Urban Community Gardening:
Moving toward a Sustainable Future
Final Capstone Report
The Professional Practice of Public Administration
PPD 546, Dr. Juliet Musso
May 5, 2013
Eric Lardy, Janet Little,
Rachel Madewell and Michael Valentine
I. Executive Summary

Community gardens are increasingly considered a viable means of addressing issues associated with food access, public health issues, and environmental sustainability, while promoting social capital and civic engagement. Public and nonprofit organizations are embracing and encouraging the development of urban gardens to enhance positive planning practices and enrich the quality of life for city residents. Focusing on the redevelopment and re-use of undesirable property in areas with a higher residential density, community gardens promote restoration, transformation and conservation of once-abandoned properties and city blocks. These gardens have become a tool for promoting good nutrition, physical activity, environmental stewardship, and social connections (Okvat & Zatura, 2011). Furthermore, citizens involved with community garden programs often support other civic improvement causes and actively advocate on behalf of their neighborhoods.

Communities face an array of challenges in the creation and sustainability, community engagement and self-governance of local gardens. For example, different styles of leadership and cultural frameworks may hamper cohesion of the gardening population, making it more difficult to develop social bonds and to engage in civil commonality. Water and land rights also can hamper the creation of gardens. These challenges are exacerbated in areas that have fewer resources, are low-income and diverse.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) operates several food access programs in City Heights, a diverse resettlement neighborhood in San Diego. These programs have been so successful that the IRC has expanded implementation to 16 locations across the country. Moving forward, the IRC in San Diego wants to provide increased skill development by expanding leadership opportunities at their urban agricultural sites. The IRC hopes to transition the garden to a more sustainable structure.

Before that transition, the IRC hopes to identify best practices for engaging low-income, diverse community members in sustainable garden management. To support this effort, two research objectives were identified. First, research was conducted to understand the attributes of City Heights that position it for sustainable, diverse urban agriculture. The second research objective aimed to determine effective engagement, self-governance and sustainability practices of community gardens in diverse urban areas.

The research included a review of scholarly journals, interviews in the City Heights and greater San Diego Region, as well as a review of community case studies having attributes that support applicability to City Heights: P-Patch in Seattle, Washington, and The Village Market in Portland, Oregon. This report identifies several best practices regarding effective engagement, self-governance and sustainability practices of community gardens.

The paper will present the common themes that emerged through the research. The findings and recommendations center common attributes in the following finding areas:

- community engagement
- leadership development
• intersectoral collaborations
• structures and systems
• conflict resolution and mediation strategies

Community engagement utilizes innovation in communicating with garden members and can establish a network of individuals and organizations that build up interest in the gardens for local participants. This paper includes a recommended 18-month schedule of activities to engage the community in the planning and development of a garden. Communication efforts, such as newsletters, should be balanced with regularly scheduled community meetings and day-to-day on-the-ground interaction that an active volunteer force can provide.

Leadership of community gardens requires a clear vision for the garden, clarity of roles and professional volunteer management. These elements can work together to empower garden leaders to manage operations, recruit supporters, address conflicts and, ultimately, sustain the garden. Leaders can be cultivated by offering training program to develop leadership skills and conflict resolution, and technical skills related to gardening.

Rarely did this research team find gardens that were not an example of an intersectoral collaboration, between a public, private and/or a nonprofit entity. Some of the most stable gardens were established with an agreement between one or more organizations. To increase sustainability, our recommendation is for gardens to network with other organizations, as well as work to join or create existing formalized policy committees with dedicated representatives to focus on Community Gardens in San Diego. Those participants from business or public agencies need to dedicate time for this partnership.

Systems and structures that clarify garden operations are necessary for sustainability, engaging the community and cultivating a robust volunteer workforce. Many gardens employ a traditional committee structure that includes formal leadership positions and subcommittees to assist management of volunteer operations. These gardens are governed by commonly agreed upon rules or bylaws, which address a range of issues from plot costs to guidelines for using shared spaces.

Conflict resolution is a necessary part of any organizational structure. Some gardens incorporate a formal recommended approach in their bylaws, while others use an informal approach. Addressing conflict equitably and following a clearly understood procedure builds trust between the gardeners, and reduces the risk of unfair treatment. Reviewing the approach, prior to actual issues, helps to streamline the process.

The above attributes and associated recommendations can better position community garden efforts to achieve the goals of being inclusive and sustainable. While the focus is on IRC and the New Roots Community Farm, it is hoped that these lessons will also be useful for communities, nonprofits, and government agencies that seek to develop volunteer gardens.
II: Issue Statement: Giving New Life to Aging Neighborhoods

Most cities today are designed to accommodate cars, taxicabs, and buses with little thought towards social engagement and community capacity. Community capacity is the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community (Chaskin, 2001). Urban residents are more likely to have limited access to green spaces. Community gardens can contribute to neighborhood capacity by bringing together individuals and groups who wish to change and improve their quality of life. Urban agriculture can significantly impact individuals and families. Not only do urban gardens provide a source of fresh produce but they can also provide economic opportunities through collaboration with farmer’s markets and other business ventures. For newcomers, gardens can allow the opportunity to meet new neighbors, acclimate to the neighborhood and foster relationships.

The goal of this report is to provide lessons that may be adapted by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in San Diego to increase self-management and sustainability among gardeners in the urban farming operations it oversees. It is hoped that increased self-governance of gardens will allow the IRC to shift their focus from day-to-day operations and management to developing leadership, business management, and marketing skills. This issue statement first considers the benefits of community gardens, after which it turns to the specific site context and the challenges engaged by the IRC.

Community Gardens: Benefits and Challenges

Community gardens are plots of land, typically in a city or densely populated urban area, used by individuals or families to grow their own food (Okvat & Zatura, 2011). Gardens can also be used by residents who are interested in selling food for entrepreneurial activities. Gardens tend to arise as a result of interest expressed from residents who have limited access to land in which to garden. Often, efforts of the community to form urban gardens are supported by organizations within a community or neighborhood. Because these efforts are reflective of the communities from which they arose, the gardens come in every shape and size, and reflect the needs and values of the area (McCelvey, 2009).

The earliest type of community gardening in the United States was traced back to Detroit in the 1890’s as a method of urban beautification, skill development, assistance for the unemployed, and to teach civic engagement and work habits to youths. The movement was popularized during World War II through the ‘Victory Garden Campaign’, an effort to provide citizens with access to food while boosting moral. Urban gardening was revitalized in the 1970’s as a means to address environmental issues, rebuild cities, increase camaraderie and fight the impact of inflation (McCelvey, 2009). Currently, community gardens have become a popular means of addressing food access and security issues, establishing civic participation, creating economic opportunities and often providing affordable access to organic, local produce.

Additionally, these gardens provide benefits to families and community members that include
improved multicultural relations, food security, health education, environmental awareness, and an array of social benefits that empower participants. They improve access to locally grown food while promoting healthy living, and environmental awareness. For example, Judd et al., (2007) found that community gardeners have greater consumption of fresh vegetables compared to non-gardeners, and lower consumption of sweet foods and drinks. Cities with community gardens also report a boost in property values and neighborhood pride (San Diego Childhood Obesity Initiative, 2013). In addition, they have been found to be associated with important social benefits, such as improved psychological well-being, social connectivity, and improved attitudes about the neighborhood (Twiss et al., 2003).

In diverse, low-income neighborhoods, community gardens can be even more essential. Many low-income individuals live within communities that have limited access to healthy food access (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011). Over 10% of Americans are food insecure, meaning they do not have a reliable food source. The food they are able access is nutritionally inadequate, or they do not know when or from where their next meal will come (Winne, 2008; Flachs, 2010). In addition to limited access to healthy food stores, markets and restaurants, many dense urban neighborhoods have limited space available to grow food. Such neighborhoods often lack opportunities for civic engagement, community gathering locations, and access to public health education (Hallberg, 2009). Community gardens have been known to address these challenges.

Urban agriculture can have a dramatic financial impact on participating gardeners. Gardens enable community members to grow their own fresh produce at a fraction of the retail cost (Flachs, 2010). This is a powerful incentive particularly as food costs continue to increase. In some communities, urban farmers can sell their produce at local farmers markets or to restaurateurs. Even in communities that restrict the sale of food grown in urban plots, farmers are encouraged to share their harvest with friends and family (How P-Patch Works, 2013).

The activity of gardening in a shared space over time can build trust among gardeners and promote cross-cultural learning and appreciation (Semenza & March, 2009; Judd et al., 2007). Subsequently communities practicing urban agriculture may experience improved race relations that transcend the gardeners directly involved with the farm. For example, based on survey results, Shinew (2004) found that members of diverse racial groups in neighborhoods with community gardens experienced less racial tension than those without.

The community garden movement has taken many strides in recent years, propelled by a combination of public engagement on issues of sustainability, community health and local food movements. As a part of this movement, there are people who would utilize local agriculture, of which community farms are a part of, to develop and promote a political force that can impact change in food policy in the United States (Field & Bell, 2013). In San Diego, the local food movement has been able to influence change in local urban policy. For example, they have been successful in revising guidelines for backyard animal keeping, including allowances for chickens

---

1 Benefits noted in this discussion are documented by Twiss, Dickinson, Duma, Kleinman, Paulsen, & Rilveria, 2003; Judd, Thompson & Corkery, 2007; Community Health Improvement Partners, 2012; Armstrong, 2000; and Okvat & Zatura, 2011
and goats (A. Mei & P. Reddy, Interviews, February 19, 2013). It has also been suggested that organized garden efforts have a relationship with the economy. In periods of economic depression, there is an increased focus on urban agriculture (Pudup, 2006). First Lady Michelle Obama, visited the New Roots Community garden as part of her efforts to combat childhood obesity and called the New Roots Farm, “A phenomenal initiative” (Darce, 2010).

While community gardens provide many benefits, they also confront challenges related to both development and maintenance over time. The literature on gardens suggests that the following general challenges can impede their establishment. These challenges can pose a particular burden to the low-income communities that arguably stand to benefit most from gardening opportunities:

1. Developing community garden programs with a strong foundation in the community requires a time consuming strategic planning and civic engagement process (Health Policy Consulting Group, 2012).
2. Land acquisition can be a particular impediment. Historically, many gardens in low income communities were established on vacant land that was subsequently lost to urban development. If on public land, there is a need to develop a public lease or other formal agreement (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny, 2004).
3. A variety of legal issues are involved, including potential liability concerns and need to comply with city zoning and other regulations (Florido, 2010; Voigt, 2011).
4. Financial resources are critical to the sustainability of community gardens. Developing community garden program without reliance on grants and sponsorships is difficult. Startup costs can range from $1,500 to estimated project budget cost of $250,000 or more (Eslick & Thomas, 2010).
5. Once established, community gardens are volunteer operations that can experience governance challenges related to leadership, management, staffing, and coordination of volunteers and community partners. Gardens often rely on the support of a few “champions” to oversee operations. If these few individuals move on, the garden program may flounder (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny, 2004).
6. Finally, farming/gardening experts must be engaged to share their knowledge of planting, maintenance and harvesting to cultivate a productive, sustainable garden (The Stop, 2012). Lack of technical knowledge and experience is often a barrier towards producing a well-managed garden.

Specific to diverse communities, engaging distinct groups or cultures with different interests and perspectives requires significant attention to role definition, and identification of goals that meet the needs of involved parties (A. Mei & P. Reddy, Interviews, February 19, 2013). Another challenge is language and literacy barriers. These barriers can pose obstacles to effective communication and coordination. Difficulties in communication can unintentionally result in the exclusion of groups during the identification and planning steps in creating a garden. This exclusion risks a longer-term lack of engagement and ownership of the garden by that group (Okvat & Zatura, 2011). Even in established gardens, language barriers can limit the dissemination of knowledge essential for successful garden cultivation (The Stop, 2012).
Study Context: City Heights and International Rescue Committee

This study focuses in particular on developing options for management practices for gardening operations associated with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), based in the City Heights neighborhood of the eastern part of San Diego, California. IRC operates four gardening and farming sites: New Roots Community Farm, City Heights Community and Remedy Garden, New Roots Aqua Farm and the REAP training center in Pauma Valley. The objective of these gardens and farms is to support refugees and community members from City Heights and allow them to grow food that is both health and culturally appropriate. For the refugee gardeners, the gardens have the added benefit of supporting their integration into the greater City Heights area. For the citizens who already lived in the neighborhood, the farms offer an opportunity to experience new cultures and customs. In supporting urban agriculture, IRC promotes economic empowerment, civic engagement, health and wellness activities (IRC Programs in San Diego, 2013). In all of the projects they undertake, IRC strives to achieve sustainability so the programs can serve the community for years to come.

Overview of City Heights

City Heights is one of the oldest communities in San Diego, originally called East San Diego as it developed separately from the rest of San Diego, and was annexed into the rest of the City in 1923. Development began in 1888 with the start of rail steam car service to the area east of downtown; City Heights developed into a densely populated area with a mixture of business and housing (Hensley, 1956).

Two of the main corridors along City Heights, and through all of the Mid City areas are El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue. At one time, these corridors were the retail centers of San Diego, with commercial development on both sides of the street. However in the late 1950s and 1960s, things changed for these corridors. Competition from shopping centers along the freeways to the north (Interstate 8) in Mission Valley and to the south along Highway 94 competed with businesses in City Heights, and the business center began to deteriorate (City Heights Business Association, 2011). In 1990, the area’s City Council representative, John Hartley, asked for a “state of emergency” declaration due to the crime and economic depression engulfing the area. Following this declaration, Price Charities undertook a partnership with the City of San Diego to work in the community and develop a plan for the City Heights Urban Village, beginning the City Heights Initiative (M. Hervey, interview, April 12, 2013)(Price Charities, 2011).
With more than 74,000 residents, City Heights is one of the most densely populated communities in San Diego Homeownership rates and household incomes that are substantially lower than average for San Diego County as a whole. The following graph shows the percentage of residents that are in each income category. City Heights is highly diverse in terms of race and ethnicity. Of the 75,252 residents estimated to reside in City Heights in 2012, 7,915 are estimated to be White, 44,065 Hispanic, 8,734 Black and the remaining as other ethnicities (SANDAG, 2012). For comparison, the proportion of the population comprised of non-white ethnicities in City Heights is 89%, compared to 51% in the City of San Diego as a whole. Figure 3 shows the existing land uses that exist in City Heights, sharing areas that are currently developed as commercial, industrial or as a high or low density of residential land use. The communities to the north in City Heights are the areas that have the highest density residential and have less open space or recreation areas. (SANDAG, 2013)(SANGIS, 2013).

According to the 2010 census, the median household income in City Height is $33,549, as compared to the San Diego region at $44,712 and the City of San Diego at $63,198. As Figure 4 shows, that City Heights has a much higher proportion of individuals with household incomes below $45,000 than either the City of San Diego or the greater San Diego region (SANDAG, 2013). Represented in this community are Hispanic, East African, African American, Indian, Middle Eastern, Southeast Asian and many other cultures. Also included in these cultures are
Many refugee populations that serve as the basis for services provided by the International Rescue Center. (Brown, 2011).

City Heights faces several additional barriers to developing community gardens that merit special consideration. Challenges with gaining access to suitable land, acquiring needed permits, and high water costs are prohibitive to community garden development, especially in City Heights. These challenges, described below, disincentivizes both gardeners and managers.

Ideally locations for community gardens are unpaved, close to public transportation and large enough to hold several garden plots. However, available land in City Heights is often small, or too hard to access. The urban gardens ideally should also be able to be secured to mitigate theft and vandalism. Finally, the best garden locations are those that are not ‘prime’ locations for immediate redevelopment, thus making government held property some of the best fit (M. Hervey, interview, April 12, 2013).

In San Diego communities such as City Heights, there are significant challenges to successfully engage with government officials. For several years, urban gardening was supported strongly by a single individual, working within the City of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation. The City of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation is one of the agencies that own land in the community. After the internal champion left, community gardens in San Diego faded from the political agenda (J. Jacoby, interview, March 23, 2013). There are currently efforts underway to revisit and revitalize past initiatives (R. Contreras, interview, April 12, 2013).

Additionally, land ownership and permitting is even more complicated in City Heights. Historically, a neighborhood use permit could have significant start-up costs (Florido, 2010). IRC referenced that they spent over $30,000 to get a neighborhood use permit (K. Hearnsberger, Interview, April 12, 2013). The high cost and long bureaucratic process drove community garden advocates to pursue opportunities on public land. In 2011, land use regulations changed to favor the use of community gardens on most private land, making the permit process for private land less complicated than seeking authority to build gardens on public land (Florido, 2010).

Multiple interview subjects discussed that it is difficult to identify the primary contact at the City of San Diego, which sometimes needs to be the departments of Real Estate Services, Parks and
Recreation, the Water Department and Development Services. However one public agency, Caltrans, has been supportive of community garden development. Caltrans has many lots along the Interstate 15, left over from right-of-way purchases that would be potential sites for community gardens. These sites are ideal for community gardens because they are centrally located but are too small or irregularly shaped to be developed for private commercial or residential use.

Another serious concern for garden managers and plot owners alike was prohibitive water prices. Garden managers expressed concern at the high cost of installing a water meter, approximately $11,000. This price immediately deters any volunteer group and most small organizations. For sites that already have a meter installed, permits are $600 dollars, still making water access one of the largest expenses associated with the garden (B. Townsend, interview, April 12, 2013)(J. Jacoby, interview, March 13, 2013). Finally, once the water meter issues are solved, most gardens are able to receive an agricultural water rate (strictly water cost, versus bundled with sewer) (Interview with Townsend). This price is normally reflected as the main driver in the annual cost to rent a garden plot. Most plots cost $100/year, but it is simply still too expensive for some gardeners. One interviewee indicated that members of the Cambodian community were no longer participating in the IRC because the high water cost was limiting any profit that could be made from proceeds (P. Chourp, interview, April 12, 2013).

These barriers that are prominent in City Heights are typical challenges facing community garden development in low-income areas. In the face of these challenges, it is nevertheless the team’s judgment that City Heights could benefit from a more robust community garden network. The issues associated with site location and attributes for selecting garden sites will be addressed in greater detail in the paper developed by Gastwirth, Liu, Montes and Tunks titled “Growing Community Gardens in City Heights, San Diego”.

IRC Community Farming in City Heights

This project aims to provide lessons that might be adapted by the International Rescue Committee of San Diego (IRC), which operates an array of community gardening programs in the City Heights area. Founded in 1933, at the request of Albert Einstein, the IRC responds to humanitarian crises and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives (IRC, 2012). IRC operates in more than 40 countries around the world. One of only nine organizations in the country that resettles refugees, IRC maintains 22 offices in the United States (Minchin, 2012)(Where We Work, 2013). To support refugees in their transition, IRC, with the assistance of a network of partners, works to address needs that arise after resettlement such as: long term housing, employment, language support, skill development, medical attention and education. The resettlement offices conveniently provide a robust array of services to refugees living in the United States (How We Help, 2013).

In San Diego, IRC’s operations are clustered around five major programmatic themes. Resettlement addresses many of the immediate needs of more than 1,000 immigrants per year that come to San Diego.
Economic Empowerment programs focus on achieving financial security through five initiatives, including IRC’s gardens and markets. Community Integration and Development employs practices to assist immigrants with the legal and social challenges associated with becoming a member of the community. Community gardening and farming is an important area for IRC’s community integration work. Health and Wellness programs are focused on the food security and nutrition issues facing the refugees and City Heights Community. Finally, because children displaced by crisis have special needs, IRC provides Children, Youth and Education programs that provide assistance with language, homework and other enrichment activities (IRC Programs in San Diego, 2013).

The IRC in San Diego operates an array of food and farming activities through its Food Security and Community Health (FSCH) Program. This effort creates innovative projects that increase health, food access and bolster economic prosperity. FSCH selects projects that combine five core principles (see Figure 6). These concepts together reflect the basic attributes of ‘neighborhood-scale food systems’ (New Roots in San Diego, 2013). These activities complement and support its refugee IRC’s larger organizational mission and local programs.

FSCH programs include nine initiatives of which four are urban agricultural sites. IRC actively manages: New Roots Community Farm, Farming Enterprise, New Roots Aqua Farm and City Heights Community and Remedy Garden (listed in Figure 7). These gardens improve food security, generate potential economic stability and preserve an aspect of the participant’s culture (Alvear, 2013).

The New Roots Community Farm hosts more than 85 farmers from 12 different countries (New Roots in San Diego, 2013). The plots are in demand as evidenced by the fact that there are 40 families currently on the waiting list (A. Mei & P. Reddy, interview, February 19, 2013). The City Heights Community and Remedy Garden accommodates 16 plots and features an herbal garden cultivated for medicinal purposes (New Roots in San Diego, 2013). Gardeners can work with IRC staff to sell their produce at the City Heights and El Cajon Farmer’s Markets. In 2012, the gardens yielded more than $26,000 in sales at the City Heights Farmers’ Market alone (Aguliera, 2012). The partnership with the Farmers’ Market, farm stands, and restaurants that serve locally grown organic food provide supplemental income and opportunities to develop business, marketing and communication skills.

Anchi Mei and Priya Reddy (Interview, February 19, 2013) attribute the success of these gardens to the empowering impact they have on the refugees. Many of the refugees in City Heights come
from agrarian backgrounds, such as African, Asian and central America (specifically Burma, Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Chaldean, Somalia, Uganda and Zimbabwe) (Aguilera, 2012). When refugees are relocated into urban environments from rural, agrarian settings, the impact is often negative. Recognizing the value of community gardens to ease this transition, and at the request of the Somali Bantu communities, the IRC initiated its New Roots Community Farm in 2007 (Brown, 2011). Now in the sixth year of operation, the FSCH has been acknowledged as an exemplar, and has been emulated by IRC organizations in other cities (New Roots in San Diego, 2013).

To support the enthusiasm for urban agriculture, the FSCH team wants to achieve increased sustainability before expanding their efforts. Currently, the team is actively developing a new garden in El Cajon that will complement the Farmer’s Market launched in March of 2013 (A. Mei & P. Reddy, interview, February 19, 2013). However, before they engage in another garden opportunity, the FSCH team is interested in better understanding how communities engage low-income residents from around the world. One of the key objectives in all activities the IRC participate in is stability and sustainability (New Roots in San Diego, 2013).

Specifically, a goal is to increase the role of the garden participants in managing and governing the New Roots Community Farm. The IRC staff is highly involved in the operational aspects of the City Height’s New Roots garden. For example, IRC assists in securing the land, establishing the garden, and involving the community. The organization also provides training and equipment, and facilitates business partnerships (The IRC Blog, 2012). The IRC manages water fees, plot allocation, volunteers coordination and resolves disputes that may arise. IRC also contracts with translators to ensure their training and information sessions are accessible. It is estimated that IRC spends more than $50,000 annually in overhead cost to support the garden (A. Mei & P. Reddy, interview, February 19, 2013).

Increased self-governance of the New Roots programs could have several advantages. First, if the gardeners take an increased leadership role in managing and maintaining the garden, organizing volunteers and daily operations, IRC staff will have greater capacity to provide support for leadership and skill development training. IRC staff will also be able to focus on more strategic efforts such as supporting gardening expansion and capacity, enrichment and education opportunities for refugees and finding new economic opportunities for agricultural efforts (A. Mei & P. Reddy, interview, February 19, 2013). This effort would in turn build the volunteers’ skills and facilitate a connection to the garden operation more deeply. The garden and community would benefit from increased stewardship.

This report considers volunteer management practices learned from other community food programs and the organizations that partner with them. The goal is to identify sustainable governance and engagement practices that could be applied to the New Roots programs as the IRC expands their gardening operations. In addition to identifying transferable management practices, the report will also consider mechanisms for conflict resolution. The report will consider how to engage a culturally diverse community and sustain that engagement over a long period of time.
III. Purpose and Method

This research project identifies practices used successfully to support development of sustainable community gardens, focusing on self-governance within the community of City Heights. The researchable questions for this project are:

1. What are the attributes of City Heights that position it for sustainable, diverse urban agriculture?
2. What are the effective self-governance and sustainability practices of community gardens in diverse urban areas?

To focus on the most applicable practices the research incorporates the following criteria:

1. Sustainability - practices that promote enduring garden management and volunteer systems and community engagement
2. Self-governance - approaches that empower members of the garden to be responsible for day to day operations with effective tools for management and structures and processes for conflict resolution
3. Inclusion of diversity - engaging diverse grassroots efforts, and sometime divergent, group members in effective self-governance

The research team has reviewed more than 18 individual gardens, 13 urban agricultural initiatives in US cities and 11 food access efforts in the US and around the world. Two case studies demonstrate best practices in use. The research has been analyzed in an attempt to identify practices that might be pursued to develop capacity for self-governance among community gardens in City Heights. Additional consideration has been given to select practices that can be feasibly employed by IRC and other organizations working with similarly diverse and low-income populations. The solutions proposed are workable (specifically low-cost), socially acceptable, proven, practical and unbiased.

City Heights Research

Research conducted on City Heights utilized quantitative and qualitative methods, including:

- Demographic Data - The team has gathered census data, economic data and vital statistics. The team drew upon federal, state and local resources.
- Literature Review - The team reviewed a breadth of scholarly and news articles that explore community engagement in low-income areas, the websites of local organizations operating community gardens and self-governing organizations.
- Field research and expert interviews - The team conducted 21 interviews with experts in the community gardening field to gain a better perspective of challenges and practical solutions. The team also engaged in field research with community activists, gardeners, supporters and organizational partners working in City Heights.
The objective of the research in City Heights is to provide community context based on the demographics and assets of City Heights that position it for sustainable community gardening (see pages 7-12). This research informed the assessment of the applicability of findings identified in the best practice review.

**Best Practice Research**

For the purposes of this project, it is important to clarify best practices. Myers, Smith and Martin (2004) offer several definitions of best practice research. Overman and Boyd’s (1994) definition “the selective observation of a set of exemplars across different contexts in order to derive more generalizable principles and theories,” aligns with our expectations of work (Myers, Smith & Martin, 2004). Myers et al., (2004) differentiate between two types of best practices research; quantitative/microeconomic and qualitative/case study. This group will focus on the qualitative/case study approach.

Best practice research involved three different initiatives. First, field research and expert interviews were conducted in City Heights and the surrounding areas. Second, the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods P-Patch Program provided a comparison with a well-established, complex urban agricultural initiative. Third, the Village Market, a nonprofit grocery store in Portland, Oregon served as a community-governed organization in a related industry. The team conducted interviews with gardening experts, food policy specialists, local community leaders in the San Diego, Portland, and Seattle (see Appendix B). By analyzing the existing practices of other community programs, the team used interviews and case studies to identity five common themes and practices that most strongly align with a neighborhood like City Heights.

**Case Study Criteria:**

Establishing basic criteria for comparison is necessary for conducting best practice research (Bretschneider, Mac-Aurele Jr., & Wu, 2005). The cases considered in this report were selected with several criteria in mind. These initiatives are located in urban settings; they are serving diverse communities; and they engage low-income citizens (see Figure 8 below). Additionally, the initiatives are located along the West Coast, are located in moderate climates and have some cultural similarities with the nationalities represented in City Heights. These common factors supported the translation of community garden governance and sustainability methods to the City Heights context. With these criteria in mind, the team selected two cases:

1. City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods P-Patch Program (P-Patch) - Located in Seattle Washington, the P-Patch is a community gardening program has been nationally recognized for their innovative approach and enduring success. Started in 1974, P-Patch has grown from a single urban farm donated by the Picardo Family to more than 80 gardens across the city. P-Patch is operated by the City of Seattle’s Department of Neighborhoods and supported by P-Patch Trust and land-owning partners (P-Patch, 2013). Given the complexity of this program, the team will specifically focus on Thistle Patch, a garden in Seattle’s most diverse neighborhood (Opalka, 2012).
2. Janus Youth Programs’ Village Market (Village Market or the Market)- Janus Youth Programs is a nonprofit organization serving the needs of children, youth and families in the Greater Portland, Oregon Area. The Market is a community governed, nonprofit grocery store serving the needs of the Portsmouth neighborhood, a highly diverse, low-income neighborhood (OPHI, 2012). While the Market is not a community garden, its grass-roots origin and creative governance structure align with the research project.

In the following table, basic census information is compared between City Heights and the case study locations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Area</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Median Income</th>
<th>Median Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portsmouth (Village Market)</td>
<td>7,490</td>
<td>$39,940</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Portland</td>
<td>583,776</td>
<td>$50,117</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Heights</td>
<td>74,062</td>
<td>$33,549</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of San Diego</td>
<td>1,301,617</td>
<td>$63,198</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego Region</td>
<td>3,095,313</td>
<td>$44,772</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranier Valley Neighborhood</td>
<td>37,056</td>
<td>$44,259</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Seattle</td>
<td>608,660</td>
<td>$61,856</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional demographic information, comparing City Heights, the Ranier Valley in Seattle and the Portland’s Portsmouth neighborhood are included in Appendix A.

Limitations

Best practices research can have several shortcomings and challenges. The most important challenge is the identification of best practices that align with the goals and interests of the community. This can be significant when there is a mismatch between the practices identified and the particular community context. It is inherently difficult to determine whether a particular approach is can be generalized and applied to a different location (Myers et al. 2004). This potential vulnerability can be mitigated by being transparent about the limitations encountered during the research process. (Bretschneider et al., 2005) suggest limiting research to a geographic area, in this case the West Coast of the United States.

Furthermore, due to time constraints the team cannot conduct a comprehensive survey of all community gardens and therefore may not view the full range of “best” practices (Bretschneider et al., 2005). The scope of the project required a selection of a sample. Given these limitations, we may not have researched the full range of engagement, management, and governance options or their outcomes.

Ethical Considerations and Human Subjects

Our research methods, consisting of literature review, interview and comparisons have not involved collection of data about human subjects. Our team has not engaged in any specific testing or group studies, and the interviews have focus on collection of perspectives and expert knowledge
regarding community gardens, rather than collection of personal information. Hence this is not considered to be human subjects research subject to Institutional Review Board review.

IV. Research Findings

The team’s research unearthed considerable information on the history and benefits of community gardens. There are many practical guides to developing community gardens from a logistical perspective. There are far fewer academic or practical studies of governance and management structures that promote sustainable operation of an urban garden. On the topics of sustainability and volunteer management there are general studies that are more suitable for established organizations, but less suitable to grass-roots efforts. Thus, the findings weave together information drawn from our case studies, industry experts, and field research with the smaller set of findings from a literature review.

While further research would be required to link these practices causally the ‘success’ of a garden, it is evident that effective gardens embraced the following practices:

1. Community initiated, driven and managed efforts appear to be successful at maintaining a sustainable volunteer workforce and community engagement
2. Strong leadership and cohesive vision is important for garden management and communication to gardeners, volunteers, support organizations and the broader community
3. Intersectoral collaborations yield more resources for garden managers thus making the garden efforts more stable
4. Formalized structures and systems for garden and volunteer management help clarify roles and responsibilities essential for governing large and diverse groups
5. Conflict management and mediation strategies help gardens promote a fair, safe, and enjoyable gardening and volunteer experience

The following section will describe the findings in greater detail and provide examples from interviews, field visits, literature and the 2 case studies:

• Seattle’s Department of Neighborhood’s P-Patch program
• Janus Youth Programs’ Village Market.

1. Community Initiated, Driven and Managed

The most frequently occurring finding in our research sources is the most obvious: community involvement is essential for developing a sustainable garden. The nonprofit sector or lead governmental agency may be motivated to lead the effort in establishing and supporting gardens in communities of need but the engagement of residents is essential. The community provides the human capital necessary to develop and maintain the garden over the sustainable long-term.
In developing enduring community partnerships that work long-term, first there must be a shared vision, common goals, and clear definition of the structure and responsibilities of the committee, the coordinators, the facilitators, the managers, and the plot renters. The more engaged and committed the community, the more likely that the gardens will be sustained over time. In addition, the community’s ability to achieve stability requires enduring partnerships and collaborative work to address other issues beyond simple gardening, such as leadership style and differences. Embracing ideas, community engagement, and dedication to stakeholders are key elements for a grassroots community garden’s sustainability.

The most effective operations appear to have a relatively high level of community engagement from the onset, and many successful gardens emerged from community volunteer mobilization. Developing community garden programs and building strong community participation takes time. A strategic engagement plan is vital to the success of sustained community efforts, however research showed creating one is time-consuming. Plans for sustainability must include steering committees, fundraising activities, community and organization integration plans, annual maintenance, garden coordinator, and event schedules (Health Policy Consulting Group, 2012). Community participation is important to gardens. Community gardens otherwise become allotments that are void of social engagement (J. Jacoby, interview, March 13, 2013).

While it is important to engage the community in the development process, engagement should be managed. The time-consuming planning and development process can stymie the momentum of community interest (K. Wood, interview, February 21, 2013). Most participants are more interested in gardening and engaging with each other than in advocating for urban agriculture policy change (Health Policy Consulting Group, 2012). People are ready with shovels and plants, but in the absence of broad-based stakeholder engagement, the garden may not take root. The ability to balance interests and build on momentum is critical to successfully engaging and sustaining participation.

A pertinent example of the role of the community can be found in the Village Market case study (Appendix __). The Village Market is a community governed nonprofit grocery store serving Portland, Oregon’s Portsmouth neighborhood. Within Portsmouth is Oregon’s largest housing project, New Columbia. It is also home to refugees from around the world. When New Columbia first opened, a portion of the community was zoned residential to promote business attraction. A convenient store tried, but ultimately failed to maintain a viable business. As most of the local stores sold only junk food, alcohol, and cigarettes, many community members had no choice but to take a 45-minute bus trip (with two transfers) to the nearest grocery store.

![Figure 9: Neighbors gather to plan the Village Market. Source: Oregon Public Health Institute, 2012](image)
Frustrated with the lack of options, a group of residents approached the Portland Housing Authority, Home Forward for assistance in starting a community market. Home Forward suggested Janus Youth Programs, a nonprofit serving youth and families, as an more viable partner.

Together, community volunteers, Janus Youth, and Home Forward created an initial business plan, redesigned the store layout, secured vendors and secured start-up funding. They engaged with a broader community through door-to-door surveys, flyers, emails and town hall-style meetings. The partners were successful in generating support from government officials across several agencies. Today, the Market is in its second year of operation and the community remains highly involved. The Village Market Volunteer Advisory Committee guides market operations; employees are hired from the neighborhood; volunteers come from partner organizations; and much of the produce sold in the store is sourced from local farmers markets.

Challenges to community engagement are not unique to lower income communities. The City of La Mesa, California had the funds to develop a community garden but it was unsuccessful for a number of reasons. One of the most important reasons for this failure was that community members did not initiate the request and they were not involved in the original planning of the garden (Y. Garrett, interview, February 26, 2013). The City instead, sought an urban garden to capitalize on the benefits associated with productive green space. The City created the community garden concept and solicited citizen participation to help launch and support the garden. They encountered many permit and licensing issues. For example, a proposed site was on assisted living property. Due to regulations, the garden could not be developed at that location. Yvonne Garrett, the Assistant City Manager/Director Community Services, with the City of La Mesa, was disappointed that this project failed because the city had dedicated considerable time to create and secure the garden. The community members involved became dissatisfied with the process and grew skeptical of re-engaging in the process to find a new garden (Y. Garrett, interview, February 26, 2013).

The contrast of the unsuccessful community garden effort and the very successful community market effort illustrates the critical role played by community grassroots support. From conceptualization to governance and oversight, the community can provide stability and guidance needed to create a garden that reflects the needs and values of their neighborhood. Once organized and focused on achieving the goal, a citizen effort is a powerful force in solidifying partners, funding and raising awareness. If residents are not organized and managed properly, efforts are stalled and fizzle out.

2. Strong Leadership and Cohesive Vision

Leadership is a necessary component of community gardens, which require a mixture of individuals who are either paid or have the interest and ability to spend intensive effort to manage the garden. Gardens also need a coalition of members who can support and volunteer time and labor necessary to run a community garden. Many community gardens are heavily reliant on either an individual leader or a small group of dedicated volunteers. Over time this reliance increases and can place garden management and efficacy in jeopardy.
San Diego Peace Garden Coordinator, Beth Townsend described her experiences as a highly engaged community garden leader as both rewarding and challenging. Townsend, a member of the City Heights community, is part of an informal group of people who volunteer their time, are passionate about food justice, community gardens and social empowerment. Townsend is responsible for managing a new garden in north-eastern City Heights. She was recruited by church leaders to be the lead in planning the garden, designing the space, raising funding, engaging interested participants, managing volunteers, and overseeing marketing, communications and promotions. With Church support, she and her volunteer workforce cleared the land and created demonstration beds. To accomplish all of this, Townsend has taken an incremental approach, dedicating 2-3 days a week of on-site labor and volunteer management (B. Townsend, interview, April 12, 2013).

Many “champions” have been working in this profession for years and are thrilled at the increase of interest in these issues. However, these core leaders from the community are often managing more than one social justice project and serving on several committees. There is a concern that without cultivation of new leaders and extension of connections with nonprofit organizations and City Officials, there will not be enough qualified candidates and adequate funding to assume responsibility of garden management (B. Townsend, interview, April 12, 2013).

This formalization of volunteer management is especially important for organizations that rely on volunteers to govern their operations. These volunteers are often charged with logistical and strategic responsibilities in addition to their roles as gardener or volunteer. Even with supporting organizations, planning committee and rules and procedures, burnout and turnover are very real issues facing community gardens. In City Heights it was apparent that highly engaged garden advocates were already involved and volunteering their time to the maximum extent.

This experience is reflected in the literature. In a 30-year study of New York City, researchers found that often the leaders who start an effort are around for a few years, and then become less engaged (Saldivar-Tanaka et al., 2004). They also found gardens with a lack of leadership were at significantly more risk of losing leases with the City of New York. It is evident that leadership development in New York City could have assisted in keeping some community gardens in business for a longer.

To cultivate leaders, garden operators must first engage the community and identify a large pool of candidates passionate and dedicated to the garden. Draw from local resources such as schools, communities of faith, local government and community organizations to help identify emerging leaders. Leaders should be chosen based on their ability to collaborate, engage and work well with others over long-term projects (Points of Light Foundation, 2004). Despite the importance of leadership cultivation, no individual can develop and manage a community garden alone.

Sometimes, staff at supporting organizations oversees training, much like the leadership training the IRC facilitates in their gardens (K. Hernsberger, interview, April 12, 2013). Other times this may require outside expertise. The Village Market needed external experts to train staff and
volunteers on community engagement practices, financial management as well as sales and marketing (Y. Maranowski, interview, August 15, 2012). Partnerships with local universities may offer affordable solutions to customized training needs. Finally, industry experts can be engaged to talk to small groups to develop their knowledge on specific topics (Village Market Volunteer Advisory Committee, meeting, February 6, 2013).

There are also opportunities to engage in more formal training. A potential collaborator to help develop leadership skills is the American Community Gardening Association (ACGA, n.d.). The ACGA has more than 30 years of experience of “train the trainer”, which is a custom design hands-on workshop curriculum for community development, growing communities, community building and organizational development through community gardening. Another resource is CORO, a California nonprofit educational institute, offers a verity of leadership and community engagement training.

Developing leaders now and for the future is critical if the gardens are to maintain self-governance and sustainability. Often the focus of a community garden is on the infrastructure of developing and maintaining the garden, but little attention is given to the human development. Without proper leadership the garden will flounder and possibly fail. Successful gardens balance community engagement and leadership cultivation. These efforts are supported by collaborations, structure, systems and mediation strategies.

3. Intersectoral Collaboration

Gardens that attract support from across the private, public, and nonprofit sectors can leverage a diverse portfolio of resources to promote sustainability. Nonprofit partners often support volunteer management, fundraising and networking opportunities. Government partners can help determine sites, navigate the permit process and ensure compliance with local regulations. Businesses often support community gardens by providing funding, equipment, training and economic opportunities. Combining one or more of these partners can create a more stable environment for garden development. Our research indicates there are examples of beneficial intersectoral collaborations, and examples that indicate a need to improve existing partnership.

The land ownership in City Heights is an example of an area that needs a strong connection or cohesive leader to bring public and private agencies together to establish gardens. According to the Victoria House and the IRC, there are locations that would be good for gardens but due to the complex costs and “red tape” that exists with the City, there is limited ability to use this prime property. In fact, when Raul Contreras was explaining why the City of San Diego, Department of Parks and Recreation had not moved forward with new gardens, he indicated that many of the potential sites were managed by a separate Department of Real Estate Services.

By way of another example, there are existing agreements with church or school properties that use existing connections to leverage resources. The Victory Gardens San Diego, Regional Garden Education Center educational materials, _Gardening 201: How to Start and Manage Community Gardens_ (2011) explains that working with school leadership there can be educational and cost
benefits in building these relationships. An example of this working in San Diego is the Springhall Academy partnership, which in conjunction with the school district, developed the San Carlos Community Garden. This garden even has support from the district for garden management, through the school janitorial staff (Community Health Improvement Partners, 2012).

Because it is more feasible to develop leadership from the outset than to cultivate it post hoc, the identification of leadership in expansion of community gardens can improve sustainability. For example, following difficulties in getting community gardens developed at four locations, the Community Health Improvement Partners piloted a modified strategy to find a community group that could take ownership in establishing a new garden. They developed a Request for Proposal process to identify a suitable existing community group that was interested in establishing and managing a new community garden. From their experiences, areas that had higher median income also had more formalized community groups and sponsors that were more experienced to undertake a new project. While this method may not be the most appropriate for an area such as City Heights, which may lack existing organizations and needs more community development and engagement, it remains viable in other communities (J. Arnette, interview, March 11, 2013).

An example of successful intersectoral collaborations is the P-Patch community garden program in Seattle, Washington. These gardens have become sustainable and self-governing as a result of collaboration among four stakeholder groups: gardeners, the P-Patch Trust, Department of Neighborhoods P-Patch staff and Seattle property owners. Each one of these four key collaborating groups forming an alliance enables the P-Patch community garden to be a sustainable urban agricultural program.

- Gardeners are the customers and volunteers who provide the labor and other resources to support the gardens.
- The P-Patch Trust, a nonprofit 501(c)3, acts as a fiscal agent for gardeners, supports the City staff with advocacy and site leadership and provides funding options to community groups (SDON, 2009).
- The City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods program staff provides administrative and programmatic support, maintains standards, and allocates resources across the city-wide program. (SDON, 2009).
- Seattle property owners, with assistance from the P-Patch Trust, provide land through a program memorandum of understanding (MOU) of lease with private and public owners of the garden property, thus providing more land for gardens (SDON, 2009).

From a management perspective, intersectoral collaborations can sometimes prove challenging. For example, in San Diego and its suburbs of Linda Vista, San Carlos and La Mesa, the Community Health Improvement Partners work to develop gardens on school properties. This effort exposed new and unanticipated challenges. In
the City of La Mesa for example, liability agreements thwarted the community garden project at
the Helix Charter High School. Ultimately, the Grossmont Union High School Board declined to
enter into a shared use agreement with the City of La Mesa (Y. Garrett interview, February 26,
2013). The board cited liability issues with The La Mesa/Helix High project. It was the impression
of many involved that continued community discussions and advocacy could have resolved some
of these issues (Community Health Improvement Partners, 2012).

Intersectoral collaboration can yield opportunities and resources to grow and expand gardens.
Sophisticated and enduring collaborations, such as those in Seattle, can also support the stability
of gardens for decades. However, not all collaborations can be engaged. Strategic partnership
planning is important to garden development.

The IRC has been active in the City Heights community for years. Partners have helped IRC
pursue creative programs and initiatives to assist the process of refugee engagement. Partners, such
as Price Charities and The California Endowment, have supported urban agriculture and the efforts to sustain them. Partnerships with Farmers Markets, farm stands (such as the City Farmers Nursery) and restaurants provide economic opportunity to gardeners (B. Tall, interview, April 11, 2013). As IRC transitions away from managing operations at their community gardens it will be important to facilitate connections to organizational partners and train the garden leaders in identifying, cultivating and managing partnerships on their own.

4. Structures and Systems

In addition to leadership cultivation, successful gardens have formalized structures for managing
paid and volunteer staff, making decisions that affect the garden, communicating and collecting
plot fees. Research indicates that community gardens employ a variety of structures ranging from
formal structures supported by bylaws to informal groups working with the advice from
community groups. Further research is needed to determine if one structure is more effective than
another. Nevertheless, the team’s research indicates that some structure is better than no structure.

Structure

Our research found that there are two predominant structures employed by community gardens:

- Formal
- Management of the garden by a dedicated staff.
The first is a formal board structure composed of plot holders, volunteers and representatives from partner organizations. Similar to a nonprofit board, this structure has officers (President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer) and often committees. This management structure is often reinforced with bylaws that not only provide the general rules of the garden, but also describe the process of electing officers and determining their length of service. Bylaws will be discussed in great detail below with examples of this structure to include:

- The Ocean View Farms, a well-established community garden in Venice/Mar Vista communities of Los Angeles. The farm is run by the nonprofit board of directors, with fees covering operating expenses only. The volunteers are not paid for their time, and work on the garden is supplemented by a requirement that plot holders volunteer 12 hours per year on general activities (Ocean View Farms, 2013).
- The Twin Oaks Community Garden in Washington D.C., is owned by the Department of Parks and Recreation but is managed by a board of community garden members. The board manages two garden locations (TwinOaksDC, n.d.)

A second common structure is the management of the garden by a dedicated staff or volunteer of an organization who operates the garden. In this structure, the garden coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the garden, attracting a volunteer workforce, collecting fees and managing a waiting list. This person is often responsible for fundraising, communications, maintenance and security (Gardening Matters, 2006). The level of engagement of the parent organization may vary depending on the capacity and mission of the organization. Some organizations simply provide the space or property needed to garden. Other organizations provide back office support, training, volunteer management, transportation and funding or supplies (Baker & Prichard, 2010). Examples of this structure include:

- The San Diego Peace Garden is managed by Garden Coordinator, Beth Townsend. Townsend works directly with the Church of the Brotheren, both property owner and fiscal sponsor of the garden. Together they develop plans, procedures and resource sharing strategies. This arrangement advances the Church’s goal of serving the community, while also supporting the garden (B. Townsend, interview, April 12, 2013)
- Seattle P-Patch identifies garden leaders by asking gardeners who want to lead to step forward. Coordinators are selected by their level of expertise. Coordinators then build a team of community gardeners willing to manage the garden activities. The Garden coordinator serves as a liaison between the on-site team and the P-Patch Program staff. This method of developing the garden’s managerial structure has proven effective with long-term, positive results for the community (K. Fredie, phone interview, March 26, 2013)

There are examples of organizational structures that do not fit into the above categories. The examples below are not community gardens, but are community-oriented efforts. First, The Village Market, a community oriented nonprofit grocery store, is governed in a round-table fashion. Leaders in the community are identified by other community members. They are asked to join the committee. The committee has no office positions and is comprised of community members,
funders and representatives from Janus Youth Programs. Sub-committees are formed as needed. This flat structure allows participants more flexibility and promotes equity of opinion and perspective.

A second example is the study: An Exit Strategy for Rural Development NGOs. Development Policy Review, presents an alternative management approach (Kahn, 2012). In this situation, an organization developing several sub-organizations, as their goal was for the sub-organizations to eventually become standalone entities. To accomplish this, a structure was established with a General Body (which included all community members) and an Executive Body tasked to execute daily operations. In this study, the organization failed to communicate to the sub-organizations their intent to pull out once they become established. This in turn resulted in considerable consternation as the master nonprofit withdrew.

Discussion with staff at the New Roots Community Farm suggests that the current structure is a hybrid of the two predominant structures described above. Representatives of five main populations serve on a leadership council that works directly with a representative(s) of the IRC in planning, operations and management. Communications to gardeners and other participants is disseminated from the IRC staff member(s) to the leadership council, and through leadership council members, back to the refugee and community groups. Translators and IRC staff aid this communication process (K. Hearsberger, interview, April 12, 2013). Creating a more empowered formalized structure (moving toward a board structure) with clear rules and defined roles, may decrease the dependence on IRC staff members.

**Systems: Bylaws**

Bylaws are rules that govern an organization. For nonprofits, bylaws are required to be filed with the state. Regardless, creating bylaws can be a useful practice for community gardens, particularly if they plan to become an independent nonprofit. Bylaws need not be complex, but they need to address basic questions about the organization’s purpose, objectives and how decision are made. To assist in the process of determining bylaws, we have provided a list of considerations and essential elements in Appendix C.

Ocean View Farms, described previously, is a 501(c)(3). Their bylaws regulate who can be members of the Board of Directors, how many Board of Directors, how they are selected and how long they will serve. They also address issues of volunteer management and general volunteer requirements. These bylaws were developed with the membership of the community garden at a series of meetings in 1996 and 1997 that involved community participation and cultivated support from the membership (Ocean View Farms, 2013).

The posted Rules and Procedures for P-Patch participants including plot use, organic gardening methods, volunteer hour annual obligation, and miscellaneous requirements are clearly identified for each gardener to understand and contribute their unique skills (PPCGPSV, 2009). P-Patch even includes technical aspects of the garden such as clarifying organic practices and dealing with
invasive plants. They also describe the practices of being a considerate community gardener. While P-Patch does not have bylaws, the rules and regulations are clear and accessible.

Bylaws can also clarify what needs to be done when gardeners fail to meet their obligations. In Appendix C, the bylaws for the Ranch Community Garden in San Diego described the steps taken when a plot is abandoned. The bylaws also detail the steps taken for grievances.

Formal structures and systems foster a safe environment and provide a clear understanding of operational practices that govern the shared space. Structure aids in communication and information dissemination. Bylaws empower gardeners and leaders to support the success of the garden. Finally, organizational structures and systems ensure that practices are inclusive and fair.

5. Conflict Resolution

In community gardens, conflicts can arise for a variety of reasons. To understand the type of conflict, it is helpful to understand the source of the grievance. Gardeners are often concerned with issues related to boundaries, layout, maintenance, shared tasks and the fees (both the collection and use of fees) (Park Pride, 2012). Working in such close proximity, there can be personality conflicts, the use of limited resources, differences in values and misconceptions of community (Atlanta Urban Garden Program, 2010). While many community members welcome well-managed and maintained urban agriculture, those living in close proximity may have a different perspective. Neighbors may not want the garden in their community and have a different idea on how the land may be put to use. They can become concerned when plants become unruly, sprawling beyond the garden’s boundaries (Park Pride, 2012). And for community gardens raising animals, noise, odor and health issues may be sources of conflict. In refugee gardens, additional issues might arise due to barriers in communication, unclear rules and procedures and cultural differences.

It is important to review potential sources of conflict before they arise and develop a procedure for dealing with different conflict scenarios (Coeytaux, Crum, Dolcini, Oberlin, Steinhauer & Vierra, 2010). It is also important to train garden leaders to observe signs of conflict (discomfort, avoidance, tension, misunderstandings and incidents) as well as clarifying role and responsibilities in dealing with conflict (Park Pride, 2012). Each garden should develop and approach what is clear and consensus driven (Atlanta Urban Garden Program, 2010). Using this approach, conflict can be mitigated by empowered leadership and accepted rules (Coeytaux, et al., 2010).

For exceptional situations, The San Diego Victory Garden recommends an impartial person (one who does not have an individual plot) be involved in resolving plot related disputes (cite). Also, given the great diversity of IRC’s gardeners, interpreters are essential for understanding and resolving conflicts (K. Hearnsberger, interview, April 12, 2013).

The formal process of conflict resolution used by the Seattle P-Patch program demonstrates a comprehensive approach to issue identification and resolution. Information on the formal grievance procedures (including a grievance form) is available to everyone involved in the P-Patch
program. P-Patch coordinators encourage people to attempt to first resolve their interpersonal problems face-to-face. If they cannot resolve their issue, staff will attempt to facilitate a solution. Often, interpreters are required. Interpreters assist communication between gardeners and coordinators. For disputes within the same cultural group, interpreters help the garden coordinator participate in issue resolution.

At Thistle P-Patch, for example, the Korean and Hmong groups have contrasting methods of gardening. The Koreans are highly orderly, while the Hmong are without order in their gardening style. Accommodating the different gardening styles associated with each ethnicity, requires clear rules and regulations including cross-cultural knowledge and communication skills. It is demonstrated at Thistle P-Patch that a site coordinator with multicultural background is very important to facilitate conflict and issues between gardeners (Hou, Johnson & Lawson. 2009).

In the absence of formal conflict resolution training, unresolved conflicts can be elevated into dispute resolution with professionals, if necessary. In the past, P-Patch City oversight managers have employed ethnically appropriate organizations to assist in resolving conflicts. These organizations have included the Asian Counseling and Referral Service, the Horn Of Africa, and The Refugee Women's Alliance. As an alternative, engaging other gardeners or community leaders who have the respect of those involved can assist in mediation (J. Bryan, interview, April 42013).

Figure 12: P-Patch Conflict Resolution Diagram. Source: P-Patch Programs
The benefits of the approach developed in Seattle are that the conflict resolution method has evolved over 40 years of trial and error. The P-Patch method of conflict resolution is a practice that is actively used and successful. However, gardens may not have as many available resources as P-Patch (such as partner organizations and funding for interpreters) to assist in mediation. Gardens may choose to adopt only portions of this approach that best fit their needs. Examples of conflict resolution procedures can be found in Appendix C.

V. Recommendations

Strategic management of scarce resources is necessary for the development of a community garden that engages the community, employs a robust volunteer network and is structured and governed in a manner that promotes sustainability. Recommended practices must be focused on effective engagement of diverse populations, self-governance that empowers participants, and a sustainable approach to management of both ongoing support processes and conflict resolution. Best practices that will be feasibly employed by IRC and other organizations working with similarly diverse and low-income populations must meet the criteria of being workable (specifically low-cost), socially acceptable, proven, practical and unbiased. Detailed in this section are recommendations to:

- Foster community engagement from conception to governance
- Support cohesive and strong leadership
- Promote intersectoral collaborations
- Develop stable structures and systems
- Establish conflict management strategies

1. Foster community engagement from conception to governance

The IRC is well versed in responding to the needs of the community from direct requests and by testing ideas. Keegan O’Neil, IRC’s Youth Food Justice Program Manager, described the process of talking to teachers, students and parents to gauge interest in creating an on-campus garden at Hoover and Crawford high schools in City Heights (K. O’Neill, interview, April 11, 2013). This strategy has proven successful and can be complemented by developing a customized engagement strategy.

Community engagement strategy is based on input from the current residents, public officials, nonprofit and business leaders. It is the collective belief of the community that will participate, support and engage in the development of the community garden. A process for community engagement is a key element for successful garden sustainability. It is important to ensure where appropriate that the community is kept informed of the decision-making process. Working together to achieve a balance offers opportunity for residents to become involved and to feel a sense of ownership toward the garden.
**Figure 13: Community Engagement Garden Development Template**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish a leadership team of 5 – 7 community leaders and facilitate a broad-based garden team.</td>
<td>Months 1 – 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit community members to attend monthly/weekly meetings.</td>
<td>Months 1 – 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead the garden team in developing goals, plans, bylaws and timeline.</td>
<td>Months 2 – 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine roles and responsibilities and develop protocols for communication and conflict resolution.</td>
<td>Months 2 – 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a plan and budget to build the garden.</td>
<td>Months 2 - 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work toward developing a formal agreement for the garden approve bylaws (see appendix # for examples of bylaws)</td>
<td>Months 2 - 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop plan for raising funds to build the garden.</td>
<td>Months 2 - 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a plan for sustaining the garden once it has been built. The document should include six elements: 1) a strategic plan, 2) budget, 3) organizational goals for next five years, 4) organization structure and leadership development and responsibilities, 5) on-going operation of the garden, and 6) funding opportunities.</td>
<td>Months 3 - 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional approaches include:

- Community surveys (in many languages), both door-to-door, online and in a community meeting space.
- Newsletters, notices and emails (presented in many languages) to update the community on progress of the project and provide opportunities to volunteer. This platform can also be used to educate participants on the importance of the garden and the essential role they play in achieving success.
- Host special volunteer and community events to attract new constituents, educate, gauge interest and build social capital.
- When possible, spread the word at complementary events attracting like minded residents.
- Cultivate informal communication channels by identifying citizens well connected in a given sub-group who can be relied upon to spread the message about the activities taking place and how to get involved.

---

It is important to select communication vehicles that target the different audiences the garden engages. For example, gardeners may prefer notices at the garden or require hard-copy newsletters and communications. Some funders and collaborators may use electronic communications as their primary form of communication. In this situation collaborating with local businesses, churches and community organizations may help in getting out the message. Coordinators must remember to engage on a fairly consistent basis, sharing information that keeps the community informed of changes, events and other relevant topics using many different communication vehicles.

2. Support cohesive and strong leadership

IRC focuses on leadership training and supporting refugees in the process of better integrating into a new society. Within this context, gardeners can benefit from identifying skills within their leadership group and working to build these strengths and augment missing skills. In doing so, it will be important to approach the issue from an assets based standpoint. Community development scholars have challenged the stigmatizing of low income neighborhoods by focusing on deficits such as high crime, poverty, homelessness, and high unemployment, which casts the community as needy and deficient (McKnight, 1993). The recommendation is to develop policies and activities based on the capacities, skills, and assets of people and their neighborhoods.

A pertinent way this has been done is through the use of skills inventories. People are asked to complete a questionnaire that begins the process of inventorying what they are good at doing, what they would be willing to teach, and what they would be willing to learn. This inventory process can help identify local leaders and neighbors that want to step-up and become community leaders. By adapting this practice from nonprofit volunteer and board recruitment, community garden leaders can better understand the assets of their volunteer workforce. It is recommended to develop the questionnaire and skill metric that reflects the management craft required for the garden, and allow volunteers to add in their personal skills that may be unique or unconventional. Appendix C provides a modified Volunteer Questionnaire and Skills Matrix for consideration.

Volunteers are tremendous assets to any community based organization. But volunteers, like employees, can move, change organizations and can suffer from burnout, leading them to exit the organization. It is also important to note that volunteers engage in different activities for different reasons. With increased reliance on volunteers, there becomes an increased need to develop more sophisticated approach to volunteer management (Pynes, 2009).

Generally, volunteer managers can facilitate an enriching and professional environment.

- Identify and define all volunteer opportunities. Projects must be clearly defined and diverse. Some projects are ongoing and occur with relative frequency, while others are single events. Diversity of duties allows volunteers to engage in ways that works best for each individual.

---

3 Volunteer management practices were gather from: C. Chavez, interview, July 19, 2012, Village Market Volunteer Advisory Committee, meeting, February 6, 2013 and M. Tryon, interview, August 16, 2012
• Establish clear priorities for staff and volunteer workers, ensuring everyone is working toward the common goal. When possible, volunteers should have the flexibility to pursue those goals creatively.
• Provide ongoing attention to volunteer management to assess its achievements and consider new ideas and improvement opportunities.
• Seek collaborations that bolster the volunteer workforce. Community events can help find and engage new volunteers. Other organizations may have increased capacity to organize and direct large volunteer workforces more effectively.

Leadership volunteers merit special support. The leadership volunteers at the Village Market partnered with external experts to develop their skills in community engagement practices, facilitating thoughtful discourse and general leadership practices among the committee (Y. Maranowski, interview, August 15, 2012). Providing training opportunities on community engagement, conflict resolution, diversity and regional gardening practices will create a knowledgeable leadership team. ACGA (n.d.) suggests the following leadership development ideas:

• Offer a monthly gathering that includes a gardening lesson, a discussion of leadership issues, and potluck-lunch fellowship with other city gardeners.
• Host a communication-exchange site (Facebook) where gardeners can post questions and exchange information.
• Work with local food bank to help develop management and communication skills.
• Develop gardens partnerships with local businesses, parks departments, environmental groups, churches, PTAs, city agencies, and other services.
• Create a children’s gardening program to promote cooperation and share knowledge with the children of the neighborhood.

Furthermore, it is important to approach garden leadership as a team or group structure. With the high level of individual burnout, it is not prudent to rely too heavily on a single leader. Managers should instead facilitate an inclusive approach to leadership engagement. Mentoring and succession planning should be considered in leadership training, development, and organizational structure.

3. Promote intersectoral collaboration

Networks can be important to the development of community gardens. Effective networks involve community members, public agencies, nonprofit organizations and businesses. The most successful gardens utilize these resources to their advantage and leverage them for development.

Understanding relationships between nonprofits, business and government agencies is an essential first step in managing intersectoral collaborations. Community gardens often operate across all sectors. For example, the IRC operates the New Roots Aqua Farm on Price Charities property for free, as a temporary arrangement before the Price Charities moves forward with the eventual development plan. Without the relationship between them, this would never have been
established (M. Hervey, interview, April 12, 2013). P-Patch (a City operated program) is supported by the P-Patch Trust (a nonprofit) and often works with private land owners to establish gardens. Garden leaders should be educated on the existing relationships that influence garden operations.

Creating a robust network is an important part of collaborations. Garden leaders should be engaging in the community and fostering connections on their own. However, partner organizations and funders can assist by making introductions and extending invitations to community events outside the purview of the garden. These strong relationships will be needed to fundraise, communicate, leverage expertise, and find new business opportunities.

Facilitating connections can also help to ease interactions with the public sector on issues related to zoning, policy, and legal requirements. For gardens established on public land or in collaboration with a public agency, resources need to be dedicated to educating leaders on how to navigate the public processes. For example, IRC has developed the expertise to navigate the City of San Diego process to utilize public land. This knowledge can be shared with other garden leaders facing land use issues (A. Mei & P. Reddy, interview, February 19, 2012) (P. Chourp, interview, April 12, 2013). Sharing this expertise with garden leaders will help empower them to engage in the political process.

Connecting to existing networks can be a fast way to gain access to information and expertise. Food policy networks exist in a variety of formal and informal settings, such as the San Diego Food Systems Alliance. These networks should be utilized support cross sector collaboration. Volunteer networks can also provide creative solutions to training, managing and supporting a professional approach to volunteer management.

Some gardens have been successful in creating partnerships with local churches. By their nature, churches bring people together, according to Kelly Wood, project coordinator for the Springall/SCUMC garden project in San Diego (K. Wood, interview, February 21, 2013). Involving faith based organizations can bring a unique opportunity for collaboration across different faith communities. Bringing distinct groups together requires less time and energy towards the devotion of defining roles and establishing goals that meet the needs of all partnering groups. Partners are more apt to be in sync with the goals of the partnership (Health Policy Consulting Group, 2012). Church-based collaborations also may address issues associated with land shortages since churches tend to have available land for garden use.

4. Develop stable structures and systems

As our findings indicated, there was no apparent conclusive evidence that any one structure or system is better than another. However, there were common themes in the development of these structures that make for good recommendations. It is the believe of the research team that the structure that allows for the most independence is the one constructed as traditional board supported by essential subcommittee and clear, mutually agreed upon bylaws.
As with every aspect of community gardening, community engagement is essential. This will hold true for board development as all community garden members need to have a say in the formal structure of the board. The size of the board should be determined based upon the number of plots, active gardeners and the operational needs of the board. Traditional board roles: President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary (described in Appendix C) may not be sufficient to address the governance needs of the garden; Maintenance Officer, Volunteer Officer and Development Officers may need special representation on the board.

For efforts that extend beyond the duties of a single individual, a committee may need to be formed. Committees may be permanent (such as the Maintenance Committee lead by the Maintenance officer) or be formed on an ad-hoc basis (such as an event committee planning a garden celebration). A volunteer cultivation committee may be the best way to cultivate volunteers, and ensure their training and professional management. Appendix C, provides several committees descriptions.

All gardeners must also have access to representation on the board. Representation in the garden community can reflect the full diversity of the area using the talents of key individuals throughout each culture. The formal structure enables the diverse group a common understanding of the rules, regulation, and authority.

This structure should be explicit in the form of a memorandum of understanding or formal bylaws, and must be developed concurrently and with participation of garden and community membership. Rules and regulations should be agreed upon by community members. The rules should be clear to the participants. Given the many different languages and cultures, the process of developing consensus would likely be time consuming. The rules should be revisited. In the case of P-Patch, the rules and regulations are reviewed at each monthly meeting, and as required during conflict resolution. This is too frequent for some gardens, keeping in mind that an annual review is conducted.

The bylaws should be shared with gardeners. Often this is done as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU can identify the garden plot users, their obligations to the garden plot, the gardeners, the neighbor, their water use, shed use, compost, payment schedule, and other garden requirements. The written MOU can be provided in translated languages as needed for a common understanding between all parties, thereby minimizing misunderstandings between gardeners, and the potential conflict issues in the future. MOU provide gardeners with a written document to refer to as the original contract of commitment of the identified rules and regulations.

The IRC’s structure involves participants by engaging directly with each refugee group (and local community) separately. This approach was developed due to the language barrier. To create a sustainable approach not reliant on IRC, these groups will need to manage together. It would be beneficial to use these existing communities to develop a formal board of an agreed upon size (taking care not to create too large or too small a board) with identified leadership roles. Complex activities should warrant the creation of standing committee, where committee members can focus
on the topic. Finally, clear rules need to be developed and agreed upon to support the leaders, garden operations and protect the interests of the gardeners.

5. Establish conflict management strategies

Employing appropriate conflict resolution methods specifically developed for community gardens, can promote peaceful participation and inclusion in garden activities. These practices can also increase the sustainability and self-governance of the garden. Finally, a fair strategy for conflict resolution can build trust within the membership.

Conflict in a community garden setting can be of three different types with its best method of resolution identified (PPCGPSV, 2009).

- Gardener-to-Gardener Confrontation: gardeners should be encouraged to resolve problems directly. Leaders should encourage dignity and respect for all parties.
  - In conflicts where different languages are required for communication, an interpreter may need to be brought in for clear communication and common courtesy during the dispute resolution process (K. Fredie, phone interview, March 26, 2013).
  - In the event of a conflict that cannot be resolved, an impartial mediator should be brought to settle the dispute.
- Coordinator-to-Gardener: It is advised that if issues arise with a disruptive gardener, the site coordinator should seek assistance from another gardener or staff member (PPCGPSV, 2009). Ultimately grievances should be heard by the administrative body (such as the executive committee) if they are not resolved.
- Citizen-to-Agency: community members, those not participating in the garden, with the close proximity of agriculture and in high density neighborhoods can lead to conflicts (parking, noise, animals, pesticide concerns). Determining an approved process for referring complaints to the appropriate organizations. These issues are regulated by the presiding municipality with authority over the land use in the area. However an informal way to resolve conflicts would be preferred to any code enforcement activities.

These strategies may be too detailed for many gardens. Regardless, it is prudent for garden managers to engage in the process of determining a conflict resolution strategy. Ultimately, conflict resolution should be specifically included in incorporation documents and agreements between gardeners for plots.

VI. Conclusion

Urban agriculture can provide tremendous benefit to the communities they serve, improve social problems such as civic engagement, health, food access, neighborhood pride, and provide an economic catalyst. For individuals, urban gardens represent significant empowerment and entrepreneurial opportunities that can help change their health, increase participation in
neighborhood activities, and develop skills that have the potential to help provide economic stability. However, community gardens do not emerge and are not sustained on their own. They require significant civic engagement, committed leaders, strategic partnerships, functional structures and systems as well as established methods of conflict resolution.

The emergence and developing trend to “go green” has many municipalities interested in developing urban gardens. These types of civic planning and emerging interests help cities foster a robust public engagement. They also enhancing the neighborhood appeal, support the environment, and promote a higher quality of life for residents. They also engage populations, such as low-income and diverse people, that are often hard to reach.

City Heights is an example of a city seeking the benefits of community gardens while working to mitigate the obstacles. The IRC is a pillar organization in the community with a well-established presence in City Heights. They have been successful in creating a network of engaged volunteers, both from the community as well as within the refugee population. IRC has also developed significant expertise in technical issues, such as zoning which can expedite farming opportunities. Finally, they have strong and supportive partners such as the Price Foundation that support, fund, and champion their work. The network that IRC has cultivated is seen as a leader by other community gardens, and was instrumental in making and supporting policy changes within the City of San Diego for development of other community farms.

As IRC endeavors to transition out of an operational role, transferring that responsibility to the garden members, they will want to consider the underlying structures and systems in place that support the gardens. They will also want to determine if the existing volunteer and leadership pool is deep enough and developed adequately to support a nonprofit organization and deal with the day to day operational challenges without benefit of IRC’s paid staff. Finally, special consideration needs to be given to conflict resolution, developing clear methods that empower and protect the gardener’s interests.

In conclusion, our research has demonstrated very clear themes that are central to sustaining community gardens. It is not clear if all of these practices must be in place to ensure the stability of the garden, further research is needed to clarify these issues. The team has also observed that there are few existing academic studies or analysis of information on garden governance structures and conflict resolution practices. We have found that gardeners, coordinators and managers working in the daily operations have valuable insights to garden sustainability.

If trends continue, community gardens will likely become increasingly prevalent in urban communities, such as City Heights. Urban agriculture represents many of the ideals that people care about the most including, access to healthy food, sustainable development practices, and food security. A community garden can be more successful by implementing the recommendations and findings that we describe to develop a sustainable volunteer and leadership base, establish a solid structure, and develop conflict resolution guidelines.