hospital for the people of Flint and Genesee County" (Hurley Medical Center Webpage: About Us). In addition to its medical related services the hospital has also been involved in a variety of community outreach activities that focus on improving the health of Flint residents, including supporting the CRIM Fitness Foundation and annual race, healthy eating initiatives, and the support of this through its community garden. In addition, representatives from the Diabetes Clinic regularly attend *edible flint* meetings, as community representatives. For a number of years the Hurley Community Garden was also featured on the *edible flint* Food Garden Tour.

Despite its prominent place and visibility within the community, the hospital has chosen to no longer support the Hurley Medical Center Community Garden. According

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to the hospital's Community Outreach Coordinator, Amanda Clark, this has largely come about as a fiscal decision as the hospital administration decided not to fund a position or even part time position for a garden manager, an essential element of large community garden. Despite no longer actively managing the garden, representatives from the hospital still attend the *edible flint* meetings and work on some other health and wellness initiatives around the city.

Hurley Medical Center, like other prominent institutions within the city, was also actively involved in the city's master planning process, in relation to offering input in regard to certain plans for greenspace that would better connect the hospital with surrounding neighborhoods. For example, in the Northern Hills Neighborhood Master Plan there is a section that details creating a green corridor that runs all the way from the center of the neighborhood, near Regina Park, to the hospital. The main ideal behind this plan is that the space could be used by Hurley employees and other surrounding businesses and institutions as a place to walk and enjoy lunch. The NHNA also hopes to attract hospital employees to the neighborhood by offering a stable and safe neighborhood that is within walking distance of their place of work.

In sum, Hurley Medical Center is involved in a few initiatives within the city of Flint that revolve around supporting greenspace maintenance and reclamation and the general health of Flint residents. On the other hand, this institution and its lack of continued support for its own community garden initiative also reflects some of the issues entailed with relying on private institutions to maintain, care for, and promote greenspace reclamation, as is outlined in the master plan. Private institutions have no official mandate to serve the local population in this capacity, unless they are publicly funded.

Therefore, when the money dries up the passion for gardening in this case, so does the initiative, unless it is picked up by an additional group. This critique is a centerpiece of the criticisms that political ecology scholars hold against a shared governance of greenspace that is often contingent on volunteer labor within the shrinking urban setting (Perkins 2010).

Habitat for Humanity

The Habitat for Humanity Genesee County Chapter was founded in 1990. It serves two main neighborhoods in the city of Flint. The Foss Avenue neighborhood lies within the predominately African American North side and the downtown neighborhood of Grand Traverse, which is within a historic district area. The organization serves a limited number of areas in order to maximize impact in the communities that it serves. This philosophy is part of an intensive community outreach component of Habitat projects in which the goal is to help grow and stabilize neighborhoods through the development of community capacity and the strengthening of neighborhood organizations.

In addition to original builds, infrastructure stress management, and façade maintenance of homes, Habitat has also worked on some projects within their neighborhoods that specifically relate to urban greening. In the downtown Grand Traverse historic district this has been in the way of supporting a block long park, known as Memorial Park, which was created by reclaiming vacant lots owned by the Genesee County Land Bank. According to Bill Haworth, the Community Outreach Coordinator for Genesee County Habitat for Humanity, the park space is used quite often for personal

parties and community gatherings. Habitat supported the development of the park through grant funding.

The second initiative in the Grand Traverse neighborhood is a project that focuses specifically on wetland reclamation. Prior to urban development, the city of Flint consisted of many low-lying areas that contained numerous wetlands and natural springs. These natural amenities were essentially built over in order to use the land for infrastructure and development. The particular space that was built over the natural spring in the Grand Traverse neighborhood was long abandoned, when the local neighborhood association looked into its history. After some investigation and with the assistance of Habitat for Humanity by way of grants and labor, the neighborhood association was able to reclaim the wetland space. This area is now much more attractive than a concrete slab and now serves as a vibrant wetland habitat.

The second main neighborhood that Habitat serves, the Foss Avenue neighborhood, also has a long history of nonsensical planning. The neighborhood is one that was literally cut in half as a result of the development of I-475 in the 1960s. The neighborhood has large-scale abandonment, and receives very little city services due to its location and population. Since Habitat has been working in the area starting in the 1990s they have built six homes in the area. Much of the current work done is on supporting infrastructure of existing houses and façade improvements. During the master planning process, the Foss Avenue neighborhood was declared a Green Innovation Zone, meaning that the area is not necessarily meant to be residential and that it is better suited for activities like producing green technology and urban agriculture.

Recognizing that adding additional housing stock to the neighborhood is not a viable option for Habitat or the neighborhood, the organization decided to pursue some initiatives that will reclaim vacant space in a new and unique way for the neighborhood. This started with the building of Ruth Avenue Park. Initially the pocket park was meant to be the size of four city lots, but after difficulty with attaining one of the lots that was owned by the city of Flint, it was reduced to three lots. For about $1,000 in grant dollars and regular Habitat construction volunteers the organization was able to create the park, which includes a picnic table, benches, and flowers and landscaping. Some of the residents and the Foss Avenue Baptist church also volunteered their time on the Saturday that it took to build the park. According to Haworth, this had already made the residents of Foss Avenue start talking. They were surprised that this type of development was going on in their neighborhood as people of the Foss Avenue area had essentially become accustomed to being ignored by the city, due to its high rate of vacancy and arguable lack of resources and political capital.

> I think that everyone knows in our city that it just doesn't have the capacity to manage the size of the city that we have and so it's kind of…the residents for a while have given up hope and so when we were out there some of them were engaged and then some were poking their heads out and just wondering "what's going on?" And people were driving by and slowing down. You could just see that they were all a little shocked that something like this was going on. That's a big driver to instill some hope but also to give them a place that they can use because in some of these neighborhoods the parks are no longer maintained so there is no recreation space. This particular pocket park isn't really designed for recreation it's more of a tranquil, peaceful setting. It has a little path you can follow to a picnic table or to a bench to read a book, but the whole idea was that the residents can wheel some grills out from their houses and have a block party.

Many of those that remain in the Foss Ave neighborhood reflect those populations that don't have the ability to leave and are cut off from basic social and economic resources.

This population is reflective of what William Julius Wilson deemed the urban underclass, those trapped within the urban core with little resources (1987). Haworth notes however, how the development of the pocket park may work as an instigator in regard to spurring community capacity and other resources for the small neighborhood. He commented that as residents were working they were discussing the ways in which that the pocket park could be used in relation to personal and community events.

> They even got thinking because they were saying "we could do senior pictures here because this is a really pretty area" or we could do open houses or do community meetings. So if we don't want to meet in a building we can do one outside, so it kind of spurred this whole conversation about what can happen in their areas.

In addition, working on the project got residents to think about the others things within the neighborhood that they could work on as a community. This led to a discussion of streetlights or the recognition of the lack of streetlights in the neighborhood.

> The park gets people thinking. It's a good PR thing but then it gets people thinking, "well what else can we do? Or what can we do to compliment this?" So for instance with Ruth Ave pocket park one of the residents said "we don't have any street lights on our street. Did you know that? The only ways we have are adjacent to the highway and on the street next to that, but it's a ways a away from us." So now they are looking at ways to raise money to put in old style streetlight that would be in each yard, kind of like the gas light kind. So they are looking at things like that…they are saying, "we are starting to feel safer and now we need to go to the next step."

As a result of a simple greening initiative residents are planning to work toward additional goals, echoing research that suggests social interaction around greening can work to build community capacity and other capitals and can be an empowering experience for communities (Westphal 2003). While at the same time one must remember that the Foss Ave Neighborhood Association is forced to complete these goals

on their own as they had essentially been neglected by the city of Flint. This idea is even further made salient when recognizing that the neighborhood has been deemed a "Green Innovation Zone," basically not meant to be a traditional residential area.

Furthermore, Haworth notes that in addition to the development community space there also needs to be development of human capital within the those communities that have seen the most abandonment and social problems. He notes the importance of other groups in the city that are helping to build neighborhood capacity.

> Part of that comes from other groups that are helping to develop resident leaders so it's great…normally 10% of the people do 90% of the work so we are seeing some of the impacts from that as more and more people are coming on board.

In sum, Habitat for Humanity in the City of Flint is focusing on ways to improve existing neighborhood infrastructure and assets while also working to strengthen community ties through focused neighborhood interventions. These plans align well with other development initiatives throughout the city of Flint that focus on using vacant and underused space in a way that meets community need but are also realistic given the current circumstances within the city. According to Haworth, it is important for Habitat's plans to be in sync with the projects and initiatives that are outlined in the City of Flint master plan, because the city can only move forward if people are in agreement on the way to address the important challenges that Flint faces. As outlined by Habitat and the Master Plan, it is also important that the roadmap ahead must also be inclusive.

State Actors

As noted in chapter two, the City of Flint is very limited in both financial and political capital due to fiscal crisis. As such, its support for community urban greening projects does not come from fiscal backing. However, the city has played a key role in

organizing the goals for urban greening and redevelopment through a comprehensive

master planning process funded by the federal government and local institutions. Through

the planning process, the city has investigated current community greening initiatives at

the institutional level and those organized by neighborhoods in neighborhood master

plans. Though the city has formally adopted the plan and has integrated neighborhood

master plans into the scheme, there is currently no funding available to support these

initiatives. As such, neighborhoods and community groups are still reliant on service

delivery organizations and brokers to meet community needs in relation to visions for the

future.

Imagine Flint Master Plan

The city of Flint has the extraordinary reputation of not having a functioning

master plan since the 1960s. Associate Planner Rory Watts shared how the status of not

having a master plan, played an instrumental role in the city being selected to receive a

1.57 million dollar Department of Housing and Urban Development grant. The grant

funded three urban planners to create a comprehensive master plan over a two-year

period.

> Not having an official plan played a huge role. The City was encouraged to apply
> as a separate entity (from the County) because of this. Poor organization and lack
> of planning led to the inability to adapt. The application focused on this, and I
> would argue it was potentially the biggest reason why Flint was selected.

As a stipulation of the grant, there is a special emphasis at looking at sustainability issues

in regard to reimagining the city of Flint. The city also had to secure matching funds in

order to be selected. The city was able to secure 1.3 million either in cash or in kind

support to assist with the planning project. Below, Watts describes how different organizations around the city supported the initiative.

> Genesee County Land Bank offered up about $140,000 in in kind support. None of that was in actual cash but it was helping with mapping, staff time on mapping, staff time in review, printing stuff, helping with outreach…things of that nature. So there was probably about twenty organizations that committed non-cash and then there were organizations that committed cash like the C.S. Mott Foundation, the Ruth Mott Foundation, and the Community Foundation of Greater Flint.

The planning process has also been touted as one of the most community intensive planning processes in the country (Chester 2013). Throughout the winter and spring of 2012 and into the fall of 2013 when the city council formally adopted the master plan, the planning team organized and facilitated hundreds of community meetings across the city with over 2,500 citizen participants (Imagine Flint Website). Noting the community-based nature of the planning process, one FPBRA resident commented, "I don't think anyone can complain they didn't get their voice heard on the plan. They had many opportunities and if they didn't get it heard that's on them." The process is also being led by a nineteen-person steering committee composed of representatives from local institutions and neighborhoods. For example, representatives from University of Michigan Flint, the Genesee County Land Bank, the Flint Institute of Arts, the Flint Police Department, Flint Area Congregations Together, and the South Side Neighborhood Association are just a few of the bodies that compose the steering committee.

The expansive community outreach process was spurred by a long history of segregation, racism, and top down urban renewal in the city of Flint (Highsmith 2009). In the 1960s, the last time a planning process was undertaken; Interstate-475 was built directly though the St. John Street and Floral Park neighborhoods, predominately African

American and historically stable communities. Families were forced to leave their homes and were moved to public housing projects to make way for an expressway that promised to ease the commute of largely white suburban workers to the auto factories. This vision was short lived as GM began closing factories in the late 1970s (Highsmith 2009). Today approximately 30% of Flint properties are vacant and abandoned and the highest concentration of these properties lie predominately African American neighborhoods (McClelland 2014). As the majority holder of these properties, the Genesee County Land Bank supports intensive community participation in development in an effort to not repeat the land use disasters of the past (Center for Community Progress 2013).

The "Imagine Flint" master plan was formerly adopted by the City Council in October of 2013, following its approval by the Planning Commission. Throughout the two-year planning period, three different emergency financial managers were also marginally involved in the process. Ultimately, the governing manager did have to sign off on the final draft of the plan that was formerly adopted. Mr. Watts notes that all three managers and the planning staff intentionally tried to limit the emergency manager's participation in the process.

> He has the final say, but did not dilute the process. They wanted the public process to ensue and I think them getting involved in any way would have had the potential of contaminating the public's perception in regard to the plan. So they kind of stayed hands off and let us do our work in a way that we were able to meet the timeline.

This was an unsurprising concern among the managers and planning staff, as the public opinion on the emergency financial mangers has been largely negative. The manger in office during the completion of the plan, Darnell Early, made an effort of supporting the

plan in public forums, applauded the community intensive process, and encouraged the city council to adopt the plan.

The master plan is composed of eight major sections that deal with specific issues that were identified as the most pressing by city residents, including (1) Land Use, (2) Housing and Neighborhoods, (3) Transportation and Mobility, (4) Environmental Features, Open Spaces, and Parks, (5) Infrastructure and Community Facilities, (6) Economic Development and Education, (7) Public Safety and Health and Welfare and (8) Arts and Culture. The three sections that relate the most to urban greening are the Housing and Neighborhoods, Land Use, and Environmental Features, Open Spaces and Parks sections.

The Housing and Neighborhoods section identifies new goals for land use based a schema of specific categories including population and housing density. The general goal for this section of the plan states: "Flint will have desirable, stable, and inclusive neighborhoods, with a range of affordable and attractive housing options available to a diverse population" (Master Plan for a Sustainable Flint: Housing and Neighborhoods 2013: 5) The plan outlines three categories of residential housing including traditional residential, green neighborhood, and mixed use residential.

Of particular interest to this study is the designation of "Green Neighborhood." Being marked as a "green neighborhood" essentially means that a given area is no longer viewed as a traditional community due to high rates of vacancy and population decline. Plans for these neighborhoods entail existing residents acquiring additional lots within their communities to extend their own yards or effectively creating urban homesteads. The plan suggests that the extension of personal property will allow for existing residents

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to use the space in ways they see fit in accordance with new zoning parameters that will

be allowed for each area. Extending yards, enhancing landscape, and urban food

gardening are offered as ideas for personal land use within the green neighborhood zones.

Associate Planner Rory Watts discussed how this designation fits in with the vision of

Flint residents and differs from other controversial "right sizing" strategies that often

entail forced relocation. These strategies have been undertaken in different shrinking

cities, such as Detroit and Philadelphia (Bergsman 2009).

> So it's kind of this idea of…kind of like a homestead, or a larger multi parcel lot
> and the idea would be…you are still getting all the services, you are not cutting
> off roads, you are not cutting of lighting or any of that but it's just embracing the
> idea that we are not going to have houses on all those lots. So that is this idea of a
> "green neighborhood." It's still primarily a residential neighborhood. This was
> generated through multiple community land use workshops. It was generated
> through assessment of looking at every parcel in the city of Flint and looking at
> housing studies and what the projections are and what has occurred over the last
> 10 years. We looked at what kind of shape our current housing is in and what we
> are seeing in trends so there was a lot of input and thought that went into where
> these areas were.

The plan also outlines recommendations for the land bank to adjust their property

acquiring guidelines in order for the green neighborhood vision to be successful.

Currently, through the Side Lot Transfer, the Land Bank allows residents to only acquire

lots that are next to or adjacent to their homes and only allows residents to buy a limited

number of lots. Under the guidelines of the new plan the Land Bank would let residents

acquire up to five to seven lots in order for all the lots in a given area to come under the

care of interested residents.

The goal outlined in the Land Use section of the master plan highlights the use of

place based planning and development: "The city of Flint will be a community made up

of distinct and desirable "places" by integrating a wide range of land uses into a city

pattern that is vibrant, sustainable, livable, and healthy" (Master plan for a sustainable

Flint, Land Use Plan 2013:5). The land use section of the master plan addressed the issue

of brownfields within the city. There are 1,500 brownfields in Genesee County, with the

majority in the city of Flint. The largest of these sites is the 103-acre "Chevy-in the Hole"

site formerly the home of a large General Motors Co. manufacturing complex. Due to the

varying sizes and complexity of the differing brownfield sites, the designers of the master

plan approached this issue with the mentality that there is not a "one size fits all" solution

to brownfield maintenance and redevelopment. Some brownfields that contain existing

infrastructure, like those on the East side of the city, are meant to be put back into a

productive use that centers on green technology, such as wind farms, or green production

in the case of organic urban agriculture and hoop houses. These areas that are suitable for

production are deemed "Green Innovation" zones.

> The idea of "Green Innovation" is that these are not primarily residential places. They are more productive areas. Some of them are currently residential but some of them are not. So the idea here is that these are some of the more blighted areas in the city as far as vacancies you know have almost whole blocks of just vacant lots. Obviously if we are trying to increase density and stabilize our existing neighborhoods. The idea is that there are no markets in these areas. It has been determined that no body is left. So these areas would be green innovation and the idea is that it allows for a variety of uses. But the ultimate goal is for the productive reuse of vacant land. It could be anything from large-scale urban agriculture, multiple hoop houses, and food stands and to potentially getting off the grid with the some green infrastructure. How do we reduce the stress on the city's water system and infrastructure? From retaining storm water, curbing runoff. Maybe its looking at solar or rain gardens, maybe its just kind of plantings to decrease maintenance.

Other large vacant areas may be used as community open spaces, such as the

current use of the site known as "Chevy in the Hole." Currently the Genesee County

Land Bank is using an Environmental Protection Agency revolving grant of 1.5 million

dollars to create a green cap for the site so it can be put back into safe community use. For the past two summers, a large community arts festival was held at the venue. The plan also outlines how some spaces may be added to existing park and open spaces.

The final portion of the plan relating to greenspace maintenance is the Environmental Features, Open Spaces and Parks section. This an important feature, considering one of Flint's other lesser well-known records. The city contains a vast number of parks for its size, 78 parks and over 1,800 acres of parkland. The goal for this section of the plan states: "The City of Flint will be a proactive environmental leader with a clean, healthy, and equitable system of parks, waterways, and open spaces" (Master Plan for a Sustainable Flint, Environmental Features, Open Spaces, and Parks Plan 2013: 147).

Of particular interest to this research, is the question of various institutional supports and partnerships surrounding urban greening and the plan for shared maintenance of city park space. The master plan addresses the many fiscal challenges that the city has dealt with in the last few decades and also acknowledges that there are not enough financial resources for the city to adequately attend to all of the park space. Discussion with Rory Watts highlighted this further as he illuminated what the parks and recreation budget is essentially funding in the city of Flint:

> The city has about 78 parks and 1800 acres of parkland. We have a park millage right now that once drew close to a million it now draws about 350,000. So that's to maintain…that's park trees, that is mowing, that's facilities. So that is paying the utilities and the maintenance for facilities. So just to put that into perspective about 1/3 of the millage about 150,000 goes just toward utilities of 3 community centers. A lot of Flint's parkland is kind of the traditional turf, huge areas, large amounts of acreage of just mowing grass, which is very expensive.

To address the contention between lack of funds and abundant parks space, the master plan puts forth ideas that center on shared maintenance of public park space between the city and neighborhood groups. Essentially through various "Adopt a Park" programs community groups and local organizations will be in charge of various aspects of parks maintenance such litter pick-ups, maintaining playground equipment, and planting and maintaining flowers and greenery. The only thing that residents and local groups will not be in charge of is mowing.

> The master plan kind of calls out collaborative partnerships with neighborhood groups through local organizations and through partnerships with the county. Obviously we do not encourage or recommend neighborhood groups mowing parks. That does not work. It has not worked in Flint. It is too much of an undertaking. It's a lot of work and to get that sort commitment and that sort of equipment with the resources that are few and far between.

Basically, the lack of mowing on behalf of the residents is related to the failure of this type of responsibility in the past. Currently, the city contracts workers to mow city parks. According to residents, such as Carlyle from the PHNA, these mowings do not occur very often, which leaves residents frustrated and mowing the parks anyway.

Another possibility in relation to parks explored in the plan is calling on Genesee County to support some of the city parks. As noted by Mr. Watts, of the 78 parks within the Flint city limits, none of them are county parks, which he argues is unfortunate considering that Flint contains some very unique urban greenspaces.

> There has been some support from the county in wanting to see that change because the city residents pay into the county millage and yet we don't have a county park. That is different from other cities our size.

In sum, the Imagine Flint Master Plan places heavy emphasis on the support of urban greening within the city as means to redevelop and repurpose vacant and underused

space. This strategy is not unlike those of other midsize shrinking cities in the Midwest

and the world at large (Hollander 2009; Shetty 2009). As noted above, the maintenance

and repurposing of this land will be done with support of additional institutions such as the

Genesee County Land Bank, the Ruth Mott Foundation, Keep Genesee Beautiful and the

county as a whole. In addition, the plan also calls on residents to be active partners in

maintaining space through personal use and through volunteerism as in the case of parks

maintenance. To be clear, greenspace is certainly a part of the vision for Flint's

revitalization but so are shared maintenance strategies that work to reach these goals.

Conclusion

As the city of Flint does not have the means to support redevelopment efforts,

local community groups and the city government itself rely on grant funding and service

delivery brokers to support and implement greening initiatives that reimagine uses for

vacant spaces, in the hopes of spurring economic development and improving the quality

of life in the city. These service brokers compete for funds from philanthropic

foundations such as the Ruth Mott Foundation and other governmental grants. The figure

below highlights the nested resource model in relation to the institutions selected for

analysis in this chapter. This model illustrates how community urban greening projects

are funded and promoted within a city context of fiscal crisis.

Figure 2. Funding Urban Greening in Flint.
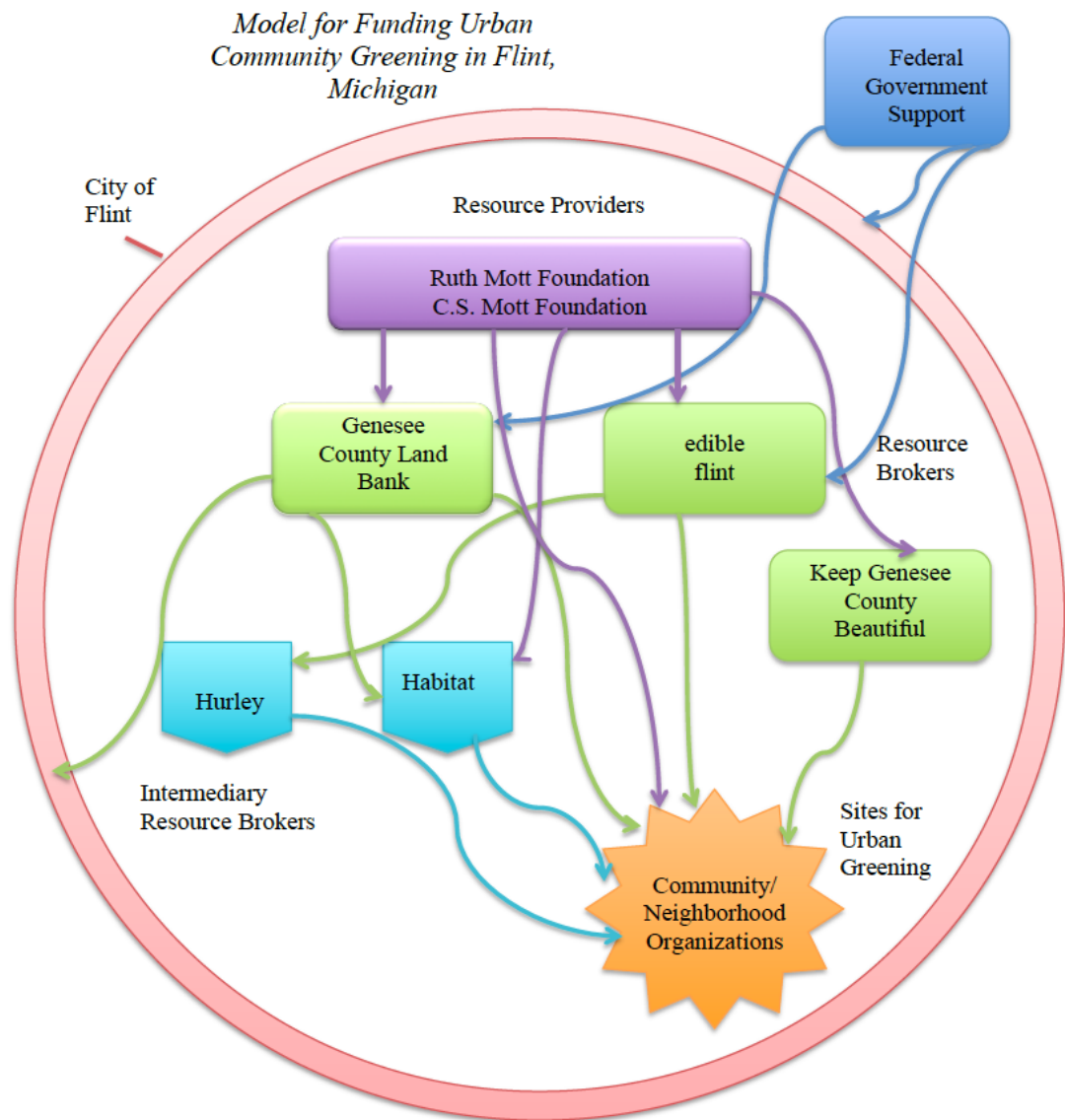
As indicated in the model above urban greening projects in the city of Flint are both promoted and largely funded by non-governmental entities that reside within the city of Flint. I chose to focus on the Ruth Mott Foundation as the main resource provider due to its key focus on greening and beautification. Other foundations such as the C.S. Mott foundation also support some of the organizations listed above, though to a lesser extent. Some programs by service and resource brokers are distributed directly to community organizations through competitive grants programs. Examples of this are neighborhood associations applying for Clean and Green grants with the Genesee County Land Bank or for beautification grants from Keep Genesee County Beautiful. In other instances, "intermediary resource brokers" serve local communities by competing for resources or securing greening education on behalf of a community. This is seen above in relation to Hurley Medical Center and its relationship with *edible flint* and its community garden. While there was not an official community association associated with the community garden, the goal of the garden was to improve and serve the surrounding community. Other instances of this Intermediary Resource Broker relationship are illustrated in future chapters in relation to social institutions (schools) in local neighborhoods.

The nested resource partnership model for greenspace maintenance identified here mirrors the system of community development identified in other shrinking cities. For example, the Mahoning County Land Bank, a "non-profit community improvement corporation" which largely serves Youngstown Ohio, offers many of the same services and programs as the GCLB. In addition, the Youngstown Community Development Corporation offers many of the same services as *edible flint*, including garden education, and also supports five large community gardens throughout the city. Programs and

organizations likes those listed above have also been recognized in other shrinking cities such as Cleveland, Buffalo, and Milwaukee as a means to attend to land use issues and community development (Perkins 2009; Shilling 2009).

The nested service delivery model for urban greening described in this chapter has raised several critiques. Critical urban ecology scholars who suggest that the reliance on nonprofit and private funding sources for community development results in the development of uneven urban landscapes and inequality in urban service delivery (Perkins 2013; MacIndoe 2007). Furthermore, they suggest that the reliance on volunteer labor for community development relates to this inequality due the imbalance of community capital resources over cityscapes and suggest that this system can work to blame marginalized populations for their own degraded environments. On the other hand some scholars suggest that development stemming from a shared maintenance-nested resource model creates avenues for community empowerment in relation to self-determination on land use decisions and the promotion of environmental justice (Roy 2011). Both sides of this debate are discussed further in chapter eight.

The following chapters in this dissertation examine select cases of where community greening is actually occurring with support from the philanthropic funders and services delivery brokers. While the support for urban greening initiatives across the city of Flint may seem obvious as a land use and city fiscal matter, there are additional reasons for the prominence of urban greening in a shrinking city setting. The next chapter explores the perceived local and community impacts of various greening initiatives including community gardens and the maintenance of vacant lots through mowing. These initiatives fall along a spectrum of what Perkins (2013) has termed individual based

"vigilante" greening projects to greenspace projects that are managed by community groups and local institutions with the support of resource brokers.

CH. 5 "BEAUTY IS THUG REPELLENT" GREENING TO CURB DISRODER AND

BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL

This chapter addresses urban greening from the perspective of those participating

in community greening programs in relation to natural capital, built capital, and the

development of collective efficacy and social capital. I offer findings from the 28-semi-

structured interviews from the five case sites. I first focus on resident perceptions in

relation to the natural environment impact of the urban greening projects. Nearly all

respondents were generally positive about the changes in regard to the natural resources

of the area. It may seem obvious to suggest that greening activities would be viewed as

positive by residents of a shrinking industrial town that contains both endless tracts of

vacant land and spot abandonment. However the goal of this portion of the research is

move beyond the common sense notion by understanding the "sensemaking" strategy of

those participating in greening projects and programs.

To flesh out the process of sensemaking I draw from the writing of organizational

theorist Karl Weick. According to this body of work, sensemaking is a process that

allows for social organizing to take place and also allows for participants to understand

the organizational process (Weick, 1995). Sensemaking is an essentially a social process

where symbolic meaning is given to social phenomena. These meanings then inform or

constrain identities and social actions (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). This

concept is similar to the act of "framing" in relation to social movement action and

mobilization. Benford and Snow (2000) suggest that framing "denotes an active,

processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality

construction. It is active in the sense that something is being done, and processual in the sense of a dynamic, evolving process" (Benford and Snow 2000:614).

In relation to my case sites, I suggest that an informal sensemaking process (similar to collective framing) is occurring around the concepts of disorder, blight, and beautification. Through small groups of residents collectively and individually (greening vigilantes) defining the current conditions of the neighborhoods as in an undesirable state, the neighborhood groups are able to come to an informal consensus on how to react to current neighborhood conditions and improve the community either through general greening maintenance or community gardens. Not all of the greening work is done in a concerted effort and therefore is not entirely representative of a collective action. As such, I argue that some of the thinking around greening as a response to environmental disorder is occurring in an informal sensemaking process.

Perkins (2013) suggests that this action on blight and disorder comes about as a necessity due to the retreat of the state. In other words, residents take action to meet their own immediate needs in relation to improving their neighborhoods in order to improve safety and aesthetic appeal. While this analysis is critical of the current shared governance state it also neglects how these actions can work to increase social interaction among the broader community, which is influential in strengthening social ties and collective efficacy.

In the remainder of this chapter, I focus on detailing the ways in which community participants believe that urban greening projects work to deter crime, while also improving social relations through the building of community collective efficacy and capacity. As such, I argue that the manipulation or beautification of both the built and

natural environment is viewed as a broad stroke solution to a variety of localized problems imposed by urban deindustrialization and neighborhood decay. Residents attend to these problems as the municipality does not have the capacity to care for public greenspaces and the thousands of vacant lots across the city.

As noted in chapter two, built capital refers to the infrastructure that supports a community including amenities like roads and water systems, but also things like parks and public open spaces. Natural capital on the other hand refers to those assets that include natural resources and natural beauty, typically those things that we associate with the "environment" e.g. trees, bodies of water, flowers, etc. (Emery and Flora 2006). The investment into blighted and vacant properties represents both an investment into natural and built capital. While amenities like grasses and trees may seem to represent natural capital, manipulation of this "environment" and building of the space is reflective of built capital as both parks and neighborhoods refer to the built environment (Leyden 2003).

In general, the majority of participants (22 out of 28) in all five case sites highlighted the beauty and aesthetic value that various urban greening and gardening programs had brought to the natural environment. Of those who did not cite improvements to the natural area indicated that they could not confirm that the environment had improved beyond the beautification of the area.   Mr. Carson a very active member in the NHNA expressed this sentiment in relation to Regina Park.

> I would question that you could find any place in the state of Michigan that looks better than Regina Park. Once that's mowed a lot of neighbors think that it's a golf course. It really looks nice. It really looks nice.

A fellow NHNA member echoed this sentiment about Regina Park.

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It just makes it look a whole heck of a lot better. Plus I live here; my motivation is that I want it to look better because that is where I live. Aesthetically it looks better. It's cleaner. It's neater.

Bernice from the Hawthorne community garden commented on the beauty of the garden in relation to the character that it brought to the environment but also in relation to serving as a space for community members to witness the growing process in action.

It's appealing to the eye and comforting, a nice place to be. I think this is an attractive greenspace. Also the visual impact, I think people like to see how things grow.

Mr. Ronald shared the same sentiment in regard to his community garden that is on a vacant lot next to an abandoned house on Bower Street.

Yeah its changes the scenery a lot and if I would have got a grant this year I could have done a lot more. And I think people really appreciate it. They love to see the beauty of an old fashioned garden.

Mr. Lenny, from across the street went on to cite the importance of the garden in relation to its aesthetic appeal. "You see a garden is first a thing of beauty, but it's also more than that."

Mr. Ronald highlights the importance of the greenspace as a way to add something pleasing to the eye in an environment marked by blight and crime. Although he also alludes to one of the main challenges involved in community greening operations, finding enough resources to maintain and improve the space. This challenge is discussed in further detail in chapter seven.

In relation to built and natural capital, residents recognized benefits in regard to the natural environment that go well beyond creating a beautified space. When I inquired about any benefits from greening in relation to the natural environment Roger from the

NHNA commented on the changes in the neighborhood in relation to the development of

natural capital.

> The natural environment is generally responding to the TLC by rewarding us with
> its beauty. I think we all know that if TLC is given to a natural environment it
> responds with its natural organic beauty and that's what has been happening.
> Really green grass…trees in some cases that have been long neglected have been
> paid attention to get rid of suckers…those sprouts that come out of the base of a
> tree. It has just been sort of an introduction of what was and what it can be…even
> better than what was.

Mr. Forester from the FPBRA group also expressed a similar sentiment in regard to the

possibility for transformation of the natural environment as the result of a small

investment into natural capital.

> Because I got to see things grow that I never seen before so I know it made a
> difference…we did a whole lot of things that just had amazed me you know and if
> we didn't put the work and time into it, I wouldn't have ever known you
> know…what the changes can look like or what they could be like and how that
> actually…one little thing, like planting grass or something. That made a huge
> effect you know… a positive effect. It was awesome.

Mike, also a resident and volunteer with the FPBRA suggested that the natural

environment can only benefit from the community greening programs as these projects

work to reduce the pollution in the neighborhood.

> Okay if it's clean there is less pollution. When there is less pollution you have
> better plants, whether its grass or trees. Like all the tires that was in the lake and
> all that kind of stuff and a lot of stuff along the banks of the lake. With all that
> pollution in that lake it was naturally going in that creek and then into the Flint
> River, but without that we are not just cleaning up the lake. It's good for the
> neighborhood but it spreads too.

> In sum, according to residents and participants of all five case sites, improving the

look of an environment and the natural capital benefits that this improvement entails are

an obvious reason for focusing on urban greening within shrinking city neighborhoods.

Multiple residents noted that simply, a garden or mowed grass with flowers, looks much better than a vacant lot and in some cases puts empty space into productive re-use. This strategy is indicative of many of the prescriptions for vacant land that are outlined by scholars who focus on right-sizing or managing land that is accrued through city shrinking (Logan and Schilling 2008).

Greening Beyond Beauty

Improving the aesthetic look of an area through beautification and investment into greenspace may be the most obvious motivation for greening in relation to what can be seen by the human eye. However, further discussion on the investment into built and natural capital via community urban greening highlights additional motivations that are not so visible. Further analysis reveals that the cultural meaning behind greening in relation to built capital is imbued within a specific goal: greening creates attractive space that will not be inviting to those who commit crimes.

As participants told me about their involvement in greening activities and how they felt about their neighborhood, it became increasingly clear that greening initiatives were viewed as a process of attempting to curb crime and disorder conditions in their communities. This is not surprising considering the sheer number of urban crime and blight problems within the city of Flint. There are approximately 22,000 vacant lots and structures in the city and in 2011 alone there were 2,337 violent crimes per 100,000 people (Longley 2012). In this context, the sensemaking strategy of attending to the maintenance of local space aligns well with urban development and criminology theories that suggest altering the physical environment can work to change the state of the

environment both in regard to built infrastructure but also the social groups that may accompany the area.

Multiple streams of urban studies and criminal justice literature have supported this notion. These ideas are imbued within the new urbanism movement, which focuses on manipulating urban spaces that are open for multiple purposes and to diverse groups, with the goal of facilitating a more vibrant urban streetscape. It is premised on the assumption that environmental cues affect the quality and frequency of social relations and group formation in a given area, which in turn can be related to the social production of place or context. One of the better-known examples of this postulation is the case of Bryant Park in New York City. In the 1970s, during a period of rampant crime, park officials under the direction of William Whyte altered the physical space in a way that attracted more middle class users as opposed to the panhandler populations that were known to occupy the area. This strategy thereby worked to reduce crime but also increased social interaction of groups considered to be more "desirable" users. The maintenance of the space in this case was key for changing the trajectory of the park and its inhabitants. According to Talen (1999), social group formation and social support relations are enhanced if there are appropriate meeting public spaces such as parks that are arranged over local landscapes.

Similar ideas can also be drawn from Broken Windows Theory, the highly controversial theory developed by Kelling and Wilson (1982). This argument contends that attending to minor disorder conditions such as broken windows or graffiti, can work to prevent the spreading of disorder and other more serious crimes. As noted in chapter two, disorder conditions have shown to drive local populations from the public sphere to

the safety of their homes, decreasing informal social control measures. This eventually creates a cycles of disorder and decline that is difficult to escape. As disorder builds people retreat from public spaces increasing both disorder and crime as it is believed that there are less people "watching" the neighborhood. The goal then is to keep public space inviting (eliminate minor disorder conditions) so people feel safe enough to interact in the area and as a result increasing informal social control.

In the case of community urban greening, this is the logic is at play, suggesting that a manipulation of the urban built environment through greenspace maintenance can prevent or reduce both crime and disorder (Hinkle 2013). As noted in chapter two, research has established a link between fear of crime victimization and the presence of disorder conditions, suggesting that the removal of disorder may work to reduce fear and mistrust which works to create the potential for positive social interaction.

Finally, similar ideas are found within the concept of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), a strategy that has been employed by criminal justice scholars and practitioners since the 1960s. Those who support CPTED suggest "the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime, and an improvement in the quality of life" (Crowe 2000: 46). The main tenets of the strategy suggest that designing the environment in a way that makes it more attractive, including things like better lighting, neat pathways, and specific territories, will both deter criminals but will also make it easier for residents to watch for criminal behavior within their communities. In this strategy, landscaping that promotes the ease of surveillance activities is a main "weapon" against crime. Research suggests that this is indeed effective as it discourages criminal activities by increasing the risk and

efforts required to engage in criminal activity while also reducing potential rewards by would be offenders. There is a gamut of evidence suggesting that CPTED is a successful strategy for crime prevention in urban neighborhoods (Cozens et al., 2005).

Themes in relation to urban greening as a means of crime prevention were shared in both explicit and implicit ways and different groups had different motivations for attempting to curb disorder. However in general, a main motivation seemed to be an effort of keeping certain groups out of the community by removing the signs of physical disorder. As one participant noted from the PHNA group those who may be considered as to "up to no good" do not prefer to be in clean areas.

> Yeah because like I said, if you clean things up, the bad people don't hang around. Its just common sense. If it's clean and green, they don't tend to hang around.

A similar sentiment was expressed by James the leader of the FPBRA, who suggested that the greening activities also deter criminal behaviors from those who are from outside the surrounding area. This is an important issue in the Franklin Park neighborhood in particular, as it contains a large section of one of the city's main artery streets.

> I just think the neater a place looks the less there would be the opportunity for just random crime. Because maybe you got a house you really want to get because you know a guy has 75inch TV or something and it doesn't matter who is out front…but just for the folks who are driving through the neighborhood who want to commit crime, they kind of look the place over and I think they would say, "We don't want to be here. This place looks too neat. People care too much. There could be eyes on us."

Mike also from the FPBRA area, discussed how the greening as a process actually works to deter criminals by creating a clean and well-lit environment that would be unattractive to "no-good Tom's." In his analogy of light and dark in relation to clean and blight, he suggests that removing blight and disorder works to deter criminals because it makes their "work" more difficult by increasing the risk associated with their activity. This

sentiment is at the very root of CPTED strategies that suggest manipulation of the built

environment can deter criminals by creating more obstacles and lessening the benefits

associated with illegal activity.

> Then you have got the bad guys out there. They are wolves. They are looking for the easy target. They want the easiest job they can get. They have to work under the cover of darkness for things to be efficient for them. They don't always but it makes it easier. It's like thug repellent, beauty is thug repellent. They are not comfortable with it. We have got light and beauty out there, people see that and it makes them move to a darker place where they are more comfortable, so all we have to do is keep lightening up the place and before too long we will push them all out.

These quotes support claims made by researchers who have emphasized the

relationship between the presence of disorder and the fear of crime, especially in relation

to Broken Windows Theory. The look of a disordered environment reinforces ideas about

safety and causes residents to retreat, while reducing informal social control.

Beautification as a means of crime prevention also mirrors the line of thinking presented

in the Rational Choice Framework, a theory developed by criminologists that has been

utilized by CPTED researchers in relation to urban crime (Cornish and Clarke 1986;

Hinkle 2013). As rational actors, potential criminals must weigh the risks, benefits, and

consequences of taking part in deviant behavior. When there is more care given to a

particular environment perceived risk is increased for the offender.

While the present research is not meant to measure participant's level of fear

within the neighborhood or actual crime rates, the data does indicate that addressing

disorder conditions by removing signs of physical disorder is viewed as a way to prevent

crime from occurring in the first place. While this may not correlate directly with fear of

crime it does suggest that residents pursue greening to address crime as a quality of life

issue within the context of a degraded urban environment (Chappell 2010 et al.).

When I inquired if residents believed that crime had gone down since

beautification projects were underway in the neighborhood, there were mixed responses.

Some participants believed hands down that the criminal activity had decreased, while

others were unsure. Mrs. Forester from the FPBRA shared:

> The crime rate is down. You don't hear about so many people getting their doors
> kicked in or windows broke out and people going in. It hasn't been as bad in the
> past year. Prior to that everyday in that neighborhood there would be somebody
> whose door got kicked in. Now 90% of that now… if it is still going on if the
> truth be known…its somebody they knew that's been in their house and knows the
> layout of their house.

Mike shared a similar sentiment in regard to the neighborhood.

> Yes I believe it has gone down but I don't believe it would be quantifiable. I know
> my corner is safer. Just that little greening project there improved the area because
> it looks nicer. I think near the brick convenience store… if they would make a
> couple more changes, they would be safer too.

Here Mike refers to the importance of the greening measures in regard to perception. He

feels safer in his environment but cannot definitively say that crime has gone down. In

addition to perceiving that crime has gone down Mike's comments also indicate the

utility of greening, even if crime hasn't gone down. As a result of the project, Mike

alludes to feeling safer in his community. This feeling of security can work to improve

collective efficacy and social capital relations in areas that historically have low rates of

social interaction due to disorder conditions. This premise is at the very heart of Broken

Windows Theory.

James also commented on the relationship between community greening and his

belief that there is a correlation between beautification and crime reduction in regard to

the message the beautified environment sends to those seeking to commit crimes.

> I think there is a correlation between crime in a neighborhood and the way that a
> neighborhood appears. I really think there is a relationship there. Again crime is

rampant on the north end. It is down here as well. The neater the neighborhood is…it just gives a message to those that want to rob and pillage and whatever else, that "ahh maybe we should drive somewhere else." I just think there is an impact on that.

James also noted that while community urban greening may help to improve the look of an area or make people feel safer, he is not exactly sure how much the actual crime rate had reduced.

We have got crime. We still do. There are some hot spots within this neighborhood. There are a couple where I know allegedly some things are going on. We have notified the right people. Well the fact that are properties are maintained when we cut or the golf club cuts, I think folks might feel a little better that somebody feels good enough about these places to take care of it. That might contribute to a little better feeling about safety. That's kind of a hard one to zero in on. We still have crime. We have still have hookers I am told, but they are not walking the street here on South Street. They do their business at night in the Franklin area down by the lake as well. At least they are off the street. Now and then you see one going through…I presume she is. If they walk by my side of the street, they will be talked to. "Hi, how are you? Are you new to the neighborhood?" Sometimes I say, "We used to have some hookers here and I hope you feel safe out here now." So they get the message.

Other participants such as Bernice, from the Hawthorne Community Garden, were also a bit more skeptical in regard to the link between community greening projects and actual reductions in crime.

I would think it would have…it would be effective at reducing crime in the area. However…the area we are talking about its right across from Hawthorne. There is a lot of crime and drug related crime or that type of crime and I think….that's a hard question to answer but I think in terms of is it going to deter someone from mugging somebody in front of that site…I don't know. That's a hard correlation to figure out.

Mr. Lenny from the Bower Street Garden on the North end was the most vocal about the idea that a community garden was not going to reduce crime.

No that ain't going to decrease no crime! They just know we watching! If you watching…when you say we have these neighborhood watches, somebody got to really watch! They lying if they ain't. Wait…don't watch sometimes, you got to watch! But is just the idea…you don't here a dog right now…not a long distance either…you don't hear a dog, but if you got a dog and the dog bark then you suppose something because it ain't thinking, "well I think I might just bark, I think I will bark!" I always look when my dog bark.

Mr. Lenny's comments are indicative of another way in which residents identified the greening as contributing to either preventing or reducing crime in some cases (as claimed by the residents) was through the increased ability of residents to take part in surveillance activities as a result of cleaning and beatifying of the natural environment either through the form of mowing and brush removal or the establishing of a community garden. This was the sentiment expressed by Mr. Lenny, who suggested that he keeps an eye on the garden and Mr. Ronald who maintains the garden.

Well you know why because whoever put the community garden in there you know what they are going to do? They are always looking so that mean you got one person guaranteed watching. Now since I am watching this guy, watching them, watching him, I am watching to see what he is doing. You have people watching.

Since both he and Mr. Ronald have eyes on the neighborhood, Lenny believes that as a result the garden gets people watching. In regard to the presence of criminal activity, Lenny believes that crime as decreased as a result of the Bower St. Garden and his own back yard garden via the surveillance that goes on in the area. His comments on his own surveillance in the area somewhat contradict his comment above in relation to his belief that greening itself will not deter crime. Perhaps this highlights the notion that the garden itself is not enough. The combination of the beautified greenspace with increased social interaction and surveillance may work to deter criminal activity.

I seen a decrease in crime on the block for one because I watch all of it. I am the nosiest man on my block. As a matter of fact that's why I wanted this (garden in empty lot behind his house) here. Look I have got access to my backyard and I can watch this. See that house, nobody lives in that house, but I cut the grass. That way it won't look just like a lot and garden.

In agreement, residents from other neighborhoods such as the NHNA community believe that the opening up of the area and the increased opportunity for informal surveillance has reduced crime in the community, as the cleaning and surveillance activity works to increase informal social control of the neighborhood.

I think that crime has been reduced. In fact over on Hope Street there is a man that now is able to stand on his front porch and with is binoculars can look across the area of the park and can keep track of people in these vacant houses. That is not something I do, but I have seen other people in the neighborhood actually do that.

This sentiment and the forgoing quotes from other case site participants relate to a concept proposed by Jane Jacobs (1961) suggesting that "eyes on the street" will work to deter criminals by their mere presence. This coupled with the simple ability to be able to "see" the neighborhood without out the clutter of brush and debris has been cited as making some residents feel more secure in the neighborhood. Roger of the NHNA suggested that this is especially comforting for the elderly population in the community.

For the older folks in the neighborhood, I think it helps to lend a sense of security to the neighborhood. When you can look across the street and have a vista of clear space you don't have to worry is somebody hiding around this house and they going to be up to no good? I think has helped a lot of people to feel more secure.

Kyle from the PHNA who noted how important the clearing of overgrown grass expressed a similar idea and brush was in relation to preventing arson. The burning of vacant homes in the city of Flint is something of very real concern considering the large vacancy and arson rates (Harris 2011).

Plus the houses aren't hidden so you can see what is going on so that will deter people from going there to torch it. At least that is what I think. If you have tall grass around it, it's easy for someone to get in there.

Ella from the NHNA group shared a similar feeling when describing how she had started taking walks in the neighborhood again as a result of the park being cleaned up.

I said by the cleaning up…I feel like I don't worry about somebody sneaking up on me or anything like. There is no place to hide…just the cutting…that makes it a lot better.

Ella's experience relates to research that asserts the presence of disorder conditions can have negative impacts on quality of life in relation to both health and physical activity, but also social relations. Those who perceive high levels of neighborhood disorder are more likely to retreat inward away from social interaction and are less likely to traverse the surrounding area, which can have negative health impacts, but can also work to decrease the opportunity for informal social interaction in the neighborhood that has been shown to be important in regard to building collective efficacy (Ross and Mirowsky 2001).

Carter, the president of the PHNA group and greening "vigilante", spends a great deal of his summer mowing vacant lots in his neighborhood, discussed how the very act of greening offers ample opportunity to take part in neighborhood surveillance. In essence, greening offers the opportunity to be the "eyes on the street," similar to the way in which Mr. Lenny suggested that the Bower Street garden promoted the watching of the neighborhood.

With the mowing part too, I see a lot of stuff going on. I have seen the drug houses, I saw a whorehouse. I saw them coming and going and I thought, "man right in front of me." They don't even know who I am and they are doing it right in front of me. Well not too many cops do a stakeout undercover on a riding lawn mower in front of a house. But you see a lot of stuff when you are riding through

a neighborhood on a riding lawn mower. You go real slow, so you get to look real slow (moves head from side to side).

While this quote indicates that the greening did not actually prevent criminal activity or social disorder conditions, Carter suggests that seeing this activity while he was out mowing put the locations "on his radar." He noted that he was going to keep watching these locations and report them to authorities as necessary though he laments that this reporting is not always met with desired results.

> It can take a really long time for them to come in emergencies and then if something is not an emergency you are pretty much screwed. It takes a long time for them to look into things we complain about. But you know I have found that the squeaky wheel gets the grease. So I always report stuff anyway sometimes more than once and I try to get other people to report what is going on around here too. We have done that a lot with the condemned trailer park. We have got people living in there without electric or plumbing.

Carter's comments and those of other participants who highlight one of the utilities of urban greening as being able to watch the neighborhood better also bring about another contentious issue in the city of Flint. The city is notorious for its slow police response times, due in large part to the limited budgets and personnel cuts outlined in chapter one. One resident from the NHNA shared that it had taken the police twenty-four hours to respond when she has reported that her house had been broken into. Other residents echoed this reality. Ms. Eva concluded the discussion by stating, "You are lucky if they even come at all." As a result, the lack of police response is in large part why residents focus on greening strategies in the first place as they view them as working to reduce crime and because it is well known among residents that when a crime occurs (unless it is a homicide) it can be a very long time until the police will attend to the situation.

In order to aid this later issue, three of the community groups (NHNA, FPBRA, and PHNA) participate in a digital crime tree reporting system called "Code Red." The police department has advised community members that those incidents that receive a critical mass of calls are more likely to be attended to in a shorter period of time. Through the Code Red system, when one resident views criminal activity, he or she can call the police and then alert the neighborhood network in an attempt to get other residents to call the police as well. As such, the "eyes on the street" strategy, which is improved by community urban greening projects, has multiple utilities in Flint neighborhoods. It can be used as a means to both deter criminal activity and as the informal surveillance necessary for reporting crimes to the police department.

In sum, these data suggest that working to reduce disorder conditions can work to increase feelings of safety in areas where residents have historically cited being fearful of being in their own communities (Johansen et al., 2014). These findings also contribute to recent research that suggests that physical disorder can be major indicator of the quality of life in an urban neighborhood (Chappell et al., 2010). The greening interventions conducted in these neighborhoods can be viewed as working to improve quality of life through increasing informal social control through community action (greening work and surveillance). Residents are actively engaging with the neighborhood blight problems via greening (investment into natural and built capital) and thereby working to establish order as opposed to the disorder entailed in over grown lots and un-manicured park space (Lindblad et al., 2013). Residents believe that these measures are successful in improving the aesthetic look of the community, improving conditions for surveillance activity, making people feel safer, and possibly helping to deter crime.

Greening and Creating a Sense of Place

Another theme derived from this research in regard to the manipulation of the

natural and built environment entails the creation of a sense of place as an outcome of the

greening activity. Focused greening activities may be a mechanism for creating a new

sense of place for residents remaining in Flint neighborhoods. This concept is defined by

(Hummon 1992) as

> people's subjective perceptions of their environments and their more or less
> conscious feelings about those environments. Sense of place is inevitably dual in
> nature, involving both an interpretive perspective on the environment and an
> emotional reaction to the environment.... Sense of place involves a personal
> orientation toward place, in which ones' understanding of place and one's feelings
> about place become fused in the context of environmental meaning (Cross
> 2001:2).

A common thread in the data in regard to sense of place, specifically focuses on those

individuals who have cited not having any other option in terms of where to live or even

the ability to leave the city of Flint. This idea is present in Mr. Lenny's quote about why

he works to maintain his own garden and also supports Mr. Ronald's garden activities;

"Why have it look bad…shit… I can't go anywhere else." Here Mr. Lenny suggests that

he may as well make the best of his situation in terms of beautification as he is basically

"stuck" in Flint. His story is similar to many of those residents across the city.

There is a long established literature on the cycle of poverty and entrapment that

the inner city urban poor encounter in relation to the larger socioeconomic forces at play

in the global economy (Gans 1993). In his conception of the "underclass" Wilson (1987)

argues that this population was left behind as a result of both White and Black middle

class flight and the loss of lucrative industrial jobs that offered stable employment.

Additionally, Gans (1993) suggests that the underclass represents a stratum of society

that it is marginalized socially, economically, and institutionally. In relation to the context of Flint, many local populations fit within this definition as many do not have access to gainful or stable employment, and the presence of institutions such as schools, stores, and banks have been bleeding from local neighborhoods since the 1970s (Highsmith 2009). These populations on the margins (both Black and White) are left with little opportunity for social or economic mobility.

Anderson (2000) suggests that being "trapped" within this environment contributes to the development of disorder and crime, particularly among youth populations as the norms and values that dictate "the street" are opposing to those found in their homes and mainstream culture. These acts of deviance that accompany street culture can work to degrade both the physical and social conditions of a neighborhood.

Accompanying this reality is the fact that vacant property represents one of the largest assets or means of opportunity for residents who are cognizant of the lack of policing and resources in their neighborhoods. For example, in addition to using the garden as a means to conduct surveillance activities, Mr. Lenny in the Bower Street Garden neighborhood discusses how the garden is beneficial as a "thing of beauty," but also as a viable food source while also making note of the perception of his physical and social environment.

> Have you ever cooked the leaves of the broccoli? I did that the other day. I cooked them up. But I mixed it with some regular broccoli first because it don't take that long and then I put the broccoli in. But I did have…I took the cabbage leaves off of them I took all of the purple bottom ones off and I got they up in there with it, so it's more like a real fast green that I am trying to cook up. But believe me I watch "The Chew." They ain't the only ones that can do that shit! I ain't joking. For real! I am telling you we could make our own ghetto garden show… "Fresh out the garden in the Ghetto!" This is how you do it on the cheap!

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Here Mr. Lenny also alludes to the health and financial benefits of having a garden in relation to meeting some basic food needs. He later went on to describe how he preserves much of his garden food through freezing.

Additional data outlined below indicate residents are percolating a new sense of place in regard to their local environment through developing an increased sense of pride in the area where they live as a result of greening activities. The data suggests that there has been a shift of negative feelings about the environment to more positive feelings. Mr. Titan expressed this idea in relation to the cleaning up of the park and abandoned lots in the NHNA community.

> The beautification is really making the area and letting people see how…if things like that are done it can make the people see the neighborhoods a little differently…make them want to use it and walk around. We are probably going to get more green and I am sure people would like to see more green, if its more green than dilapidation. You know blight. This was a tree area you know. I would like to see…I know the leaves situation, but I would like to see trees and just a little place where you can sit with nature, you know squirrels and birds and stuff. I see rabbits, there are woodchucks. Sometimes it makes you feel like you are out in the country. I haven't seen a deer, but I love to see squirrels and birds. At a certain time in the evening you can just hear all these birds, you know the natural things. I think that's what we needed. People need to remember what the natural noises are you know, instead of hearing that siren. There is not a day go by that you don't hear that.

A similar idea was echoed by Buffy in the FPBRA group who cited her home being important to her as her main asset in regard to wanting to participate in greening and beautification activities in the area. Her comments reinforce the notion that if Buffy were to leave the neighborhood she would lose the only significant asset that she has. Though many other residents of the city have freely chosen to walk away from their homes due to the value of the home being less than their investment as a result of the depopulation and foreclosure crisis (Downey 2011).

Because I love my home. It's paid for. Its mine! I don't want to give it up. It's all I have. I want to be proud of the neighborhood I live in and the only way you can be proud of neighborhood is if it's clean and green and if crime is down.

Illustrating the idea of neighborhood pride was also a common theme among participants both from those that lived in the area where greening was occurring and also those that did not live in the community. The data suggests that this sense of pride was working to spread the greening efforts among community members. Buffy went to on to explain:

I am really proud of what the beautification has done for the area. I have noticed more people are trying to keep their places neater than they used too. People were sort of depressed I think because the whole area was depressing. It wasn't when I moved here in 1988. Then it was one of the most beautiful neighborhoods in the city of Flint, but it just kept going downhill and downhill.

Similarly, Mr. Titan with the NHNA group shared how he believed that residents that specifically resided around Regina Park were taking more of an interest in beautifying their yards and homes.

I think more of the neighbors that live next to the park take more of a pride in their own property. Its seems to me that more of the houses are spending time and effort taking care of their front yards, something a lot of them wouldn't do before.

Pastor Martin from PHNA also reflected on the comments that people made about the community garden. He believed that these comments alluded to a sense of pride in the neighborhood.

They would just be talking with pride on how beautiful the garden looks and it's in their neighborhood and "boy this is just a great thing, boy this is good for the people." It was the comments that they made it give some folks a sense of pride, but not enough to move them on to different modes of action.

Carter also from the predominately white, working class PHNA neighborhood suggested leading by example is a fairly common sense notion and that it was one way to

try to get residents to participate in contributing to the community without formal

participation in an organized group like a neighborhood association.

> If you live in an area where nobody is taking care of their property then they
> won't either. If you start doing something little then pretty soon it spreads up and
> down the block.

Carter went on to suggest that maintenance is basically an informal social contract among

residents and that by not abiding in it (excluding physical disability) then you are not

upholding the norms of the neighborhood. Unsurprising considering that a nicely

manicured lawn is one of the foremost American dream values (Robbins 2007).

> Well I would hope that people are trying to understand that you are not in the
> ghetto! You know I don't…you are not in the hood! You see you know…it's a
> good day when you see everybody's grass cut. You just say, "wow!" And like I
> said, I have seen where I do mine and then you see neighbors cutting theirs. It just
> makes you feel better, I think to keep… you know it's not that hard of work and
> you can pay people to do it. But you would want it to look like everybody else's.
> If you're a neighbor, a decent neighbor, you got to think about everybody else you
> know your property values. It involves everybody. You know if you going to start
> junking or whatever you are going to have more mad people then friendly people
> you know.

The environmental maintenance strategies for reducing or preventing crime discussed

above suggest that these visual cues of orderly space and manicured lawns reinforce the

social norms of the neighborhood, which may result in community members or

individuals from outside of the neighborhood being less likely to take part in deviant

behaviors including perpetuating minor disorder conditions and crimes (Cozens et al.,

2005). As such, keeping neat and maintained greenspace areas becomes part of the

sensemaking strategy for greening among neighborhood residents.

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Pastor Martin also shared this sentiment in regard to the spreading of greening and setting a neighborhood precedent at which other residents should also try to meet even if the community garden did not inspire residents to volunteer.

> Absolutely! It set an example. It set a standard. I think it did and if it was not well cared for that would say something else. Yes…I think absolutely. When people see an example of nice flowers growing…the sunflowers were lovely…that makes them think, "Maybe I should try that in my yard, I love sunflowers!"

Beyond the sense of pride participants believe that that the greening entails, they also suggested that the initiatives signal activity and care both to residents and visitors or passerby's to the community. This was mainly a signal that suggested "this place is cared about," which Chappell et al., (2010) argue is good for the well-being of residents in relation to quality of life, but also may to work to deter criminals as discussed above. Corrina suggested this idea in regard to the PHNA community garden.

> We are trying to give that impression that these homeowners are caring and we are not going to tolerate crime. We are not going to tolerate blight and our community garden is one way of showing that we care.

Sandra from the Hawthorne Garden shared this view in relation to the importance of the space being cared for but also the presence of people on the property.

> I think having a lot of people just physically on the site and seeing the garden grow is an outward expression that people care about this space. It's very physical and has a positive effect.

This sense of caring and pride may also go beyond deterring others in regard to deviant behavior by working to promote positive social change in the neighborhoods. This is a basic underlying goal of greening initiatives (Rickenbacker 2012). Kyle from the PHNA echoed this idea.

Well I think the garden says first "caring." So I think when people drive by they think, "Somebody is doing something. Somebody is caring.

When Kyle from the PHNA group was pressed in regard to his comment above he noted that sending the message of care is important, as the city of Flint has long been portrayed as an "abandoned loser city," with only those who remain being trapped. In a sense the greening may work to suggest that perhaps the people left in Flint are not completely invisible to those within and outside the city limits. James the leader of the FPBRA expressed a similar view in relation to the positive feelings that can be associated with a sense that somebody or some entity or organization is invested in your community. The very idea that someone has interest or care in your community can be a positive outcome among residents.

I think that the fact that they just see their neighborhood is…people care…and I think that has an impact on folks. People care instead of…I don't know if it will ever effect the degree of trash that is floating around the neighborhood…maybe folks will take a little more care in that.

This assertion is made even more salient by the suggestions among participants that greening has spread among the local neighborhood residents, apart from the Hawthorne Garden, which does not have much community participation. Mr. Carson shared this view in regard to the park in the Northern Hills Neighborhood.

You figure it's a contagious type of thing. Once we did something nice in the park then people started to care for their houses a little bit better and it is contagious and that's a positive outlook of what we have done.

Troy from the Bower Street Garden community also commented that since Mr. Ronald had been planting his community garden, more people in the neighborhood were spending more time taking care of their own property.

I see that more of the neighbors are keeping their lawns cleaner. They take the paper in and all that. They keeping their grass mowed and whatever else. They

used to didn't. I mean they would do it every now and then but…I don't know how I would put it. But since the garden has grown up, I feel that they want people to see the garden and their grass and have been doing a really really good job of keeping it cut…they have.

These assertions in regard to the spreading of greening and promoting an ethic of community care is reason to suspect that both individual and community greening initiatives in terms of planting gardens and maintaining and mowing vacant properties could also have a "contagion effect" which encourages others residents to follow suit (Galster 2010). This assumption follows the opposite logic of "disorder breeds disorder." In this case greening can work to "breed greening."

In sum, greening activities may also work to create a deeper sense of place for residents who live within a socially, structurally, and environmentally degraded environment, by creating new or reinvigorated images in relation to the meaning of their local communities. Further analysis also indicates that this strategy is also pursued for reasons beyond the immediate spreading of disorder. In addition to this utility, greening projects are viewed as a tangible way to increase community social interaction and to build collective efficacy, an imperative ingredient for any successful community development initiative. This assertion is discussed in detail in the section below.

Learning to Work to Together: Building Collective Efficacy and Social Capital

Another theme derived from this research is the importance of greening for spurring social interaction among community residents. The development of community collective efficacy is a key asset that residents believe is developed from the greening interventions in my case study sites. Community collective efficacy is defined as "the social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good" (Sampson et al., 1997). In general, activities centered on increasing

collective efficacy in a neighborhood setting focus on increasing social interaction and reciprocal exchange among residents that encourages the development of informal social control measures by aiming to reduce resident anti-social behavior.

This idea is illustrated in the quotes above that allude to the feeling among participants that residents in their communities feel safer as a result of greening interventions. If residents feel safer they are less likely to take part in anti-social behaviors. In addition, the data that indicates some residents are improving their own space in a contagion style effect is also one of the key components of developing community collective efficacy by reinforcing the social norms of a given community.

Collective efficacy, social capital, and the development of local social interaction is something that has been heavily focused on in the literature in relation to the outcomes of community urban greening projects (Hanna and Oh 2000; Westphal 2003; Rickenbacker 2012). Walsh (2012) notes the importance of the development of bonding social capital ties within a community, while Brown (2012) also notes the importance of creating bridging social capital as a means to literally tie neighborhoods to other communities and other resources. This development of increased social relationships and expansion of access to resources also reflects the initial building of political capital in local communities (Brown 2012).

In my case study sites, I both observed social interaction among residents and measured and increase in social relations according to resident perceptions. In this section, I detail how both collective efficacy and social capital were developed as a result of community urban greening.

The results of my interviews illustrate that all 28 participants perceived there to be an increase in social interaction as a result of urban greening projects. This was established through a series of questions meant to gauge efficacy and social capital. In relation to the umbrella question "Can you tell me how your participation in the urban greening/gardening project impacted the way you feel about your neighborhood and neighbors or other people in your community" (See Appendix 4 for full questionnaire and additional probing questions) all twenty-eight participants cited an outcome associated with the strengthening of social ties or social capital. In responding to a follow up question, James from FPBRA noted how the greening project in and of itself is a conversation starter:

> Clearly! Yeah it gives you something to talk about. You see somebody on their porch and what do you talk about? It's something that generates interest and often they would say, "Who is cutting that stuff?" Who is doing this and that? So that opens up the conversation piece to increase the communication.

Brenda also from FPPRA, and Kyle from PHNA also suggested that communication had increased in their respective neighborhoods as a result of greening projects.

> Yes I think it has improved neighborhood friendship because they are talking. We are talking more. (Brenda)

> Yeah they talk more to each other. It gives you something nice to talk about. (Kyle)

In addition to increasing communication among residents, some also noted that additional people in the neighborhood who were not regularly active in the community started to involve themselves in different activities and discussions. Mr. Carson from NHNA reflected on the new involvement of residents in the neighborhood.

> I have a number of different neighbors that come to me and a number of different neighbors that are talking to me and getting involved so it changed them.

Mr. Carson noted that this new participation was not formal in the sense that new people were joining the association, but rather they were communicating, which is something they hadn't done before. This increased communication may reflect the beginnings of the development of trust and efficacy in the neighborhood, a positive outcome that has been associated with urban greening activities (Westphal 2003; Rickenbacker 2012). Mr. Carson viewed this sharing as a positive step for community development.

In a similar vein, Carter the president of the PHNA shared how the garden and his blight elimination work had actually generated new participation in the neighborhood association.

> We have a new member because of it and he wants to be involved. When somebody raises their hand and says they want to be involved, you go over there immediately and bring them in.

Mr. Forester from the FPBRA also shared how he believed that more neighbors were involved and were helping out with more neighborhood initiatives.

> I do think it's made a difference because they are learning to work together where before everybody went their own separate ways. Now the neighborhood cleanup projects a couple times a year. There's people out helping that I thought I would never see out there helping. So I see nothing negative. I see only positive.

Here Mr. Forester touches on the development of collective efficacy in noting that community members are learning to work to together. This efficacy is in important in establish the repeated social interaction that can lead to the development of social capital and subsequent community development as a result of a shared understand of community problems and shared goals for meeting community needs.

Positive social interaction was also recognized among both in the Hawthorne Community Garden area and the Bower St. Community Garden neighborhood. These two communities do not have typical or strong neighborhood associations like the NHNA,

PHNA, and the FPBRA. In this sense, it may be more difficult for local residents and volunteers to get involved in greening projects. Regardless, participants noted the importance of social interaction at each site. For example, Sandra a volunteer for the Hawthorne Community garden shared why she believed the garden was important in relation to increasing communication between people around the garden or those who may just be passing by the area.

> The garden changes the way people interact together. People who are volunteering its seems to me do not live by the garden. Maybe they live in a suburban area or maybe they are a part of an outreach program and their working on the garden and interacting with people who pass by, people who might be homeless or people who are just getting their day on and are stopping by and chatting "What are you doing here?" "I am working on this garden." "I used to garden, my granddad had a garden." It gives people an idea. Maybe they will have a garden in their own back yard. It changes the possibilities, it makes us more human. Yeah it brings out the humanity in people.

Here Sandra notes how the greenspace can serve as a physical space for social interaction. She also touches on the main challenge that the Hawthorne Community Garden faced in regard to serving the surrounding community. This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter seven.

While an increase in social interaction may be viewed as a positive outcome in any environment, the particular context that surrounds many of Flint neighborhoods suggests that this is an even greater feat. The city has a very negative reputation in large part due to being ranked by the most dangerous city in the country and the murder capital of America by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The literature in relation to disorder highlighted above, suggests that those environments that are marked by disorder conditions may have experience decreased social interaction due to a lack of trust and feelings of powerlessness among community members (Sampson et al., 1997; Ross et al.,

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2001). In addition, in general greening activities such community gardening or maintaining flowerbeds has been shown to have a positive impact within communities in regard to increasing collective efficacy and social capital, key ingredients of community development (Putnam 2000; Hynes and Howe 2002; Wolf 2012).

The increased social interaction situations found within my study varied from the hosting of block and park parties to people stopping by to chat as they passed the community gardens. Mr. Ronald, whose garden resides on the north end of the city where crime and poverty rates are at their highest, recalled how when he moved to the area and started the Bower Street Garden that neighborhood gatherings increased, as he would host parties featuring food from the garden.

> I was told by a lot of people here that for years everybody just pretty much stayed to themselves and I started doing the garden and having barbeques and stuff and people kinda started coming out and interacting with each other…some hadn't spoken in years or something. Can you imagine not speaking to your neighbors for years? Crazy!

Here Mr. Ronald touches on an issue that plagues many of the severely segregated and economically marginalized neighborhoods across the country. According to Sampson et al., (1997), those who live in these communities are more likely to keep to themselves and not take part in informal social control measures due to the fear of threats within the local environment imposed by disorder conditions. In this example, the garden but also a multiple parties spurred by the garden's bounty resulted in an increase in social interaction. These multiple chances for interaction over time is the very thing that scholars suggest can work to build strong social capital ties (Putnam 2000; Brown 2012).

In a similar vein, Mr. Carson highlighted how the NHNA park project not only beautified the area, but it also created a productive or useful social space.

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> I think that is a real success story when you have a park that people use. You can create greenspace if you want to, but it isn't really a park unless people use it. So we have had neighbors have picnics and birthday parties in it. We have had several activities in it, so the land is actually being used and that's the real success story.

Having birthday parties outdoors in the local park may seem commonplace to some, but in the NHNA community this was cited at a neighborhood meeting as being a major feat of community success in and of itself. Residents discussing witnessing the party recalled how not even a whole year prior to the park project, there was a homicide in the green house that bordered the park. Mr. Carson went on to suggest:

> There has been a murder at that green house, there has been shootings at that green house, there has been a number of people go to jail from that green house so I think that the park has helped us because it made a nice social space but it has also organized us to look at another common problem.

In organizing around the beautification of the local park, the members of the NHNA not only created an actual physical space for social interaction in their neighborhood, but also worked to eliminate a source of contention by revamping the cultural norms of the neighborhood and making the space an inviting place for a certain set of social users, namely middle class families.

Miss Eva, another resident from the NHNA agreed with these thoughts and noted that she perceived a change in the social climate around the park and the neighborhood.

> Well I think…all I can think is that there seems to be more of closeness from the neighbors. I know I am closer to some of my neighbors than I was before. I was kind of not really aware or sure of them and their thoughts about this area, but now I am.

Miss Eva's comments highlight the underling notions of scholarship that indicate that greening can both spur social and interaction and thus the development of trust. Through repeated social interaction over time social capital ties are also strengthened, which can

work to increase community capacity for community development measures (Ross et al., 2001; Chaskin 2001).

Mr. Forrester from the FPBRA community shared a similar sentiment in regard to how the greening process worked to change social interactions in the Franklin Park neighborhood and how this interaction worked to increase social relationships among residents.

> If you work together you get to know your neighbors. I think that happened to a small degree with the planting that we had and the neighborhood clean up that we had. We had people come out of their houses when we started this project. People we haven't seen in a long time or ever!

Scholars suggest that even if these relationships do not develop into long standing friendships they still have a powerful potential in increasing mutual trust among residents due to the signals that mutual participation in the project entails (Chappell et al., 2010; Westphal 2003).

Other increases in social interaction identified in my case study sites had more long-term consequences as opposed to being able to visually recognize and feel comfortable with people in the neighborhood. Speaking to the development of trust and the longevity entailed in maintaining a garden, Corrina from the PHNA group suggested that the activities of the greening go well beyond the actual activity of planting, maintaining, and harvesting a garden.

> It's more than a project because you work with people over a period of time and then you develop trust and friendship. So that is going to be forever the case not just for the time of the garden. It brings the…it goes from a neighborhood to a community. It brings the community together. When people work together things get done.

Here Corrina not only refers to the opportunity for trust and friendship building that gardening offers but also indicates how these important factors can develop into a

powerful component of community development, the building of collective efficacy and the ability for people to work together to recognize and solve problems by leveraging community resources (Sampson et al., 1997; Chaskin 2001; Rickenbacker 2012).

Carlyle also from the PHNA echoed this idea about the development of friendship and trust. Like Carter, Carlyle is a one-man greening "vigilante," who founded an organization that serves East Flint called the "Community Members Against Blight." He has been featured on Flint ABC 12 News a couple times due to his blight busting work. The last time he made the news someone had broken into his garage and stolen all of his equipment including a fleet of push lawn mowers, most likely for scrap metal. Carlyle reflected on how people rallied behind him to restore his equipment.

> Two weeks ago all of my equipment was stolen but within 3 or 4 days I got triple the equipment back. New lawn mowers, used lawn mowers…and my neighbors are constantly telling me how much they appreciate what I do. You know not everyone in the neighborhood is young and able to do what I am doing. I am on disability myself. I only have 3-4 hours a day that I can work. Someday I can't even do that. But there is elderly people here. There are severely handicapped people here that can't do for themselves and not all of them have the benefit of family nearby so that's another part. I have established a good relationship with my neighbors and a respect from the neighbors for what I am doing.

Carlyle went on to note how people in the neighborhood recognize him as the "Community Blight" guy. Similarly, Carter in the PHNA is known as the "blight guy." Increasing their visibility in relation to positive activity for their neighborhoods offers the opportunity to increase both social interactions with others in the area and as Carlyle notes the development of trust and respect.

Conclusion

In sum, according to resident perceptions urban greening activities contain a variety of utilities in relation to community development and the prevention of crime. In

the face of neighborhood degradation as a result of deindustrialization, disinvestment, and economic and racial marginalization, urban greening activities are viewed as a means to attend to the disordered social environment that has been neglected by the municipality. These activities improve the look of the natural and built environment through beautification activities, which in turn (according to residents) makes them feel safer in their communities and has the potential to reduce neighborhood crime due to the signals that the manicured environment sends to those who might be inclined to conduct serious criminal activity.

This increased sense of safety stems from a variety of avenues. As discussed within the disorder literature, the look of a disordered environment can breed mistrust and cause residents to retreat into their own personal social worlds. The opposite can be said to be at play as well. When there is reduced disorder, residents are more likely to feel safer and thus more trusting of other residents. This sense of trust helps to lead to increases in social interaction or can be developed through repeated contact between residents in regard to the greening projects, thus working to spur the development of collective efficacy and social capital. Furthermore, physical disorder has been shown to be one of the most important indicators of urban quality of life, thus reducing the signs of physical disorder not only helps to reduce crime but can work to improve the lives of residents in relation to other indicators such as personal physical and mental health, social interaction, and the increased sense of trust among neighbors (Chappell et al., 2010).

Previous research within one of the case study neighborhoods (the Northern Hills Neighborhood Association) also indicates that residents believe that community urban greening projects are helping to increase social interaction within the neighborhood

(Johansen, Gasteyer, Nikolai, and Frank 2012 Presentation at the American Society of Agronomy Annual Meeting). Results from a neighborhood survey conducted in 2012 in relation to the transformation of the local park and reclamation of surrounding vacant lots are highlighted below. The responses refer to agree and strongly agree in relation to a variety of questions that began with this phrase "Since the beginning of the park project I feel…safer in my neighborhood, there is less trash, neighbors interact more, I trust more of my neighbors…etc.

Figure 3. Social Impacts of Greening in Northern Hills Neighborhood.
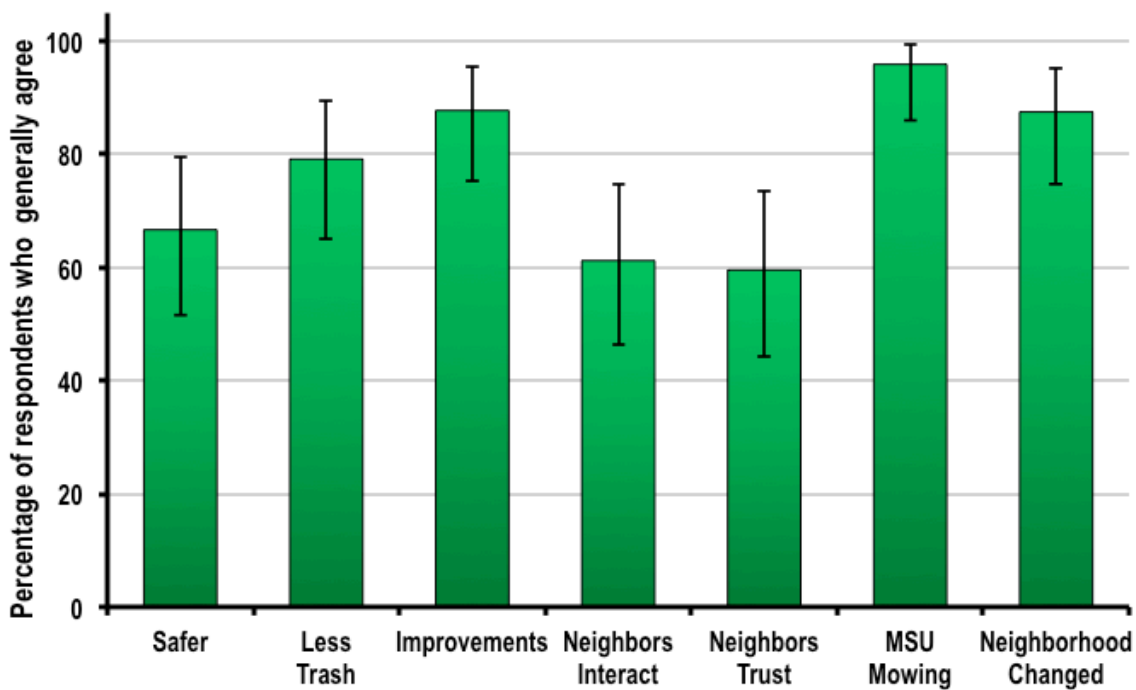
The data outlined here and the previous research findings in the NHNA neighborhood are similar to those found in a recent research study on the impact of greening vacant lots in relation to crime reduction in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The study concluded that greening of even a small number of lots marginally reduced gun

violence, but also led to great increases in resident perceptions of safety. The study

authors contribute this increased sense of security to a variety of factors:

> "This may occur by enhancing neighborhood pride and encouraging community members to use the space in ways that promote social cohesion. Additionally, green space may reduce stress and mental fatigue associated with living in an urban environment" (Garvin et al., 2013).

The data from my cases outlined above as well as similar research conducted in

the NHNA community also suggest that greening initiatives do a play a role in relation to

developing community social interaction and trust. These elements are essential for

creating a sense of community collective efficacy. Having collective efficacy is imbued

with some sense of mutual trust among residents and the willingness to intervene in

neighborhood problems in relation to working for the common good (Sampson et al.,

2007). While efficacy is a key component of community development it is not the same

thing as community capacity, which is defined as

> The interaction of human, organizational, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized efforts by individuals, organizations, and the networks of association among them and between them and the broader systems of which the community is a part. (Chaskin 1998:4).

As such, community collective efficacy is something that must be developed prior to the

leveraging of resources in order to solve community problems. In other words, residents

need to develop mutual trust and shared goals in order to be able to focus energies on

capacity building. As such, this efficacy building/urban greening process can be viewed

as an essential first step toward greater capacity building which can be useful in relation

to a group having the ability to find, secure, and leverage resources for continued

community development.

This idea is the main topic of discussion in the next chapter, which focuses on resident perceptions of the growth of human, political, financial, and cultural capital as a result of the outcomes associated with greening measures. I analyze the benefits associated with community urban greening through the indicators entailed in the Community Capitals Framework. This framework is important for understanding how populations within local spaces maneuver the neoliberal context to turn "liabilities" into local assets.

CH. 6 COMMUNITY URBAN GREENING TO BUILD COMMUNITY

ASSETS

This chapter centers heavily on the community capital gained when Flint residents

turned public space that was neglected by city authorities from what they view as a

dangerous liability to community asset. This can be seen in the development of the actual

physical space but also in the additional growth of community capitals that stems from

urban greening projects. This asset development is viewed as an empowering experience

even it is born from the confines of the deindustrialization, population decline, and the

neoliberalization of the local environment.

Following from the work of Rickenbacker (2012), I suggest community urban

greening activities, through the reduction of disorder and development of collective

efficacy and social capital offer an important step in the creation of community capacity

to leverage additional resources for community development. This idea is also illustrative

of the main tenets of the CCF model of community development. These additional

resources may be individually based in relation to human capital, which can later be

invested in community development projects or something that can have a community-

wide effect such as the growth of cultural or financial capital.

Political Capital

As noted in greater detail in chapter two, political capital is the ability of local

groups to exercise power or to influence power brokers within a community and to

leverage additional resources (Emery and Flora 2006). Through the act of community

greening and the social relationships and trust that is built from the process, community

groups can also build political capital as a result of their new found social ties. These ties

may be in the form of bonding social capital between neighborhood residents, but also

bridging social capital that can link community groups to other outside organizations and

resource providers and brokers. Scholars have suggested while bonding social capital is

important, bridging social capital is essential for community development success as it is

influential in creating important social networks (Brown 2012). Bridging social capital is

inherently related to political capital in that it is the leveraging of resources based on

influence or power in regard to social connections. In addition, political capital can also

be in the form of social clout as a result of the evidence of community development

effectiveness stemming from successful community greening projects.

The political capital derived from community greening projects, in conjunction

with bridging social capital, may be limited in scope in some instances, but may also

work as a stepping stone to develop broader social movements and social change as

indicated by previous research discussed in the literature review in chapter two. For

instance, those groups such as the NHNA and the FPBRA that were already heavily

involved in community greening prior to the master planning process brought their

neighborhood plans to the table and were able to have them integrated into the Imagine

Flint Master Plan in a relatively short period of time with little or no changes. In fact the

NHNA plan was the first to be adopted by the planning commission who has identified

the community as a "green neighborhood."

I have identified several instances of the development of political capital and the

leveraging of additional resources in my case studies. The most striking is that of the

FPBRA and the new partnerships that the association has formed as a result of the

neighborhood community greening project that was born from a partnership with

Michigan State University. James refers to these opportunities through discussing at

length the partnerships that the community is building with both local institutions and

entities outside of the City of Flint.

> In fact from the out growth of that (MSU park project) we have also formed a partnership with Longate Pharmacy, the Golf Club, Holy Life Church, and ourselves and we are really moving ahead with what could be a major community effort here. Again that is part of a…the reason that we are moving into this big partnership. This all has to do with the master plan too because this area was selected as a sub area and that effects our school here. We are designated as a mixed neighborhood as well as greenspace area. I am actually working on a little project now to re-route a street to go into Franklin Park as well as then veering of the other direction to go to the Golf Club. The other thing that has happened is now the Golf Club community is now interested in what we do here. In fact at the meeting last night about Long Lake we had people from three neighborhoods here. We had a member of the planning commission at the meeting too.

> We have the legislation folks involved as well, Stabenow's office, Kildee's office, and the governor's office with a gentleman by the name of Rodney Stokes who is the past director of the DNR. He is extremely well connected with the Michigan Housing Authority and others. They attended the meeting and are on our side and are willing to be a part of this. The group I have been after for several years is Habitat for Humanity to get some new buildings in the neighborhood. That would generate some new interest so we are trying to improve this neighborhood quality of life. Another piece of this that I haven't shared is the demolition of properties. We were selected in one grant of 3.7 million for 3 neighborhoods, we are one of them. Out of that grant there should be 33 homes that will be demolished from Bales Road to above 12th Street. Then there was another major 100 million from the federal government and Flint got 20 million among 5 cities. So we will probably get some more demolitions there.

James highlights the strong bridging social network ties that the association has

developed in large part due to his human capital abilities but also as a result of the

community urban greening park project. While Michigan State University played an

instrumental role in spearheading the park project, the greened and improved park not

only acts as a centerpiece of the neighborhood, it is also a built demonstration of the

association's ability to secure funds and to follow through on the requirements and maintenance of a project. This initiative has led to the rise of additional projects and partnerships that have resulted in actors with great political power taking a seat at the neighborhood development table.

Representatives from the FPBRA community were also selected to be on the City Master Planning Steering Committee, suggesting that the group has some sway in relation to being an example of a neighborhood with a great deal of political and social strength. This is also recognized in the fact that the Franklin Park area will be receiving a large portion of the Hardest Hit grant, event though there is substantially more vacant housing in other areas of the city such as the North end.

The ability to demonstrate community success in relation to attaining additional funds is something that has been focused on in the literature in relation to community development and non-profit work. MacIndoe (2007) argues that community groups that are viewed as successful in attaining funds and partnerships are likely to find additional success as the initial success acts as an endorsement of the group and its abilities to follow through with projects. Similarly, those groups that participate in successful projects also have added additional players to their social networks. These ties can be drawn upon in other instances of community development. For example, since the NHNA and FPBRA initially jumpstarted major greening initiatives in their neighborhoods through a partnership with MSU, they are now linked to one another in a way that they were not prior to the project. Currently the organizations are partnering in an effort to secure additional grant funds for the maintenance of each of their respective parks.

The recognition of the importance of political capital in regard to greening was also identified at other sites that are as not as "well connected" as the FPBRA. Carlyle from PHNA also indicates that greening work is important politically but also goes beyond "just the politics." Here he recognizes the sticky political situation that the city of Flint is in and why community political capital then becomes an essential element for community development success.

> Well not just the political part but even…we passed by several drug houses driving through my neighborhood. We pretty much know where they are. We want to make sure everybody is safe and aware of what is going on in their community. Not that we are going to stop it but awareness is very important. If you don't know what is going on around you, you are not really safe, but politically with the city of Flint finances the way they are even the county finances… there is just not money out there available for the city and county to take care of its self so as citizens… we are the city, we are the county… it falls to us to take care of our neighborhoods and if we can work together and be united that way then neighborhood by neighborhood we can get back on our feet and be secure.

Here Carlyle highlights how the care of the neighborhood literally "falls to the citizens" in relation to crime prevention, blight control, and neighborhood development due to Flint's dire political and economic situation. Carlyle argues that it is important that residents understand this political reality if they want to live in a safe and cared for space. These comments are illustrative of Perkins (2013) conception of coercive consent to neoliberal hegemony in relation to city services. In other words, he notes that citizens must be active in improving the physical community spaces because they really have no other choice.

Both James and Carlyle's comments above reflect a political situation that stems from the devolution entailed in neoliberal governance structures. Several services that were once within the purview of the municipality are now in the hands of community

members who are partnering with local and outside institutions or just relying on their own labor to gain resources and political headway. Furthermore, traditional power brokers within the city such as the mayor and city council have no real political power due to the take over of city administrative duties by a state appointed emergency financial manager. As such, community residents working on community development initiatives have no real stake in seeking changes or improvements to their communities through the traditional political process. As a result, community urban greening activities represent one of the few political opportunities that offer community groups some agency in land use decision-making and as a means to reshape the governing narrative of the city of Flint.

In outlining this idea, Bernice shared that she believed that community gardens are important, as they represent a way in which residents can have a say on and physically engage with the development of vacant space, an asset that is in no short supply in much of the city, even in those neighborhoods deemed "traditional" or "stable."

> Yes I think the gardens are important politically because I think they give life and Flint had the life sucked out of it for a few years now and I think it puts life back into a neighborhood and a community in a way that a building can't and I think it brings people together…it unites people in a way that nobody can explain but having been involved in standing side by side with individuals that I believe have probably quite a different background than I do…I think that is the ultimate strength of a garden.

Here Bernice refers to the garden as a space where social interaction can occur around shared goals and interests. Her quote indicates that in years past this is not something that had occurred for some time as she argues that gardens put the "life" back into the community. This life is seen both in the care for plants but also in putting the space into a productive re-use.

Following as an outcome of their participation in community urban greening

projects (as Bernice describes above) some residents even shared that they have become

more politically active as a result of their greening participation. Politically active in this

case refers to the indicators outlined in the CCF table in chapter three and do necessarily

refer to the traditional political process.

Rhonda from the FPBRA neighborhood shared that greening projects in the

neighborhood had inspired her to be active in the city master planning process.

> I think the park and beautification is really great and it has made me want to be
> more involved. I have been going to those meetings (master planning meetings) I
> went to one last night.

Along similar lines other residents shared that they were more aware of what was going

on in their neighborhoods as a result of the greening projects. Carlyle from PHNA stated:

> I am much more informed. I am not much of a sign holder, marcher, or protester
> but the beautification definitely inspired me to get more informed about my city
> government, my city's plans for the properties in my neighborhood.

Troy from Bower Street also noted:

> The garden raised my community awareness and wanting to be more involved
> with my community and then I am sure at some point be more involved with my
> city.

The quotes highlighted above indicate that community urban greening programs

do have the potential to increase political capital among individuals and neighborhood

groups. Data from participant observation and interviews reveal that the success of the

greening projects can be an impetus for pursing other community development activities.

The data also suggests that as those communities that seem to be the most successful in

terms of reducing disorder, increasing social interaction, creating a sense of place, and

garnering additional resources, including political capital, are those that have strong

networks within the community and across the city overall. This is evident mainly in the FPBRA and NHNA groups. While on opposite sides of the city, members of each of these groups actively stay involved in the other group's business and have even partnered together on various initiatives.

Furthermore, in addition to using greening as a means to leverage additional resources some individuals have citied personal increases in political participation or awareness as a result of the greening projects. This new found political participation or awareness has the potential to foster additional capital growth in those communities that do not have the strong political capital ties like those that are found in the FPBRA neighborhood. For instance, Mr. Ronald from the Bower Street Garden noted how his gardening work had helped him to develop some new social and political capital ties.

> I been on a lot of clean ups. I started helping with that after doing the garden and getting involved with Salem I been on a couple of 5th ward council campaigns…when they run for the city council. I have worked for a couple of people that have ran in those elections. I met them through garden. I have been offered a couple of times at Salem to try to help other block clubs but they always catch me at a bad time. I have had a lot of opportunities to speak at block clubs meetings and stuff like that when people are just getting started and giving information to people when they are trying to get something together. I try to encourage them because people are not going to participate right off the bat and so many people get discouraged and you cant do that. That's why I keep doing it you know. I am not going to let them discourage me. I am going to keep doing it.

While the Bower Street community does not have nearly as many opportunities as the FPBRA, the growth of bridging social capital creates the potential for the leveraging of resources. The main difference in these cases in terms of success in leveraging grant monies seems to be disparities in human capital (spread among association members) and the lack of a strong neighborhood association. This idea is discussed further in chapter seven.

In sum, political capital is a key asset that I have shown to be in the process of development from community urban greening projects within my case study cites according to the perceptions of those participating in the projects. This asset is key for additional development endeavors but for also promoting a positive quality of life in a degraded inner city environment that is known nationally for its blight and crime. While the levels of political and social capital may be low at this point in some areas, broad scale development and community social change is not something that occurs overnight. Community intervention evaluation researchers have indicated that it takes a good deal of time (several years) to see the major and indirect (ripple effect) outcomes of any community development project (Vitcenda 2014). The growth of both political and social capital are key components of any community development project. They represent positive assets in and of themselves but also help to promote the gateways necessary to gain additional resources such as financial capital.

Financial Capital

Financial capital represents both monetary assets and the investments that are made in built or natural capital with the hope that additional assets can be grown from the investment (Emery and Flora 2006). Financial capital is the asset that is viewed to grow the least as a result of an investment in urban greening within the context of Flint due to the fiscal realities of the city. However, some research does illustrate that community greening projects may have an economic impact in communities in relation to indicators such as housing value and the providing of cheap and healthy food through urban agricultural production (Hanna and Oh 2000; Barthel et al., 2013). For example, Heckert and Mennis (2012) illustrate that greening vacant properties in Philadelphia

neighborhoods worked to raise residential property values. This finding was only noted in

relation to distressed neighborhoods suggesting that those communities suffering from

blight and disorder conditions have the most to gain from urban greening projects. The

study also supported the claim that those properties in closer proximity to parks and

community gardens are likely to have higher financial values.

In regard to my case sites, participants were not overly positive about the potential

for community urban greening activities to be able to have any sort of major financial

impact in their communities. In regard to the question, what sort of effects can

community urban greening have on financial capital, only seven participants replied with

very positive answers in regard to the possibility of economic community development

through greening. For example, Rhonda from the more commercial FPBRA shared:

> I do think it can have an economic impact. With a cleaner neighborhood you will
> get more businesses. Business will want to come in because they look at a clean
> neighborhood, they consider it a prosperous neighborhood and that means "ahh
> we can sell more!" Because these people are prosperous because their
> neighborhood is clean and kept up.

Similarly, Sandra who volunteered in the Hawthorne Community Garden also looked

more at the "big picture" in relation the community garden and others around the city

having the possibility of creating economic growth.

> Holy crap! Absolutely! If that one garden inspires one more and maybe those two
> gardens inspire ten gardens…if we have a lot of people who are growing their
> own food and eating their own food, their buying seeds locally, they are probably
> buying seeds locally, whether or not they are farming organically they are buying
> products locally and if we can create a local economy that would be amazing.
> Flint I think right now…Genesee County spends 1 billion dollars on food and of
> that I think only 1 million comes from inside Genesee County. It's something
> crazy like that. So if we could just as an economy grow 15-20% of our own food
> that's going to have a huge impact on our local economy.

While other respondents saw the benefits of having fresh and local food available, they

were not as positive in relation to viewing community greening or gardening as a viable

opportunity in creating economic change in the city of Flint. Corrina from the PHNA

definitely viewed the garden has having minor economic impacts, but nothing on the

scale that would help to transform even the neighborhood or the city overall.

> I don't think it could have a direct economic impact. I think we could expand it so
> we could get the vegetables to the "shut-ins." I think that would be a wonderful
> thing and I bet the church would jump on that. Holy Cross church…they have
> been so instrumental in helping us. The intention was not to sell any of the
> produce. I guess kids could sell at the farmers market as a project. Other than it
> improves the neighborhood as a whole and it's an asset, but I don't think it has a
> direct economic effect.

Other respondents focused more on the possibility of community greening activities

generating economic change, noting that these changes have not occurred but may be

feasible with continued dedication and resources. For instance, Mr. Ronald of Bower

Street garden expressed his interest in getting children involved in his community

gardening activities, though in other conversations he also notes the difficulty of

procuring both volunteers and financial resources, which impacts the size and scope of

the garden from season to season.

> Is it possible? (Economic impact) Sure…sure. I mean if you can get people more
> involved as far as the children go you can do different things. I have a lot of ideas.
> Maybe have the kids help in growing and maybe in that section grow their own
> separate garden and then sell some of the produce, which would teach them
> different self experiences. I seen a program on television that they have in
> different cities that actually worked like that. You know teaching them
> entrepreneurship and having them more involved in the community and so it
> could possible have economic growth.

Here Mr. Ronald highlights the benefits of youth learning new skills and the

responsibility that comes along with gardening work. This is something that has been

poignantly identified as a positive outcome in relation to community gardening (Hanna

and Oh 2002) and is often associated with those gardens that have names that promote

personal growth such as "seeds of change" and "growing hope" (Pudup 2007).

In addition to generating economic change through business growth and skills

creation, residents also reflected on the possibility of community urban greening

initiatives having an impact on local property values. This is a salient topic in the city of

Flint, which at times has some of the lowest property values in the nation (Droge 2013).

This reality is reflected in Mr. Lenny's thoughts on buying a home in Flint.

> I would have no idea to be honest. The property values around here in Flint in
> general…I actually once heard that it is cheaper to buy a home in Flint that it is to
> buy a car. But I couldn't tell you what its like as far as my property here. I can't
> see anything really increasing the property value so much, but if I was to sell my
> home I am sure it would look better with a beautiful community garden next to it
> as opposed to an abandoned house.

Here Mr. Lenny refers to the idea that while property is abundant and values are low, a

place that has a nice beautified space is more desirable than an overgrown and vacant lot.

Some other residents were also hopeful in relation the effect that greening can potentially

have on property values. Kyle of the PHNA shares this sentiment.

> At some point in time possibly. Again it goes back to as opposed to there being a
> vacant piece of property, there is activity occurring that's positive. I don't think
> anybody… I have never heard anybody say a negative thing about a garden lets
> just put it that way. I just haven't…its never, I have never heard anybody say oh
> "I hate that garden or…" you know. It's always seen as something vibrant I think.
> Something vibrant for the area.

Similarly, Roger from the NHNA also agreed that through the investment in the natural

and built capital there is the potential to create positive economic change in the local

community, but that at present the community urban greening projects had not yet had

that type of financial impact.

Maybe in the long term I think if people perceive "Wow this park is nice or this garden is nice, maybe I am going to have a garden." And if there are some other positive impacts or influences other people might decide to move into the neighborhood because it looks nice and because they have perceived that community members are trying to create positive change. I think over the long term if it is a continued trend where more and more improvements like this are happening; I think yeah it could make an economic change.

The idea that the improved greenspace would serve as economic asset was viewed a being more a long-term outcome was noted by several participants. For example, Kate also from NHNA suggested:

Yes I think that the increase in property values will be more long term, but I think the answer is yes it can happen, but it's not immediate.

Similarly, Corrina from the PHNA shared

Absolutely! Because it's an asset and any time you are living close to an asset…it's an asset and that affects your property values. At the Fink Street garden, I used have people walking by and this was a really bad neighborhood…filled with drug dealers and prostitution…its really really high there and they would come by and say, "This is beautiful." And they would stop and talk and they would say, "keep it up, keep up the good work!" They so encouraged me! Absolutely it inspires people to do better things and can only help with things like property.

Here Corrina's comments on viewing the garden as an asset reflects the research cited above that suggests those home that are in closer proximity to assets such as a park are more likely to have higher property values, even in blighted neighborhoods (Heckert and Mennis 2012).

While some of the thoughts above in relation to greening and economic change may seem like common sense (e.g. a nice and developed greenspace is preferable to a blighted area and therefore may attract additional residents) this line of thinking is very reflective of the urban development and crime prevention theories discussed in chapter five. It is arguable that if strategies like Broken Windows Theory and Crime Prevention

by Environmental Design deter criminal activity and blight then the opposite may occur

if conditions are reversed. A nice space may be able to attract more people to the

neighborhood and potentially increase the local property values. In fact some recent

research has illustrated that urban greening projects do in fact have impacts on local

property values and may help to reduce crime (Heckert and Mennis 2012; Badger 2011;

Garvin et al., 2013).

Despite these findings, the perceptions of the possibility of community urban

greening having any major impacts in relation to property values were mixed within my

data, for example Roger from the NHNA reflected on the beautiful and cheap empty

houses in the improved neighborhood.

> I hope it can have an economic impact, but I don't know. I hope so, but I don't
> think it's likely. Surrounding the park there is maybe 6 or 7 homes that have been
> completely remodeled from the top down. Homes where we have spent well over
> $150,000 on… homes that we want to sell for thirty or forty thousand and these
> homes have been on the market for over a year and none of them have sold, they
> hardly get walked through.

Mr. Carson from the NHNA shared a similar idea. He argues that if the greening is going

to generate any economic change, it is likely to be a long process.

> Not yet. I don't think it's really had a great effect. We have had a lot of homes in
> the area that have been demolished and we also have homes that are being
> rehabbed and the park should be a selling point. I don't think it really has been a
> selling point yet, but hopefully it will get some people in here that really are proud
> of the property that they have.

Resident perceptions in relation to housing value are accurate. According to

housing value data from the American Community Survey Five Year Estimates[13],

housing values in nearly each neighborhood fell in the years from 2008-2012 to 2009-

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[13] Data is not available at the block group level from American Community Survey one
and three year estimates or the decennial census.

2013. The table below highlights the median housing value of each neighborhood for these time periods.

Table 5. Flint Community Housing Values.

Owner Occ. Units/Median Value	Bower Street	NHNA	Hawthorne	Poolman Heights	FPBRA
2008-2012 Owner Occ. Units	180	46	22	184	195
2008-2012 Value	53,900	33,200	49,000	30,900	34,781
2009-2013 Owner Occ. Units	223	63	19	144	228
2009-2013 Value	23,500	31,500	49,400	28,100	26,568

The data outlined above represent similar trends in the city of Flint as a whole. In the period of 2008-2012 there were 22,904 owner occupied housing units with a median value at $50,500.00. By the 2009-2013 period the median value had dropped to $41,700.00, but owner occupied units had increased to 23,176. While measuring the impact of community urban greening projects on neighborhood property values was not within the purview of this study, the data above suggests that greening may not do much to raise property values, but may have the potential to influence people when purchasing a new home as described by Roger above. With property values being at an all time low in the city, many people can afford to purchase a home which may reflect the increase of owner occupied housing units despite the decreases in value.

Recognizing this reality, other respondents focused on the potential of urban greening having the ability to impact property values and economic vitality only through being one small piece in a large and complex puzzle. For example, James pointed out the

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potential in relation to future beautification projects in conjunction with the MSU

turfgrass project.

> If this Front Street project kicks in, of which the greening turf project was an
> initiator of in essence, once we get folks together… then I think the property
> values will increase because we will be demolishing homes that bring down the
> neighborhood and maybe some things that improve the aesthetic and the
> function…property values should increase.

Similar, Roger from the NHNA shared the potential of economic impact in relation to the

abundance of assets within the community.

> Its not going to do it itself, but I think the strategy of increasing home ownership
> works because of the help that the park is giving. That will have a positive effect.
> I think that is going to be the biggest key to retaining and growing a
> homeownership base in the neighborhood. There might be something else that
> comes down the road…with a "green neighborhood" there might be something
> else down the line that comes along to up the property value. The likelihood of
> anything-commercial happening is pretty small, but we are just beginning to get
> to the stage where people have stopped mourning the loss and instead are
> focusing on the future. I preach to people all the time, " you have got to stop
> thinking about what we have lost and instead think about…" You know if we
> were a community that was growing and we had all of the assets that we do now
> as a community we would think, "wow what other community our size has all
> these assets?"

Here Roger highlights the importance of treating the vacant land as an asset as opposed to

a hindrance or dangerous liability in relation to community development as getting

people to move into the neighborhood is half the battle. An increased population can help

to stabilize the community in relation to increasing property taxes and the demands for

city services and amenities.

On the other hand, identifying that the low property values and lack of economic

opportunity are only one portion of the problem is also reflective of some of the critiques

of urban greening by political ecology scholars who would suggest that the greening

initiatives fail to acknowledge the larger structural problems that have led to social unrest

the degradation of the environment (Perkins 2009). As such greening projects are viewed as a small Band-Aid on a gapping wound. Even if property values do in fact increase and economic activity picks up, this trend will only be part of larger cycle of capitalist production. Maybe the blight and loss will go somewhere else (to a different neighborhood) but it will still be present nonetheless (Perkins 2009, 2010; Birge-Liberman 2010).

Despite this critique, participants in my case study sites were somewhat optimistic about the potential for urban greening projects to have an economic impact in their community and to improve their quality of life overall. In addition, community greening also represents a relatively low cost development strategy that residents can actively participate in. In essence, not only do participants believe that greening improves their quality if life, they also believe that it may potentially (down the road) impact their economic standing. This is a benefit of community greening at the local level, despite the critique that urban greening initiatives are not going to alter the social structure.

Currently a greater economic impact can be seen in relation to community groups using greening projects as a springboard to attain additional grant funds for continuing community development projects within their neighborhoods. The most successful example of this is the FPBRA, which is outlined above in relation to attaining additional funding through partnerships. James attributes these relationships at least in part to the MSU turfgrass project. The NHNA is also currently working on securing addition funds from the Ruth Mott foundation for beautification and is working with the FPBRA on a plan to make there respective park projects sustainable in regard to long term

maintenance. Kate also suggests that successful greening initiatives are used as a

"measuring stick" in relation to community capacity for receiving additional funds.

While the NHNA and FPBRA illustrate the largest financial growth in relation to

using urban greening as a means to generate additional capital, small increases have also

been identified in the PHNA. For example, as a result of Carter's blight busting work and

the focus on the community garden as a means of beautification, Carter became

connected with the Land Bank and applied for a Clean and Green grant for the summer of

2014. The grant was awarded and for the first time Carter and Kyle received some

payment for the work they that they typically do anyhow.

In summary, community urban greening projects may not have immediate nor

drastic impacts in relation to encouraging business or homeowner development or

increasing property values according to resident perceptions. Despite this reality,

residents do believe that sustained greening projects do have the potential to bring

additional financial assets. Furthermore, in the three cases that have strong neighborhood

associations, association leaders have concluded that the greening projects have already

assisted them in acquiring additional grant dollars or that they are in the process of

working toward this goal. This is especially the case in the FPBRA, which has secured

funds from the Ruth Mott Foundation, Michigan State University, the Michigan

Department of Natural Resources, and a portion of the Hardest Hit federal grant dollars.

Cultural Capital

Urban greening in the city of Flint serves a multitude of purposes. In addition to

spurring social interaction and building assets, greenspace is used to project a specific

image about the local community. By focusing on improving greenspace or creating the

opposite of blight, community residents work to portray the image of the ideal American

neighborhood: neat houses in a row marked by manicured lawns and attractive

landscapes, including gardens. Some scholars have critiqued strategies that focus on

improving the built environment due to the cultural image they portray "clean and safe

environments" where some people (others, outsiders, the poor, etc.) are not welcome

(Sampson and Raudenbush 2004). Bill Haworth from the Genesee County Chapter of

Habitat for Humanity highlighted this idea in relation to greening and working to keep

some populations out by comparing it to the process of gentrification.

> People used to be able to conduct illegal and violent and all types of criminal
> business openly and now because of things like the pocket park, because of
> housing being developed, because of parks being maintained and people from
> other communities coming in and using the parks, they don't feel as comfortable
> coming in and conducting that type of business and its kind of weird because its
> like…. its almost like a form of gentrification. You're not pushing out one race or
> one economic class but you are pushing out that criminal element and
> unfortunately they are probably going somewhere else.

This same idea is also reflected in the quote in chapter five by Carter, from the PHNA

whom suggests that he hopes greening sends a message to the neighbors that they "are

not in the ghetto."

Other respondents from both the FPBRA and the NHNA also engaged similar

ideas in relation to the idea that greening the neighborhood portrays in regard to cultural

aesthetics. For example, Arlene from the NHNA expressed how she believed many

people are afraid of Flint because of the way the city is portrayed in the media and how

she hopes the greening work can help to combat this image.

> Some people are just scared too. Some people come from other places that might
> have been bad and then they just never…they don't feel that way you know. And
> just the way the media plays Flint you know. I kind of hope…that it kind of…just
> that attitude about Flint…murder, fire, I think people tend to be cautious. I think
> they blow it up. It's not in every neighborhood and the crime that happens there is

a personal thing…its something else behind it all you know. Like I said…lately though this past summer I have seen people walking. When you see people walking I feel like, "well their not scared." You know and I have seen parents with kids and people. I don't know where they are going because there is not really a store around here. I figure they might live around here, but I think they…its like I said, I want to walk and if people see me walking maybe they be like "oh that lady walks her dog pretty much everyday." I mean if you feel like you can't go out of the house then that's really…I don't want to be like that and if it get like that then its probably time to find somewhere else you know. But I think the park it has a lot to offer.

Mr. Carson also expressed ideas that suggest the greening of the park can work to highlight a new image of the neighborhood. He also noted how increasing the perception of safety in the neighborhood might help to attract institutional employees to the community.

> I think it raises the impression that people have of the neighborhood. If it looks good then they think it is good. Another goal that I would like to see happen is to see if the nurses and technicians and the people who work at the hospital, which is one of the largest employers in Genesee County, would consider using this area; walking in the area or buying houses in the area because it is so close to the hospital.

Additionally, Sandra from the Hawthorne Community Garden expressed a similar idea about the perception of Flint as being a dangerous environment and how greening may work to project a different cultural image. While the violence in Flint is real, both Sandra and Arlene emphasize that there is much more to the city than just the violence and that these acts are usually gang related or acts of crime between people who are familiar with each other as opposed to random acts of violence.

> Flint is known as the murder capital you know there are people who call it "Murder City." People are afraid…I know when my students are coming to and from school they have to call their parents and say "I am getting on the bus at this time." And then they get there and have to walk home and have to let their parents know that they are safe. They are concerned just with them having to be on the street. I think that's part perception, but I think in terms of reality when you are actually riding your bike around the city or your walking around the city or working in a garden in the city, you realize that that's not really the reality.

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Here Sandra suggests that greening activities around the city may help to shift the tides of

perception in regard to the danger of the city. Buffy from the FPBRA also expressed how

she believed the newly greened park had a hand in helping to change the atmosphere of

the neighborhood. She recalled that the park was starting to be like it was before the

major waves of population loss and crime hit the city in the late 1908s and into the early

1990s.

> I do think that the park is helping to change things. I think that has a had a lot to
> do with it because when I moved here in 1988, my little grandkids would always
> spend the weekend with me and we would walk over to the park on pretty days.
> We would cross the catwalk at the end of my street. We would go over there and
> my grand kids would play on the playground. I would sit there and watch them.
> People would come and sit there on the benches by me and we would talk. Then
> all of the sudden young people…teenagers started dealing drugs out of there and I
> was out there one day and there was these grown men playing basketball. All of
> the sudden they stopped playing basketball because someone else came up and I
> sat right there and watched a drug deal go down. I got my grandkids and we left. I
> never went back because I figured I didn't want them to see something like that
> and I certainly don't want one of them getting shot if there was an argument. So
> that…I didn't like that. I didn't like having to give that up. It was a beautiful park
> in 1988. But we are not seeing that kind of activity as much now so I think that
> the park and how it's green and clean again is helping to change the
> neighborhood.

The quotes above suggest that just as improving neighborhood safety is a main

motivation for the community urban greening activities, changing the cultural landscape

in terms of perceptions of Flint overall, as a dangerous environment is also a key goal of

greening according to participants. Through greening activities such as maintaining parks

and planting community gardens, residents hope to portray an idyllic image of urban

American neighborhoods and a safe city in general. This image entails a clean and safe

environment where residents look out for one another and people can traverse the city

with out cause for concern.

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In addition, specifically in relation to urban gardening there is another cultural theme that be gleaned from my research on greening activities in Flint. Some local urban gardening groups are turning to collective memory and tradition in relation to providing for their own food. As noted in chapter two, collective memory refers to "memories and knowledge shared by a distinct social group" (Barthel et al., 2013). Personal food production is something that as a culture we have historically moved away from beginning with the inventions of "modern conveniences" such as the microwave and canned and frozen foods that promised to save time and money in the years following World War II. However, recent research and healthy food campaigns have highlighted that many of these "convenience foods" result in dangerously high sodium and sugar diets, leading many to conclude that the majority of quick, cheap, and processed food options are the culprits behind the obesity epidemic (Collins 2014).

In response to these claims, some people are turning to their own food production as it is often viewed a safer and more healthful way to get the nutrients that we need to live. This idea gives new meaning to the definition of "convenience food" especially when residents can go to their own backyard for ingredients. In the context of Flint, this can be done while also converting an ugly vacant lots into a beautiful vegetable gardens. In essence, community gardening is viewed as a "two birds, one stone" solution, particularly in those neighborhoods deemed stable that are grappling with "spot abandonment" as opposed to those neighborhoods that contain entire blocks that are abandoned or vacant.

Respondents working in and commenting on gardens have highlighted the importance of providing healthy food but of also utilizing vacant space. Bernice, the Garden Manager of the Hawthorne Community Garden highlighted this idea.

> I think its important for everybody especially since we were an industrial place and now we have lost our industry, but we still have to live here and why not make good use of the land we do have. I mean it makes sense. If you can grow food and can it and everything else to use it all winter…It just makes sense to grow your own, use it, teach your kids how to do it. You won't be hungry if you can grow food.

These comments reflect a common line of thought among the proponents of urban gardening in relation to increasing food security among urban residents who may live in food deserts or places where the only viable food options fall under the umbrella of the cheap and unhealthy convenience foods (Hayes 2010).

Bernice also commented on this idea in relation to the importance of gardening for developing food and education within Flint, a place that has been in the national spotlight for negative images for far too long.

> Gardens really help with trying to debunk that image. I think bringing people together in a way that we haven't been able to do successfully and understanding the need for food access and the lack of food access in our community is a big deal and I think these gardens have a way to educate people that can be very powerful going forward.

Greening by way a gardening reflects a broader cultural trend that highlights the utility of "slow food" in regard to safety, health, and ecological sustainability. The "Slow Food" movement places an emphasis on focusing on local and sustainable culinary traditions, while also using locally sourced food products (Andrews 2008). Sandra also touched on some of these ideas in relation to the importance of community gardens in relation to sustainability and local food as local and national concern.

I think they (gardening and greening projects) are important for the city of Flint, but I think they are important for our state as well as our nation. I think any greening initiative that has real, positive, environmental awareness attached to it is good. And by that I mean greening initiatives that are just for PR value, are not so good. I think there needs to be cohesiveness. Lets start connecting these individual greening projects so there is a theme so people can come together. So like maybe we have satellite markets. There is this thing called *edible flint*, maybe that needs to be expanded. I know there is the master planning process that is happening in Flint which is great but this city has a lot of different sections and a lot of time these sections never come together so you know maybe its building a network of bicycle trails.

At the same time local food production also addresses the issue of food security in Flint, a problem that has been identified by scholars and activists alike (Ober Allen et al., 2008). As such, it is no surprise that greening vacant lots and gardening are seen by participants as a way to potentially close this gap while also working to aesthetically improve the environment and increase social interaction in local communities through garden maintenance and harvest sharing.

In regard to local food production, Pastor Martin from the PHNA shared how he knew that people were eating well from the garden because most of the produce was picked as soon as it was ready, some before it was even fully mature. Although he expressed dismay that those who were harvesting were not willing to help out with the labor entailed in the garden, he was happy that people were getting the food.

Because most times they are ready to work when its time to pick things and take them with them, which is fine because you know that's what its there for. There are some people that ate very well out of it. Every time I went there, there was nothing to pick. I mean they got a lot of it. Somebody harvested the potatoes a couple of different times. They all ate well out of it.

Sandra from the Hawthorne Community Garden also expressed a similar benefit in relation to the garden and providing healthy food to the local community.

Access to fresh produce! That is one of the best things about the garden for people who live around here. They could just be walking by and we will load them up

with tomatoes and squash! Another benefit is that a lot of times there might be some things here that they have never tried, so its an opportunity for them to try some new things that they have never thought of trying.

Here Sandra also highlights the importance of creating variety of foods for local residents who may be restricted to the subpar produce that can be found at the corner store. Ms. Anna, who received produce on a regular basis from the Bower St. Garden, shared a similar sentiment in regard to the freshness of the produce and trying something new.

> Ohhh it gave me some good eating! Man I tell you! I didn't really have Swiss chard before I got it from Mr. Ronald. I ate that Swiss chard for 3 whole days with the tomatoes and all of that. Man I tell you! I was just full I didn't even have to have any meat; you know a lot of people have to have meat. I didn't…just the vegetables and they gave me such a fulfilled, I mean I was full…it was just so so good! Now since I got that Swiss chard out of the garden I have been eating more vegetables. I can even tell the difference in my body, my system, and my immune system. I can tell the difference. I am not as weighed down. You know when you eat a lot of junk food it weighs you down. And with eating more healthy and eating stuff out of Ronald's garden has made me healthier. I am able to exercise without being out of breath. I can ride my bike and all that stuff. I am not weighed down. That's real! Man Mr. Ronald and his garden!

Ms. Anna went on to discuss other benefits of the garden being in the neighborhood especially in relation to kids and learning about the garden and how things grow and having access to fresh produce right on their own block.

> Just watching the kids you know they protective of the garden. I said one day I don't know where Mr. Ronald is but tell him I want a cucumber, so one of the kids said "you know what I don't know where Mr. Ronald is right now, but I will go get you one and then I will tell him that I did" because they lived beside the garden. So I mean they were really really infatuated to have the garden right there. That gave them some sort of incentive just to walk in it and I mean just a proud looking moment, "I can really do this and pick the cucumber itself, instead of going to the store to pick it up." Just to be able to go into the garden to pick it off the vine, so I think it's been a great thing.

Sandra, Ms. Anna and Pastor Martin refer to some of the main benefits identified by scholars in relation to the promotion of urban food gardening and promoting food access

in relation to the cultural capital of a community. Having access to fresh and local produce has been shown to increase the vegetable intake and healthy eating patterns among urban residents (Alaimo et al., 2008).

Similar lines of thinking in relation to deindustrialization and food security have also been drawn in relation to the cultural importance of urban food production among Black populations. Scholars also note that many African Americans practice urban and community gardening as a way to reclaim a cultural identity that focused on community and self-sufficiency, prior to the slavery era (Philpott 2011).

During our discussions, Mr. Ronald expressed similar motivations for at least part of the reason why he maintained his garden.

> It is a source of food, but its more than that too. In my family we always had a garden. My daddy always planted it on the Memorial Day weekend. I am a city boy but I know the country life too. That's what I like about it. I have food but also have roots in growing things.

Here Mr. Ronald refers to both cultural and family tradition in relation to food production as one of the motivations for his community gardening activities. Troy, who lives next door to the Bower Street garden, also reflected on how the greens from the garden that Mr. Ronald gives him remind him of his grandmother, who taught him how to wash and prepare greens.

> Man…I tell you he grows some awesome greens in that garden! I know how to cook 'em up right too. My granny taught me that. I know they good to because you do see all that green in the sink like with the store bought ones where you have to wash them 6 or 7 times. Its some good eating and I think of granny too!

These data suggest that keeping traditions in relation to gardening helps to strengthen and revive collective memory among populations either taking part in the gardening activity or enjoying the produce procured from the gardens. This idea is viewed as cultural

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benefit associated with urban food production that can work to foster further participation (Barthel et al., 2013).

In sum, urban greening in the city Flint offers a means to change both the physical and cultural landscapes. Residents believe the process of greening can help to shift the tide in relation to Flint's notorious reputation of being one of the most dangerous cities in the country by highlighting the many positive activities taking place in the city. In addition, the actual space for greening activities offers a place for cultural growth through holding community events, but also a space to promote new or revive old cultural ideals such as urban food production. Along with this revival those who participate in greening activities also apply and build skills and knowledge that can be used to assist the community development process. This is knowledge is known as human capital.

Human Capital

Human capital relates to individual capacities and the skills and knowledge participants can bring to a project or that can be gleaned from any endeavor (Emery and Flora 2006). In relation to community urban greening this often has to do with learning to use new tools and how to care for and harvest plants. However human capital growth can go well beyond the actual greening specific knowledge. In fact, the development of human capital in relation to personal development and growth is one of the highly cited benefits of urban greening projects such as community gardens (Hanna and Oh 2000; Ober-Allen et al., 2008). In addition other skills such as learning how to solicit and manage volunteers as well as planning social gatherings are skills that have been identified both by participants and previous research (Tidball and Krasny 2007). Scholars contend that working the land with other community members can help

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participants to discover their potential in relation to personal skills, communication and leadership abilities. This concept also ties nicely to cultural capital in relation to collective memory (discussed above), as the awakening of collective memory spurs individual skill growth (Barthel et al., 2013).

The learning of new skills in relation to greening often had to do with people who claimed that they had never really worked with "dirt before." This included young adults who were being exposed to greening for the first time and some of the neighborhood residents who previously had no interest in greening. Other participants noted that they had developed new human capital skills as a result of the greening project. Many of these were related to the skills of the actual greening work. For instance, Mr. Forester shared how he learned new things in regard to planting flowers as part of the association's annual neighborhood beautification project.

> I learned how to plant some flowers. I am serious there are some flowers that I had no idea how to plant. And we kind of helped to build the flower boxes too.

Similarly, Carter expressed that he had learned a lot about gardening and how things grow. This was something he really hadn't had an interest in before he volunteered.

> You know I am more of a blight guy. I like the stuff that comes out of it…but the garden isn't really my thing, but I think it's still important to understand the process of the garden and how things grow and all or where certain things should be placed…how it should be organized. It's important for me to know that stuff to be able to help since I am the president of the association and hopefully we can keep this garden going. People have gotten some really good food from it. I know some people who really ate a lot out of it last summer.

While some noted the development of skills in relation to the greening process, others participants commented on the growth of feelings such as empowerment and self-

confidence as a result of taking an active role in community greening. Below Marnika

discusses the development of her communication skills as a result of the greening project.

> I would say I have learned communication skills. James has put me out there and put me to situations where he says okay "I need you to go in front of this group and deliver the inspiration for the day." He puts me up to a lot of stuff. But it helps me grow as a person because I am very very very shy. So I try to do it because it does help me out.

Pastor Martin who spent a good deal of his summer maintaining the PHNA garden also

suggested that he honed a variety of skills that are applicable to other life situations

outside of the garden. He noted that these skills are important when working with diverse

groups of people.

> Patience is something I learned that I can use in a lot of aspects in life and a lot of patience, especially with the weather changing like it is. Disappointment! Dealing with disappointments that I can take over to other aspects of my life, just from working in the garden. And of course a sense of joy from seeing what your hands have done, so I went from extreme to another.

Bernice, from the Hawthorne Community Garden shared a similar idea in relation to

working with people on community projects. She highlights the importance of learning

how to negotiate for various resources for the garden and understanding that not everyone

brings the same amount of "capital" to the table.

> Well being flexible can always come in handy. Its like there are things I want that I have to negotiate for like new hoses or a hoop house and different things like that. Or just working with different people. You figure it out.

Bernice went on to add how the experience helped her to both teach others and learn

about the lives of the people in the area who she encountered while in the garden.

> I guess just the interaction and letting people learn through experience. Making sure that people have the opportunity to experience the activity so they can gain more knowledge about it and a better understanding of its importance. And really to learn their perspective too, in regard to their position within the community. I learned a lot in that sense from meeting some of the different people around here.

In a similar vein, Corrina from the PHNA noted that she was completely "green" at gardening so she learned the actual gardening skills but she also had the chance work with people that she was not familiar with.

> I knew nothing about gardening. I hated it! But I was asked to do it by my church because I was the youngest member and I said, "okay." And I fell in love with it. There is all kinds of skills you can grab from it. I never had a garden in my life and I planted one in my own yard now because I know the herbs that I like and I plant those herbs and I know how I like raised beds so I made those. The skills that you learn are mostly gardening skills but also you have to learn the skills of working together and working with people that might be different that you are and learning about them too. It's a learning experience. Sometimes we come in with prejudice and when you work next to that person and when you work next to that person your prejudice kind of starts falling away.

Here Corrina refers to the knowledge and skills that she believes she has developed due to gardening, but also personal growth in relation to her "prejudices falling away" by working with people who are different from her. This is one of the important benefits of urban greening cited by scholars who refer specifically to the development of social capital and human growth in relation to urban gardening (Rickenbacker 2012; Westphal 2003). Increasing social interaction among diverse groups of people has also been the motivation behind some of the greening interventions discussed in chapter two as a means to address social crises, such as the Rodney King riots.

The only participants that did not cite indicators relating to human capital growth are those who were already designated as having high levels of human capital, mainly the community leaders such as James, Kate, and Mr. Carson. While they noted that they did not necessarily see themselves as developing human capital they did note how they believed others in the neighborhood had developed skills in relation to the greening project. For instance, Kate shared how she pretty much already had the skills necessary

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for greening projects but did have to develop the ability to try to inspire neighborhood

residents in order to keep them motivated to follow through with the project.

> I think….I don't know if its a skill or just consciousness that when you take on a beautification project of a common space within your neighborhood that there is an expectation that you carry the long term commitment and you do whatever it takes and sometimes that is hard to do…the whatever it takes and that its important to try to transfer my love of gardening to other folks which I have not been very good at…so there is always someone who is willing to be the facilitator for these beautification projects. I don't know if that's a skill or more of an observation…I guess if anything…its just trying to figure out how to get more folks as excited as I am about beautifying common spaces and knowing that it is a long-term commitment.

Here Kate refers to one of the most commonly cited problems with urban greening as a

form of development or any development initiative for that matter (McCurley and Lynch

2005). It can often be difficult to keep community members engaged in a way that results

in a successful project. This reality coupled with the fact that local initiatives are also

constrained by limited budgets makes for a tricky situation to navigate.

Despite the difficulties cited with the long-term engagement of residents in

greening activities some residents suggested that their participation did inspire them to

become involved in other neighborhood projects and groups. This additional involvement

arguably has positive outcomes for both social and human capital development. For

instance, Sandra who volunteered in the Hawthorne Community Garden highlighted how

her involvement there had encouraged her to a start a school garden.

> I think my participation inspired me to go deeper into the urban organic farming movement. To continue to gain experience and cultivate more networking or resources so that we can actually have a school garden or farm or hoop house. So that's still a goal. We are still actively pursing the ability of having our students have some sense of ownership over growing food on a space.

Here Sandra highlights many of the noted benefits of community gardening both in regard to building individual and community skills but also networking and the building of bridging social capital (Rickenbacker 2012; Brown 2012).

In a similar vein, Carter from the PHNA discussed how his own involvement in mowing and learning about landscaping encouraged him to help Carlyle when he started his blight busting group.

> It did inspire me to do other projects in the neighborhood. I helped Carlyle out last week. It was in the news. I helped him mow and there is a picture of me. I am also with the 4th ward master plan group. So I am sitting at this meeting and everybody is bitching about Poolman-Heights and how nice it looks and all this stuff we got and how all our lawns at the empty houses are kept mowed. So I said, "first of all those empty houses look good because I mow them. Number two I was over there Friday at Taylor and Rosebush, helping Carlyle out on his little project. It was me and five of his family members. I didn't see no neighbors helping! Where was you guys?"

Like Carter, other residents from the FPBRA and from the NHNA also suggested hat their involvement around the community greening project inspired them to take a more active role in the master planning process. For example, Mrs. Forrester of FPBRA, noted

> "Well just seeing everything that went on with the park and how much people were caring about it and were working to keep it nice…it just made me want to see what else could be done…what else could we do to improve the neighborhood? Its not ever going to be completely like it was before but it can be a lot better."

In addition to taking part in more neighborhood activities, some participants also noted that the community greening initiatives had an impact on they way they feel about themselves. In total 12 out of 28 respondents suggested that they did feel different, while 16 reported no change. Of those who reported no change, many cited that they were already active in the community and that this gave them a good sense of purpose in their neighborhood. On the other hand some participants who are newer to community

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greening initiatives expressed new feelings of accomplishment. For example, Carter and

his brother Kyle expressed this sentiment:

> Carter: I just don't throw stuff on the ground no more. When I go by and see liter or scraps I say, "Who did that?" and pick it up. That has changed.

> Kyle: It gives you a nice sense of accomplishment because if you didn't do it, it wouldn't get done. So you know you did it. It was kind of fun.

Residents from other communies also suggested that taking part in the community

greening initiatives gave them a sense of pride that they haven't had in relation to their

local neighborhood for quite some time. Buffy from FPBRA had this to say about her

involvement in the beautification projects going on around the neighborhood.

> It makes me feel really proud of the neighborhood and it makes me feel like I am helping, where before I didn't know what to do. I would do whatever I could through the business and residential association and I have always watched my street. Now I can talk to other people and try to get more involved with other people and it's slow but its slowly working. I want to work on the crime watch too and eventually I think I will have a real good crime watch group. The beautification project that I helped with helps that too because the better it looks… hopefully that will make people not want to be up to no good around here.

Rhonda also from the FPBRA shared a similar feeling about helping to plant flowers

along the Front Street corridor, one of the main thoroughfares in the city of Flint.

> Yes I felt good about myself. Like I had accomplished something. I knew I was giving something to my community and I think that's really important because it seems like for a while everything was taken from the neighborhood… the people, the closeness, the nice houses. It feels good to have something good be given instead of taken. Don't get me wrong… I don't think it will change the neighborhood over night but it's still something.

In addition to these quotes, some residents also shared how their participation had made

them feel better physically as well. For example, Pastor Martin reflected on the physical

labor that went into maintaining the PHNA garden.

> Yeah it made me feel younger! It made me feel like I was going outside and getting some vitamin D. It made me feel more active. It made me feel like I have done some community service.

In a similar vein, Carlyle expressed how the "blight busting" mowing initiative was more than just about improving his community and helping his neighbors who are not physically able to mow.

> Well I pretty much decided that mowing was going to be my exercise regimen. I was told had to lose some weight so I figured mowing would be a good way to do it. But is has effected me more than that too, Well you know the first two years I was on disability I pretty much just sat around the house and didn't do much, but this has given me a chance to get outdoors. Like I said, I can't do much everyday but I can do some things. So it's helped me, it's given me a purpose that I didn't have before. It's also very tiring, time consuming, and can be frustrating when things don't go the way you would like them to go. Like I have been waiting over a week for a dumpster to show up and it finally showed up yesterday, but I don't have a front-end loader to load it so now I am doing it by hand.

Here Carlyle expresses both the personal benefits he has experienced due to his greening work but also some of the challenges that accompany greening activities.

In sum, the development of human capital has been cited as one of the benefits of community urban greening activities according the perceptions of participants. Some noted the development of new knowledge and skills in relation to be the actual greening but also more general skills that can be used in additional life situations beyond gardening or general greening and beautification projects. Important personal traits and abilities such as leadership, patience, and listening were noted as being acquired or honed as a result of participation in community urban greening initiatives. Furthermore, some participants also suggest that the greening entailed personal benefits such as improving physical fitness and providing a fresh and local source of food in the case of urban gardens.

Conclusion

In general, my findings in relation to the perceived benefits of urban greening projects among participants and residents support much of the literature in relation to the positive outcomes of greening projects, including greenspace maintenance and community gardening. Overwhelmingly, participants cited positive outcomes in relation to community greening and the development of additional assets according to the Community Capitals Framework. As a result, my research suggests that investment into natural/built capital by way of urban greening helps to grow other community assets according to residents involved in the greening projects.

The only capital I could not provide detailed evidence for in relation to growth (according to resident perceptions) is that of financial capital, though many respondents were hopeful that economic development would some day be a possible outcome in relation to greening. Some believed that greening was the first step in the economic development equation, like Roger who believed that the park may attract people to the neighborhood as a well defined neighborhood asset. However, the lack of large-scale perception in relation to the improvement of financial capital as a result of greening is not at all surprising given the current fiscal state of the city of Flint.

Community urban greening participants clearly see utility in greening activities as a means to address a gamut of issues within their neighborhoods and as a way to build additional assets and skills. Despite these noted benefits, multiple challenges have been noted in relation to community urban greening as a development strategy. I examine some of these issues in the next chapter and investigate some of the major changes in some of case sites that are indicative of the fragility or problems associated community greening initiatives as a development strategy.

CH. 7 CHALLENGES TO URBAN COMMUNITY GREENING SUSTAINABILITY

While the last two chapters have focused on the benefits associated with community urban greening according to resident perceptions, this chapter focuses explicitly on addressing some of the challenges identified with community urban greening. This discussion highlights some of the critiques identified by scholars who are critical of shared maintenance volunteer based strategies for urban development.

The following pages are organized in relation to a set of themes identified by urban political ecology scholars. I first address one of the main critiques that suggests community urban greening strategies represent a legitimation of the retreat of the state by placing community development efforts in the hands of resource providers, resource brokers, and volunteers. In addition UPE scholars suggest that these strategies promote a neoliberal citizenship ethic (based in self-reliance and meritocracy) through the use of "workfare" labor to complete development projects. I address this issue by highlighting data in relation to the limited and uncertain nature of resources (within the context of structural crisis) available for community urban greening and issues surrounding "community buy in" and volunteer labor. I then address a second main critique identified by UPE scholars who argue that community urban greening, within the context of a shared governance structure, is likely to result in the development of highly uneven urban landscapes. I address this issue by illustrating data in relation to understanding what social groups can access greening resources and the importance of a "community anchor" for urban greening success.

Data from this chapter is gleaned from institutional key informant interviews, greening participant interviews, and participant observation from case study sites in the summer of 2014 (a year following urban greening participant interviews). I recognize that one year's time is not adequate to be able to address all of the challenges and the sustainability of greening initiatives as a community development strategy. However, my findings serve as a telling example of some of the problems entailed in relying on volunteer labor and grant funds as a way to transform communities.

Legitimation of the Retreat of the State

Limited Resources and the Struggle for Basic City Services

One of the main challenges in relation to community urban greening is the limited amount of fiscal resources within the context of broader municipal economic struggles to provide basic and affordable services, while also balancing the physical reality of the city. This issue was addressed both by Amy Smith from *edible flint* and Quianna Fields from the Genesee County Land Bank.

While the land bank does have some critics, many of the residents in the city view it as doing positive work. Quianna echoed this sentiment by noting the great achievements of the land bank in relation to its work on vacant lots and by suggesting that the city would be in a very different state without it.

> I think the land bank is one of the best things that has happened to our community. We are a major player and if you honestly sit down and look at what it has accomplished, I think most people would be highly impressed.

When I asked Ms. Fields how she might respond to some of the backlash about the land bank in relation to being what some have called Flint's largest "slum lord" or the extended time that is takes to get some properties mowed, she responded by saying that

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many people don't have an understanding of what the Land Bank does and the resources that it has to work with.

> We have over 10,000 properties in our inventory and about 5,000 are vacant. We get all these properties and they don't come with money. So we have to scramble and try to find funding to maintain these properties. The other thing to is that if it wasn't for the land bank this community would look 100 times worse than its looking now. Before the Land Bank it took up to 6 years to address neglected or abandoned property. Now it's about 3 with the County Treasure's Office. It makes a big difference.

This quote highlights one of the main problems within the city. Many people and organizations are working toward change, but at times this can be a painstakingly slow process due to the sheer number of vacant properties and the limited resources (often stemming from philanthropic resource providers) available to the address the problem. In other words, the expectations of local residents are often not met in relation to the timetables they deem as reasonable for attending to issues like demolition for vacant homes. It is certainly true that due to changes in Michigan law and the development of the Land Bank vacant properties are dealt with in a much quicker and streamlined process. Even so, it is not uncommon for vacant homes to sit on demolition lists for multiple years. This causes frustration among residents as the homes pose multiple hazards as highlighted in chapter five.

In addition to the magnitude of problems imposed by thousands of vacant lots that require millions of dollars for maintenance, the city is struggling to provide cost effective and adequate city services to municipal residents. The cost and provision of water is one the main structural issues currently plaguing the municipality. Water rates in Flint have soared for the last several years as a result of payment plans worked out with the city of Detroit, who historically provided water to the city. Compounding this issue was the fact

that the Flint's aging water infrastructure was known to leak often. Though the city has

recently severed its ties with Detroit and switched to treating water from the Flint River,

the switch has done little to reduce the cost burden for residents or reduce water related

problems[14]. This was highlighted by Seventh Ward City Council Representative, Josh

Freeman, who shared at a community meeting how water bills were still a top concern

among Flint residents.

> I am still getting calls on a daily basis about water bills, especially from older
> folks who might only make 600.00 in social security a month and then have
> 200.00 water bill. It's outrageous. There is no way a single little old lady can be
> using that much water. That's why we need more training on leaks and monitoring
> the water meters.

> Reflecting on the water issue in relation to urban gardens, Amy Smith of *edible*

flint noted that access to water is huge problem due to the high cost of the utility. Though

edible flint does offer workshops and resources on creating things like rain barrels to

meet this need. In addition, Amy noted that both water and having the resources and

money needed for supplies necessary for a garden is also a problem for people who are

low income.

> Land is not an issue here. The bigger issue is water because gardens need water
> and water here is very expensive. The thing that *edible flint* can do through the
> grant funds it receives is really offering the tools at a reduced price. The plants
> and the seeds are at a much-reduced price. The services that folks receive are at a
> much-reduced price. So we hope that we are reaching folks at the lower end of
> income ranges that would like to do gardens for either personal or community use.

> I noted this problem of access and cost first hand while working with Mr. Ronald

in the Bower Street Community Garden. Mr. Ronald had an illegal water hook up in the

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[14] By September of 2014 the city had already been placed under three "boil water
advisories" due to the aging water infrastructure. This understandably left many residents
frustrated at the lack of progress that the new system operation had brought.

abandoned house next to the garden and was very angry one day to discover that

someone had stolen parts to his water rig. I reflected on this situation in my field notes.

> Mr. Ronald has been having trouble watering lately because one of the guys that
> knows about his water rigging stole some of parts for scrapping. "I know who it is
> too. I can't wait till I see that guy! You know you can figure it out! Only a few
> people knew. He trying to work on a house and he is a scrapper. I know it was
> him." I was glad to hear that someone that Mr. Ronald knew had messed with the
> water and that he hadn't been found out by the city utility. Clearly this isn't a
> crime he can report…not that it would make a difference if he did. It is sad though
> because this garden feeds a lot of people. I have seen it first hand.

This instance reflects some of the larger structural issues in the city of Flint that impact

greening activities as a result of the fiscal strain within the current environment. The

problems surrounding water make it even more difficult for community urban greening

projects to find long term sustainability. This is discussed in greater detail below.

Another structural issue that has caused much tension in the city is the

understaffing of the police and fire departments and the slow police response time as

reviewed in chapter five. Residents often lament that they know they cannot rely on the

police to respond in timely manner. This issue was highlighted publicly in relation to a

conflict over urban agriculture in the summer of 2014 when Roxanne Adair of the well-

known Flint River Farm was given a 30-day notice to remove ten backyard chickens from

her property. A blight control officer cited Adair, as current city zoning does not allow

for foul or livestock within the city boundaries[15]. Adair noted, how ridiculous some of the

threats seemed in relation to her chickens given the current state of city services.

> The kicker that got me ... when I talked to someone at the city, I said I would fight
> for them, and I was told if I didn't remove the chickens they would send police to

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[15] There was an attempt to change the animal husbandry zoning in 2010, but the motion
failed to get enough support in city council. There are current plans to address this issue
again as part of the zoning component of the Imagine Flint master plan.

forcefully remove the birds. I had to laugh, because my garage has been broken into ... my car has been broken into five times and only once did the police come out, (and that was) five hours later (Fonger 2014).

Adair's comment highlights the larger structural problem in the city of Flint in relation to inadequate city services due to dwindling resources. This very issue is one of the main reasons why urban greening projects are promoted in the city of Flint. As detailed in chapter five, community greening strategies are believed to reduce physical disorder conditions which then in turn may work to reduce social disorder behaviors.

Greening Project Sustainability

While there are certainly many benefits associated with greening in relation to reducing disorder and growing other capital resources, there is a lingering contention as to whether these initiatives can be sustainable within the broader structural context discussed above. This issue was identified as a main challenge by Amy Smith from *edible flint*, who argues it generally reflects a lack of funding and institutionalized city or state support for community development projects and programs such as community gardens and entities like *edible flint*. This idea highlights some of the problems associated with shared governance strategies and the trend toward privatizations that force organizations and community groups to be reliant on grant funds (Francis and Talansky 2012).

> Sustainability is a great question and I can tell you from the perspective of school gardens that's always the issue too. You can have a passionate parent or volunteer but if the teacher is not involved and there is no one to tend the garden through the summer things often do fail. So sustainability involves engaging teachers and connecting the curriculum that they are judged on. The same goes for these community garden projects. I think we see a good example with the Hawthorne garden. For a number of years it was directly supported by the Hawthorne organization and when Hawthorne pulled funding for staffing…the garden has struggled to identify folks from the community take it over and keep it going. As

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far as *edible flint* goes…we know we are heavily grant funded an that is not sustainable forever so in our long range planning we look at models where we could do enough programing for full funding however, we are cognizant that we are often working with the low income portion of the population and it can't be on their backs that we remain sustainable. So other ways to fund the organization are always being considered.

The issue above gets at the heart of the critique of scholars who view urban greening (while entailing many benefits) as essentially a nice Band-Aid for the state neglecting distressed urban areas within the tide of neoliberalism. This is especially seen within the state of Michigan as a result of the reductions in state revenue sharing (Kliene 2013). Essentially, local partnerships between citizens, non-profits and grant giving institutions are left to replace the state in terms of promoting social and environmental sustainability (Pudup 2007; Ogawa 2009). These partnerships and projects are often fragile due to the reliance on volunteers and grant funds.

Roger from the NHNA also highlighted issues surrounding greening project sustainability. When addressing the problems associated with the neighborhood community urban greening project, he shared that biggest issue that the neighborhood association faced was coming up with a comprehensive plan and resources to care for Regina Park and its new extended space.

Yeah…we have stuff we have to care for now! To me that it is the biggest problem. If we don't manage to come up with some sort of mechanism to fund things then again the actual ownership could become a problem. At the moment the Land Bank is holding the park and that's not a problem, but the land bank is tasked with not holding on to property but with holding on to property to get it into the right kinds of hands. So if we are going to be following through with the whole spirit of everything we ought to be saying we will somehow care for the eventual long-term outcome for that space.

Here, in addition to the "positive problem" of having a nice space to care for, Roger does allude to an additional structural problem in the city of Flint in relationship to public

parks maintenance. As discussed in chapter four, the city is planning to be increasingly

reliant on public and private partnerships to care for park space. Roger went on to discuss

the possibility of park conservancies and the private ownership of Regina Park as a

possible solution to the issue of maintenance.

> At the moment it doesn't feel like city is the appropriate place to go for funding
> and I have broached the subject and others have talked about it…possibly doing a
> trust for the park, like they did for Memorial Park, the old Hurley Park or for
> Ballinger Park. Those are all privately owned parks and that would help to care
> for some of it, but to get those in place you have to have a funding mechanism
> and those parks exist in larger part because of one of the early wealthy auto
> families in Flint got the land, set it aside for a park, and then set up a trust fund to
> maintain it. So we don't have anybody identified like that who could do that for us
> so for us its really a real grassroots effort, but if we hope to make good on what
> we put together in the AIA plan figuring out a funding mechanism to make
> Regina Park work is the first step.

The privatization of public space as a means to make up for the reduction of

public budgets has been critiqued as a neoliberal strategy that results in the uneven

development and quality of public space (Krinsky and Simonet 2011). This strategy also

places the burden of public space maintenance on residents like Roger and other

members of the NHNA. These community members are left scrambling to find new

resources to maintain the hard work that has gone into developing the neighborhood's

centerpiece asset.

Uncertainty of Resources and Community Leaders

Sustainability is also a big concern when the certainty of grant resources and

leaders with high amounts of community capital wane. These often-unexpected changes

can leave community groups in a state of limbo. This was an experience that several of

the community groups from my case study sites had to cope with in the summer of 2014.

These issues arose largely as a result of the combination of structural problems and the

loss of community resources. I noted this to be especially problematic in the Poolman

Heights and Northern Hills communities as the associations lost human capital leaders

and water resources.

In October of 2013, Carter the PHNA President informed me that that Pastor

Martin was no longer interested in running the community garden. I had already

suspected this due to my interview with him, in which he basically outlined how he

believed that the garden was just another "free handout" for people to take advantage of.

> My wife and I are missionaries for the gospel of Jesus Christ and we moved into this neighborhood to have an effect in the neighborhood and we thought it would be one of the best ways to make it known in the neighborhood and to meet people in the neighborhood. We really didn't get any help from anybody else in the neighborhood. Ahhhh…haha (uncomfortable). We have determined that and its not in a bitterness at all…its just the way it is. The folks that are in these types of neighborhoods and that aren't in the upscale places…they are used to receiving things for free and having things given to them without having to work for them. So it's a come and take thing without any input whatsoever. It turned out to be another "give away program."

As a result, Carter had volunteered to run the garden, but noted that it was going

to be much smaller than the one from the year before. In addition to this setback, Corrina

informed me that the soil test for the garden last year had come up with problems,

reflecting the larger issue of industrial contamination in many Flint neighborhoods.

In April of 2014, I learned that the PHNA garden was not got going to be planted

for the 2014 season. There was potential for the garden to be planted in future seasons,

but not in the current year. Carter shared:

> "We can't do it this year. I wanted to, but there just isn't a way to get the water right now. We can't ask the school and we have no way to pay for the water. So we need to come up with a plan on what we are going to do with it. The weeds are already tall."

The forgoing of the garden mainly had to do with some remediation measures that needed to be done to improve the soil quality and due to the costs and logistics involved in watering the garden. Mr. Carson, from the Northern Hills Neighborhood, had been instrumental in watering community gardens throughout the city of Flint, including the PHNA garden. He had special equipment and a truck that he used to pump water out of the Flint River in order to water the gardens. When Mr. Carson passed away, community members around the city were left scrambling trying figure out how they would water community gardens.

There was a brief discussion among the group on ways to replace the watering system. There was some talk of the school helping to foot the bill and of use of rain barrels, but the former option was not even given any serious consideration due to the soaring water rates in the city. In addition, even though the community garden is basically on school grounds, there is no official relationship between the association and the school in relationship to its maintenance or use or any other community development projects in the neighborhood. This is something that is strikingly different than the relationship between the FPBRA and its local school. This is discussed further detail below under the *Community Anchor* section.

I later asked Carter if he thought that garden would be missed by any residents and he replied:

> Yes there are going to be some people who miss it. You didn't see them a lot, but I know there were people who went up there and picked. Hell I am going to miss the tomatoes…but yeah its too bad we can't have it but we are pretty much stuck between a rock and hard place.

Despite not having the garden to care for, the active members of the PHNA stayed very busy throughout the summer of 2014. Carter secured a Genesee County Land Bank

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"Clean and Green" grant and a Keep Genesee Beautiful "Park Tenders" grant in order to maintain Poolman Park. In addition, he and Kyle continued mowing vacant lots, some of which were owned by the Land Bank. The association also dedicated a day to cleaning up and repainting the play scape at Poolman Park.

The NHNA also experienced problems in relation the reduction of human capital when two of the association's most dedicated and active members experienced long-term hospitalizations. Roger, who is very active both in the neighborhood and through a local community development corporation, was not released until the early spring of 2014. Mr. Carson was also hospitalized in the winter of 2013 shortly after friends noticed he was having increasing bouts of confusion. He was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor and was given six months to live.

I went to visit Mr. Carson at the hospice center he was living at about a week before he passed away. His face lit up when I came in the room as he bellowed his familiar "Heyyyy Rachel!!" Mr. Carson made me promise that I would see what I could do to ensure that Regina Park would get mowed in the summer, reflecting the uncertainty of resources to maintain the park. Mr. Carson's death[16] was a blow to the NHNA and the city as a whole. Not only was he in charge of the watering the community gardens around the city, he also led the crew of community service workers that completed service projects around the city.

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[16] In recognition of his service to the community, Mayor Dayne Walling declared the day of his funeral as "Mr. Carson Day." He was also active in voting rights and campaigns. Mr. Carson's shoes would be hard to fill citywide, let alone in the Northern Hills neighborhood.

Following the death of Mr. Carson, Kate the NHNA leader, was working on applying for mini-grants from the Ruth Mott Foundation and the Flint Community Foundation for the long-term maintenance of Regina Park. She had also met with MSU faculty and James from the FPBRA for a discussion on partnering to seek additional grant funds to continue work on each of their respective park projects. The Michigan State University Department of Plant, Soil, and Microbial Sciences had also agreed to mow the park for the season.

The story of some of both the triumphs and problems of the NHNA are indicative of a common problem in community organizing and development. In one regard, the small group of people dedicated to various initiatives very much reflects the famous quote by Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." While on the other hand, when people and their capital resources are no longer available this can leave communities in a situation where they struggle to continue and sustain progress.

This is reflected in the community capacity model identified by Chaskin et al., (2001). It may be hard to recover from the loss of dedicated members if those members are the ones that held the deepest sense of community and acted as dedicated community organizers. Moreover, it also largely reflects the problems within the city of Flint overall and the lack of state support for urban community development.

The reliance on grants and volunteer labor is not a sustainable solution when community groups are left scrambling each year waiting to learn if they qualify or if they will be receiving this or that grant. The uncertainty entailed in this development is perhaps one of the hardest parts of the shared governance strategy that has been ushered

in with the neoliberal tide (Perkins 2009, 2013). People can make a difference and it can

be revolutionary and empowering in some regards (Roy 2011), but the model in its

current form does not seem to be sustainable for transforming all neighborhoods in the

city of Flint. Perhaps it is more feasible for some communities like the NHNA that are

well connected to citywide resources, have multiple leaders with strong human capital,

and a comprehensive neighborhood master plan that is set to be integrated into the city

master plan. But for other less connected communities such as the Bower Street area this

type of development can be problematic in terms of sustainability.

Community "Buy In" and Volunteer Labor

Another issue identified with community urban greening project sustainability is

maintaining the engagement of dedicated community members and volunteers. Amy

Smith of *edible flint*, recognized the benefits of urban gardens both as a way to improve

food access and as a way to utilize underused land, but suggested that sustained

community engagement is consistently a difficult issue.

> Well-committed people are the key. For us here in Flint available land is not an
> issue. Probably it's the people. You have to have a committed person or persons
> that will oversee and care about weeds and make sure things will get watered etc.

Amy's thoughts are illustrative of some of the main challenges also identified by

community development scholars. Oftentimes participants are initially very excited about

greening projects but lose interest as resources fade or their time becomes more

constricted.

Along similar lines, Kate from NHNA echoed this concern in relation to

commitment among community members for greening projects. She highlighted the

necessity of being accountable to those institutions that are funding greening activities

and the expectation that community groups will follow through on their projects.

> Well I think a very fundamental problem is that is not always discussed openly is
> when urban greening projects are funded by an entity and the expectation is that
> the neighborhood association or whatever community group is going to take
> responsibility for the initial implementation, which is the design of whatever that
> greening project is, the installation of that, and the caring…the funders…. I think
> the neighborhoods don't understand to some extent that you can't install a
> gardening project or a beautification project and ignore it. There is an ongoing
> maintenance role that has to be played and I have discovered is that a lot of
> residents get excited about the initial project, the initial installation, they
> participate in that and then maybe you can keep them interested for the first one
> or two maintenance meetings after that but it becomes more of a problem getting
> people to care about the long term maintenance and nurturing of the installation. I
> think funders don't always understand that it takes…that any beautification
> project is a long term commitment and sometimes you have an association that
> has the capacity, commitment, and depth to take that on and I think we have
> demonstrated that… but in other instances in other situations where the resident
> engagement is not as strong those projects do well in the first year and they
> eventually just disappear.

Kate addresses one of the main challenges imbued in utilizing community

greening and volunteer beautification as an urban development strategy. If support and

volunteers wane, it can be difficult to sustain the project both in terms of basic

maintenance, but also in regard to providing the accountability or data that keeps the

funding stream running. This issue is in large part why some scholars are critical of

development projects, in relation to greening (Rosol 2011, Perkins 2013). These projects

can be unstable both in relation to their long-term permanence and the physical

placement of the projects in the first place is dependent upon organized individuals that

have high levels of human capital as with the case of NHNA. This suggests that not all

neighborhoods have equal opportunity access to urban greening projects (Perkins 2010).

However, the quotes above also indicate there are sustainability issues even in very well

organized neighborhoods.

Similar issues were also recognized in relation to the community gardens in my cases in regard to acquiring a solid volunteer base to maintain the gardens. Corrina from the Poolman Heights Neighborhood cited this challenge, in relation to getting those residents the garden is meant to serve actively involved in the maintenance of the garden. The majority of the labor done in the PHNA community garden came from a small group of dedicated volunteers.

> I think a problem would be just getting workers and getting them to work on a regular assigned basis. If we get enough workers then we could say they can come once a week or once a month, but everybody's schedule is so thin and people who just walk by don't know…just looking at the garden how they can participate. So my feeling is that we need to be much clearer to people and neighbors… "Next Wednesday we are going to have something special here!" Or maybe just a salad day… "Come enjoy some fresh salad from the garden." Maybe that would inspire them.

When I inquired about the PHNA community outreach process, Pastor Martin discussed the "planting party" that the neighborhood hosted, where a hot dog lunch was provided. He and his wife and the PHNA group also posted flyers around the community to advertise the event. Despite these efforts the group had a difficult time engaging the community.

The Hawthorne Garden group also had a difficult time creating community "buy-in" as there were literally not any local community members engaged in the process. This is an issue that has been often cited in the literature specifically in relation to the success of developing and maintaining community gardens. There must be ample community support for a project to have any major staying power (Kato 2013). Dorothy from the Hawthorne garden cited this issue.

> I would say volunteer coordination, you know soliciting volunteers that has been the most difficult and again a lot of it might have to do with the fact that I came into this late and didn't have the time to really investigate what had to happen and

how it had to happen so Bernice and I are going to sit down and make sure we put together a good plan for next year.

Here Dorothy is referring to volunteers and participants in relation to those who live in and around the Hawthorne Hospital. The volunteers that the group did have were mainly institutional either from the hospital, a local school, or through a non-profit workfare program.

This lack of community buy in and volunteerism led to the relinquishing of the community garden from the hospital's control. In mid May of 2014, I drove by the garden and saw the proud and colorful Hawthorne Community Garden sign stating "Connecting with Community" standing above an impressive bed of weeds, some nearly three feet tall. I later learned, while volunteering at *edible flint*, that Hawthorne Hospital had essentially given the garden to *edible flint* to use as a demonstration garden for raised beds and handicapped accessible gardening. Through the partnership, *edible flint* would maintain and support the garden including all the regular maintenance activities, soliciting volunteers and community engagement. Hawthorne agreed to pay for the use of the water utility (not the monthly water bill) and the Community Outreach Coordinator had promised to send emails to hospital staff reminding them of the days that they could volunteer in the garden. Given the lack of volunteer turn out of hospital staff volunteers from the last year, I wan not anticipating that many would be volunteering during the 2014 growing season.

According to Amanda Clark, the Hawthorne Community Outreach Coordinator, the hospital had essentially given the garden to *edible flint* because it was not willing to put up the money to pay a staff member even part time to manage the garden. Ms. Clark sounded a bit defeated as she described all the hard work that goes into maintaining a

garden and how if it was done correctly it needed a dedicated individual to oversee activities. Amanda closed with the statement that the garden had essentially been the brainchild of a former Community Outreach Coordinator who was really passionate about gardening. When she retired the passion went with her.

The Hawthorne Community Garden poses and interesting example of an institution or intermediary resource broker (arguably an entity that has more resources than any neighborhood association or block club) involved in greening, but essentially failing at the same time. There are at least two prime resources needed for a community greening project to function at the very least, financial and human capital and the dedication needed to sustain the project (Hanna and Oh 2002). Arguably, Hawthorne Hospital as nationally known institution could have the financial backing, or at the very least the human capital resources and social network ties to work toward securing financial support through grant funding. However, as the comments from Amanda Clark, indicate, the garden its self, although an initially appealing endeavor in conjunction with some other local activities was not a priority.

Ms. Clark suggested that this decision also stemmed at least in part from the lack of community engagement in relation to the garden. Through my time with the garden and discussions with other volunteers I only saw a handful of people taking produce from the ample garden, which included everything from tomatoes, squash, pumpkins, melon, sweet corn, okra, and collards, to herbs and flowers. Despite this great variety Bernice and other volunteers struggled to engage surrounding residents and local volunteers. This is all to suggest that if Hawthorne Hospital had wanted to "make a difference" with its

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community garden, it would have required more resources to develop a comprehensive community engagement process.

This is not to say that surrounding residents, Hawthorne employees, or even those passing by did not enjoy the beauty of or appreciate the garden, it just didn't push them to be active either in relation to taking produce or volunteering. In essence, gardening is not a "if you build it, they will come" endeavor. As such, in relation to capacity, the Hawthorne Community Garden was greatly lacking in relation creating a sense of community in the area or having the ability to instill a commitment to the community either among Hawthorne employees or the surrounding residents.

Workfare and the Voluntolds

In lieu of a sufficient volunteer base four out of five of my case sites (excluding Bower Street Garden) utilized "workfare labor" at some point in the study period. Workfare labor refers to populations who are required to volunteer their time in exchange for receiving state welfare assistance or as part of work release-drug treatment programs (Krinsky and Simonet 2011). Perkins (2010) and Pudup (2007) have critiqued the use of workfare labor for community urban development projects as a mechanism to instill neoliberal ideology among marginalized populations. I refer to the workfare laborers I spoke with during my volunteering as the "Voluntolds" based on a conversation with Miles, a Hawthorne Garden volunteer and director of a workfare labor program at a local non-profit.

I worked with Voluntolds on a variety of occasions both at the PHNA and Hawthorne gardens, I reflected on my conversation with Caleb after a day of volunteering at PHNA.

Caleb is a Black man and is only 19. He was sent to jail and New Paths for being busted with a bag of pot in high school bathroom. He talked a lot about trying to stay out of trouble and getting through his programs and wanting to get back home again. He said he liked to go out on projects like this with Mr. Carson because he was able to be outside and learn some new things, but he did think Mr. Carson was a bit of a "slave driver."

In addition to gardening and mowing, Caleb shared that he had also learned how to do some minor home repairs and how to board and close vacant homes. He hoped that all these skills might help him to find a job when he returned home. The building of new skills to serve other areas of life has been identified by scholars as one of the many benefits of community greening initiatives. This is especially seen among community gardens. The goals imbued within these programs are indicated even in the names of gardens such as "Growing for Change" (Hanna and Oh 2000; Ober-Allen et al., 2008; Pudup 2007).

Though Caleb shared fairly positive thoughts about working in the garden, others in the "Voluntolds" population were not so keen on "getting their hands dirty" in the community gardens or with working with Mr. Carson. At a "weed-pulling-party" later in the season at the PHNA garden, I met some different "Voluntolds." Larry, a middle aged white man originally from Mississippi, told me that he moved to Flint with his grandmother as a teen in 1987. In my field notes, I reflected on our conversation and how he noted that working on the greening projects was like working on a "chain gang":

Corrina asked Larry if he ever wanted be a farmer. He replied that his grandfather was a farmer in Mississippi who grew everything and picked everything under the sun and that because of watching him he was not too interested in growing things. He noted that being a farmer or even being out in a garden is very hard work. He then joked and stated "but here we have to do what we have to do...we are pretty much on the chain gang."

Tanisha, working in the Hawthorne Garden also expressed a lack of interest in "volunteering" in the community garden, though she did note one of the perks of the labor, free produce. Whatever was ready to be harvested was always given away to garden volunteers as Bernice sometimes had a difficult time of making sure all of the mature produce was taken.

> Yeah… you know I really wouldn't be doing something like this if I didn't have to. It kills my back. I have never had a garden and don't know much about it. I like tomatoes though so I guess that's a benefit (laughter) but I am not really into to getting all dirty and hot.

In a similar vein, Chris who also worked at the Hawthorne Community Garden as a Voluntolds, suggested that being outside in the summer was better than some other things he could be doing, but that he really did not enjoy the gardening because it is really hard work.

Through volunteering in the Hawthorne Garden, I met Miles the man who coordinates the "volunteers" for the garden through a local non-profit. I asked him what his thoughts were in relation to the interest in greening activities among the participants. He expressed that majority a of the people that he worked with were younger African American women as they make up a large portion of the population in the city that is on cash assistance. He suggested that gardening was not their favorite "volunteer" activity.

> A lot of them will complain about garden work saying is was like slave labor. "This is what my grand mammie did back in the day, I don't want to do this." I hear a lot of them say stuff like that and to an extent I get that, but I also think the garden work is good because if you can get into it, you can learn to grow your own food and there is a good thing in that.

Following his comments, I told Miles about the conversation I had with Larry at the

PHNA garden and how he referred to working in the garden like being on a "chain gang."

Miles simply replied, "Well it kind of is."

This critique of urban gardening by African Americans was also identified by

Amy Smith of *edible flint*. During our interview, Amy highlighted a disinterest in urban

gardens and urban food production among the African American population, but also

noted her experience with this type of disagreement had usually stemmed from older

African Americans.

> There were people that felt really polarized and I will also say through *edible flint* meetings we have had older African Americans say that their families moved from the South to get away from farming situations where they were either forced to or through economic need had to farm and they moved to the city for the hope of a better paying job and don't care to see gardening or farming operations outside their window.

This is a sentiment that has been echoed in other parts of the city, not always among

older African American populations. Kate from the Northern Hills Neighborhood

Association somewhat questioned the motives of *edible flint* in relation to her perception

that the organization is composed of people who are from outside of the city of Flint who

are essentially "telling" Flint residents what do.

> I think for Black folks in particular it is reminiscent to work as a sharecropper or to know about a family member that worked as a sharecropper and to know that whole southern, agrarian, slavery, Jim Crow kind of legacy. I think it's hard for some people not to see that in this urban gardening piece, particularly when it's being promoted by folks outside of the community. I don't know that neighborhood residents have...at least in Northern Hills they haven't asked for community gardens. I think there is a tolerance level for it, but it is very low. I don't know who makes up *edible flint*. I don't know where they come from. I get a sense that some of them are innovators and entrepreneurs, which is great! We need that profile of persons in our community, but I don't know who represents *edible flint*. And for those that are not from Flint, those individuals probably have a much more progressive attitude about land use than residents do within communities. So I don't know the answer to that question. *edible flint* is *edible*

> *flint* and I think they have done some good work, but unless that group was born out of community, then I think it is going to be seen as an outside group dictating how vacant land should be used and promoting gardens and so fourth…. its something again that there is just a low tolerance for in general I think.

This perception isn't inaccurate. While *edible flint* was formed in the city by some residents, there are members of *edible flint* who are essentially outsiders, though it is clear that organization prides itself on being diverse, inclusive, and democratic. In regard to the comments above, there has been little research on the disinterest of African Americans in relation to urban gardens as a result of historical legacy. On the other hand some scholars note that the legacy of farming and civil rights activism within African American culture is precisely why urban gardening is attractive to Black populations. The maintenance and provision of one's own food offers a clear route to self-determination (Philpott 2011).

In sum, the data outlined above in relation to "Voluntolds" labor are also indicative of critiques by scholars who suggest that greening is used as a personal development tool that often entails the message of pulling one's self up by their own bootstraps. This is especially seen within the mandate that benefits recipients must volunteer their time in order to maintain their benefits and the push for providing for ones own food source. Pudup (2007) specifically focuses on community gardening as a neoliberal welfare strategy and suggests these programs negate the real structural causes for why certain populations face extreme poverty and are more likely to engage in criminal activities. In contrast, greening programs are used as a means "to teach" participants how to climb out of their own negatives situations, while not paying credence to structural poverty and racism. Miles highlights this issue below.

Greening and gardening projects are great but they are not really going to change the city, because they do nothing to get at the root cause of poverty. If you have the space, the time, energy, and money you mine as well do them just because there is so much vacant land. But that's about all it's going to address.

Uneven Urban Development

Accessing development resources

In addition to maintaining a solid volunteer base and the funds necessary for greening project sustainability, is the issue of accessing greening resources in the first place. The Bower Street Garden case is the most indicative of some of the issues that can accompany the problems entailed in attaining grant monies and how the lack of a traditional/solid neighborhood association with social and political capital can hamper greening goals.

In the early spring of 2014, I contacted Mr. Ronald of the Bower Street Garden to let him know that I was planning to help with the garden again. He was elated, despite the fact that he did not receive a mini beautification grant that he had applied for through a local philanthropic organization. He was also excited to share that he was planning on buying a house on Bower Street that was just two doors down from the garden. He told me that he had planned to put the garden in on Memorial Day Weekend, as this was tradition in his family.

After repeated difficulty in contacting Mr. Ronald, on June 17, 2014, I drove down Bower Street to see if he was at the garden. He was nowhere to be seen and the garden was full of weeds. I later called Ronald's house number to inquire about the garden. He stated that he was only planning on planting a smaller portion this year and the he didn't have much in. He explained that due to medical and financial difficulties he

was limited in what he could with the garden for the year. He was experiencing difficulty with his arthritis and was struggling to attain the funds to remodel the land bank house he had purchased near the garden and stated that this was why both of his phones were shut off. I finally met up with Mr. Ronald in person in August of 2014. He gave me a tour of the land bank house that he purchased that he was working on fixing up for he and Ms. Darleen. Every piece of metal inside had been stripped for scrapping. Given this massive project and Mr. Ronald's financial and health troubles it is easy to see why the garden was not a centerpiece of the neighborhood in the summer of 2014. Although Mr. Ronald suggested that he has big plans for future summers since he will be living on the same block again.

> Rachel you just wait. You are going to have to come back when I get it really going again. The garden is going to be beautiful and I am gonna pull out my grill and we will start having block parties again!! Man I tell you what! It's going to be good. I just need a little more time to get in here and hopefully I can get a grant again like I did before to make it really good.

The Bower Street Garden and Mr. Ronald's story and experience of gardening seems to be indicative of broader trends with gardening in Flint. Often times a garden, neighborhood association, or block club is started with great energy in attempt to address local problems and revitalize neighborhoods. As time goes on however, commitment from the members and volunteers fades as work and other commitments get in the way. Or in other instances, the dedicated members such as Ronald lose the ability to contribute in the ways they had before. In other cases, people and families leave blocks one by one until there is not anyone left. Evidence of this is peppered throughout Flint Streets, marked by signs that promote local block clubs and crime watch groups on vacant streets.

Community organizers and practitioners have long recognized this as a problem among communities in relation to capacity building and development. In the case of the Bower Street garden, it can be seen how the community assets identified by Chaskin et al., (2001) are in short supply, considering the "community garden" is essentially ran by one dedicated individual. However without a great deal of community support or funding it is difficult for Mr. Ronald to achieve all of his goals in relation to using the garden as a centerpiece for the neighborhood. Mr. Ronald is a retired man on disability and as such lives on a very fixed budget. While programs like *edible flint*'s gardens starters may aid in issues like this (15.00 for a garden starters kit) there is still the real fact that water rates are astronomically high in the city of Flint, which highlights the motivations for Mr. Ronald illegally attaining water for the maintenance of the garden.

As noted above, Mr. Ronald hopes to keep the garden going next year and is planning on trying to secure grant funding. This highlights another tenuous issue with this type of community greening strategy. Not all community groups have sufficient assets or capital to attain the resources necessary for continuing projects. In relation to this critique, within the last year there has been resident criticism of the Genesee County Land Bank in regard the belief among some residents that the organization is not spending as much time and resources in North side neighborhoods in relation to programs such as clean and green and housing demolition. For example, residents of the North end convened in a meeting with the land bank in July of 2014 to encourage a redesign of the use of the Federal Hardest Hit Grant monies inspired by an open letter from the Pastor Flynn of Foss Avenue Baptist Church. According to officials from the Land Bank, the monies will first be used to target blighted houses in those areas deemed "stabilized

neighborhoods" (Fonger 2013). Pastor Flynn argued that this is a misstep, as demolition efforts are severely needed in the north end in many areas that are not deemed "stable." The Pastor's argument relies heavily in relation to some of the indicators of removing disorder to improve community trust and social relations discussed in chapter five as a means to increase community development opportunity. In fact, the Land Bank argues that those stabilized neighborhoods are being focused on as a means to reduce crime. Pastor Flynn counters this point by highlighting the north end has both the highest crime and foreclosure rate in the city (Fonger 2013).

The block that contains the Bower Street garden, while not as far north as the Foss Avenue Baptist Church neighborhood, lies in arguably one of the most dangerous and degraded neighborhoods on the northern edge of the Fifth Ward. In early September of 2014 there was a violent shooting at the giant lemon yellow party store that I often stopped at with Mr. Ronald to get beverages before working in the garden. Five men were shot; one was in left in severely critical condition. This shooting followed a June murder in the same area.

The fact that resources are scant in the Bower Street area and other North Flint communities is reflective of the structural conditions in the city of Flint, but may also highlight the critique made by Perkins (2010, 2013) and the writings of scholars focusing on greening as an environmental justice issue. Some suggests the placement of funds in relation to greening projects is often uneven in relation to the areas that are chosen for development and that these plans, perhaps consciously or unconsciously tend to neglect those populations living in areas of concentrated poverty and disinvestment (Rosol 2011).

Unsurprisingly funds are typically filtered toward projects in the downtown area in the hopes that cities can attract more visitors and residents. There is also historical evidence of the neglect of majority Black neighborhoods in the city Flint as referred to in chapter four. This is highlighted by both the current state of Flint's downtown area in comparison to residential neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city, particularly on the North end. In addition, some portions of the master plan deem those degraded and unstable neighborhoods as no longer fitting within the ideal of a traditional neighborhood due both to extreme blight and population decline.

Even if neighborhood groups do have equal opportunity in applying for programs and grants provided by the resource providers and resource brokers around the city, the process is still competitive. Those groups that exhibit the traits of a strong neighborhood association such as longevity and proven performance are likely to have a leg up in relation to applying to and receiving grants. Human capital is also a key element in this process. Those groups that contain leaders with high human capital skills may have an advantage, as they are more likely to understand the process of grant writing and what funders expect in return in terms of project outcomes. This in essence is one of the motivations of greening among community groups, to be able to show funders that the group has the capacity to manage and to continue to work on community development initiatives. Research also indicates that those organizations that are successful in attaining grant funds are likely to be "repeat players" as attaining a grant from one particular funder often acts as an endorsement of the group in relation to seeking additional funds (MacIndoe 2007).

The Importance of Institutional "Anchors" for Greening Development Success

According to social anchor theory, institutions, such as a community centered

school, can support community development through being a platform for building both

bridging and bonding social capital, a place to close gaps across demographic groups, and

providing a sense identity in the community (Cloptin and Finch 2011). As such, social

anchor theory essentially argues that a community institution is an essential ingredient to

successful community development. This institution does not necessarily need to be a

school or business, it can also be a sports team, natural structure, cultural event, etc.

(Cloptin and Finch 2011). As such, in theory, with the right community capital tools

present a garden, park, or different greening project could also serve as a social anchor.

Roger, from the NHNA reflected on this idea when recalling the experience of the

closing of local elementary school in the neighborhood and the motivations for creating a

neighborhood park:

> We knew that Hoffman School was going to be in trouble. It was an old building.
> It was an expensive building to heat and all of the new schools that were getting
> built were all one story and there wasn't enough space on that site to build a one-
> story school, even if you tore it down. So that's really why we first started
> acquiring the land. We were trying to save space to build a new Hoffman School,
> figuring we would have to do that to keep a school in our neighborhood. Well of
> course Flint lost all its population and it became impossible to keep the school
> open…period. So the other need that we have always identified in the
> neighborhood is that we wanted to have a park so that people could say it was
> "our park." So it just made sense to try to do something there after it was made
> obvious that we were not going to be able to do anything about having a school.
> So that's where we started after. So the idea was to create a greenspace in the
> neighborhood that would help to attract people to the neighborhood. Northern
> Hills has always had a fairly high percentage of homeownership, compared to
> some of the other neighborhoods in the area. But its hard to hold it too so you
> have to have some amenities that attract people. The loss of Hoffman School was
> a huge blow to the neighborhood and there is no evidence yet that we are actually
> going to survive that.

While the NHNA is working to develop a community anchor, in terms of the

"right stuff" the FPBRA is an example of one of the most successful community groups

among my case sites in relation to their activity around urban greening, in large part due to the local school as a community anchor. When I spoke with James May of 2014 he reflected on the unique relationship that he and Mr. Carson had as result of being "community educators" and the important role of the community school,[17] which focus on:

> A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Community schools offer a personalized curriculum that emphasizes real-world learning and community problem-solving. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone – all day, every day, evenings and weekends. (Coalition for Community Schools Webpage: About Community Schools).

Community scholars contend that the presence of a local school is a key component of neighborhood stability that can also work to promote social interaction in relation to activities surrounding the school (Craig 1993). In this way, the FPBRA offers a striking contrast from the other case study cites, that either do not contain a strong institutional anchor or do not have a relationship with the institution as in the case of the PHNA. One reason for this difference may be that that Poolman Heights Elementary School is part of the Flint Public School District, which is extremely hampered by budget issues. In contrast, the academy in the Franklin area is a charter school. The physical building of the school certainly serves and a space for community gatherings throughout the year. It also gives residents something to galvanize their support to in relation to youth in and out of the community. Additionally, there are a larger number of active

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[17] The concept of community education was born in the city of Flint. Both James and Mr. Carson have dedicated their lives to the community school ideal.

members in the FPBRA association who are dedicated to attending meetings each month and to volunteering for the various neighborhood improvement projects.

In addition, the FPBRA illustrates an interesting comparison to the Hawthorne Community Garden in relation to institutional support of urban greening projects. While FPBRA is a quasi community and institutional based, the case reflects the importance of community engagement in addition to having the financial resources to complete urban greening activities. This is most notably visible in the lack of community support and sense of community in the Hawthorne Garden area. The garden project also lacked a charismatic leader that is essential to gain cooperation and support among residents and who might also have strong bridging social capital ties (Chaskin et al., 2001; Cloptin and Finch 2011).

The success of FPBRA in relation to greening and the goal of neighborhood stability is also reflective of the CCF in that it takes a variety of resources for community success. In regard to human capital, James is a tirelessly dedicated leader (residents often note receiving emails from him at 3:00 in the morning or seeing him out watering the school flowers at midnight) who has the connections and skills to gain resources for the neighborhood by way of grants and various other activities such as participation in university research projects. Furthermore, his position and dedication to community education, and the school in and of itself act as anchor to the neighborhood that supports local activity.

The FPBRA is currently working with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources on the restoration of Long Lake and Michigan State University Planning Department to give input on a greenway trail that will be implemented through the city of

Flint. As a finale to the turfgrass project, this spring James and some other volunteers worked with the Michigan State University Department of Plant, Soil, and Microbial Sciences to redevelop the baseball field in in the park, an area that prior to the project was extremely over grown and contained a huge hole right in the middle of the field. In past meetings, residents half-heartedly joked that the hole was used for dumping bodies.

In addition to these larger projects, the FPRBA planned for their annual community beautification days and other community activities. James had also procured a small grant from the Ruth Mott foundation to build a small gazebo in Franklin Park that is going to be dedicated to Mr. Carson. Mike from the FPBRA is planning to take charge on the gazebo project. Part of the grant funds allotted for the gazebo went toward employing Mike to manage a team of local youth who will work on neighborhood improvement projects throughout the summer. In the two-three years before his death, Mike became quite close with Mr. Carson and seemed to be enduring what looked like and informal apprenticeship for taking on the some the responsibility in relation to community projects around the city. As such, it was no surprise to learn that Mike would be stepping in to run the community garden watering operation after Mr. Carson's death. Unfortunately, not too far into the spring of 2014 Mike had an accident with the truck and watering rig, which totaled the vehicle, leaving many community garden groups around the city, including the PHNA garden, in search of a water source for the 2014 growing season.
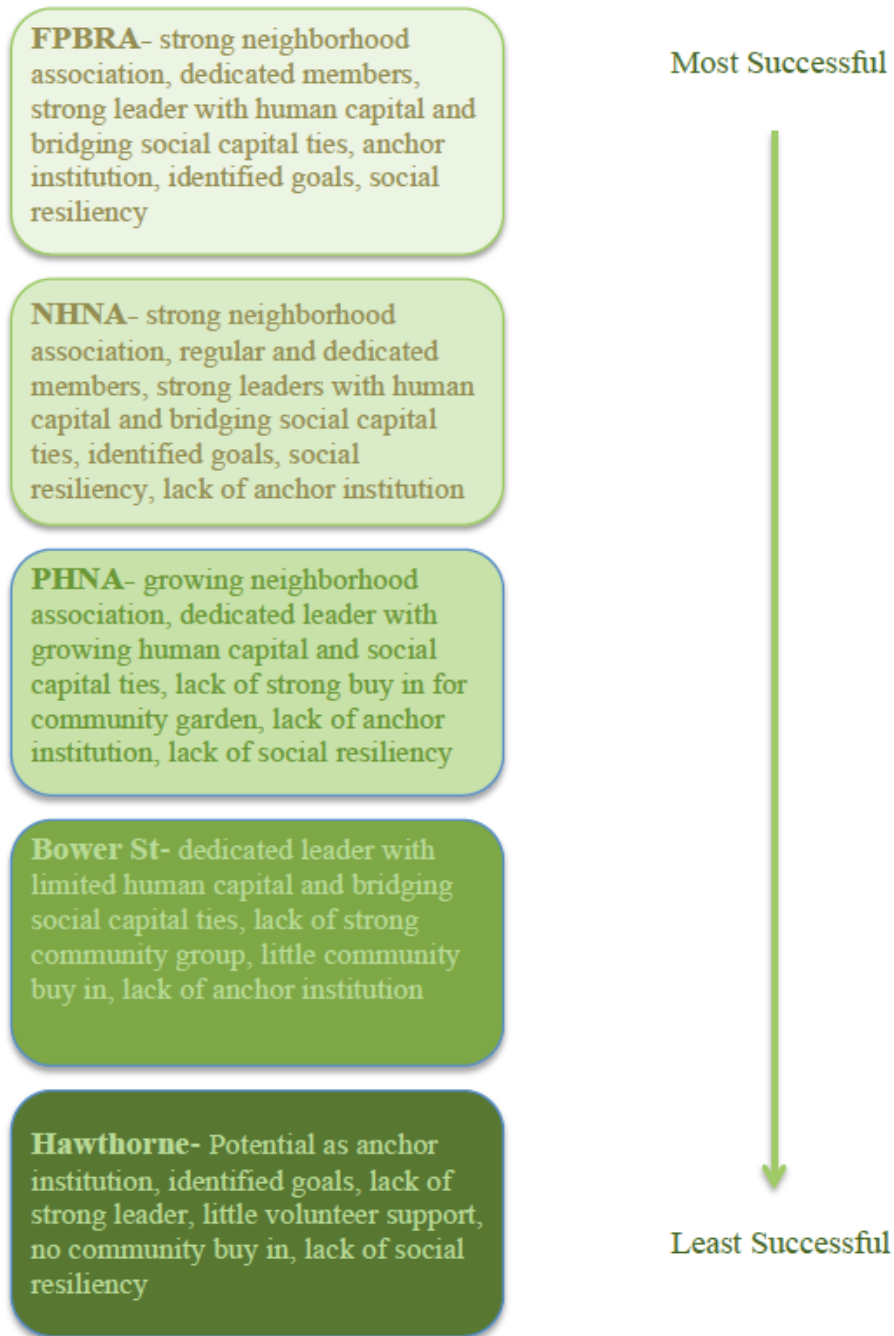
Conclusion

In sum, while residents have identified many benefits associated with community urban greening, the city's structural condition and resource issues lend to inherent

problems that impose challenges to the sustainability of urban greening projects. Many of the challenges have been identified by UPE scholars who contend that the promotion of urban greening through a shared governance structure results in placing the burden of community development and public space maintenance on volunteers and Voluntolds. Furthermore, they articulate that this arrangement, that makes community development success contingent on the resources and community capital assets of neighborhood groups is likely to result in unevenly developed urban landscapes.

While it was not the goal of this research to measure the success of urban community greening projects, my research does indicate that there is a certain set of factors that are required to successfully navigate the shared governance structure imposed by the neoliberalization of the economy (see Figure 4. below). In addition to these factors, rates of success seem to also correlate with the surrounding population of the community, suggesting that neighborhood stability and a critical mass surrounding greening activities may potentially play an important role in greening success. This is discussed further in chapter eight as an area for future research.

This finding is important both for community development efforts within shrinking cities but also beyond as urban development initiatives have largely come under the purview of shared governance structures in cities across the country. Recognizing the key factors for community success in relation to urban greening can help community development practitioners to assist communities in crafting goals that center on creating opportunities to develop the key factors. This recognition highlights the UPE critique in relation to the development of uneven urban landscapes as not all community groups have equal amounts of the key factors.

Figure 4. Indicators for Long-Term Greening Success

FPBRA- strong neighborhood association, dedicated members, strong leader with human capital and bridging social capital ties, anchor institution, identified goals, social resiliency

NHNA- strong neighborhood association, regular and dedicated members, strong leaders with human capital and bridging social capital ties, identified goals, social resiliency, lack of anchor institution

PHNA- growing neighborhood association, dedicated leader with growing human capital and social capital ties, lack of strong buy in for community garden, lack of anchor institution, lack of social resiliency

Bower St- dedicated leader with limited human capital and bridging social capital ties, lack of strong community group, little community buy in, lack of anchor institution

Hawthorne- Potential as anchor institution, identified goals, lack of strong leader, little volunteer support, no community buy in, lack of social resiliency

Most Successful

Least Successful

CH. 8 CONCLUSION: FINDING THE MIDDLE "GREENING" GROUND

In this chapter I offer conclusions and major contributions to the study of community based urban greening and shared governance greenspace maintenance strategies from my dissertation research. I first briefly discuss the set of questions that this research addresses and highlight how the Flint case study answers these questions. I argue that the perspectives governing much of the urban greening debate are too simplistic and cannot be viewed strictly as either inherently empowering or perpetuating inequality.

This lack of "middle ground" both negates the agency of local residents who do act within the face of the constrictions of the neoliberal environment and also over emphasizes the transformative power of community urban greening projects. This latter point refers to the idea that important structural problems (beyond the neighborhood level-e.g. cost and quality of water) must be attended to in order to fully improve the quality of life in Flint, Michigan. In addition, while not all populations have equal access to greening resources, the neoliberal environment does create the space for social movements and activism that work toward lessening this disparity. This is seen in both the mission of some of the greening resource brokers organizations and additional groups in the city working toward social justice goals. As a result of the potential for community empowerment imbued within community greening projects, I suggest that the Urban Political Ecology framework benefits from a systems perspective (CCF) that examines how community groups can grow political power within a constrained environment. I refer to this as "empowered UPE."

I finally conclude by offering dissertation limitations and offer areas for future research. I suggest that additional projects studying the social outcomes of greening projects should be undertaken so we may better be able to understand the role of community based greening initiatives in the wake of the redevelopment of postindustrial cities. These questions are only going to grow more pertinent within the era of ecological sustainability and a growing focus on the shared maintenance of public space and privatization of service delivery.

Review of Questions and Findings

This research sought to address questions on the promotion and utility of community urban greening projects as community development strategies. These questions stem from two bodies of literature that have either been largely critical or supportive of these efforts with little room for middle ground. UPE scholars have been very critical of these efforts as a community development strategy by noting that within the context of the global economy, inequality is not eradicated rather just moved from one physical location to another. They also suggest that these strategies are not radical enough to alter any of the major implications of the destructive nature of capitalism that are readily visible in shrinking cities. On the other hand, community practitioners and community development scholars have heralded the merits of community greening as having the potential to completely transform local environments and to usher in an idyllic future based in local food economies and green technology.

Based on these postulations I sought to investigate a set of questions that addresses these two disparate perspectives within the context of Flint, Michigan.

1) What type of political structure is governing and promoting the use of community urban greening as a development strategy?

   a. Do community based urban greening projects legitimate the retreat of the state in relation to public space maintenance by promoting greening through neoliberal citizenship ideology and the use of volunteerism and workfare labor?

   b. Do community urban greening projects based in a shared governance (competitive grants) structure result in the development of uneven urban landscapes?

2) What benefits do participants perceive to be associated with community urban greening projects?

   a. What factors contribute to sustained community success in relation to community urban greening projects?

   b. Can community urban greening projects work to create the conditions necessary to challenge local neoliberal policy measures?

I briefly summarize findings in relation to these questions below and conclude by suggesting that the debates around the utility of community urban greening as community development cannot be viewed as black and white. The Flint case, which provides a very nice context for this study due to its structural and economic condition, suggests that while greening may not completely alter the local political system, it does work toward creating the conditions necessary for community empowerment and thus may work spur future activism that can challenge urban inequality. In addition, my findings also highlight some the benefits and limitations of community urban greening as a community

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development strategy at the local level. This is an important contribution as cities across the country are struggling to find ways to manage budget shortfalls for public services along with a broader trend of the privatization of public space (Krinsky and Simonet 2011).

Governance Structure

Local institutions and the city government in Flint that are pushing urban greening initiatives represent a shared governance structure that views urban greening as a tangible means to attend to vacant properties and social problems within the context of fiscal crisis. These initiatives are funded through a system of *nested resource partnerships* with a bulk of the financial backing coming from competitive grants from philanthropic foundations identified as Resource Providers. These providers then funnel funds to Resource Brokers who distribute funds to Intermediary Resource Brokers and local community groups through urban greening programs and competitive grants[18]. The labor entailed in the actual greening process is usually volunteer and "Voluntolds" based.

The current political arrangements in the city of Flint in relation to the promotion of urban greening as a development strategy reflect the "shadow state" or "governance beyond the state" models discussed in chapter two (Marwell 2004; Swyngedouw 2005). Typically a municipality, with tax funds as well as revenue from the state, has the power dictate land use decisions and provide for essential city services. Flint differs in this regard as the current local political structure has no real power when it comes to appropriating money and making financial decisions. This reality is coupled with the fact

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[18] To review the Nested Resource Model please see chapter four.

that the state of Michigan has severely reduced important revenue sharing measures that support local governments.

While this case may be an outlier as Flint is in a state of extreme financial and political emergency, critical urban political ecology scholars such as Pudup (2007), Perkins (2009, 2010, 2013) and Rosol (2011) suggest that pursuit of community based urban greening strategies around the nation is more than just a response to vacant space within a context of built and fiscal decline. Rather they suggest that this arrangement stems from the neoliberalization of the broader economy, which supports the shrinking of municipal budgets that offer provisions for social and public services. This lack of funding can stem from tax reductions or from the lack of a budget for amenities likes parks maintenance due to reductions in revenue as a result of deindustrialization. No matter the cause of this reduction the effect is similar—public greenspaces become physically degraded. This reality leads to what Perkins (2013) has described as residents and city officials alike viewing their local greenspaces as "liabilities." In some cities such as Milwaukee, this motivates the city government to sell off the public land for private development, thus reducing access to public lands, a restriction that typically affects the poor and minorities most as those spaces that are visited by more affluent populations are more likely to be cared for.

Retreat of the State

As outlined according to Perkins (2009) the focus on community urban greening based in a shared governance structure does result in a legitimation of the retreat of the state in relation to public space maintenance and community development efforts. In the context of a shrinking city like Flint where land is not in high demand, the city is not able

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to sell off its abundant park or vacant space. As such the care of the space is forced upon (willingly yet coercively) among community groups partnered with and supported by resource providers and brokers such as the Ruth Mott Foundation or the GCLB. Perkins (2013) refers to this process as coercive consent to neoliberal hegemony through necessity. In other words, community groups who view public greenspace as a liability in relation to reducing homes values and the public safety of a given area, are forced to care for the space, thus reinforcing the neoliberal system that intensifies the devolution of state control of public spaces. This control is then spread among a local governance structure that includes local resource providers, resource brokers, and volunteer groups.

Particularly, in the city of Flint, as a response to the retreat or forced neglect of the state (as a result of deindustrialization and city shrinking) local bodies within the city scramble to find ways to engage multiple volunteer groups in greening activities as a means to complete work it was once responsible for. As a result, greening initiatives are heavily supported and promoted by the City of Flint and other institutions as a sustainable, reasonable, and cost effective way to address city shrinking and community development through institutional partnerships. As such, it is easy to see why these programs are promoted due to the fiscal benefits they offer, by essentially "employing" or forcing (workfare) residents to care for their own space and the areas in their community.

The idea of "employing citizens" to maintain greenspace is not new. The promotion of environmental stewardship and conservation has roots in the Roosevelt era (Taylor 2009). Nor is the idea of public and private partnerships for parks maintenance a new concept. This has a long history in the massive urban parks systems like those found in New York and Boston (Taylor 2009). These cities offer examples of conservancies and

organizations meant to support the funding and maintenance of public space. The proposed funding of public parks through private entities also has a long history. As early as the development of New York City's Central Park, wealthy individuals were opposing Frederick Olmstead who suggested that the parks should be maintained and funded by the city in order to ensure that people from all social classes have the same opportunity enjoy public park space and to also ensure that parks would be equally maintained. He suggested supporting the public parks system through an increase in streetcar fares (Taylor 2009).

Uneven Landscapes

Both arguments discussed above (consent to neoliberal hegemony and the shadow state/governance beyond the state) suggest that the main problem with this arrangement is the issue of inequality in relation to volunteer groups accessing grant funds. Not all community groups have skilled individuals and leaders who have the ability to acquire funds or the equipment necessary to compete for grant dollars (Perkins 2013). This was cited as one of the reasons that some of the Land Bank "Clean and Green" grant applications were turned down. Additional instances in my case study also illustrate examples of the denial of grants, as with the case of the Bower Street garden, which lacks a strong community organization. Despite the lack of ability to include all interested parties, volunteer/grant based labor is still viewed as a primary means to meeting municipal greening maintenance due to the lack of fiscal investment on the part of the city, which may have historically worked to appropriate funds in areas where resources were heavily needed. As such, this reality highlights the main critique of urban political

ecology scholars who suggest that shared maintenance strategies lead to the development of highly uneven urban landscapes.

Those resource providers and brokers composing the governance structure that promote and fund citizen based urban greening development can be considered what Perkins (2013), drawing on the work of Gramsci has termed the "organic intellectual deputies." In other words the resource providers and brokers are the groups that essentially "sell" the argument for the need of the neoliberalization of the local economy by way of the retreat of the state in relation to tasks like greenspace maintenance. In Perkin's (2013) case study of Milwaukee greenspace the reasoning for developing shared maintenance was tax revenue reduction (once used to fund parks maintenance) as being beneficial to homeowners and businesses. In the case of Flint the call to austerity is based in fiscal crisis that is blamed on the historical loss of auto industry and the failings of previous municipal administrations.

This lack of municipal fiscal resources is seen in the fact that currently none of the sub areas of the master plan are funded and proposed ideas for generating money for the plans center exclusively on grant dollars. As two of the main funders of initiatives in the city of Flint, it is likely that the Ruth Mott and C.S. Mott Foundations will play a key role in integrating many of the greening projects either directly or through programs organized by resource brokers. While this could potentially be a source of competition for other greening programs that seek funding from these entities (Rosol 2011), practitioners at organizations like GCLB and the Ruth Mott Foundation see the greening projects across the city as part of a broad strategy for urban development. In other words, there may be competition between neighborhoods and groups but the overall development is

for the benefit of the city as a whole. In some ways this can be viewed as a "trickle down" policy of urban greening. As the city transforms overall, those neighborhoods that have difficulty competing for grant dollars will also eventually "rise with the tide." Critiques of this neoliberal ideology have been made within the literature in regard to other areas of urban community development (Lorente 2002).

The question remaining then is can parks and public space be equally maintained and offer equal access to all populations if they are cared for by private entities and through partnerships between local institutions? Critical scholars echo the concerns of Olmstead discussed above and suggest that the problem with shared governance and citizen maintained public space is that the maintenance and resources that go into these initiatives is likely to be unequal, especially when community groups are competing for grant resources within the same city (Birge-Liberman 2010; Roy 2011; Perkins 2013).

Highlighting this issue, Rosol (2011) discusses it in relation to the prevalence of volunteering in urban gardens as neoliberal strategy employed by the city government in Berlin, Germany. This strategy is taken on to reduce the burden on the city in relation to fiscal strain and is analogous to the focus on private organizations spearheading greening initiatives in Flint. He argues that those areas that already have a prevalence of greening and civic engagement are more likely to receive funds, thus reducing opportunities in the areas that arguably need the most resources as a result of economic and social marginalization.

Similar arguments have also been made by Perkins (2011) and Roy (2011). These scholars highlight the class disparities in relation to the rise of community based greening as a result of state retrenchment policies. While wealthy citizens are able to maintain

desirable open space through "friends of park" groups and conservancies, poor and minority groups often suffer due to having the lack of both time (these groups must attend to more pressing issues such as affordable food and housing) and political and financial power to make sure that greenspace in their neighborhoods is maintained to their satisfaction.

This idea reifies Perkins (2009) postulation that those communities that are the most successful in maintaining public greenspace and using it as a means of community development represent small communities of interest and do little if nothing to alter structural inequality in urban space brought about by capitalist production and creative destruction. This type of success was most readily visible in the FPBRA case and to a lesser extent in the NHNA and PHNA cases. While this is empowering for those groups that are successful and does help to improve quality of life, UPE scholars argue it is not a lasting solution. As disorder still exists in other communities and those committing crime and disorder are pushed to new environments in much the same way that the process of capitalist creative destruction works (Brenner and Theodore 2002).

Community Benefits

Despite the critiques addressed above, urban greening projects are often taken on as a result of the very real and visceral reality of living within a city that has experienced severe population loss, fiscal crisis, and a magnitude of social problems. In this setting, attending to urban greening at the community level either through vigilantism or with the support of resource providers and brokers is one of the only feasible and tangible options for community development, including improving the safety of the local environment.

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Additionally, those neighborhood groups participating in community urban greening projects view them as a relatively low cost way to improve the disordered environment and prevent crime, thus improving the safety of the community (at least in regard to perception). My research indicates that this increased feeling of safety works to promote trust among residents, which can work to further increase social interaction. The data outlined in chapter five clearly illustrates that residents perceive there be a correlation between greenspace maintenance and working to prevent crime and disorder. In many instances this was the primary reason for taking on greening initiatives in the first place as in the case of the NHNA and Regina Park. In addition to improving the physical environment, participants also reported their belief that community urban greening projects worked to improve neighborhood trust levels and worked to increase neighborhood social interaction among residents. The development of collective efficacy and trust has been identified by community scholars as being essential to building social capital ties that are necessary for successful and longstanding community development efforts (Sampson et al., 1997; Rickenbacker 2012).

Moreover, residents also perceive a utility of urban greening projects beyond improving the built and natural environment. They view these actions a means to turn a "dangerous" liability into an asset that can hopefully help them to grow more community resources and can spur further development initiatives such as political capital, financial capital, human capital, and cultural capital. Community scholars have argued that these assets can be leveraged to address additional problems or to secure more community development resources (Flora and Emery 2006). In this vein, community urban greening projects can be viewed as a means both to reduce disorder but also to grow community

capacity and empowerment. These findings also support Rickenbacker's (2012)

conclusion that community urban greening activities are an important "intermediary step"

in growing community empowerment as they help to support local communities

immediate needs (public safety, neighborhood pride, and increased social interaction). By

working to provide these resources, community greening projects can serve as a

springboard for the development of additional community assets particularly through the

leveraging of political capital and bridging social capital ties as indicated by the success

of the FPBRA case.

Key Factors for Community Success

As indicated by my various case studies, though greening seems to be an

empowering process (for participants at the local level) to some degree across the board,

those groups that tend to be the most successful in relation to garnering additional assets,

forming new coalitions, and moving toward additional community develop projects, are

those groups that have dedicated leaders with high human capital as seen within the

NHNA and FPBRA cases. Along similar lines, Larner and Craig (2005) suggest that the

neoliberalization of the urban environment has not only spurred the shared

governance/nested resource structure but has also carved out new roles for community

activists as well. These human capital leaders or activists play an instrumental role in

supplementing the neoliberal project, but are also demanding social change in their local

communities at the same time.

> Advocates of local partnerships are very often community activists who have
> been forced into, opted for, or been recruited into new ''professionalised''roles in
> their efforts to advance social justice in a context marked by the legacy of nearly
> two decades of neoliberal experimentation, most notably (and locally) manifest in
> increased socio-spatial polarisation. Many see their current work as expressly
> about rebuilding the social links neoliberalism severed. As such, these new

strategic brokers might be considered as prime exemplars of Polanyi's (1957) ''enlightened reactionaries'' seeking to re-embed market society relations, or alternatively as pragmatic improvisers who unwittingly contribute to the hybrid, contested ''rolling out'' of neoliberalism. (Larner and Craig 2005:405).

The authors go on to suggest that community leaders or activists have always taken on this type of work, but now their grassroots action is being institutionalized into official roles that assist in the maintenance of partnerships required for urban service delivery. In addition, they suggest that this arrangement, while a result of neoliberalism, reflects the tendencies of activist organizing prior to the neoliberal era and therefore works to contest inequality developed within neoliberalism. As such, this arrangement may be inherently more empowering than it is often described as due to the focus on trust, respect, and the partnerships that these arrangements require.

The growth and development of this activist organizing is outlined in my case study in relation to the leaders of the neighborhood associations (particularly in NHNA, FPBRA, and PHNA) who go well beyond their civic and professional duties to act on behalf of their neighbors to secure resources and foster long-term partnerships with resource brokers. Kate from the NHNA illustrated this type of activism when discussing the neighborhood association's role with working with MSU in relation to the neighborhood park project. Kate is instrumental in applying for grants from resource providers and brokers on behalf of the association.

> Well I really think that this longer-term partnership with MSU has been really good for us as an association. We have showed that we can work with other organizations and that members of our community are willing to step up to care for the park and to expand on the work there. We still do have problems with getting more community members involved or staying involved but just that work and that illustration of a relationship is helpful to us. Its not just that either. We have our little median area on King Street and other greenspaces that we try to maintain that show even with bumps in the road we are committed to this process.

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This is all part of our long term vision that we worked on for our neighborhood master plan.

As the ability to procure resources is of key importance within a shared governance community development structure, activists/leaders with high human capital are imperative for community success. At the same time, this system then again highlights the inequality that can be imbued with such as system as not all community groups have the same ability to attain material resources.

The other key elements that have been identified from this research as being key in relation to successful community development include active and dedicated community members, an outlined vision of specific neighborhood goals, "buy in" from the surrounding community, an anchor institution, and the resiliency to withstand community change (see Table 6. below). These indicators are also discussed in greater detail in relation to the challenges of urban community greening outlined in chapter seven.

Table 6. Key Factors for Community Urban Greening Development Success

Strong Community Organization
(block clubs, neighborhood association)
(active and dedicated members)
(strong community vision and outlined goals)

Surrounding Community "Buy In"
(support and interest of the local community)
(community participation)

Community Leaders with High Human Capital and Strong Social Capital Networks
(skills and knowledge to procure additional resources)
(Connections to outside institutions and additional community groups)

Anchor Institutions
(schools, churches, parks, sports teams etc.)

Community Resiliency to Withstand Change
(loss of leadership, resources, loss of institutions, population etc.)

My five case study sites represent a continuum of success in relation the indicators identified above. Those groups that have ample supply of these resources were more

likely to be able to use the results of an activity around greening projects to spur

additional opportunities or community involvement. Those cases such as the Bower

Street Community Garden and the Hawthorne Community garden already experienced

major setbacks in relation to greening in one year's time as a result of a limited amount of

resources and little community support or buy in for the various garden projects (see

Figure 4 in chapter seven for a detailed outline). Despite this critique, community urban

greening does offer a limited sense of community agency in relation to maintenance and

land use decisions. In addition, if the key factors are present it is likely that community

groups can find lasting community change, an idea that has largely been negated by UPE

scholars.

How then can scholars reconcile the fact that these resources that make

community greening projects beneficial and empowering are not equally distributed

among social groups? What then is the solution for working toward change to alter this

arrangement? While it is likely to be a very long process, there is evidence in the city of

Flint of organizations that are working on the ground in an attempt to foster the resources

necessary that result in successful community urban greening projects, which may in turn

be used to garner additional community assets. Furthermore, the neoliberalization of

urban environment and the rise of the shared governance structure has ushered in these

activists organizations, reiterating that there can be a middle ground in relation to

empowerment in the context of a constricted neoliberal environment.

This work is seen in groups like "Growing Neighborhood Power," which trains

community members on organizing neighborhood associations and block clubs. This

work is also seen in conjunction with local police department programs that also train

groups and individuals on issues such as forming block clubs and crime mapping.

Finally, the organization "Flint Neighborhoods United (FNU)," acts as "one stop shop"

for neighborhood associations and block clubs to meet and share best practices in relation

to some of the most pressing issues in the city, such as dealing with neighborhood crime,

city blight programs, and applying for grant resources. The data below highlights the

goals of the organization (gathered from a public forum).

> Flint Neighborhoods United (FNU) is a coalition of block club, neighborhood
> association and crime watch captains and presidents (or their designated
> representative). This coalition meets on the first Saturday of each month to share
> information and leverage their resources to create positive change in the Greater
> Flint community. The group's focus is from a citywide perspective versus the
> focus of the individual members of a specific neighborhood or area within the
> city. FNU has three goals.
>
> 1. Improve communication among and between stakeholders at all levels.
>
> 2. Create and maintain an environment that supports safe and healthy
> neighborhoods.
>
> 3. Re-establish a citywide sense of community with a shared responsibility.

These goals illustrate how the organization is working toward citywide change by

attempting to inform local groups and to supply them with the resources necessary to

successfully navigate the shared governance structure. This is especially visible within

goal three that highlights a notion of "shared responsibility" for city development. The

organization also acts as a community "opportunity posting board" by highlighting

various grant and resource opportunities that neighborhood groups can apply for.

Working Toward Finding the Greening Middle Ground: The Case for an "Empowered

Urban Political Ecology"

In his 2008 exploration on the "right to the city" as a foremost civil right, Harvey

questions why more people are not in street demanding their public rights (in relation to

the re-creation of urban space and to access to city services) as opposed to passively consenting the neoliberal hegemony (Perkins 2013). In cities like Flint the answer to this complex question seems fairly simple… necessity. In order to meet relative quality of life standards, community groups must maintain their public spaces not just for the beauty of greenspace, but also a means to prevent and reduce disorder and hopefully raise property values. However, while residents may take part in community greening projects as a result of necessity, there actions can still be viewed as agentic and claiming their right to public space by working to manipulate the environment in a way that suits their own interests. This power over land-use decision-making is something that is likely to have not occurred without the process of creative destruction, particularly in historically marginalized communities.

Due to this visceral realty, scholars such as Roy (2011) suggest that critiques on the neoliberalization of greenspace maintenance are too simplistic and do not taken into account the dynamic nature of the neoliberalization process that is dictated by specific complexities of local environments. As such, Roy (2011) suggests rather than just being open receptacles of neoliberal ideology, community groups in partnership with service broker organizations work to resist the neoliberal tide. Addressing critiques that suggest that the neoliberalization of urban economies among a shared governance structure does not reorganize power relations but only civic responsibilities (by placing development within the hands of nonprofits and volunteers), Roy (2011) identifies several ways in which non-profit groups resist neoliberalization in relation to greenspace maintenance initiatives and highlights how these projects can actually work to empower local communities.

First, Roy (2011) suggests that non-profits and private organizations can work to resist neoliberalization through green activism activities that work to hold the state accountable in relation to keeping space public, as in the case of Preserve Our Parks and the Milwaukee County Parks system. This organization challenged urban neoliberalism by successfully politically challenging the selling of public lands. The organization now acts as a watchdog group for public park spaces. Roy (2011) argues that other organizations, while operating with private funds within in the neoliberal frame, also work to simultaneously reject neoliberalism by working to correct environmental injustice that is imposed by the uneven development of urban space as an outcome of capitalist production.

These often grassroots, yet non-profit, resource-broker, organizations form to pick up the municipal slack in regard to the neglect of public space while at the same time transforming spaces in historically marginalized communities. Roy (2011) draws on the empowering experience of community garden development stemming from environmental justice activism in Milwaukee to highlight this idea. In addition, she also suggests that while non-profits and citizen groups represent part of the shared governance structure that has resulted from neoliberalism, they are not inherently negative or positive entities. Rather they should be viewed has having their own socio-environmental goals (outside of the political structure) that compose the mission of the organization. These groups maneuver through the neoliberal state agencies to meet their own interests, which often center on empowering local communities and increasing the quality of greenspace in historically marginalized neighborhoods.

Instances of this social justice work are readily seen in the city of Flint, both through the work of resource brokers and local neighborhood and community organizations. *edible flint* is a primary example of a resource broker organization that has an explicit focus on creating a positive social change within the local environment through the development of urban food gardens, education on food sovereignty and healthy food choices, and self-determination in the face or urban inequality. The organization works toward these goals by promoting programs (often at no cost-through scholarships) to underserved populations. They also showcase the development work of community groups and raise awareness about the benefits associated with urban food gardening through celebrating gardens with the annual tour.

Beyond the role of resource brokers data highlighted in chapter five and six in relation to the growth of social capital and other important community assets such as political and human capital, underscores how community urban greening projects can be a very positive and empowering experiences for participants and may literally be the "grounds to plant the seeds" for social change. Mike from the FPBRA noted that while he recognized community social change is not something that happens quickly, he had hope for the greening projects to continue to make a positive impact in the community.

> It's like going out there and planting a seed. Not to use the biblical parable but you know what I am talking about…well you scatter enough seeds a good things happen.

Similarly, Corrina from the PHNA noted:

> The garden really helped me to get to know some of the people in the community better. I feel closer to them and I feel like we have an understanding of the goals we have for the neighborhood. It's not something that is going to happen quick…reaching those goals but having goals and working toward them is the

first step. It makes you feel better too, knowing that you are doing something to help your community, to be a part of the community.

In this sense we can see that there is a middle ground between the disparate perspectives on community urban greening and that critical perspective benefits from an analysis of how community residents work within the constricted environment to challenge current conditions. The Community Capitals Framework is a systems model that helps community scholars and residents alike to see the assets that can be developed from local mobilization around quality of life issues. As community groups work on greening projects they feel more comfortable in their neighborhoods, interact more with other residents, and gain a new or expanding awareness of the major issues within their community through developing a collective consciousness. While the development of this collective consciousness may be contrived as a result of state neglect and neoliberalism it is a community asset nonetheless. I refer to this process as taking an "empowered urban political ecology" approach. This approach recognizes the structural limitations of community based development initiatives, but also recognizes the potential for community change that is laden within the current social and political environment. Previous scholars have referred to this process as developing "alternative political imaginaries" and note the importance of citizen participation even when residents do not directly or explicitly challenge existing power relations (Staeheli 2008).

As such, local citizen groups operate within the face of neoliberalism to meet their own needs and work toward goals that support the sustainable development of their communities, sometimes in ways that challenge traditional notions of land use, particularly in relation to urban food production. In doing this, community groups are

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also contesting (albeit at a surface level) the social and physical realities in their communities by improving the local material conditions that have been imposed by historical marginalization and the neoliberalization of the urban environment. Examples of this are seen in my case study both in relation to greenspace maintenance and community gardening as residents and members of community groups decide how to use land and create goals for long-term land use development. Ghose and Pettygrove (2014) also reflect on this idea in relation to a community garden project in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

> In the case of Harambee, community gardens do not overtly challenge existing power relations that have produced conditions of poverty and political marginalization. Participants in Harambee gardens endeavor towards localized change in terms of food production, community building, and environmental revitalization. By emphasizing improvement through individual effort, these community gardens reinforce the neoliberal tenet that citizenship (including rights to material reproduction and participation in decision-making processes) should be earned through active participation. Nonetheless, these community gardens also create potential for alternative practices by enabling citizens to assert partial control over space and to use space in ways that are not strictly capitalistic. (Ghose and Pettygrove 2014:1108)

In short, community urban greening projects create the spaces to grow community ties and to work toward neighborhood autonomy within the context of the neoliberal frame. This is seen in the way in which residents in Flint have organized around various land use decisions, both in regard to the master plan but also in smaller community group settings when residents involve themselves in greening programs implemented by resource brokers.

In sum, previous research and the data outlined above suggest that the rise of a shared governance structure as means to attend to public greenspaces and lack of municipal funds cannot necessarily be viewed as black and white, or totally disempowering or empowering. Following from the work of Ghose and Pettygrove

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(2014), I suggest that resident grassroots activism within the urban neoliberal context can "simultaneously empower and challenge" residents. Residents are empowered through the assets they gain from greening, but are also challenged to acquire the resources necessary to find success in these initiatives. While the growth of shared governance certainly stems from the broader neoliberalization of the American economy and political system, there is a contention as to whether community groups and resource brokers that work to fill the void of devolution are just passive receptacles of neoliberalism.

Residents may consent to neoliberal hegemony through action but may also empower themselves in new ways at the same time. Activism within the spaces of actually existing neoliberalism is viewed by residents as one of the few ways they can play a role in improving the quality of their lives through greenspace maintenance activities. Even when community groups do not experience long-term success (beyond a season or two) activism surrounding greening is still an act of agency within a constricted political environment.(see figure 5 below for a detailed theoretical model). These activities and the maintenance of public space in general were historically under the purview of the municipality. While this is no longer the case, the city does support the shared governance structure and activist growth through promoting citizen participation in land use development.

Figure 5. Theoretical Model for Resident Empowerment and City Transformation
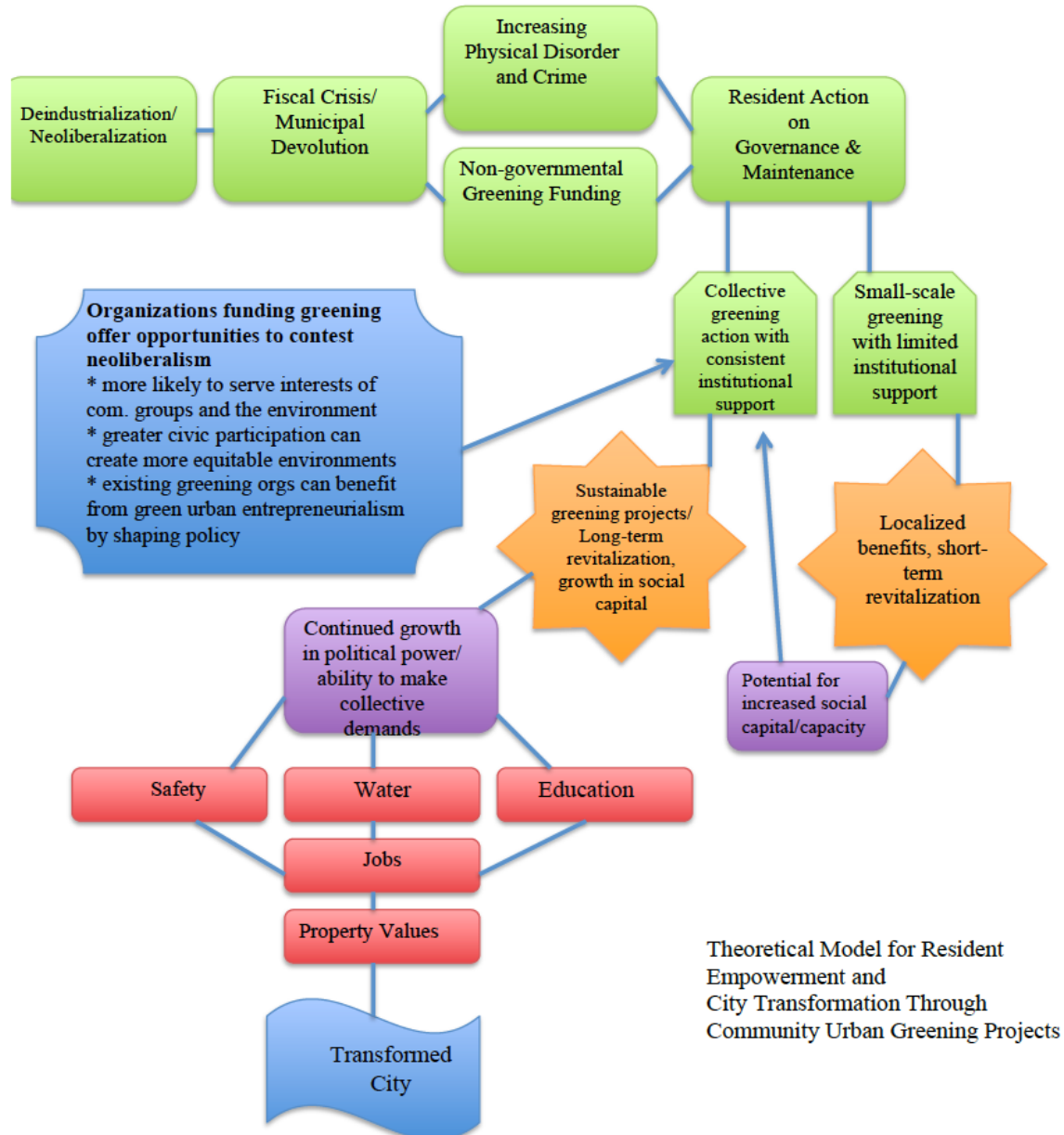
For example, through the creation of the Imagine Flint Master Plan, city planners may be working within the shared governance system and may very well be the "deputies" of neoliberalism in relation to selling the idea of development through partnership between local institutions and community groups. However, at the same time these deputies have also taken on one of the most community intensive urban planning

processes on record, suggesting that the plan itself has empowered residents to envision environmental changes in their city that would have historically been made through a top down approach. Furthermore, the plan itself lies almost exclusively on the partnerships between resource providers, brokers, and resident volunteers. As such, community participants and activists are required to have a seat at the table both in a professional and personal sense. While this arrangement may be an artifact or lesson learned from historical land use disasters, it is arguable that the shared governance structure imposed by neoliberalism created the space for this citizen focus. Despite this empowerment, residents in conjunction with nonprofit groups will still be responsible as "citizen-subjects" for cultivating and maintaining the changes they wish to see (Pudup 2007).

In sum, the community urban greening as a development strategy in the city of Flint represents a context of structural economic and political strain where citizens act to provide some of the services once provided by the municipality. My cases illustrate how these actions can spur additional community assets. While this is likely to be a long and winding road, the greening itself is an important mechanism for creating new political awareness, institutional partnerships, and political coalitions to demand justice.

Two important lines of future inquiry stem from the empowered UPE approach. As noted above this approach takes into perspective both the empowering aspects of local community development and structural limitations.

1) How can community development scholars assist community groups in developing the tools necessary for creating community change within in a neoliberal urban environment?

2) What can resident groups do to alter or subvert structural restrictions and

inequality imposed by the neoliberalization of the urban environment?

The purpose of the case study was not to investigate how Flint residents are altering

political power structures through community greening initiatives, while this is may be a

possibility; this longitudinal question is not within the scope of this research. Despite this

limitation, I offer an example below of how community urban greening and other

community based initiatives may be used a springboard to mobilize residents to challenge

political power and to have a greater impact on the structural conditions of the city.

In the winter of 2015, glimpses of this resident mobilization were visible in

relation to the quality and provision of city of Flint water. As noted in previous chapters,

water in the city has been a very contentious issue largely in relation to the astronomical

cost and sourcing of local water. Since the spring of 2014, the city has been providing

water through an updated treatment plant that sources water from the highly

contaminated Flint River. Near the end of 2014, city water tested above federally

permitted levels of trihalomethane, a byproduct of chlorine treated water. Excess

exposure to this toxin over a period of many years can lead to increasing chances of a

variety of ailments include kidney and liver disease, and cancer. Though the water has

been permitted as safe to drink, city officials cautioned that the elderly and those with

compromised immune systems should seek medical advice before drinking tap water

(Pratt-Dawsey 2015).

In response to these conditions, multiple protests have occurred. These rallies

have been organized by activists and City Council members who have brought in

specialists like Bob Bowcock, who is well known for his work with Erin Brokovich. Post

research conversations with members of community groups participating in my study indicate that some of the groups have taken an active roll in the protests and special meetings on water quality. In addition, the resident uproar surrounding the water situation has spurred Mayor Dyane Walling to request assistance from the state government to aid in the issue. Through demanding this support and action, resident activists are operating within a neoliberal governance frame, but at the same time are not legitimating state retreat from local environmental and social problems. Residents believe that this assistance is owed, as the shifting of the city water source was a money saving measure imposed by the emergency financial manager. The shift saved the municipality money, but did very little to lessen the cost burden on the part of residents. To make matters worse, residents are paying the same high rates for lower quality water.

While the water issue is representative of an area where residents in concert with their relatively powerless city officials are mobilizing to challenge structural conditions, there is another area where they might demand change as reflected above. One part of the solution may begin within state governments and with people demanding that their cities get the portion of the taxes that those citizens pay. The restoration of revenue sharing has the possibility to jumpstart local economies by providing the capital necessary to create local jobs that can work to improve local service delivery operations, including the provision of safe and healthy water. This idea does not seem implausible either. In response to backlash in relation to tedious regulations tied to acquiring revenue sharing funds and the general reduction, in June 2014 the Michigan State Legislature approved a 7% increase in revenue sharing funds that was originally proposed by Governor Rick Snyder.

In sum, though this case study has explicitly focused on the motivations and social outcomes of community urban greening projects in the city of Flint, the motivations can be seen within broader structural forces that have been ushered in with the neoliberalization of American cities. This is something that is impacting all cities, though it is very easy to see the fiscal outcomes of this policy in shrinking cities, due to the existing financial and social problems that accompanied deindustrialization. These coupled issues have resulted in the inability of municipalities to adequately provide service delivery and has thus forced the development of shared governance and greenspace maintenance strategies. While constrained by this environment, citizens working within this structure are also offered the opportunity to build community capacity and empowerment while working to provide for services. While this could legitimate current conditions, citizen empowerment by way of urban greening can also work toward creating the grounds for social change. Though this change is not likely to be seen across the board in all communities as the discussion highlighted above suggests several key factors are needed for continued community success. These include the presence of anchor institution, community leaders with high human capital, and community resiliency to withstand changes in community leadership and resources.

Practical Implications

This research has implications for community groups in the city of Flint pursing development through community urban greening strategies. My findings indicate that community members do find multiple benefits in relation to quality of life as a result of greening. Perhaps more importantly in some respects, I have also illustrated that community groups can use greening activities as a means to grow community bonds and

important bridging social capital ties that are essential in gaining access to additional resources and opportunities for sustained community development. As such, the findings from this research can indeed provide a platform that may lead to future funding for other pro-social activities and interventions in the city.

Major findings and recommendations for improving the sustainability of greening projects as a means for development will be shared with the community groups that participated in this study. This information will be dispersed in the form of a community workbook that highlights the motivations, outcomes, and indicators of success in relation to community urban greening according to the Community Capitals Framework (Emery and Flora 2006). In addition, an executive summary will also be produced to share with officials of the city of Flint as well as resource brokering organizations such as the Land Bank and *edible flint.* The community groups and institutional organizations will be able to use this information to illustrate the positive outcomes associated with community urban greening when applying for additional grant dollars and institutional/governmental support.

Dissertation Limitations

This dissertation provided insight into the motivations for and social outcomes of community urban greening activities within five community groups in the city of Flint. The site for the case study is often viewed as outlier in relation to the drastic environmental, social, and political problems within the city. As such, the motivations and outcomes for greening activities in the city may very well be different in relation to the motivations in other cities that may focus more heavily on greening in relation to environmental conservation or awareness activities. While these goals are certainly part

of the strategy in Flint, the data outlined in previous chapters illuminates that the motivations often reflect a desire to increase safety and to reduce the burden of public land maintenance on the municipality.

Due to the limited scope of this case study, the findings presented here are not meant to be extrapolated to all greening activities occurring across the city, the state of Michigan or the country at large. Despite this limitation, the findings outlined here can be viewed as a telling example of the way in which shared governance strategies are developing in relation to the maintenance for public greenspace, which is useful in exploring the outcomes of these strategies in relation to issues of equality and community empowerment in relation to the development of public space.

The interviews conducted at each case site also represent a limited number as the participants in each group were relatively small and therefore do not reflect a representative sample of all participants in community urban greening projects across the city. The timeframe for this research was also relatively short and does not reflect the long-term outcomes of community urban greening interventions. However the goal of this research was to understand resident motivations for such projects and what they perceived to be the main outcomes of these initiatives. Similar limitations are present in relation to the data outlined on the nested resource model in relation to the bodies funding and promoting urban greening projects in Flint, Michigan. The institutions discussed are only a subset of a larger number or organizations working on similar issues.

Areas For Future Research

Longitudinal research of the social impacts of community urban greening projects would be useful in relation to understanding both the success of strategies and how

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attending the local urban environment effects the social climate of a community in relation to the development of additional neighborhood assets. Along similar lines, a longitudinal study would be beneficial for investigating the relationship between neighborhood occupancy/population and urban greening success. There are several possibilities that can potentially explain the relationship between population and greening success. One argument suggests those communities with a greater population plausibly have more opportunities for increased social interaction surrounding the promotion of greening. A second possibility could be that greening is spurring the growth of the community. Though my research indicates that only one neighborhood has seen a population increase in the last few years.

Additional research on urban governance structures within distressed cities would also be beneficial in understanding broader motivations for the shared maintenance of urban greening. This research is may shed light on the neoliberalization of public space as a means to make up for the shortcomings of municipalities to be able to care for public space.

Additional research should also be conducted to better understand the sensemaking process of local communities taking part in urban greening as a means of social control and crime reduction. This research would be particularly striking if perceptions could be matched with crime data for both petty and serious crimes over an extended period of time. This information would be useful for urban areas that are seeing the reduction of budgets for services such as police and fire protection.

A similar line of analysis should be taken in relation to further investigating the role of community urban greening in growing neighborhood empowerment and capacity

as a springboard for garnering additional community assets. This information would be particularly useful for community development practitioners within shrinking city environments that are seeking to revitalize distressed neighborhoods through investing in the greatest community asset, vacant land.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

<div align="center">
Greening Organization
Background Information Guide
</div>

Organization Name:

Years of Operation:

Big Question One
What is the mission of the organization?
- *How does the organization work toward meeting the goals of its mission?*
- *What is the history of the organization?*
- *How is the organization overall funded?*
- *Are the goals of the organization solely related to greening?*

Big Question Two
How does the organization implement/promote/support urban greening in the city of Flint?
- *How are community urban greening projects funded?*
- *How are project participants selected?*
- *Is selection a competitive process?*
- *Can community groups/individuals participate more than once?*
- *How does the organization share information with the community at large/ neighborhood groups?*
- *How does the organization recruit volunteers?*

Big Question Three
What role does the organization play in the political structure? (1. Resource provider, 2. resource broker 3. Combination of 1 and 2 4. Intermediary resource broker)

- *Is the organization supported by a government entity?*
- *Is the organization partnered with any other organizations or institutions in relation to urban greening activities?*
- *What role does the organization play in governing the activities surrounding urban greening and land use reclamation?*

Appendix 2

Interview Participant Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Interview introduction:

I am Rachel Johansen, a graduate student at Michigan State University in the Department of Sociology. I am interested in talking with you about your experiences participating in community urban greening projects/your professional role in relation to community urban greening. There are no right or wrong answers. This interview will take 30-45 minutes. All of your responses will be completely confidential. I would like to tape our conversation so that I can concentrate on what you're saying instead of on taking notes.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions I ask. There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this interview. You will not be compensated in anyway for participating. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty. This interview will be audio recorded. If for any reason, there is anything that you don't want me to write about, please indicate it on during the interview and I will respect your wishes.

You may stop the interview at any time. Is it still OK with you to do this interview?

By continuing with the interview you are giving your consent to participate in this research. For further information in regard to your participation please contact:

Rachel Johansen
Michigan State University
316 Berkey Hall
Phone: 616-558-1462
Email: johans18@msu.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher, please contact the University of Michigan State University Institutional Review Board, 408 W. Circle Dr. Rm 207 Olds, East Lansing, MI 48824
Phone: (517) 355-2180
Fax: (517) 432-4503
Email: irb@msu.edu

Appendix 3

Greening Organization Key Informant Interview Protocol

1) Please describe your position within (GCLB, *edible flint*, master planning team, City of Flint, Hurley Medical Center, Habitat for Humanity, Ruth Mott Foundation)

        -How many people are employed at _____ ?

        -How is _____ mainly funded? *(Political Structure)*

        -Please briefly describe the mission of (organization)_____

2) What programs/projects at _____ relate to urban greening?

- what are the main goals of each program/project related to urban greening?

- How are urban greening projects funded? *(Political Structure)*

- why did the organization become involved with urban greening projects?

- what is the mission of projects related to urban greening?

- How many staff members are dedicated to these projects/programs? *(Political Structure)*

- How does the organization work to engage city residents/volunteers? *(Retreat of the State)*

- How are community groups selected for participation/funds? *(Grant Hustling/Uneven Development)*

- Is the organization partnered with other city institutions/organizations in order to meet community urban greening goals? *(Political Structure)*

- Does the City of Flint support these programs/projects? *(Retreat of the State/Uneven Development)*

- Does the EFM support these programs/projects?

3) What is the future of urban greening in the city of Flint?

- what are the benefits of urban greening programs/projects?

- What are the difficulties associated with urban greening programs/projects? *(Uneven Development/Retreat of the State)*

- in your opinion are urban greening programs and projects sustainable? Why or why not. *(Uneven Development/Retreat of the State)*

4) What is needed to transform the city of Flint?

Appendix 4

<div align="center">Community Greening Participant Interview Protocol</div>

<div align="center">**The Impacts of Community Based Urban Greening Programs**</div>

Interview introduction:

I am Rachel Johansen, a graduate student at Michigan State University in the Department of Sociology. I am interested in talking with you about your experiences participating in community urban greening projects. There are no right or wrong answers. This interview will take 30-45 minutes. All of your responses will be completely confidential. I would like to tape our conversation so that I can concentrate on what you're saying instead of on taking notes. You may stop the interview at any time. Is it still OK with you to do this interview?

By continuing with the interview you are giving your consent to participate in this research.

Big Question 1:

Can you tell me about your involvement in an urban greening/gardening project in the past year?

   Additional Probes

-   When did the garden/greening project start? Was it started through *edible flint's* Garden Starters?

-   Does the garden/project get support or supplies from any other organization?

- How many times/seasons/years have you participated in an urban

   greening/gardening project such as _____?

- Why did you decide to participate in _____ project?

- How was _____ project organized in your

   neighborhood/block/community?

- What is the project about, how does it work (i.e., neighborhood group, work days,

   Picnics, meetings, what is grown)?

- Do you know other participants in the project? Who?

   (Probe for whether or not knowing the participants motivated them to participate

   or stopped them from participating)

Big Question 2: Can you tell me how your participation in urban greening/gardening

projects impacted the way you feel about neighborhood and your neighbors or other

people in your community? *(Social Capital)*

   Additional Probes

- In what ways did your participation change how you feel about your block

   club/neighborhood/organization?   *(Social capital)*

- In what ways did your participation change how you felt about your neighbors?

   (Social capital-trust)

- What kinds of benefits has your block/neighborhood/organization encountered as

   a result of participating in urban greening programs?

- What kinds of problems has your block/neighborhood/organization encountered

   as a result of participating in urban greening programs?

- Did this project change how the residents/members/neighbors worked together? How? *(Social capital-efficacy)*

- What kinds of benefits or problems do you think that the youth in your community experience in regard to this greening/gardening project? What about older populations (30-50), (60-80)?

Big Question 3: How did your participation in a greening/gardening project/s affect your life personally?

Additional Probes

- Why did you choose to participate in the project? What kinds of goals did you have for the program?

- If you have children/grandchildren did they assist you at all with the project? If so, in what ways?

- If participating in a garden, have you changed the way you eat? Why or Why not?

- Does/Did your participation change how you felt about yourself? How?

- What kinds of benefits or problems have you personally experienced any from participating in _____? *(Social capital-human capital)*

- Does/Did your participation give you a sense control over something you didn't have control over before?

- Did this project get you to participate in other neighborhood programs or projects? *(Social capital)*

- Did this project inspire you to become more politically active (attend association meetings, town hall meetings, master planning meetings etc.)? *(Political capital)*

- What kind of skills did you learn from this project that you have, or might, use in other situations? What? What kinds of situations? *(Human capital)*

Big Question 4: Can you tell me about the other participants? (age, gender, race, friend/neighbor, co-worker etc.)

- Did you know the other participants before the project?

- If not, do you intend to stay in contact with any of the other participants? *(Social Capital)*

- What do think there motivations were for participating in the project?

Big Question 5: Can you tell me about how the greening/gardening project may have impacted the neighborhood/area in relation to feelings of increased safety or the reduction of crime?

Additional Probes

- In what ways did the project help you and your neighbors/community members to have more or less control over your block/neighborhood/community? Do you have more control over this now? Did it take any control away? *(Efficacy, Social Control)*

- How did this project affect your feelings of safety? (*Quality of Life*)

- Do you think greening projects have any effect on crime on your block/in the area? How? (*Quality of Life*)

Big Question 6: Can you tell me about how the greening/gardening project has effected the built environment (buildings, parks, streets) in your neighborhood? *(Built capital)*

- How did the project changes how people take care of their buildings or houses or yards? How? *(Contagion effect)*

- Do you think that the greening project had any effect on rents or property values on your block? What effect? *(Financial capital)*

- What kind of economic impact do you think the greening project will have on your block/neighborhood? *(Financial capital)*

Big Question 7: Can you tell me about how the greening project has effected the natural (trees, water, flowers, grasses) environment in your area? *(Natural capital)*

- How has the project impacted the way you feel about the natural environment?

Big Question 8: Tell me about the major outcomes of the project? What has happened? What is going on now?

Additional Probes

- What else was happening in your neighborhood this summer (block parties/festivals etc.)?

- Do you think of the _____ as more of a success or something that didn't work? Why? What made it so?

Additional questions for block club organizers/ neighborhood association leaders/ organization leaders:

Big Question 9: Tell me about the _____ (block or neighborhood group) When was the group formed? (How old is it?)

- How is your group organized? Formally, with a president or chair, or more informally? Who would you say is the leader of your organization or group? You? Someone else? A group?

- How do you take care of business, make decisions? How do you get word out about your project? How do you get people involved in projects?

- Since participating in the urban greening project, have you
  had people participate in your community organization who had never
  participated before?

- Have you told other community organizations about _____programs.

- Have you been in contact with any professional organizations other
  than_____ for help with you greening project? If yes, which
  organizations?)

- Has the greening project tied into any other neighborhood events or activities?

- Have there been any other activities or programs your group tried that worked
  well? If yes, what were they? Why do you think your group was able to succeed
  in that (those) effort(s)?

- Have there been any other activities or programs your group tried that didn't work
  so well? If yes, what were they? Why do you think your group wasn't able to
  succeed in that (those) effort(s)?

- Did you get much support from outside the neighborhood for this project?

- Has your group hooked up with other organizations as a result of the greening
  project?

- What's next for your group?

Demographics

I'd like to ask a few questions about you and your family. Again, your answers are
between you and me—I won't tell anyone what you say here. After these questions,
we're done!

Clarify if necessary: How do you identify your race or ethnic background? *Note gender*

How old are you? Do you have children? How many? Ages?

How long have you lived in _____? *(probe for specifics if answer is*

'all my life' etc. If a new resident, find out where they moved from: same neighborhood?)

Do you own or rent your [home, apartment, room]?

Note whether they live in a home, apartment, which floor

Please tell me all the people who live with you here. I don't need names, just

relationships, like spouse, children, parents, friends, others...

How much school have you completed?

1) grade school (through 5th or 6th grade) 2) middle school / junior high (through 8th

grade) 3) high school / GED 4) technical training or community college 5) some college

6) college degree 7) graduate degree

What is your work status? Retired, not employed, part-time, full time, occasional What

do you do?

What range includes your household's total income (before taxes) for last year?

1) less than $15,000 2) more than $15,000 but less than $25,000 3) more than $25,000 but

less than $40,000 4) more than $40,000 but less than $70,000 5) more than $70,000 but

less than $100,000 6) more than $100,000

Wrap up

Is there anything else you want to add, questions you think I should have asked that I

didn't? Thank you very much for your time. I greatly appreciate it

Appendix 5

Contact Letter For Snowball Sampling

(On Michigan State University letterhead)

April XX, 2013

Hello,

I would like to introduce myself. I am Rachel Johansen, a graduate student at Michigan

State University in the Department of Sociology. I want to talk with residents in your

block club/neighborhood association/ organization about participation in urban greening

programs in the city of Flint such as Clean and Green and Keep Genesee Beautiful. I

have spoken with ____(neighborhood contact)____, and they have agreed to help me

with this study. I hope you will, too.

You may hear from me soon, or see me around the neighborhood. Of course,

participation is voluntary! If you have any questions or want to talk with me, feel free to

call me at 616-558-1462 (you can leave a message any time).

Thanks, and I look forward to meeting you in person!

Sincerely,

Rachel Johansen

Doctoral Candidate

Appendix 6

Key Themes in Analyzing Interview Transcripts and Field Notes

Feel about neighborhood
      Benefits
            beauty
            greening contagious
            changes in natural environment
            home values
            pride
            respect for neighbors
            free food
            neighborhood stimulation/revitalization
            garden education
            health
            leverage additional resources
            other economic impact

Feel about neighbors
            social interaction
                  increased communication
                  increased social activities
                  neighbors helping
                  new involvement
            increased safety
                  surveillance
                  report crime to leader
                  report crime to authorities
            community social control
            feel safer
                  closer to neighbors
            neighborhood reputation
                  importance of community
                  sense of place

Personal benefits
      changed eat
      children help
      feel about self
      impact life personally
      learn skills
      politically active
      impact maintenance of own yard/buildings
      why participate
            know other participants

        greening vigilantes

Volunteering
        Voluntolds
                New Paths
                Resource Genesee
                students
                Vista Center
                        racial tension
                        neoliberal citizenship
Austerity
        Neo-lib ideology
        push for greening
        lack of city services
        poverty
        crime
        racial interactions

Resource Provider
        non-profits
        grants
        city shrinking
        fiscal crisis

Resource Broker
        government
        competitive process

Localized Greening
        Focus on volunteers

Greening important flint
        vacant lots
        contamination
        new industry/vision
        negative reputation
        Imagine Flint master plan
                traditional neighborhoods
                spot abandonment
                green innovation

Greening challenges
        maintenance
        grants
        volunteers
        water

community transformation
lack of leadership
neighborhood crime

Appendix 7

Example of Themes to Focused Coding

Theme beautification

Focused codes stemming from beautification:
BeautySafety
 This code describes acts of beautification/greening undertaken with the perception that the action will improve the safety of the given area.

BeautyPlace
 This code describes acts of beautification/greening to attempt to alter the sense of place from a not cared for to cared for environment—to improve the area as the only place for the resident to live.

BeautyOrganizedGoal
 This code describes acts of beatification greening conducted in an organized manner as part of broader plan with the intent of using results to gain additional resources.

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