

FINDING COMMON GROUND: COMMUNITY GARDEN
AS CONNECTOR BETWEEN CULTURE,
NATURE, AND THE INDIVIDUAL

by

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ABSTRACT

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In the vacant spaces between buildings, in the corners of school yards, in open fields--wherever community gardens are deliberately placed--the space between culture and nature grows smaller. Closing this gap can come about on the common ground created in a collaborative spirit: the community changes the space; and then the space ultimately changes the community. This is the connective power of the humble community garden.

In the days following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States a wave of introversion, personal self-sufficiency, and emphasis on home life

washed over the American psyche. People put more of their personal resources into their homes and neighborhoods, including such nurturing social spaces as community gardens. Also, with the decline or deterioration of many inner cities, these kinds of places became more vital to growing healthy communities.

This study finds that in urban environments, a community garden can be the link between individuals and their community, and between people and nature, imparting health of body and mind, feelings of belonging and social connection, and a sense of stewardship for the environment. This is the story of how community gardens are about much more than growing food; they are about growing individuals and communities. This study explores the changing approaches to community gardening by residents and cities, and landscape architect's role in their creation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	ix
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Research Objectives.....	1
1.2 Research Questions.....	1
1.3 Definition of Terms	1
1.4 Overview of the Topic.....	2
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	3
2.1 Introduction.....	3
2.2 Culture, Nature, and the Garden	3
2.2.1 Meaning through Order	4
2.2.2 Memory.....	5
2.2.3 Expression.....	6
2.2.4 Identity	8
2.2.5 Process	10
2.2.6 Participation.....	11
2.2.7 A Place of Control	12

2.2.8 Serenity	13
2.2.9 Nature in the City.....	15
2.3 The Community Garden	16
2.3.1 History of Community Gardens in the United States	17
2.4 Summary.....	19
3. RESEARCH METHODS.....	21
3.1 Introduction.....	21
3.2 Interview Background	21
3.2.1 Mark Francis.....	22
3.2.2 Carlos Benito	22
3.2.3 Hayward Ford.....	23
3.2.4 Don Lambert.....	23
3.2.5 Lee Coble.....	23
3.2.6 Dennis Virgadamo	24
3.2.7 Janet Neath.....	24
3.3 Study Sites	24
3.3.1 Karl Linn and Peralta Community Gardens	24
3.3.2 Aspen Farm Community Garden.....	26
3.3.3 East Dallas Community Gardens.....	28
3.3.4 17 th Street and Meredith Community Gardens	29
3.4 Summary.....	31

4. ANALYSIS	40
4.1 Introduction.....	40
4.2 Interviews	40
4.2.1 Garden Descriptions	40
4.2.2 Why Participate in a Community Garden?.....	43
4.2.3 The Professional’s Role.....	46
4.2.4 The Benefits of Community Gardening	49
4.2.5 Learning from Other Gardeners.....	52
4.2.6 Does Community Gardening Bring You Closer to Nature or Your Community?	53
4.2.7 What Would Make the Best Community Garden?	56
4.3 The Results of the Data Analysis.....	57
4.4 Summary.....	58
5. CONCLUSION	59
5.1 Conclusions.....	59
5.1.1 Significance of the Topic to Landscape Architecture.....	60
5.2 Recommendations.....	61
5.2.1 Future Research	63
Appendix	
A. TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH MARK FRANCIS	65
B. TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH CARLOS BENITO	71
C. TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH HAYWARD FORD.....	79
D. TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH DON LAMBERT	88

E. TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH LEE COBLE	95
F. TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH DENNIS VIRGADAMO ...	100
G. TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH JANET NEATH	105
REFERENCES	111
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION.....	117

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1.1 Karl Linn Community Garden raised planter.....	32
1.2 Karl Linn Community Garden storage building	32
1.3 Peralta Community Garden entrance gate.....	33
1.4 Peralta Community Garden seating area	33
2.1 Aspen Farm Community Garden commons	34
2.2 Aspen Farm Community Garden mural.....	34
2.3 Aspen Farm Community Garden surrounding neighborhood.....	35
2.4 Aspen Farm Community Garden surrounding neighborhood.....	35
3.1 East Dallas Community Garden commons	36
3.2 East Dallas Community Garden raised beds.....	36
3.3 Live Oak Community Garden.....	37
3.4 Peace Community Garden.....	37
3.5 Our Saviour Community Garden	38
4.1 17 th Street Community Garden.....	38
4.2 The Meredith Gardens pathway	39
4.3 The Meredith Gardens.....	39

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to explore the use of community gardens to reconnect urban dwellers with the natural, social, and individual realms from which many may feel detached. This study also looks into the perceived value of the involvement of design and planning professionals in the creation of community gardens.

1.2 Research Questions

The primary questions addressed in this paper are: (1) Does participation in community gardens produce greater social and environmental connections than gardening without this kind of space; (2) what are the current trends in community gardens; (3) what is the landscape architect's impact on community gardens; and (4) what, in turn, are the community gardens' implications for the future of the profession?

1.3 Definition of Terms

The definitions of relevant terms are as follows:

Community Garden. Small plots of land rented by individuals from some organization that holds title or lease to the land. (Federation of city farms & community gardens)

Culture. "The totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought." (*American Heritage English Dictionary*)

Natural. Present in or produced by nature. Of, relating to, or concerning nature. (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. Answers.com 02 May. 2006. <http://www.answers.com/topic/natural>)

Nature. “The predominant meaning has traditionally been ‘our nonhuman surroundings’” (Clayton and Opatow 2003). However, Clayton and Opatow state that they consider nature to also be “environments in which the influence of humans is minimal or unobvious, to living components of that environment (such as trees or animals), and to nonanimate natural environmental features, such as the ocean shore” and that “the experience of nature can take place in urban settings as well as in remote wilderness areas” (2003).

1.4 Overview of the Topic

This study is a continuation of the dialog about the significance and value of community gardens to those that use them and to cities that support them. Study after study proves the benefits to people of some kind of connection to their natural or cultural surroundings, particularly on an ordinary, everyday level. This research suggests that participation in a community garden is a unique and accessible way to offer just such connections. Moreover, the creation and participation in a community garden gives a sense of ownership to some small part of their neighborhood and City. Both local governments as well as citizens benefit from such a venture on many levels. And since landscapes are perceived based on our memory, either collective--as a culture--or individual, the higher the level of participant self-expression and control, the greater the social and environmental connection (Schama 1995). In other words, this study suggests a method for engaging citizens with the natural, social and civic circles of their communities and to allow diverse groups of people find a common ground for their personal expression.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

“The garden suggests there might be a place where we can meet nature halfway” (Pollan, 1991).

This chapter contains an exploration of the supporting literature involving the social, psychological and physical, and personal advantages of gardens in general, focusing on the nature-culture relationship. It also includes background on the concept of the community garden, its history, and current status.

2.2 Culture, Nature, and the Garden

In his inspirational writing on his personal gardening self-education, Michael Pollan speaks of the Transcendentalist view of nature being the cure for culture. But he has a more modern view of man’s relationship to his environment. He believes that:

[T]here are simply too many of us now to follow Thoreau into the woods....[T]oday it is probably more important to learn how to mingle our art with nature...in forms of human creation that satisfy culture without offending nature....

Americans have a deeply ingrained habit of seeing nature and culture as irreconcilably opposed; we automatically assume that whenever one gains, the other must lose....

[W]e need...to learn how to use nature without damaging it. That probably can’t be done as long as we continue to think of nature and culture as antagonists. So how do we begin to find some middle ground between the two? To provide for our needs and desires without diminishing nature?... [T]he place to look for some of the answers to these questions may not be in the woods, but in the garden (Pollan 1991).

Within this portion of the literature review, many subsections of man's relationship to nature, the idea of nature within the garden, and the significance of gardens to human beings were encountered. Those most relevant to this study are included in this section.

2.2.1 Meaning through Order

Recent Gallup polls point out that on any weekend almost 80 percent of US households are engaged in working with the earth: "Gardening becomes a mass public action, a quiet revolution against mundane daily labor. The movement enjoys more public support than any president of this century" (Francis 1990). Because of this, Francis claims that "today, more than ever before, meaning resides in the act of gardening" (1990). Meaning in gardens can also come from a strong personal desire to be involved in place-making. Gardens are made to be places to just be, as well as places to grow plants, to have control over, to be creative and expressive of personality, to be free in and retreat to, and places that will develop over time and demonstrate ownership (Francis 1990). Although this seems like a tall order for a small plot of land, it is essential that such considerations are developed in order to "strengthen people's connections to the environment and to others around them. The garden is an obvious and fulfilling starting point" (Francis 1990). In a "never-ending human quest to grasp the meaning of life within its context", humans make sense of the world and their place in it by "systematically [arranging] everything--people, events, the environment, values--into an order" (Francis 1990). This is true for all aspects of life, but gardens are especially "an unconscious expression or a conscious concretion of an order that is

important to us. Uncovering the order is a key to the meaning of the garden. Understanding the order,” as well as “involvement over time,” is essential to the “creation of meaningful gardens” (Francis 1990).

2.2.2 Memory

It has been argued in the literature that the landscape is nothing more than what we as humans make it out to be: what our memory attaches to it. According to Simon Schama, “nature and human perception” cannot be separated (1995). He says that “landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock” (Schama 1995). Indeed:

Every garden, even one just made, is a place haunted by spirits that whisper to our memory. The garden is thus nostalgic, reactionary. But just as strongly, every time a garden is born, there is the hope that the world will be made better by it, an unselfconscious but radically utopian belief. Meaning resides in the power of the garden to express, clarify, and reconcile oppositions and transform them into inspirations (Francis 1990).

This is also true of the urban landscape, which has the “power to enhance the social meaning of public places...and nurture citizens’ public memory” (Uludag, Caglar, and Ultav 2005). Further, the authors note that “identity is intimately linked to memory: both our personal memories and...social memories”, and that “urban landscapes are storehouses for these social memories” (Uludag, Caglar, and Ultav 2005). This idea of memory shaping our perception of landscape is not a new phenomenon. “In the *Sakuteiki*,” an eleventh-century Japanese gardening manual, Pollan notes that the author “advises us in making a garden to...study the work of past masters and recall the places of beauty that you know. And then...let memory speak” (1991). Given the strong pull of memory on the human psyche, it should be no surprise

that “gardens have been molded by our memories” (Pollan 1991). Indeed, Pollan rhetorically asks “is there any garden that doesn’t cast a backward glance, gather meaning to itself by allusion to the places in our past?” (1991). An example of this might be that “when we look at roses and see...symbols of love and purity, we are projecting human categories onto them, saddling them with the burden of our metaphors” (Pollan 1991). Just as nature and human perception cannot be separated, as argued earlier, neither can culture really be separated from nature. Indeed, we need to see the two concepts as working together, and not in opposition. So, humanity may attempt to look “to nature as a cure for culture, but before it can exert its ‘sanative influence,’ we have to first scrape off the crust of culture that has formed over it” (Pollan 1991). It is with the context of culture that nature may be best understood and protected (Pollan 1991). Pollan goes on to explain that “what sets us apart from other species is culture, and what is culture but forbearance? Conscience, ethical choice, memory, discrimination: it is these very human and decidedly unecological faculties that offer the planet its last best hope....to bring more culture to our conduct in nature, not less” (Pollan 1991).

2.2.3 Expression

It is inherent in human nature to seek out creative channels. The literature is filled with accounts of the importance of people having an outlet for self-expression. The garden in particular “provides an opportunity for individual creativity and personal expression in a world where opportunity for creativity and expression is increasingly limited” (Francis 1990). Francis even claims that “access to a garden of one’s own

making is essential for everyone”, because he says that “the garden as personal expression is one of the prime delights of society” (1990). Likewise, it was found that “personal expression” is a “central reason why people make gardens” (Francis 1990). This repetitious cycle of expression and garden creation seems to reinforce itself as a means of personal satisfaction. Because of the accessibility of gardens to all people, it is an everyday place that imbues its users with the creative freedom to express their values as well as to create an inner place insulated from the outside world (Francis 1990). Being a “medium for personal artistic expression”, the garden, “with skill, good dirt, and love...produces beautiful sights, smells, and tastes as well as personal statements of our world view” (Francis 1990). A world view that “provides for an expanded concept of the human self defined in terms of expressive activity...through which aspects of the human self and landscape are realized together” may be the ideal form of expression (Thwaites 2000).

Just such a concept, shown in a study of a Detroit neighborhood beautification program, tells the story of how a modest, everyday touch of nature in a declining neighborhood can be the source of important personal expression as well as environmental healing: “Their involvement...allowed each of them a context in which to express themselves. Through their efforts, the local stewardship projects flourished, and they in turn found meaning and satisfaction in their contributions” (Clayton and Opatow 2003).

2.2.4 Identity

There's a feeling like you don't end at the tips of your fingers or the top of your head. Because what's going on has to do with what you're doing, and with other things that are going on, so you're kind of a part of this whole thing, and very small because there's so much more out there (Myers and Russell 2003).

Katy Payne, a wildlife biologist and writer, who grew up in an environment of natural discovery, writes this about a defining moment in her childhood:

I remember my first encounter with myself, on a high day in later summer. Standing alone in a field where wildness crowded up yellow and green against our garden and house, I said out loud, 'This is the happiest day of my life and I'm eleven'...[M]y hurraing, that made me inside out with exuberance, was for wildness (Holmes 2003).

For Payne, nature defines who she is. Indeed, nature is included in the identity of all humans. Since it is part of all humans, feeling cut off from nature is detrimental to the formation of identity, especially in children (Johnson and Hurly 2002). "The loss of childhood experiences in nature and one's community runs counter to an increasing body of literature citing personal, social, and environmental benefits of such experiences", including "mental and physical well being, experiential learning, place attachment, community participation, cultural awareness, and ecological literacy" (Johnson and Hurly 2002). Fortunately, any place that allows the observation of ecological processes and changes provide children with limitless opportunities for interaction and discovery (Johnson and Hurly 2002). Furthermore, "through interaction with nature, artifacts, and other people, children construct increasingly adequate understandings of the world" (Kahn 2003).

Because natural places are vital in the fulfillment of "biological, social, psychological, and cultural needs", that also makes them meaningful to the development of self-identity (Thwaites 2000). The natural environment provides "a

particularly good source of self-definition, based on an identity formed through interaction with the natural world and on self-knowledge obtained in an environmental context” (Clayton 2003). It has been shown that “people’s preference of natural to human-influenced environments is related to their perceived competence in a natural environment” as well as “with nature in an urban setting” (Clayton 2003). To be considered an important facet of identity “the natural environment must influence the way in which people think about themselves” (Clayton 2003). What is important is that the “natural environment provides the opportunity not only for attentional restoration but also for self-reflection” (Clayton 2003). Nature can provide an individual with a wider understanding of their influence, because nature does not change in response to a person’s behavior, as another human would, but rather the individual’s position towards nature changes (Clayton 2003).

It is also important for individuals to encounter the recognition that their personal expressions are validated within a group setting (Thwaites 2000). Moreover, gardens may be another important form of communication, especially for those who lack other skills or means of communication:

For many, the garden is personal expression. In making gardens, we express our personal values and our inner feelings. We use our gardens to communicate to others, to show the public world how we feel about ourselves and the larger world that surrounds us. Through our gardens we reveal to ourselves and others our own sense of our status, personality, aesthetics, environmental values, and social ideology (Francis 1990).

Building on the individual’s identity formation is the on-going interchange between the individual and the communal (Meyers and Russell 2003). This interplay and identity-building is heightened when experienced in the natural environment

(Meyers and Russell 2003). Indeed, “the garden is a record of the uniqueness of a culture in time and place”, and it is “essential to maintain and celebrate cultural diversity in a landscape increasingly made uniform” (Francis 1990).

2.2.5 Process

“Anyone who has ever gardened knows that a garden represents constancy yet is ever changing” (Francis 1990). Indeed, the process of creating and maintaining any garden space is cyclical in nature (Austin and Kaplan 2003). “Just as the project changes over time, so too do those who tend it and use it” (Austin and Kaplan 2003). This repetitious cycle involves other changes as well: “Pride in the neighborhood increases, along with self-esteem. People become more willing to participate, leading to changes even beyond the vacant lot (Austin and Kaplan 2003). “Something of the human spirit is invested in the gardening process” (Lewis 1990). Certainly, the creation and care of new landscapes has the power to transform “people’s lives in serious and non-trivial ways” (Thwaites 2000). These changes in landscape and community bind communities together “by the continuous process of creation and recreation of places” (Thwaites 2000). It is important that “project participants are able to experience the activity of making as a continuous and evolving process as far as possible” (Thwaites 2000). Almost as important as the process is ensuring that the progression is visible as being touched by the creators. “Minor imperfections and irregularities are encouraged as positive features, as evidence of the *human-ness* of the process” (Thwaites 2000).

2.2.6 Participation

The literature finds that, although being in any ‘natural’ place is beneficial to human beings, active participation in that place further amplifies the payback. The garden, as a natural place, requires “intimate and direct involvement. We cannot dig, plant, trim, water, or harvest with detached passivity” (Pollan 1991). “Gardening has important social and psychological benefits....The act of gardening provides relief from our often abstract and secondhand work” (Pollan 1991). There is little doubt that “gardening is participatory” and as such the action involved also leads to a deeper meaning of the place for the gardener:

[P]ositive feedback serves to entwine him even more closely with his plants....The gardener gains a sense of accomplishment, self-esteem, and control over his surroundings....Gardening provides connectedness....Gardeners are in intimate contact with life forces and participate in those forces....A sense of humility is gained....One becomes aware of the larger rhythms, seasonal change, germination, growth and maturation, the forces at work throughout the earth transcending those political and cultural differences that divide the world and make it unknowable....Gardening provides time for contemplation....He flows with the life forces that are directing growth....[G]ardening ultimately leads to spiritual realization....Gardening also provides a basis for socializing....If the garden is part of a larger community plot, opportunity for meeting and talking to fellow gardeners is increased. Prejudices based on race, economic level, and education soon dissolve (Lewis 1990).

It is often the case that “involvement itself is also a source of psychological benefits that are self-supporting” (Austin and Kaplan 2003). Participation often leads to involvement in other projects, “further enriching the neighborhood and possibly encouraging others to participate in the process” (Austin and Kaplan 2003). Since “participation in creating the place” results in “enhanced personal identity...increased

sense of connection and ownership...respect of community,” active involvement by numerous people in the community should be encouraged (Clayton and Opatow 2003).

Participating in creating and sustaining a communal place is believed to develop an increased sense of responsibility, ownership and connection (Austin and Kaplan 2003). And “a sense of ownership on the part of local citizens can lead to sweeping changes in the well-being of a neighborhood” (Austin and Kaplan 2003). This is also an important lesson, from which children can learn, especially in a garden setting, with the encouragement of mentors (Austin and Kaplan 2003). “Among many changes to childhood experiences due to urbanization, reduced accessibility to the surrounding community is prominent.” (Johnson and Hurly 2002). “Places that provide opportunities for emotional connection, ownership, and personalization offer valuable and lasting experiences for children” (Johnson and Hurly 2002).

2.2.7 A Place of Control

In a clear and concise characterization of the kind of place gardens are, Francis states that “gardens are active and social places, created especially by those who use them to fit their specific needs” (Francis 1987). Indeed, “every society in history shapes its distinctive social space” (Uludag, Caglar, and Ultav 2005). When people of any society fashion new places “they are not simply making an objective product or artifact in the environment, but they are expressing and communicating to others something about themselves. There must be a close, indeed integrated, bond of association between the maker and the made” (Thwaites 2000). Here, place and creator work together to strengthen the other, in a clear act of solidarity. The garden is also “an

everyday place, part of our common landscape touched and formed by human hands” (Francis 1990).

Working in a small, simple space can also raise strong sentiments on a global scale. “Gardening gives us a sense of control over a small patch of earth in spite of all that is left to chance....With control comes responsibility, commitment to stewardship of the earth...we are reconnected...to the larger ecology of the world in which we live” (Pollan 1991). Helphand sums it up in this way: “Above all [the garden] is a place of life, a model of a symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. The garden is a landscape idealized and transformed by design....The garden can be a source of spiritual as well as physical sustenance” (Francis 1990, 104).

2.2.8 Serenity

Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul (John Muir).

According to E.O. Wilson (e.g., 1984), in his concept of Biophilia, “the relationship with the natural world is hard-wired part of human nature” (Clayton and Opatow 2003). Deep Ecology suggests that “people need contact with nature at a deep and personal level” (Clayton and Opatow 2003). And according to the study of Ecopsychology “humans need to rediscover their ties to the natural world in order to experience full mental health” (Clayton and Opatow 2003). These concepts make it a matter of necessity for all human beings to connect with the natural world of which they are a part.

Other studies show this necessity on a more day-to-day and familiar level. It has been observed in physiological studies that “contact with greenery has restorative value.

This can restore equilibrium to a person's relationship to the natural environment and heal a damaged self" (Clayton and Opatow 2003). "Access to a nearby natural setting such as a park or garden, has been shown to strengthen cognitive awareness, memory, and general well-being and to decrease depression, boredom, loneliness, anxiety, and stress" (Clayton and Opatow 2003). Indeed:

Nearby nature comes in many forms. Parks, street trees, and backyards all have a potential contribution to make. But perhaps the quintessential microrestorative environment, the one that most closely brings together the multiple themes of the restorative experience into a single, small, intensely meaningful space, is the garden (Kaplan and Kaplan 1990).

But the even better news for gardens is that "experiences gained through the intimate participation of nurturing and being responsible for plants are more intense than those gained through distanced viewing of vegetation in the larger landscape" (Lewis 1990). Natural elements helps humans gain such benefits "by engaging our attention, taking us away from our mundane activities and settings, and providing a level of stimulation that is neither overly arousing nor boring" (Clayton 2003). "The elements of the garden--earth, water, plants, sun, and wind--can heal and nurture us with restorative energies" (Francis 1990). Such healing should lead humans to "a new relationship with [earth], a joint venture that accepts the fragility and healing power of both parties. This mutual relationship is being practiced by thousands of gardeners who are healed by their healing" (Francis 1990).

And it is equally true for adults as well as children of the aesthetic, stress-reducing, and restorative effects of green open spaces (Sommer 2003). In a study of children's intrinsic value of nature on human welfare, one child answers that "gardens

are important because the city is a place that causes great stress and it gives a chance to someone to go to a place that is near, and to be in contact with nature, to stay calm” (Kahn 2003).

2.2.9 Nature in the City

Although some inner cities may feel devoid of nature, with concrete and buildings in all directions, the literature shows that even cities are part of nature, especially if the earth is viewed from space. Although we live on one physical world, “living vegetation in the city symbolizes the two worlds in which we live, the biosphere of our inheritance and the technosphere of our creation” (Lewis 1990). In other words, nature and culture are in harmony. “In the stress of urban living, crowding, traffic, overload of stimulation, lack of peace and quiet, all take their toll” (Lewis 1990). In a place like this “vegetation serves as a shock absorber for the sights, smells, sounds of the city. It does not present a challenge to the senses, does not have to be screened out, but provides an opportunity for rest from the constant mental alertness” (Lewis 1990). “The data demonstrates the importance of the garden as access to the natural world, no matter how modest” (McNally 1990). For instance, “access to a nearby natural setting such as a park or garden, has been shown to strengthen cognitive awareness, memory, and general well-being and to decrease depression, boredom, loneliness, anxiety, and stress” (Clayton and Opatow 2003).

2.3 The Community Garden

I believe natural beauty has a necessary place in the spiritual development of any individual or any society (Rachel Carson).

The community garden, with its ability to bond nature, the individual and community, is at the heart of this study. Within this portion of the literature review, the concept of the community garden, its beginnings, its development, and its current meaning, is explored. Some city dwellers perceive a sense of isolation from nature; a feeling that “nature is ‘out there’...that [it] is beyond our day-to-day urban experience” (Clayton and Opatow 2003). However, as seen earlier, cities are not devoid of natural processes. Indeed, “the city is part of nature” (Spirn 1984). Thus, the creation of community gardens within urban areas is not an act of man versus nature, but rather a community’s desire to connect with nature and each other. These places are the products of “intentional human acts turned towards the ‘creation of places’” (Thwaites 2000). In these gardens “human creativity, community, and the physical setting are brought together and collectively bring about the realization of both landscape and self” (Thwaites 2000). This special place is more than the “*location* of people’s expressive activity. It is also...a *means* of expression...and the *product* or outcome of their expressive acts is partly the embodiment of themselves, their values, aspirations, and needs” (Thwaites 2000).

In *The Struggle for Eden*, Hassell points out the community garden’s place within the fabric of the city:

According to Jane Jacobs, there are three levels of existence on which urban dwellers operate: the level of daily interaction within the immediate neighborhood, the street, or block; the level of the district or locality; and the

level of the entire city (Jacobs 1961). Community gardens are focal points that help to weave together these three levels of existence. Community gardens extend from the private realm enacted in the individual member garden plot and the immediate garden community, to activism and community organization at the level of the neighborhood, and finally to city-wide community garden coalitions and organizations (2002).

In a study of a Detroit neighborhood's use of vacant lots, Austin and Kaplan note how a neighbor took it upon himself to maintain the vacant lot with his own tools: "He did not say much, yet his words reflected an awareness of the way these green spaces connected local residents to the natural world" (2003). Other Detroit lot keepers saw their involvement in lot maintenance as a form of expression and stewardship and "found meaning and satisfaction in their contributions" (Austin and Kaplan 2003).

2.3.1 History of Community Gardens in the United States

The history of American community gardens can be divided between the early urban garden programs from 1890 to 1917, the national urban garden campaigns from 1917 to 1945, and the gardens for communities from 1945 to the present time (Lawson, 2005).

The beginning of the 1890s saw the emergence of three types of urban gardening programs: the vacant-lot cultivation association, the children's school garden, and the civic garden campaign (Lawson 2005). Although promoted and used by varying groups, all three types of gardens shared the themes of social, environmental, and economic goals (Lawson 2005). A series of economic depressions between the years of 1893 to 1915 gave rise to vacant lot cultivation programs in Detroit, New York, Pittsburgh and elsewhere, in which the unemployed could bolster their morale, health and financial situations by working the vacant land in cities (Lawson 2005). In 1890,

the school garden movement began with the establishment of the George Putnam School in Boston, and grew in 1902 to include the DeWitt Clinton Farm School in New York City (Lawson 2005). These and other school gardens were established to mitigate the urban conditions faced by children as well as to instill in them a love of nature (Lawson 2005). The civic garden campaign began at the turn of the twentieth century as volunteers and organizations promoted gardens as a means for beautification of the city and expressions of civic-mindedness (Lawson 2005).

From 1917 to 1949, through years of war and depression, gardening programs were less centered on particular groups and more focused on securing the support of all US citizens (Lawson 2005). Due to the food crisis caused by World War I, the war garden campaign sought to involve ordinary citizens, families and organizations in the production of food as a way to help the soldiers overseas (Lawson 2005). With the Great Depression of the 1930s came gardens to offset household costs, provide relief work and boost morale (Lawson 2005). The victory gardens of World War II promoted the augmentation of food rations as well as physical and mental fitness (Lawson, 2005).

After the war, the victory garden movement began to wane, along with other communal gardening alternatives (Lawson 2005). With the growth of the suburbs and individual yards, gardening was now a hobby (Lawson 2005). But with the energy crisis of the 1970s came a renewal of the community garden and civic activism (Lawson 2005). Gardens created during the 1970s and 80s involved the users in design and maintenance, as opposed to the outside organizations of the past (Lawson 2005). The

community garden movement continued to grow throughout the 1990s, with some activists wanting to include community development and environmentalism in its scope.

Today a ground swell of community gardening, backyard gardening, and other greening activities is permeating the fabric of urban life. Interest in growing plants, especially for food, is so pervasive that one cannot help but experience urban gardening as an idea whose time has come at last. During the 1990s community gardening has become more and more widely acknowledged as an integral part of our urban existence....According to the National Gardening Association Gallup Poll in 1994, 30 million households were gardening in some form, and 300,000 people were involved in community gardening (Linn, Karl. 1999-2005. "Reclaiming the Sacred Commons", www.newvillagepress.net).

2.4 Summary

The literature finds that community gardens are active and social places, created especially by those who use them to fit their specific needs (Francis 1987). When a group of people work together for a common purpose, the dynamics of this situation profit the individual, the community, the city, and the environment.

It is also increasingly shown that human fulfillment is linked to diverse experiences with environmental contact (Thwaites 2000). "The location of experience" and "expressive space" have "human emotional expression built into it, so the result in physical form can be experienced as the embodiment of the thoughts and feelings of those who conceived and constructed it (Thwaites 2000). Characteristics such as ownership, expression and meaning are "grounded in human participation with the surroundings of routine life" (Thwaites 2000).

By the end of his book, Pollan begins to wonder if there is a better way for culture to govern itself in its actions with nature. He wonders if the wilderness ethic of the Transcendentalists with its "absolutist ethic: man or nature, it says, pick one" could

be replaced with one based “...on the idea of a garden” (Pollan 1991). “For the garden is a place with long experience of questions having to do with man *in* nature” (Pollan 1991).

His ideas may well be put to use especially in the design of the community garden. Using this new “garden ethic”, landscape architects and gardeners alike would look for “local answers” and “consult the Genius of the Place in all”; he would “play the hand he’s been dealt” and he would not be “romantic about nature” (Pollan 1991). The fact that he knows “nature only through the screen of our metaphors,” would make him recognize “that he is dependent for his health and survival on many other forms of life, so he is careful to take their interests into account” (Pollan 1991). And in the end “the gardener doesn’t feel that by virtue of the fact that he changes nature he is somehow outside of it” (Pollan 1991).

But ultimately “if nature is one necessary source of instruction for a garden ethic, culture is the other” (Pollan 1991). “Civilization may be part of our problem with respect to nature”, he continues, “but there will be no solution without it” (Pollan 1991). Pollan concludes that “it is culture, and certainly not nature, that teaches us to observe and remember, to learn from our mistakes, to share our experiences, and perhaps most important of all, to restrain ourselves” (1991).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Introduction

The most appropriate methodology to use in studying this topic is the qualitative approach, based on study sites open-ended interviews. Study sites are chosen based on availability of contact and other information, their geographical location, longevity of existence, and their mix of uses as well as mix of participants. Contacts are made and open-ended, conversational interviews are conducted. Retrospective comparisons are then made between study sites, as well as interviewee responses to a selection of key questions. The key questions and their comparative compilations can be found in Chapter 4. All the interview questions and answers can be found in the appendices.

3.2 Interview Background

Over the course of this study, interviews are conducted with selected local, state-wide, and national community garden coordinators, participants, and one scholar in landscape architecture, community gardens, and public spaces. These interviews take place primarily through phone conversations, although one is conducted in person, and one is conducted via electronic mail. All of the phone and in-person interviews are tape recorded and the conversations transcribed. The method for selecting interviewees involves contacting actively involved professionals, coordinators and participants in community gardens. All of the people and contact information are found via the

internet. Phone calls and / or electronic mail are then used to notify the possible subjects of this study and to request their involvement in it. Upon the subjects' agreement to be interviewed, times for phone calls or meetings are scheduled, then conducted at the selected times.

3.2.1 Mark Francis

Mark Francis, a professor of landscape architecture at University of California Davis, who has written several books and articles on the subjects of landscape architecture, urban design, and community gardens, is currently out of the country on sabbatical. He agreed to answer the interview questions via electronic mail. His involvement in the gardens at Village Homes in Davis, California, his comparative study of an adjacent park and community garden in Sacramento, and his book *The Meaning of Gardens* all leads to his selection for this study.

3.2.2 Carlos Benito

The Peralta and Karl Linn Community Gardens, in Berkeley, California are rather high-profile places, especially due to the strong presence of their late leader, Karl Linn, and also due to the independent film, "A Lot in Common," documenting the building of the Peralta Community Garden. Carlos Benito has been the garden coordinator of the Karl Linn Community Garden since 2001 and agreed to be interviewed. Although he mourns the loss of Linn and his ability to inspire others, Benito brings with him a lifetime of social activism and love of the earth as well.

3.2.3 Hayward Ford

Another well-known community garden, this one located on the east coast, is Aspen Farm in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Hayward Ford has been coordinator and president of this garden since 1984. He had the privilege of working with Anne Whiston Spirn and her landscape architecture students in 1989 when they redesigned and rebuilt the gathering area of this garden. He is also actively involved with Philadelphia Green and the Neighborhood Gardens Association, which allows him to help with all the gardens in the City when he is needed.

3.2.4 Don Lambert

Don Lambert is the garden coordinator for the East Dallas, Live Oak, Peace, Church of Our Saviour, Kramer School, and Hope Community Gardens in the Dallas, Texas area. He is also the founder of Gardeners in Community Development. He is a retired anthropologist, whose extensive studies of many Asian cultures, such as those of Cambodia & Laos, led to his eventual involvement with the Asian refugee community in Dallas. Being the most active and outspoken community garden activist in Dallas makes him an appropriate candidate for this study.

3.2.5 Lee Coble

Lee Coble is a long-time gardener in the Our Saviour Community Garden in Balch Springs, Texas, as well as a volunteer in numerous charitable organizations. He has worked with Don Lambert for many years and credits Lambert with his continued participation in this community garden.

3.2.6 Dennis Virgadamo

Dennis Virgadamo is garden co-coordinator of the 17th Street Community Garden in Houston, Texas, along with his wife, Laura. His is the most recently built garden of this study. However, this garden is one of more than one hundred gardens in the City of Houston to be supported by Urban Harvest, a nonprofit organization that strives to strengthen communities through gardening. This innovative organization may be a viable example for cities across the country to emulate.

3.2.7 Janet Neath

Janet Neath is garden co-facilitator for the Meredith Gardens in Houston, Texas. This garden is also under the umbrella of Urban Harvest, but is more well-established. She came to this garden as a retired Montessori school teacher, who previously had no interest in gardening. However, for the last thirteen years, she has found and cultivated a part of her life that she soon realized was missing. Her enthusiasm and perspectives on community gardens leads to her selection for this study.

3.3 Study Sites

The following community garden sites are examined through the use of garden internet sites, site visits, and interviews.

3.3.1 Karl Linn and Peralta Community Gardens

The Karl Linn and Peralta Community Gardens in Berkeley, California (figures 1.1 through 1.4) are often lumped together due to the fact that they are across the street from one another and that one inspired the other's creation. The Peralta Community Garden is built on an odd shaped piece of Bay Area Rapid Transit-owned land near the

opening of a BART tunnel in the North Berkeley neighborhood. The vacant land was fenced off and full of weeds and trash. Karl Linn, a landscape architect, psychologist, educator, and community activist, saw the potential of this vacant lot as he gardened across the street at another once-blighted piece of land, called the Peace Garden. Linn and other neighbors convinced the city of Berkeley, the owners the property, to provide the \$10,000 needed to transform the abandoned land into 15 new community garden plots. The new Peralta Community Garden and its users became the subject of an independent documentary entitled “A Lot in Common”. Meanwhile, The Peace Garden was renamed the Karl Linn Community Garden on his 70th birthday in appreciation of his commitment to bringing people and nature together in cities.

Linn and his family were the only Jews in the village of Dessow in northern Germany, where they had a tree farm. When Hitler came to power they escaped to Palestine and started a new farm. There he studied ornamental horticulture. He moved to Zurich, Switzerland to study psychoanalysis, and then moved to New York, where he practiced both child psychoanalysis and landscape architecture. It was in 1989 that he moved to the Bay area and joined forces with his long-time friend, Carl Anthony, cofounding the Urban Habitat program at Earth Island Institute in San Francisco, to develop multi-racial environmental leadership and restore inner-city neighborhoods.

Having escaped the Holocaust as a child, Linn devoted his life to creating “neighborhood commons” where people can meet and get to know one another regardless of race, creed, or class. In a concept he calls “eco-justice”, Linn argues that "From time immemorial, people of indigenous or land-based cultures have celebrated

their connectedness with nature as an integral part of their daily lives. Free and enduring access to air, water, and land assured their sustenance and survival." According to Linn, urban community gardens are the last remnants of the commons in contemporary life. Karl died in Berkeley, California on February 3, 2005, at the age of 81. Carlos Benito is now the garden coordinator of the Karl Linn CG since 2001. Although he mourns the loss of Karl and his ability to inspire others, Benito brings with him a lifetime of social activism and love of the earth as well.

3.3.2 Aspen Farm Community Garden

Aspen Farm Community Garden in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (figures 2.1 through 2.4), has been one of this city's most successful and enduring community gardens. This garden, located in West Philadelphia's blighted Mill Creek neighborhood, is built where row houses and a small business were demolished in 1965 due to the poor soil conditions caused by the burying of Mill Creek. After ten years of neglect, Esther Williams and her neighbors got together to clean up the vacant lot across the street from her front door. Thus Aspen Farm was established in 1975, with the sponsorship of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. In four years the garden had filled the entire 28,400 square-foot vacant lot. The garden has been headed up by garden coordinator and president Hayward Ford since 1986, and currently has about 40 members. The garden also collaborates with students from the Sulzberger and Martha Washington Middle Schools, as well as with students from Penn State's Urban Gardening Program and the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Landscape Architecture. And in 1988-89, as part of the West Philadelphia Plan and Greening Project, Aspen Farm was redesigned

and renovated as a collaborative effort between the Aspen Farm gardeners, students and faculty from the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, and Philadelphia Green. The students got a tour of the garden, learned about the gardeners' desire to have a gathering space for meetings and tours, and even spent the weekend in the gardeners' homes. What seemed like a simple task on the surface was complicated by the small budget and the established relationships and territories within the garden. The winning design created a widened main street, with benches and planters, which caused minimal changes to the adjacent plots and achieved the gardeners' needs. The garden has been recognized on *Good Morning America*, in *National Geographic*, and was recently introduced into the Smithsonian Museum.

Two organizations involved in the success of Aspen Farm are the Neighborhood Gardens Association (NGA) and Philadelphia Green. The Neighborhood Gardens Association, part of the Philadelphia Land Trust, holds the title to twenty-nine gardens on behalf of the community in order to preserve them. The gardens are maintained by the local community residents while the NGA handles the insurance and taxes. Since 1974, Philadelphia Green, a program of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, which uses greening projects to bring neighbors together and create a higher quality of life, has organized Philadelphia citizens to maintain parks, plant trees along streets, and transform vacant lots into community gardens and open spaces. Aspen Farm is part of Philadelphia Green's Keystone Gardens Project, which helps large-scale, high profile gardens that are part of the city's community-gardening history.

3.3.3 East Dallas Community Gardens

East Dallas Community and Market Garden in Dallas, Texas (figures 3.2 and 3.3) is one of the six community gardens managed by Gardeners in Community Development (GICD), whose mission is to improve the quality of life in Dallas' limited-resource and immigrant area neighborhoods through community gardening. Their gardens offer a sunny vegetable plot and the opportunity of raising a cash crop for residents, while also making a huge impact on local food pantries.

Garden coordinator and executive director of GIDC, Don Lambert became actively involved in these gardens in 1986. Unfortunately, the gardens already in existence had no organizing body so Lambert formed the non-profit Gardeners in Community Development (GICD) in 1994. His background as an anthropologist in Asian countries also gives him unique skills for working with Dallas' Asian refugees.

The East Dallas Community Garden, also known as the Asian Garden, with 50 plots on a three-quarter acre lot, was started in 1987 to assist the Southeast Asian (Cambodian & Laotian) refugee community, many of who at that time lived in the area. The Live Oak Community Garden (figure 3.3), just a block away, was started in 1991, and then rebuilt in 1994-5, on three vacant lots. Its 30 plots are gardened mostly by older Cambodian Refugees. The smaller nearby ten-plot Peace Community Garden (figure 3.4) is used mostly by Laotian families. Many original gardeners now live with their children in the suburbs but still commute to the gardens to work. Gardeners pay \$36 a year to garden on a plot. This garden continues to evolve as this spring will see the introduction of plots specifically for Bantu refugees into the garden.

The GICD also manages a school community garden and two church gardens in diverse, low-income neighborhoods, such as the Our Saviour Community Garden (figure 3.5), established in 2003 with 20 plots. The neighboring Umphress Road Methodist Church, the majority of whose members are from the Philippines, joined the garden, as well as students of John Ireland Elementary School across the street from the garden. The Our Saviour gardeners have donated almost 700 pounds of produce to the food bank and are currently planting a fruit orchard.

3.3.4 17th Street and Meredith Community Gardens

Urban Harvest in Houston, Texas supports over one hundred community gardens in the greater Houston area. Community garden types include donation gardens, school gardens, neighborhood, therapy and market gardens. It is an independent nonprofit organization, started as an effort to ease urban hunger, and it now also supports neighborhood revitalization, sustainable environmental education for all ages, supplemental income for poorer residents, the Bayou City Farmer's Market, horticultural therapy, and better food, health and vitality for the entire community. Two such Urban Harvest gardens that are studied here are the 17th Street Community Garden and The Meredith Gardens, both in Houston, Texas. Garden coordinators are Dennis and Laura Virgadamo and Janet Neath, respectively. The 17th Street Community Garden (figure 4.1), which was established in 2005, was built on a vacant lot, left over by the demolition of abandoned townhomes, that had begun to attract graffiti and trash. Local community members, led by Dennis and Laura Virgadamo (who live next to the vacant lot), worked together with local businesses and Urban Harvest to transform the

land into a community garden in two weeks. The nine raised beds, including a therapy bed raised several feet off the ground, are tended by individuals, schools, non-profit volunteers, and master gardeners. They produce vegetables, herbs and flowers for donations, education, income, and individual consumption. Other unique features of this garden include the new children's bed, complete with Jack-and-the-Beanstalk vines, and the fall scarecrow contest in conjunction with the October Heights Festival in the neighborhood. The Houston Heights Association awarded the 17th Street Community Garden with a Community Improvement Award for its accomplishments. The twenty-five dollar annual fee allows membership in the garden and with Urban Harvest, as well as access to educational programs.

The Meredith Gardens (figures 4.2 and 4.3), established in 1993, was built on land originally slated to house the Montrose Branch of the Public Library. The land was cleared of all houses and businesses, but the library ultimately opened in an old church which was donated to the city. Meanwhile, the cleared land became choked with weeds and full of trash. Headed up by Meredith Burke, the Castle Court Neighborhood Association (CCNA) cleaned up and maintained the lot, and eventually came up with a plan to garden the site. Using the city's Adopt-a-Lot program, their plan was approved and the CCNA now rents the land from the city for one dollar per year. This property is now considered a city park and as such is protected from development, ensuring the garden's continuation. Janet Neath, a retired school teacher, has been the garden's co-facilitator for thirteen years. The inclusive, non-fenced garden

welcomes everyone to participate or just enjoy the surroundings. Children have art classes here and workers enjoy lunches among the plants.

3.4 Summary

The interviewee and site study backgrounds are included in this chapter because how and why they are selected is of primary concern to the qualitative research method used in this study--they set up the background for the major findings and conclusions of this paper. This initial information is considered antecedent to the responses of the interviewees, which is best placed in the analysis chapter.

Based on the context set up in this chapter and the interviews in the following chapter, study sites are compared next--in Chapter 4--in terms of surrounding neighborhood history, general economic level, and state of neighborhood evolution (old, new, blighted, revitalized, and so on), participant age and ethnicity, participant distance from the garden, the design and amenities of the garden, and the like.

Likewise, the brief biographical information on the interviewees in this chapter sets the milieu for their responses in the next. Of all the questions answered during the interviewing process, a select few are chosen as having the most influential and decisive results. These questions and comments are grouped by subject as a means of comparative analysis that is straight-forward and clearly understood. For example, comparisons are made in regard to the participants' experiential benefits of community gardening, reasons why they participate in community gardens, what they believe a professional designer's role in the community garden is, on so on.



Figure 1.1: Karl Linn Community Garden raised planter.



Figure 1.2: Karl Linn Community Garden storage building.



Figure 1.3: Peralta Community Garden entrance gate.



Figure 1.4: Peralta Community Garden seating area.



Figure 2.1: Aspen Farm Community Garden commons.



Figure 2.2: Aspen Farm Community Garden mural.



Figure 2.3: Aspen Farm Community Garden surrounding neighborhood.



Figure 2.4: Aspen Farm Community Garden surrounding neighborhood.



Figure 3.1: East Dallas Community Garden commons.



Figure 3.2: East Dallas Community Garden raised beds.



Figure 3.3: Live Oak Community Garden.



Figure 3.4: Peace Community Garden.



Figure 3.5: Our Saviour Community Garden.



Figure 4.1: 17th Street Community Garden.



Figure 4.2: The Meredith Gardens pathway.



Figure 4.3: The Meredith Gardens.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

Following the interviewing process, the recordings are transcribed and the most significant common themes are compiled. In this chapter, the story of this sampling of community gardens and their participants begins to come into focus.

4.2 Interviews

The following seven topics told the most important part of the story. Refer to the appendices for the transcripts of the complete account of the interviews.

4.2.1 Garden Descriptions

The interviewees are all asked to give some background on their community gardens, including garden description and history, characteristics of the neighborhood surrounding them, and general demographic information on the gardeners. Although there are some underlying similarities, the differences are notable. No two gardens come from the exact same mold.

For example, the 17th Street Community Garden in Houston, is situated in an older neighborhood that is “coming around.” According to Dennis Virgadamo, “the neighborhood has a lot of trees and the new houses that they’re building are big houses on small lots, so the people have no way to do any gardening because there’s no

property. Even the bungalows are just too shady. So this is a good thing for the neighbors who have too much shade in their yard.”

However, the Meredith Gardens, also in Houston, at Montrose and Richmond, is “close to downtown so it’s a nice place to live. They’re not lavish homes--middle income. One street over is where they are building all those homes that are really nice.”

In stark opposition to both of these is the neighborhood surrounding Aspen Farm Community Garden. According to Hayward Ford “there was a heavily blighted, really almost half a city block. And the houses were torn down because Mill Creek ran under it and the houses were sinking. The property lay dormant for more than twenty years.”

When asked if the gardeners live nearby, the answers are also dissimilar. Virgadamo is fortunate that “they’re all in the same neighborhood”, whereas at the Meredith Gardens the answer is “no.” “That was the interesting part”, is Janet Neath’s reply. “One young Japanese man, he comes from the University of St Thomas and then we used to have Rice graduates that would come. One man would drive like thirty-five minutes to turn the compost. He considered that his civic duty. Isn’t that something?” But this seems to be changing: “Now, there are three or four who live in the neighborhood.”

But perhaps the most extreme example of long-distance gardeners is at Aspen Farm Community Garden, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. According to Ford, he feels that his garden has “evolved to be a combination of Pennsylvania. Because in our garden we have four or five different cities people come from to garden at.” He believes that this might be the case because “over twenty-five years we have worn the

community out. The average community gardener, when I started was in their 60s. And so every ten years there's probably another generation. So in the next two or three years we'll go back in the community because younger people are coming in and we'll start the evolution again."

Similarly, findings from the interviews show that the age and ethnicity of the gardeners is not usually representative of the surrounding neighborhoods. For example, in the 17th Street Community Garden, the gardeners are "a mixture of children, old folks, and we have some elderly people that come and work. We have one African American, most are Anglo." However, "the neighborhood is probably forty percent Hispanic and maybe ten percent African American and the rest Anglo."

Likewise, in the Our Saviour Community Garden in Balch Springs, Texas, gardeners are "mostly middle age to older people in their 40s to 60s. We got a younger couple in right now that's probably in their 20s. We had some Hispanic people; we don't have any African-Americans at all. But generally, no, I don't think we have a real diverse group." Lee Coble goes on to say that "it doesn't really reflect the community here either. Because it's like eighty-five percent Hispanic or something like that and the rest are black and maybe less than one percent is other."

However, at Aspen Farm, Ford has "made it a point to get the diversity," into his garden. "I guess its fifty percent black; Cambodian, Spanish, Indian, English, Australian is the other fifty percent. And up till about five years ago it was about ninety percent black," due to the fact that it is "set in a black neighborhood." At Aspen Farm they also vary in age from "ten to ninety." "If everyone was ninety", Ford argues that "you

couldn't learn anything." He says that "anytime a younger person wanted to know something I would purposely send them to an older person. And consequently, they found out that the younger people weren't bad and the older people weren't bad." With a background in psychology, Ford wisely states that "someone who is younger learns more about life than gardens from the older people."

An interesting observation and commentary came from Mark Francis about the common assumptions about garden demographics. He finds that "the common perception is that community gardens are primarily in low-income communities used by low-income residents. I do not think this is always the case. I have found in my studies that they are more diverse than this, found in wealthy as well as poor neighborhoods." Interestingly, he also confirms that "people who have backyards still participate in community gardens." He also points out a deficiency in the mix of ages participating in community gardens. "I am struck how few children are involved in community gardens. They tend to be by adults for adults. An interesting question is how to better involve children and teens in the gardens." He suggests that "one way to do this is to create special areas for them in the gardens (e.g. - children gardens, animals, hang out areas, etcetera)."

4.2.2 Why Participate in a Community Garden?

The interviewees were all asked to explain why they or others participate in their respective community gardens. The answers are as distinctive as each individual; some had quite specific reasons, while others were more broad.

Dennis Virgadamo, not unlike many people, “was always raised up around gardening.” This memory for him seems to echo his current desire to spend his leisure time in the garden. “It’s just really something just to get out there in the sunshine and get away from the telephone and computers and just get out there with nature and work with you hands.” He also believes “that’s the way the other gardeners feel.”

Lee Coble, on the other hand, has a very specific reason for getting involved in his community garden, but it led to more wide-ranging benefits and outcomes. Besides having “a lot of shade in my backyard, the main reason was I wanted to learn how to grow some plants that would attract butterflies and act as host plants for caterpillars and things like that.” Another specific skill he wanted to learn about is “how do you go out and find these wild plants that these insects feed on and how do you get the seed, you know, how do you find it, where’s it located.” Coble does grow plants for food to eat and share, “but that’s not the primary reason that I grow there, it more just to learn how to grow stuff.” Even though this is why he started out in the garden, “it’s sort of shifted since then. I’ve met a lot of people up there, so it’s become more of a social activity also.”

The first thing out of Janet Neath’s mouth is an enthusiastic “I love community gardens!” For this adventurous former Montessori teacher, the community garden is a way for her to connect with nature’s cycles and enjoy the company of others. But it was not always this way: “I always made fun of gardeners” she confesses. “I was a mountain climber and ran marathons and didn’t have time for that.” But once she tried it, “it was like that piece that was missing in me. It grabbed me. You get the rich

experience of working with all different types of people. Everyone brings a different viewpoint, so it expands you in many ways.” She enjoys the manual labor as well as the socializing: “I like to shovel and work with the people.” She notices a common thread among many of the gardeners in why they chose to join the Meredith Garden. “One lady was moving and she thought ‘I can’t move somewhere I don’t have a garden’. And that got her to our garden. And this other young man and his three-year-old daughter moved into an apartment. Tonya came because she wanted to raise tomatoes and she couldn’t do that at her house. Doug has too much shade in his yard. It’s usually that reason.” However, the gardener named Betty is a completely different case. According to Neath, “she has amazing gardens at home and she just believes in this concept so she garden’s at two community gardens. And she believes in Urban Harvest.” But for Neath, it comes back to seeing things grow. “For me to witness the complete cycle of growing something and let it go to flower so all the beneficials come and then saving the seeds--to really get to just marvel in the cycles of nature.”

“Gardening is not easy” is the sentiment of Don Lambert, who coordinates six community gardens in the Dallas area. “It’s based on skills that have to be learned by a lot of trial and error. You don’t discover a whole lot by yourself; you’ve got to find out things from other people and from observing.” Because of the time and dedication needed to develop such proficiency, he finds that “a lot of people get discouraged.” But Lambert has found that people leave and projects fail “if their major objective is only to create gardens. They have to have an objective of gardens that do something, and it has to be something meaningful, something worthwhile, something achievable. The ones

that are successful”, he finds, “are the ones that take on a really strong mission like environmental stewardship, becoming the best organic gardeners they possibly can, training other people, or involving youth in the neighborhood, promoting horticultural therapy, helping seniors or the disabled, helping refugees adjust and adapt to American life, improving people’s incomes, or improving people’s health and diet.” The advantage of these kinds of programs is that “the gardeners that get involved with them get caught up in the missions and become better gardeners and are able to link themselves to the rest of the community in ways that makes them successful.” In addition to having a mission, he says that “a garden has to be a great place to be.”

4.2.3 The Professional’s Role

Based on the interview responses, the subjects favor some level of professional involvement, whether it is from the design skills of a landscape architect or the support of City governments. For the most part, they all saw the value of these services to the success and functionality of their community gardens.

For Carlos Benito, the involvement of a landscape architect in the continuing development of the garden is evident in the outcome. Since the Karl Linn Community Garden was designed by a landscape architect, he believes that “you can see the knowledge of a professional in the type of structures we have. Everything was very functional and very beautiful. Everything flows here because it was thought, someone thought the place.” In the same way, getting the City to support the project in an on-going fashion was also found to be essential to the garden’s success. Benito believes that “a skill which is very important [to have] to organize a movement like this is

politics. Karl Linn and other associates of him spent a lot of time establishing very good relationships with the City. They worked on that continually.” He says this is a vital “element of power. One cannot ignore that.”

On the other hand, a lack of support from a city can lead to resentment or indifference on the part of the gardener, as is the case for Lee Coble. He has found that “it’s difficult to work with the City as far as getting a community garden going. It doesn’t fit into their zoning plan apparently.” Ultimately, he admits “as long as they don’t give me any problems, I don’t care.”

Mark Francis believes, similarly to Benito, that landscape architects can and should “get involved in city-wide planning and policy that supports the gardens.” He also sees that “landscape architects can also play a useful role in helping design individual gardens”, but cautions that they “need to understand community process and participation to do this successfully. What landscape architects can offer are design features that communicate a strong sense of permanency. It is important they do this ‘with’ rather than ‘for’ the garden participants.”

As Hayward Ford sees it, both politics and design came together in Aspen Farm to create a “utopia as far as community gardens are concerned. And it would not have been done without a...landscape architect from the University of Pennsylvania. We had a garden before we met them, but the award winning garden appeared after 1988 when we met them. Our collaboration with the university, and Dr. Anne Spirn, was very instrumental in putting us on the map.” For this garden, it was the collaborative efforts

with soon-to-be design professionals that lead to its full potential. It was a valuable learning and teaching experience for the students and the gardeners.

While student involvement is successful in some gardens, others gardeners are more apprehensive to try it. The Meredith Garden leaders find that while they want to involve a professional designer, which might be cost prohibitive, they are also reluctant to bring in students. Janet Neath laments that “we have an architect who wants to do the plan, but we really want someone who is steeped in landscape architecture. People with degrees would be great but these community gardens don’t have much money, so we always have that rub.” The leadership brought up the idea of bringing in university students, but their concern is that “you get the students and they do the design and all and then they move away. Where if you get an architect in Houston who is established then they can nurture this along for a longer period.” So, clearly another concern for community gardens is the need for on-going design involvement as the garden evolves.

Then there are some gardeners who just want to go it completely alone. What Don Lambert found was that “all of the gardens that I discovered, there were some six or eight out there, had no interest in being connected with anybody else. I would come in and say ‘wouldn’t it be neat if we could put together some kind of coalition or something and all the little gardens could all get together and share information and tools and seeds and plants’--they weren’t interested in that.” Unfortunately “none of those gardens survived.”

Then there are some gardens that just look like they have been designed and this grabs people’s imagination, and possibly inspires others to seek professional advice.

Dennis Virgadamo seems to be describing the Meredith Gardens when he states that “we have one garden [in Houston], close to Richmond Street, and the landscaping is fabulous. They have wet pond, the real fancy concrete blocks, and between all the rows its concrete pavers, the have an iron fence around it. I mean it looks like something you would see at the White House or something!”

4.2.4 The Benefits of Community Gardening

Many of the questions about the benefits of participating in a community garden came from the American Community Garden Association (ACGA) mission statement. This was an attempt to verify their validity in the responses of the subjects. While most of the benefits seem to be there, the answers are again unique to each individual’s lifestyle needs.

Carlos Benito finds that he not only eats more nutritious food, but he also relishes the process of preparing a meal: “There is some quality of going there and cutting the lettuce and preparing my salad for dinner.” Likewise, Dennis Virgadamo has discovered that freshness is important to children, too. “We’ve even had kids come in the garden that didn’t like certain vegetables and they taste our vegetables and decide they like it because it tastes better.”

Many of the subjects find that the garden provides them with a kind of recreational exercise. For Lee Coble, it’s a way to get in touch with something real: “I work at home all day pretty much, inside the house and on a computer and so it gets me out and interacting with people and touching the real world, you know, earth and plants and things that are alive and gets me out in nature a little bit.” “I am truthfully there for

the exercise and camaraderie”, according to Hayward Ford. “I don’t even really think I’m there for the food, because truthfully I could buy the food cheaper.” Sometimes he will go out to the garden “just for the exercise. Especially now that I am retired, that’s my basic exercise.” He finds it to be beneficial for both physical and mental health, as a way to stretch your muscles and ease your mind simultaneously. “Because when you’re stiff, tired, out of sorts, you go out and work a few hours you’ll be in good shape.” He predicts that “if you can’t sleep, go out and work a half a day--you’ll sleep!” Janet Neath also enjoys similar benefits of working in the garden. “We go out and get manure; we’re the shovelers. I guess it would be recreation, but for me it’s like a meditation.”

Virgadamo finds that gardening is socially therapeutic. “We’ll have several gardeners working out there together and you have a connection, a good friendship out there; camaraderie.” However, it has been Neath’s experience that, although she benefits socially, it does not happen for everyone. “One lady though, I remember, she came to the garden and I think she wanted a community or group of people and it didn’t work for her. It’s not a guarantee that these are going to be the people you want to see outside the garden.” But fortunately for Neath, “in my life it has developed that whole other culture of people.” Luckily, similar therapeutic benefits are available to visitors to the community garden, which they may not come across in a typical city park. Neath and her fellow gardeners find that “all the people who come [will] use the swing and walk around the beds; they say this is just such a nice place for us, or the workers will come eat lunch there.”

In the Meredith Garden “it can be peaceful at times and bustling at times.” Neath finds that it is “busier on weekends and Wednesdays. Those are the two official gardening days, those mornings, you know if you go then there will be other people around.” However, a quiet garden can sometimes signal a lack of involvement. Coble notices that “it’s pretty peaceful” in the Our Saviour Community Garden. “I mean, there’s not often a lot of people up there, even on our work days.” At the Karl Linn Community Garden, according to Benito “it’s very peaceful. You can go and sit. We have a nice patio with chairs. It is very nice.” He takes advantage of this setting for special occasions and customs. “I go and have Mate’. Its South American tea that you drink with a straw. It’s very meditative to do it, it’s a ritual. So I go and have my Mate’ there. I read a new book. Not everybody takes advantage [of the garden in this way] because not everybody lives nearby as I do, but many do it.” Ford takes similar advantage of the setting in the Aspen Farm Community Garden to find solitude. He often goes out “just to go sit in the gazebo. As a matter of fact, I’ll take all my bills and books and everything and go and read. And to be honest with you, many times I’ll go when I know no one is there. I sit, think, I do a little writing, I like a little poetry, so I go sit and write it. The garden is a place happening in my mind. I get total relaxation.” This claim is evident in the fact that he can declare “since I am gardening I am no longer on blood pressure medication. I haven’t been on it for ten years.”

Another benefit afforded to the entire neighborhood is the feeling of increased safety produced by the creation of a community garden. In Benito’s opinion, the Karl Linn Community Garden “happens to be a safe place, but the garden gives [the

neighborhood] presence.” The more extreme example of this is shown at Aspen Farm. “Anytime you control or alleviate blight” claims Ford, “the neighborhood itself will not only be beautified but will have less crime. Because I don’t think criminals like beauty.”

4.2.5 Learning from Other Gardeners

The interview includes questions about what the gardeners teach and learn from each other. It appears that the most successful community gardens have a mutually educational component, and for all the subjects in this study it was a major benefit to share and gain knowledge. Mark Francis reiterates this idea: “There is much exchange and learning involved in the gardens. Problems are solved and skills exchanged.”

For Lee Coble, the fact that he found someone who could continually inspire him was enough to keep him going. “I don’t know if I would hang in that long if it hadn’t been for Don Lambert. He has so many good ideas and he really directs a lot of people on how to garden. He’s just a great resource for information that I think that’s what really got me hooked into it.” Coble realized that he could “learn a lot from him.” Hayward Ford is a huge advocate of life-long learning. At the Aspen Farm Community Garden “we have one gardener from India and one from Cambodia and I’m learning all new things--new vegetables, even techniques on planting. It’s always different. Every culture they do something different. So you’re constantly learning.” He professes that “when you get to the point that you can’t learn, its time to give it up.” Community gardens also serve as classrooms for the challenges of learning how to work along side others, as well as how to grow plants. At the Karl Linn Community Garden, learning

about others perhaps comes before learning about plants. “You learn to improve your relations” claims Carlos Benito, “because we human beings are very different and arrive with different habits. Not everybody behaves according to expectations.” He makes a point to “educate [the gardeners] how to do it better.” Janet Neath has gained similar knowledge from her involvement in the Meredith Gardens. Most specifically, she has learned to appreciate “diversity, being able to see a challenge, a question, from all the sides.” She has also gained “patience, and trust, that the situation will work or that the plant will either work there or it won’t. And a lot of humor.”

4.2.6 Does Community Gardening Bring You Closer to Nature or Your Community?

The responses to this question were surprisingly diverse and perhaps reflect the complex inner workings of community garden. Most of the subjects felt that there were distinct benefits, to themselves and others, when they work in a community garden in contrast to working by themselves at home.

Through his research, Mark Francis has found that “gardening is one of the ways that people have direct contact with nature.” This is especially hopeful for inner city dwellers to gain the benefits of nature right where they live. “Community gardening [with others]”, he continues, “offers additional social benefits.”

“It does both”, claims Lee Coble. “I guess its part of nature in the sense that things are alive and there’s dirt there and things like that. But I mean it’s not like nature like being out in the woods or in a wild environment.” Although he makes a clear distinction between natural things that have been touched by humans as opposed to those which seem to be untouched, he still benefits from working with others through

the medium of soil and plants. However, he has another source to connection to his community by way of his involvement with the Southeast Dallas Emergency Food Center, to which the Our Savior Community Garden regularly donates fresh vegetables. “I’ve had sort of a connection to it and the garden has a connection to it and so I help support an institution I already know.” Yet he feels that this is “just a secondary benefit to the community really.”

Don Lambert echoes the value of community outreach as an essential component of community gardens. “I think that’s what makes community gardens work: in a real community garden, people have this sense that they’re doing something in the garden that improves their neighborhood, community, and part of that space is theirs.” The idea of having a place they can control while benefiting from the support of others is also a form of outreach. “While they’re using it, it’s really theirs and if they don’t have any place to garden because they live in an apartment or their backyard is shaded with big trees or something”, he explains, “to have a space that they can garden in is really important to them.” He reiterates that community gardens in the Dallas area “have got to have some bigger mission than just gardening themselves, something they’re doing as members of a group. I think the proof is in getting stuff done, in the sustainability, an on-going sustainable project. Involving people in the overall scope of the project.”

In more general terms, Janet Neath feels that such involvement definitely connects her to her community: “It just broadens you, because you’re going to have so many different ideas, ideas you never even thought of.” For Dennis Virgadamo and the

members of the 17th Street Community Garden, gardening together strengthens their ability to communicate with one another. “We share ideas” he says. “It’s better to communicate with the people in the garden, we just learn a lot from them.” But, as can be found in other gardens, times of togetherness are tempered with quiet work. “Of course we have our own time, too. There’s one woman who has young children and they come out in the garden and just to read and spend time in the garden. The children get close to nature. It’s real rewarding to see that.”

However, Hayward Ford brings up an interesting contradiction. When asked if he feels closer to nature or culture when in the community garden, he answers “I don’t think so. I think I would feel the same either way, but I think it would be more advantageous to your psyche if you garden with someone that you like.”

Yet in a very personal way, Carlos Benito “feels very much close to nature and close to my self, my true self--my ground being” due to his participation and coordination of the Karl Linn Community Garden. He eloquently explains that “for me when I work with my hands, my mind, and in particular with nature, with the air, with the soil, the plants, you just become an observer of the reality you are living with. So when you stop being your thoughts and you are just present in this moment it’s an experience of being, just being you, and maybe something more than you.” When asked if this experience is also as meaningful when experienced in his own yard, the answer was quite telling of his compassion for others: “If by being with your land and your plants, being present and mindful, your true being is able to emerge” he explains, “if it stops there and you are not able to explain to others, the experience will bring you back

to your selfish self. But being with others you have to transform this awareness, this consciousness that arises in this relationship with the land. If it doesn't become a good relationship with others it's a selfish experience." He sums it up in this way: "So for me it's very important to work with others, to deal with the issues of others in a constructive way and in a participatory way. I need a compliment of this inner life with an outer life to work on the relationship with others."

4.2.7 What Would Make the Best Community Garden?

Since community gardens are more often than not full of hopeful people with dreams and ideas of how to make their gardens ever more promising, this question is offered up to the subjects as a means for them to share their insights. Their responses were deceptively uncomplicated, yet deeply perceptive.

Simply, yet profoundly, put, Hayward Ford believes that a successful community garden ultimately comes down to the people: "A group of people, dedicated people that can help you fulfill a vision. It has nothing to do with money." It takes "like-minded people who can work on one vision and bring it to fruition."

Mark Francis focuses more on the physical space. He advocates what he calls "mixed life places." These would be community gardens that combine "different elements and areas including garden plots, gathering areas, natural areas, places for recreation, etcetera" in order to provide for the varied recreational needs of a broader spectrum of people.

Carlos Benito reaffirms and integrates the two previous ideas with the continuation of the lifelong beliefs of Karl Linn. "A good community garden has to

begin with the philosophy of the common good” he explains. “It is not enough to farm in an organic way. It is not enough to eat fresh food. But for a community garden to help others, to make more beautiful the neighborhood, it requires a spirit of participation, of sharing.” He also finds it helpful if a landscape architect works with the gardeners to design the place because “if you take an idea and represent this idea in the space, the way you walk, the place where you sit to read, the place from which you see the sunset, all that, that has to be thought well.” Benito concludes with a vision for places of serenity in the sometimes chaotic modern world: “More than ever we need places of peace and reflection that radiate, that reminds us that human beings are capable of doing some good. I think now in our cities these gardens can be these places of encounters of the best of the human condition. The nature makes possible the emergence within us of the sense of participation, of a sense of healing.”

4.3 The Results of the Data Analysis

There is no one reason why people who live in urban environments chose to participate in a community garden. Some need more room or more sunlight, some want to learn how to grow plants, others want to enjoy the social or meditative aspects of a community garden. The subjects in this study had a common desire to be outside, working with the earth, plants and others in their community. Some believe so strongly in the concept that they have been involved for many years. All were more than willing to generously share their experiences and insights for this study.

There are several recurring but unexpected themes mentioned, that emerged as the interviewees responded to the questions. These items warrant additional study in

the future. For example, it came up a few times that one of the challenges faced by community gardens are people who get excited about joining a community garden, plant their plot and disappear a short time later. Also, many of the subjects who are concerned with the freshness of their food also seemed to prefer to buy organically grown produce from grocery stores when necessary. For almost all interviewees, the aspect of meditation or an inward journey promoted by the garden is significant. Another interesting finding is that those gardeners with landscape architect-designed gardens really perceive the difference in the order, organization, function, and beauty of these places. Many see the importance of community gardens for children, but note that a modest amount is currently being done to promote their involvement. Lastly, the importance of political involvement on the part of gardeners and especially landscape architects is both implied and clearly stated.

4.4 Summary

The majority of the contacts responded promptly to requests for interviews. However, Anne Whiston Spirn did not respond, and the Coppell Community Garden responded too late for inclusion in this study. Also, a brief email contains background information on the Santa Monica Community Garden, but again not in a timely manner for inclusion in this study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusions

This study concludes that participation in community gardens has the potential to produce greater social and environmental connections than gardening without this kind of communal space. For some urban gardeners community gardens fill a need for physical contact with the earth and a safe place to meet people that the typical city park cannot provide. Many studies have demonstrated the vital need for humans to be in contact with natural elements (Francis 1990; Lewis 1990; McNally 1990; Thwaites 2000; Clayton and Opatow 2003; Kahn 2003; Clayton 2003). Community gardens are an important way for a diverse group of people to have such connections.

There are a range of things that a city can do to encourage and support the creation and preservation of community gardens. As this study finds through its site analyses, especially of enduring and thriving community gardens around the country, there exists a continuum of public support for community gardens. Many Cities claim that a vacant lot is too valuable to be set aside for a garden. Economics, zoning and planning of Cities come into play when determining the fate of any unused land. However, Cities must provide their citizens with certain everyday amenities that strengthen the social fabric as well as economic well-being. When done successfully with involvement, support and encouragement, community gardens can be an

advantageous situation for cities as well as for citizens. Community gardens can produce feelings of goodwill, which not only make city dwellers happy, but also have the potential to relieve political tensions and pressure. The positive feedback from urban dwellers, who tend to experience a lack of control over any part of their cities, is not only good for public relations, but in an economic way. With a sense of ownership comes a sense of responsibility to maintain that which they worked so hard to create. In this way, a City's investment in the desires of its citizens lessens the amount of money and maintenance required.

5.1.1 Significance of the Topic to Landscape Architecture

The literature suggests specific ways in which landscape architects may consider the design of community gardens, and common spaces as well. For example, it has been argued that the practical elements of landscape architecture be adjusted to the concept of the human-environment relationship, in which individuals and communities shape and are shaped by their relationship to the environment (Thwaites 2000). This concept emphasizes “the creative processes which bring about the landscape they use, stressing the commonplace settings of everyday life, their value in shaping human life quality, and the active role of people in their realization and use” (Thwaites 2000). In other words, a key consideration for landscape architects, in the context of creating communal spaces, “is a fundamental concern for how interactions between people and their surroundings can bring about mutually beneficial outcomes” (Thwaites 2000). The professional role is to be “a facilitator of collective creative expressions, rather than only an aesthetic and technical specifier” (Thwaites 2000).

The study of parks and gardens conducted by Francis “questions the need for the formal aesthetics typical of most urban open spaces and taught in design schools” (1987). Francis stresses that “to fully understand the power of gardens, we cannot ignore the common, everyday variety that for millions of us still constitutes our most significant landscape” (1990). He found that people cherish the aesthetics of gardens that, although they are visually varied, are sewn together by the orderliness of plot placement and repetition of plant types (Francis 1987). The literature asks why landscape architects should concern themselves with the study of such common, even vernacular, gardens. There is apparently little economic value to the designer, and the gardens are often unsophisticated and “stylistically naïve” (Grampp 1990). “Taken alone, however, these objections fail to account for the factor that produced the gardens: human expression” (Grampp 1990). Simply put, “by recognizing the complex ways in which people attach meaning to the environment, one is in a more favorable position to design environments for other people” (Grampp 1990).

5.2 Recommendations

The study suggests that landscape architects and Cities play an important role in the creation of a framework of community gardens. Setting aside spaces for community gardens, especially in newer developments, may help Cities ensure the gardens’ permanence. For landscape architects, when they are involved in the creation of community gardens, it is important that they craft the framework of the basic organization, the utilities, and the like, and then give the users ultimate control over the things that will affect the way that they function in the garden. This act of personalizing

their own place is essential to the success of any community garden due to the sense of ownership it generates. A lack of ownership can lead to feelings of resentment and detachment and lack of stewardship or personal responsibility towards the community garden. Again, the success of such a place, especially as far as the city governing body is concerned, comes from the pride taken by the community and the desire to maintain what is theirs.

Landscape architects may strike a balance of shared control, to ensure a well-designed community garden, while empowering the users to make their place meet their desires. One way may be to bring the garden users into the design process, as in a charette where the landscape architect leads the discussion and design process. Perhaps a more resourceful way to do this is to have the users and landscape architects to collaborate on the framework of the facilities--drainage issues, water and electrical supply, permits for shelters--and give the design and layout of plots, pathways, buildings, signage, fencing, and the like, to those who will ultimately use, maintain and manage the community garden. The lesson learned by using such a technique may benefit the profession, the residents and the cities on another level. This may be the model for the future for other aspects of urban landscape design.

Based on interviewee responses as well as suggestions in the literature, Cities are encouraged to lend support to the creation, use, and preservation of community gardens. Typically, when of a group of citizens asks the City for the use of a vacant lot for gardening, this request may be granted, but with a caveat that the City may use the lot for a building or parking lot in the future, at which time the gardeners must abandon

the garden. However, as in the case of Philadelphia, many community gardens are properties of a land trust, which takes care of the taxes and insurance and holds the space open so that gardeners can create upon it their plans and means of management. A similar method is used in Houston where the City considers the vacant lots, managed by Urban Harvest, as City parks to be preserved as open space in their currently deficient City park system. This seems to be a new concept of governmental permission, encouragement and support. Perhaps the most extreme condition is the planned and assigned community garden on very valuable land in Santa Monica. The location for their community garden is prominent, with a relationship to City municipal facilities, perhaps further boosting its importance as a community place.

5.2.1 Future Research

This study generates many considerations for other topics of study. Future research considerations may include the following items:

- A thorough study and interpretation of the motivations of people to participate in community gardens, especially those already in possession of their own yard, may contribute valuable information and support for future community gardens and add to this growing body of knowledge.
- ASLA involvement, by way of special committees and focus groups and the like, may elevate the community garden's standing in the profession and promote its use for community building and revitalization for cities.
- A comprehensive study of the concept of community garden as City Park is needed. Such research may assist communities, landscape architects, and city planners in the development of a framework with which to establish a more varied city park system.

- The development of a comprehensive framework for the making of community gardens which involves both designers and users, which is touched on within this study, will test the results of this study, and reveal a process onto which landscape architects can build future community garden and urban design principles.

APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH MARK FRANCIS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS for Professionals

BACKGROUND:

Name: Mark Francis

Age: 55

Gender: Male

Country of origin: USA

Education level: Masters

School(s): Harvard/UC Berkeley

Degree(s) (if applicable): MLA in Urban Design

Trade or profession: Landscape Architecture

How many years in chosen trade or profession: 30

MF: Note: Since my work has been more involved in researching rather than developing community gardens, I did not respond to all the questions below.

SPECIFIC TO COMMUNITY GARDENS:

VW: What is a “community garden”, in your own words?

MF: A garden developed and maintained by the nearby community.

VW: What interested you in participating in community garden projects?

MF: I first became interested in community gardens when I was working and teaching in New York City in the later 1970s. They seemed like successful responses to problems of vacant land common throughout the city.

VW: Describe the community gardens you have worked on. What were their successes and failures? What can landscape architects learn from your experiences with them?

MF: I have been involved in two studies of community gardens. The first was a survey of gardens in NYC in the late 1970s including 10 detailed case studies of community gardens. This was published as a book *Community Open Spaces* (Island Press, 1984). The second was a study comparing a community garden and public park in Sacramento, California (Francis, M., "Some Different Meanings Attached to A Public Park and Community Gardens." *Landscape Journal*. 6, 2: 101-112, 1987). We found in these studies that community gardens are used and valued more than traditional parks. I became interested in community gardens to see what landscape architects can learn from community built and managed places. During our early studies, landscape architects were rarely involved. Today, it seems to be more of a mainstream part of professional practice.

VW: Why was a community garden created in the neighborhood(s) you worked in? Describe the function / purpose of the community gardens (personal or communal plots / for charity / etc).

MF: The gardens we have studied fulfill multiple functions – a place to be, a place to gather with others and a place to grow food or flowers. Especially striking is how important they are for socialization and bringing different people together.

VW: What was the land used for before it became a community garden? Who owns the land? How long can it be used for a community garden?

MF: N/A. Permanency seems to continue to be a major barrier facing the success of many gardens.

VW: What do the community gardens do to create equity / fairness among its members? How do they solve their internal and external problems? How do they make decisions?

MF: They are truly democratic places where decisions are made collectively. On the other hand, most were started by one leader. This creates a kind of contradiction where power is not always equally shared. But as see them as more democratic than most other forms of urban open spaces.

VW: What can landscape architects (city planners, etc.) do to make community gardens more feasible / valuable / self-sustaining / successful / enduring?

MF: Landscape architects can get involved on many levels. Most cities have community greening organizations and landscape architects can help these organizations be more successful. They can also get involved in city-wide planning and policy that supports the gardens. Landscape architects can also play a useful role in helping design individual gardens (but they need to understand community process and participation to do this successfully).

VW: Do you think landscape architects can close the gap between culture and nature (man versus nature paradigm) through the use of community gardens? Why or why not?

MF: This is a very big question and difficult to answer. I have often thought that one of the few places where environmental protection, sustainability and social justice come together is in the gardens.

SPECIFIC TO NATURE:

VW: What is “nature”, in your own words? Again, a tough question. I have a hard time with such big terms such as “nature” and “culture”.

MF: I do think the gardens provide direct contact with nature and natural processes for the gardeners. I also think they are appreciated by non-users. I see the gardens as a form of constructed nature.

VW: From your experiences, do you think most people feel surrounded by or separated from nature where they live and work? Why?

MF: It is well documented that people need natural elements such as vegetation in their everyday life. Community gardens are a form of nearby nature but differ from parks in

that they allow people to be directly engaged with the natural world (dirt under their finger nails). They also help to build a stronger sense of community.

VW: Do you feel like humans are part of nature? Why or why not?

MF: Too big a question for me to try and answer here.

VW: Do you feel that gardens are part of nature? Why or why not?

MF: Yes – see answer to #10

VW: From your experiences, do you see that gardening in a group (community gardening) helps the participants to feel closer to nature than gardening alone (by themselves)? Why or why not.

MF: Gardening is one of the ways that people have direct contact with nature. Community gardening (with others) offers additional social benefits.

SPECIFIC TO CULTURE:

VW: What is “culture”, in your own words? Again – too big a question for me.

VW: For the participants, do you think that community gardening (please elaborate):

VW: Produces feelings of self-reliance?

VW: Makes the neighborhood more beautiful?

VW: Facilitates eating more nutritious foods?

VW: Helps with a family’s food budget?

VW: Conserves resources?

VW: Creates a source of recreation and exercise?

VW: Creates a kind of therapy or promotes of mental health?

VW: Encourages involvement in other aspects of the community?

VW: Makes the neighborhood feel and/or become safer?

VW: Brings them closer to ‘nature’?

MF: The answer to all the above is yes. But how much? How do you measure these benefits? I suggest that you review what past research says about each of these.

VW: Do the community gardens you worked on help to meet the needs and desires of the neighborhood or local community? What were some of these needs?

MF: What is interesting about the gardens is that the residents themselves initiate them. This kind of bottom up approach results in stronger attachment of the users to the gardens as well to their larger environment.

VW: From your experiences, what do you find that community garden participants teach and learn from each other? What professional guidance do they need? How do landscape architects fit in?

MF: There is much exchange and learning involved in the gardens. Problems are solved and skills exchanged. The biggest problem facing the gardens is their long-term permanency. What landscape architects can offer are design features that communicate

a strong sense of permanency (the gardens are here to stay). It is important they do this “with” rather than “for” the garden participants.

VW: Do you find that young and old alike participate in community gardens? Is a mix of ages important? Why or why not?

MF: Adults of all ages tend to participate in the gardens. I am struck how few children are involved in community gardens. They tend to be by adults for adults. An interesting question is how to better involve children and teens in the gardens. One way to do this is to create special areas for them in the gardens (e.g. - children gardens, animals, hang out areas, etc.).

VW: Do you find that a variety of ethnic groups participate in community gardens? Within the same or separate community gardens?

MF: I think they are some of the most diverse places of any type of urban open space (although I do not know of studies that document this definitely). This would be a useful study to do.

VW: Do you find that a variety of income levels participate in community gardens?

MF: The common perception is that community gardens are primarily in low-income communities used low-income residents. I do not think this is always the case. I have found in my studies that they are more diverse than this, found in wealthy as well as poor neighborhoods. I have also found that people who have backyards still participate in community gardens.

VW: From your experiences, do you see that gardening in a group (community gardening) helps the participants to feel closer to their culture or community than gardening alone (by themselves)? Why or why not?

MF: Yes – see answers above.

GENERAL / MISC:

VW: If nothing stood in the way (money, time, help, etc.), what would you say would make the best community garden?

MF: One that combines different elements and areas including garden plots, gathering areas, natural areas, places for recreation, etc. – what I have called “mixed life places”.

VW: In your opinion, does gardening in a group or with a common purpose heighten the perception of a culture-nature connection? Why or why not?

MF: Again, a huge question. I would say again that the gardens serve to connect people with nature and people with one another.

VW: Please add any additional comments on your community garden experiences that we have not talked about or that you wish to elaborate on.

MF: Many of the questions you ask have been addressed in previous research. I would encourage you to try and draw in this work and show where perceptions match (and do not match) realities. Good luck with your study.

APPENDIX B

TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH CARLOS BENITO

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS for community garden participants

BACKGROUND:

Name: Carlos Benito – KARL LINN CG, Berkeley, CA

Gender: Male

SPECIFIC TO COMMUNITY GARDENS:

VW: Describe your own community garden.

CB: I work in the Karl Linn Garden. Are you familiar with it? This is a public garden that belongs to the city but is run by the community network. Basically it was the inspiration & the energy of Karl Linn, who passed away about one year ago. Very recently. As a neighbor I knew about this garden & one day I applied & was invited to join the garden. That was about 5 years ago. I always have been attracted to the experience & in the 1960s & early 70s I was following the movement. I was studying & I helped organize a community garden for grad students at UC Davis. So my interest comes from several things, like working with the hands & relating with plants, assuming responsibility for them, sort of manual meditation, no? But also because of my commitment in life I have always a social consciousness, a social awareness. I see the value of these activities for society & I am a professor of economics & I am an agricultural economist, so in my research abroad, mainly Latin America, in the Caribbean, I have followed communal-type gardens as a means for development. So there are many things that led me to join the Karl Linn Community Garden. & soon Karl Linn was always identifying who could be leaders, who could accompany him, asked me to become the coordinator. That was about 4 years ago. The duties are I keep the waiting list of those who want to join. So I eventually, with consultation with the garden members, I decide who is going to receive an empty plot. Then each gardener is supposed to take care of the plot, which means to prepare the soil, to plant, to weed & to harvest, which will look trivial, but there are many persons who get excited, who plant the garden & don't weed & don't harvest. Part of the human condition. So [?] with moderation, with courtesy, not as a top-down process. Also the common areas, the walks between plots, the perimeter, the common areas we have to keep clean, to weed. And also on the perimeter we have spices & trees, so we assign each individual a plot, has the opportunity to plant what they want, but also has to cooperate keeping the spices & trees properly. 6 times a year we have working parties & I organize the working parties, identify the activities, I assign them, taking into consideration the preferences always, the activities. So keeping the place running, if it is necessary to change a tool, we need a new tool, I ask the treasurer to do it. Also there are other gardens in the area that belong to the same umbrella organization. Here & there we have meetings that I attend to coordinate our work. & then there is a larger umbrella in the City of Berkeley & once in a while we have to go to meetings. & once in a while the City does an inspection & I have to be there to receive them & receive their suggestions. There are many chores, no? & the most difficult is the relations, how to keep the relationships within the garden & to remind them that it is not only planting vegetables in an organic way, which in itself is good, but there is the philosophy of Karl Linn of reclaiming the

commons. Learning to value the commons of the town, no? Karl Linn saw it, his hope was that the garden would expand the awareness about community, about others, & that the garden would be not only the place, only the garden of the [?] but would be the garden of the others, of the neighbors. We keep the sidewalks, by the way. We open the garden to the public. Even if they want to have a party, we are very happy when the garden is in use. There are 2 small shops. One where we have a small office, where we keep the papers, & another where we keep the tools. They are secure & every member has a security combination to open those places. 12 plots. One per family or individual.

VW: Describe the function / purpose of your community garden (personal plot / for a food pantry or church or school / etc).

CB: Not required to donate, they grow for themselves. But a few times a year organizations that support the homeless or prepare food for the poor will request a donation & everyone is happy to donate surpluses from what they have.

VW: Why do you participate in a community garden? Where is it? For how long?

CB: 5 years at Karl Linn Community Garden. In a communal way it was 1970s when we built from scratch a community garden for grad students at the UC Davis. & then I have a garden in my home, no? I know of many community experiences in Latin Am & Caribbean for different purpose. A place of training for the patients, a place where they learn about organic alternatives, how to farm on hillsides. & so in that case I have been an economist evaluating the projects trying to demonstrate to large banks that were going to invest in those programs- what is called rural development.

VW: What was the land used for before it became a community garden? Who owns the land?

CB: Yes. When they built the BART, the BART run underneath the garden. The BART owns a lot of land, because to build the tube under the earth they have to appropriate this land. There was a group that lobbied the city to lobby BART to allocate this land for a garden, as much as possible, and park. So [?] a lease of BART to the city & then the city has allocated this land to the garden. Our ultimate authority is the city. Yes, the city approved of the garden & paid for some of the infrastructure, water, energy.

VW: How long can you use it for a community garden?

CB: This is always a concern. To do a good job so the city maintains this land for public gardens. & this is the only stick I use with the gardeners. If we don't take care of this place, there will be a tennis court here. This is our competition.

VW: How does your community garden solve its internal and external problems? How does it make decisions?

CB: We have a steering committee. They meet every month or when necessary & there we talk about the issues & how to approach & who will go & talk & if it's necessary to

talk. For example, last year we had a decline in participation in working parties & there was a small core of gardeners who did everything. So rather than complaining, we called a meeting, we had a tea party. We talked about the issue & what they suggested to do. & everybody acknowledged that it is important to participate & out of those came a series of proposals we are implementing & were proposed by those who were not coming. Hopefully for a time it will work. But there are many things that have to be solved one case at a time & with the intention of educating. The steering committee is integrated with other gardeners. I am the coordinator & there are 2 members more from the garden & we integrate the steering committee. But I represent the garden in the meetings of the local government. & then there is a large umbrella for all the community gardens of the city. We don't have a very complicated organization within the garden, very simple.

VW: How can landscape architects, city planners, etc. help to make community gardens more feasible / valuable / self-sustaining / successful / enduring?

CB: Well KL was a LA, no? What I know is that the KLG was designed by a LA & you can see the knowledge of a professional in the type of structures we have, for example these 2 rooms. Everything was very functional & very beautiful. I think our sidewalks are very well planned for wheelchair, for old people, everything flows here because it was thought, someone thought the place. So although I don't know very much about the profession, when I look at the KLG I am grateful for those who planned this place.

VW: Was the community involved in the design?

CB: No, I was not there at the time, because this place is 10 years old, I think. There are some members of the community that were involved from the beginning. So maybe they were more involved than I thought. I think it must have been a two-way street. The city tried to experiment with this idea & some progressive neighbors working with the city.

VW: Did Karl Linn start this garden?

CB: There were other people, too. But he became the leader. He was already a known person in the country for these activities. But I don't know the specific history of who was in the beginning.

SPECIFIC TO CULTURE:

VW: Do you feel more self-reliant because you participate in a community garden?

CB: I can tell you what I observed from other gardeners. Many persons who have an education, but for one reason or another don't have many resources, single woman in their 40s or 50s, for them this opportunity has been a great possibility. For me, too, but I have more alternatives because of my profession.

VW: Do you feel like your neighborhood is more beautiful because of your community garden?

CB: It is & the neighbors know that. Very much more beautiful. When it spring & summer & full of vegetables & flowers it is very pretty to walk by or to drive by.

VW: Do you eat more nutritious foods because you work in a community garden?

CB: I would say I appreciate to eat my food & the freshness. There is some quality of going there & cutting the lettuce & preparing my salad for dinner. Being fresh is a quality that is lost in the marketing process. However, when I buy my produce I go to organic places, I get good products here in California. But something that is very special is to harvest & to eat there, freshness.

VW: Does working in a community garden help with your family's food budget?

CB: Maybe, but a little, because today produce is so inexpensive everywhere. Its more the opportunity of working with the hands, enjoying the growth process, the, freshness of what you eat.

VW: Does community gardening help conserve resources, in your opinion?

CB: We promote organic farming. Some of us compost, not everybody, but there is a group who produce their own compost. Now there are 2 or 3 who are growing fava beans to renew the soil. In that sense you don't buy chemicals. & you're your able to rotate & to use another crop as a way to fix nitrogen in the soil. This is what fava beans do.

VW: Does your community garden feel peaceful and/or tranquil? Is it bustling with activity? Does it seem to reduce your stress level? Why or why not?

CB: Its very peaceful. You can go & sit. We have a nice patio with chairs. It is very nice. I go & have Mate' (ma'tay). Its South American tea that you drink with a straw. South America, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia. This is the gaucho tradition. The gaucho have tea mate', which is a strong tea that you don't boil; you put in hot water & have a straw. It's very meditative to do it, it's a ritual. Like those who used to smoke a pipe, no? It's a ritual. So I go & have my mate' there. I read a new book. Not everybody takes advantage [of the garden in this way] because not everybody lives nearby as I do, but many do it.

VW: Does participation in your community garden encourage you to get involved in other aspects of your community? If so, what?

CB: Yes, for example I was not aware of the city government, who was the representative of our area. Now I go to the meetings a few times a year that the representative has to talk about issues. It's mostly in the neighborhood. Since I am a political animal, & even in our garden I am following the political communication of the public things.

VW: Does your neighborhood *feel* safer with a community garden? *Is* it safer?

CB: I think so. It happens to be a safe place, but the garden gives it presence. It's not an abandoned place, you know. There are activities; there are concerts, movement of people. I think it's an asset for this community.

VW: What do you teach others in your community garden?

CB: There is, when you first come to the garden, some have a lot of experience but many don't. & they learn a lot by asking questions. "When do I plant what?" "How do I improve the soil?" "What fertilizer do you use?" "Where did you buy your seeds?" "How did you grow espalier?" "How did you prune them?" & there is always one who knows something & they teach the other. But it happens in a very informal way as you go along.

VW: What do you learn from others in your community garden? Are workshops provided?

CB: You learn to improve your relations. Because we the human beings are very different & arrive with different habits. Not everybody behaves according to expectations. So I at least make a great effort not to use any stick, but always to educate how to do it better. Suppose when you water the garden, we have to be careful the water doesn't overflow. Because the garden was DG which we have on some of the sidewalks. & there are many persons who think this is a beach in the tropics & enjoy to splash the water everywhere, so in a kind way I remind them not to do that. Or to leave things as they found it. Like an individual who used the water hose & leave it anywhere, while when they came it was coiled around something & it was clean & it's a continuous teaching. One sociological phenomenon is when they join, we explain all the rules & philosophy & everyone agrees to take care of the lot, to work in the common areas, etc. but gradually they develop a sense of ownership of the plot & become very possessive & give less & less time to the common area. This is something very noticeable & you have to be continuously educating. First the plots do not belong to us, they belong to the city. & the city wants that it be an experience for as many people as possible. The city has an expectation that there will be a rotation. Because when they develop a possessive stance the problem is that they decide not to plant one year & the place gets full of weeds. So when you talk with them they remind you that "this is my plot" the same way that children say "this is my ice cream" & Americans say "this is my property".

VW: Are there young and old alike in your community garden? Is a mix of ages important? Why or why not?

CB: Yes, it is always changing. It used to be 50% male 50% female but lately there are more female. I am Hispanic but I am white, you know. So I don't consider myself different from them. There is always one Asian person. But there have been very few Latinos. More or less [representative of the neighborhood].

VW: Most people live near the garden?]

CB: No, they live short distance, but the garden is in the western side of Berkeley & the gardeners live in different parts of the city of Berkeley.

VW: Does gardening in a group (community gardening) help you to feel closer to nature / your culture or community than gardening by yourself? Why or why not?

CB: Very much. Close to nature & close to myself. Particularly close to my true self. My ground being, no? It is difficult to explain, but there is an order called the Benedictine & their motto is “ora et labora.” “Ora” comes from oration. In Latin to pray is to orate & “labora” is to labor. So pray & work. For me when I work with my hands my mind, & in particular with nature, with the air, with the soil, the plants, my mind is totally, rambling, thinking, theorizing, making hypothesis, all the things that happen within the mind, no? You just become an observer of the reality you are living with. So when you stop being your thoughts & you are just present in this moment it’s an experience of being, just being you, & maybe something more than you, no?

VW: Would you have this same experience gardening by yourself?

CB: Well, being in a community garden supposed to, if by being with your land & your plants, being present & mindful, your true being is able to emerge, if it stops there & you are not able to explain to others, the experience will bring you back to your selfish self, no? But being with others you have to transform this awareness, this consciousness, that arises in this relationship with the land, if it doesn’t become a good relationship with others it’s a selfish experience. So for me it’s very important to work with others, to deal with the issues of others in a constructive way & in a participatory way. I need a compliment of this inner life with an outer life to work on the relationship with others.

GENERAL / MISC:

VW: If nothing stood in your way (money, time, help, etc.), what would you say would make the best community garden?

CB: A good community garden has to begin with the philosophy of the common good. It is not enough to farm in an organic way. it is not enough to eat fresh food. But for a community garden to help others, to make more beautiful the neighborhood, it requires a spirit of participation, of sharing. So its very important that this philosophy be made very explicit & to look for garden as having the potential to live those ideals. Also I found very helpful, very supportive that LA designed the place, that it was an original design, that it didn’t grow spontaneously. There are some experiments here in the city of gardens that go the wrong way, no? But eventually they become run down & someone has to come fix them. So this mysticism of participation & this organizational element is embedded within an architectural design. Because when a person who knows design a place, if you take an idea & represent this idea in the space, they way you walk, the place where you sit to read, the place from which you see the sunset, all that, that has to be thought well.

VW: why has you garden been successful for so long?

CB: Well, this will be a test. The prescence of Karl Linn kept those places within their original concept, the original discipline. So it was basicly because of his personality, his dedication. Now he is gone, & organizations have been established to replace him. & its trying to maintain the same principles & discipline. & we will see if we succeed or not as it is. But I think his presence was a factor.

VW: Please add any additional comments on your community garden experiences that we have not talked about or that you wish to elaborate on.

CB: Always in life have been fear of peace & fear of violence, no? & we live ...fear of growing conflict throughout the world, for various reasons. & more than ever we need places of peace & reflection that radiate, that reminds us that human beings are capable of doing some good. & like in other times, people went to the monasteries or retreat place, I think now in our cities these gardens can be these places of encounters of the best of the human condition. The nature makes possible the emergence within us of the sense of participation, of a sense of healing where you are aware of all the accomplishments that technologically we have achieved. But when we separate one from the other & it leads to large poverty unnecessary in the world & this unnecessary war – I am pro life, but this is type of life.

Now that you mention it, I think a skill which is very important to organize a movement like this is politics. Karl Linn & other associates of him spent a lot of time establishing very good relationships with the city. They work on that continually. The element of power. One cannot ignore that.

CB: Thank you & I hope you can give shape to your dreams.

APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH HAYWARD FORD

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS for community garden participants

BACKGROUND:

Name: Hayword Ford – ASPEN FARM CG, Philadelphia, PA

Gender: Male

Education level: Undergrad BS

School(s): Univ of S. Carolina

Degree(s) (if applicable): general education in psychology

How many years in chosen trade or profession: none / Garden coordinator for last 26 years

SPECIFIC TO COMMUNITY GARDENS:

VW: Define “community garden” in your own words.

HF: Anyone in the community of Philadelphia, in most cases the def of a community garden is people in the community working together for a common gain I would say. But at Aspen Farms is it not that. It has evolved to be a combination of Pennsylvania really. Because in our garden we have 4 or 5 different cities people come from to garden at. Over 25 years we have worn the community out. The average community gardener, when I started was in their 60s, in that age group chronologically, 25 years ago. & so every 10 years there’s probably another generation, that’s why I said we’ve worn the neighborhood out. Ok so in the next 2 or 3 years we’ll go back in the community because younger people are coming in and we’ll start the evolution again.

VW: Describe your own community garden.

HF: Started in November 1974. & its one of the only CG’s in Philadelphia that’s been in continuous operation for that length of time.

VW: Have you been gardening in it since then?

HF: No, not since ’74, not me. I started about ‘77 I would say & I came in to help a friend. I was not there when they started.

VW: Is this the first community garden you ever worked in?

HF: No, absolutely not. I’ve had a garden every day of my life I think.

VW: How many plots do you have?

HF: We have roughly 40, 41. And they’re all pretty good size you know. Everybody grow more food that they can use.

VW: Are there annual plot fees?

HF: We charge, uh, let’s get this very carefully now. There is no charge for the garden plot. But we have other amenities that have to be paid for, like electricity, water bill, port-a-potty, and we charge \$5 a month for that. It’s about 50 bucks a year. ...we may have to increase it. So we just went on solar power. We made enough solar power to pay the electric company back & come out with a zero bill. It’s a new experiment. We just went on solar power a week ago. You have to have something after 25 years, you always have to have something new to do, that motivates you, you know.

VW: Describe the function / purpose of your community garden (personal plot / for a food pantry or church or school / etc).

HF: Growing basically organic food & socialization. We don't sell anything, we give it away. We give it to community people & to places like [?] neighborhood people, soup kitchens, whatever. Sometimes we just hang some on the fence & whoever come by & take it that's ok.

VW: What are your favorite things about belonging to a community garden?

HF: Coordinating & kinda motivating people, because it's like a family. You have good & bad in it. My new thing is to start a new project & see it come to fruition. It's my favorite. When I tell you about motivating people, I think you can figure that one out.

VW: Why was a community garden created in your neighborhood?

HF: Because there was a heavily blighted, really almost half a city block. & the houses were torn down because Mill Creek ran under it & the houses were sinking. So I guess the land couldn't support the weight of the houses & they torn the houses down in the 50s & the property lay dormant for more that 20 years. And so you know what that breded. So a community group got together & request from the city, the redevelopment authority, they asked could we use the land, and they said yeah, until they needed it. & they hadn't needed it yet. And we now own it.

VW: What was the land used for before it became a community garden? Who owns the land? How long can you use it for a community garden?

HF: We have a land trust in the city known as the Neighborhood Gardens Association. They gave it to us, we gave it to NGA so they'll pay the taxes & insurances on it, and they hold it in trust as long as someone wanted to garden, they can garden now.

VW: How does your community garden solve its internal and external problems? How does it make decisions?

HF: Our garden is ran on [?] rules of law & we have a grievance committee, a leadership, president, vice president, treasurer, we run it just like a city. I am coordinator & president. Not by choice.

VW: How can landscape architects, city planners, etc. help to make community gardens more feasible / valuable / self-sustaining / successful / enduring?

HF: One thing, I can only speak for us. Matter of fact, we have [?] utopia as far as community gardens are concerned. & it would not have been done without a complete & total landscape architect from the University of Pennsylvania. We had a garden before we met them but the award winning garden appeared after 1988 when we met them. For many years we worked with them with them & the landscape students used our garden as their workshop. & all the best designs we used them and the rest is history.

VW: So it was successful using the students?

HF: Absolutely. Our collaboration with the university, & Dr. Anne Spirn, and she was very instrumental in putting us on the map.

SPECIFIC TO NATURE:

VW: What is “nature”, in your own words?

HF: Anything that comes natural & evolves...

VW: Where do you live (rural area / suburbs / urban area)?

HF: Quasi. 20 minutes from the garden. Right on the edge of suburbia.

VW: Do you feel surrounded by or separated from nature where you live? Why?

HF: I almost live in Farimont Park. Does that tell you anything? I live within 3 minutes of Fairmont park - one of the largest urban community parks in the world.

VW: What do you do to feel close to nature?

HF: I think I’ve always been. I came from an agrarian state, it’s not all I know but I’m in my comfort zone here.

VW: How does it make you feel when you are in a ‘natural’ setting?

HF: If it’s not too invasive or contaminated you feel good. You feel relaxed.

VW: Do you feel like humans are part of nature? Why or why not?

HF: I think I am a part of nature. If I’m not around nature I get somewhat depressed, out of sorts, & when you get back out you can think & breathe fresh air, etc. I don’t think it’s too many people who does not like nature.

VW: Do you feel that gardens are part of nature? Why or why not?

HF: I think absolutely, because the garden does the same thing. & not only does it grow for beautification, it’s for the body & it also helps the person. Because a lot of this stuff filter contaminants & what not, so its got to be, you can recycle everything back into “nature” & then it starts all over again. It’s one of the natural things. Recycles itself. Anything that totally recycles itself it helps on the way up & down has got to be natural.

VW: Does gardening in a group (community gardening) help you to feel closer to nature than gardening by yourself? Why or why not?

HF: No I don’t think so. I think I would feel the same either way, but I think it would be more advantageous to your psyche if you garden with someone that you like. I think as far as gardening per se, it wouldn’t make any difference to me personally, but I think it would be [?] if you had somebody around that you liked.

VW: So maybe you feel closer to culture or community?

HF: Yeah, that’s why I said we use it for food & socialization.

SPECIFIC TO CULTURE:

VW: What is “culture”, in your own words?

HF: A group of people with like values & mores. I think that’s the only way you can describe culture: same values & mores.

VW: Do you know your neighbors? Do they participate in your community garden also?

HF: Yeah as a matter of fact that is what community originally came out to be. Philadelphians & especially my garden or our garden in essence & technically is not a “community” garden because we have people coming away 20, 25 miles. That’s why I say the garden has evolved from a community garden to a community garden of Pennsylvania. It must be lacidocious(?), I would say at one point it probably was the best community garden in the country. & we’ve gotten awards & the accolades to prove that. But I won’t brag. As a matter of fact we just went in to the Smithsonian museum. We will be the first community garden, urban community garden, that will be in there with a web site. Matter of fact I should get the address in the next couple of days. We’re accepted & photographed & cataloged & have been accepted. I just got the certificate back a couple of days ago.

VW: What is it that makes you garden the best?

HF: Well I guess truthfully we work with professionals, over the last 15 years. & assuming a certain level we usually get the majority of things we ask for improvements. And so aesthetically I think we are the best community garden around. Right now we have 3 projects where we’re remaking our main passage way, back driveway & walkways on the inside of the garden. Around the perimeter, concrete walkways. All this stuff is done for visitors, so when they come in it makes it easier to walk. & so we can accommodate the disabled. All this has to be done thru a grant [not the city]. The city has never donated, as long as I’ve been there, one cent to our individual garden. They probably have donated to Philadelphia Green, but 99% of our improvements were done thru grants thru the Neighborhood Garden Assoc.

VW: Where do you interact with people the most (garden / church / work / etc.)?

HF: 99% of my interaction I would say would be away from the garden. I guess in clubs & meetings. Because I associated w/ most of the governing bodies of the horticultural things in Philadelphia. So that’s where I meet most of my people is in those meetings. In the summer I’m in the garden 6 to 7 days a week for some time. But usually when I’m there the majority of our gardeners are working or its too hot or whatever & in the evenings I’m usually in meetings or in the early mornings when the gardeners are there.

VW: What is your most satisfying way to interact with people?

HF: When we have our garden meeting or just sitting in the gazebo chatting.

VW: Do you feel more self-reliant because you participate in a community garden?

HF: I’ve been there so long I really don’t know.

VW: Do you feel like your neighborhood is more beautiful because of your community garden?

HF: Absolutely, no doubt about it.

VW: Do you eat more nutritious foods because you work in a community garden?

HF: Absolutely.

VW: Does working in a community garden help with your family's food budget?

HF: Let's put it like this, I don't think I've bought any vegetables in the last 20 years or more. I grow what I like. I freeze, I eat raw. [He preserves what he doesn't eat]

VW: Does community gardening help conserve resources, in your opinion?

HF: Yes, absolutely, sustainability. & now we're at a very important community garden as a whole..because most people at one point fund these community garden are now going away from it. Now its open spaces, you know like public parks & what not. So we are getting some funding, but the budget's been cut quite a bit. So ...the preservation of community garden is what we are in dire need of.

VW: Does community gardening create recreation and exercise for you?

HF: Yes it helps me personally. Sometimes I'll go out just for the exercise. Go out & dig for 2 or 3 hours, & especially now that I am retired, that's my basic exercise.

VW: Does community gardening create a kind of therapy or promote your mental health? In what way(s)?

HF: Yeah, mental & physical. Because when your stiff, tired, out of sorts, you go out & work a few hours you'll be in good shape. If you can't sleep, go out & work a half a day – you'll sleep.

VW: Does your community garden feel peaceful and/or tranquil? Is it bustling with activity? Does it seem to reduce your stress level? Why or why not?

HF: I think personally, before I was gardening I was on blood pressure medication. Since I am gardening I am no longer on blood pressure medication. I haven't been on it for 10 years. I eat the food from the garden, nothing else special & working in the garden, & I think its weight control also. I think I weigh the same thing I did 20 years ago.

VW: What are the needs and desires of your neighborhood or local community? Does your community garden help meet these needs?

HF: I would say partially. For those that are in the garden & those that receive from the garden, I think they are somewhat helped. But I don't think, & a little socialization. Gives some hope, maybe aesthetic value, or it might motivate someone coming thru or something like that. But does it directly affect the total community, outside of aesthetic value, I don't think so. I think many people have many different needs. When you are

dealing with 50 different people, they have 10 different reasons for being there. Using myself as an example, I am truthfully there for the exercise & camaraderie. I don't even really think I'm there for the food, because truthfully I could but the food cheaper. I can have fresh food here, I can buy organic food. It takes me all year to grow carrots. So the fresh foods I could buy them in 20 minutes. That's why I say it's for the exercise & the camaraderie of the other people. Like I go out 7 days a week, I may go out & work 2 hours or just to go sit in the gazebo. As a matter of fact, I'll take all my bills & books & everything & go & read. And to be honest with you, many times I'll go when I know no one is there. I sit, think, i do a little writing, I like a little poetry, so I go sit & write it. The garden is a place happening in my mind. I get total relaxation. I think quite a few people do it. We have a sitting area for 300 people in the garden. We have 3 or 4 focal points, & if you see someone sitting there, reading or doing writing, we've made it a point not even to go towards them, we don't interrupt them. Not unless they request to be interfered with. You go to another point, we have it set up like that. Then unless someone invites you into their space you just leave them there. They'll eventually come over if they want to talk to you. & they may not even say anything that day but "how are you?" & if you respect their space, you'll be ok.

VW: Does participation in your community garden encourage you to get involved in other aspects of your community? If so, what?

HF: In our garden we work with a lot of the kids from the schools. We go out to nursing homes, we have a couple of nursing homes in the area. We try to help people or educate them how to take care of their properties, when to plant. So I guess the community garden is fully involved in the immediate area. We try to be very conscious not to interfere with the other organizations & business which job it is to do that. So sometimes you have to walk a very thin line & I'm still requested sometime not to do certain things, but that's me.

VW: Does your neighborhood *feel* safer with a community garden? *Is* it safer?

HF: I would say anytime you control or alleviate blight the neighborhood itself will not only be beautified but will have less crime. Because I don't think criminals like beauty. No, they can't hide their stash.

VW: What do you teach others in your community garden?

HF: Oh absolutely. That is one of my greater things. This year we had 2 schools that would garden weekly & sometimes I go to the school classrooms & we try to instill plant logic into the children, the younger ones. We had an elementary school & a middle school. Plus we have many schools that come on day trips. Always plenty of work to do. You'd be surprised, the youngsters are very good gardeners. With a just a little bit of supervision, they are magnificent. 6 years old & up. We have AmeriCorp & that type of group. They come out & volunteer. The school will come in twice a week. AmeriCorp will come in when they need a project. They'll call & say "do you need anyone next week" or "can you use 15 people?" Of course i always say yes! But they are paid by the government. And they are helpful & they are some nice people.

VW: What do you learn from others in your community garden? Are workshops provided?

HF: Matter of fact, we have one gardener from India & one from Cambodia & I'm learning all new things. New vegetables, even techniques on planting. You know, they plant different, they have different fruits, stuff I've never seen. So you're constantly learning. When you get to the point that you can't learn, its time to give it up. It's always different. Every culture they do something different.

VW: Are there young and old alike in your community garden?

HF: I guess its 50% black; Cambodian, Spanish, Indian, English, Australian is the other 50%. & up till about 5 years ago it was about 90% black. I made it a point to get the diversity. At one point it was set in a black neighborhood, so that's why it was 90 % black. & as they left, went to wherever, I made it a conscious effort because we were getting stagnant, & so I could get motivated again.

VW: Is a mix of ages important? Why or why not?

HF: I guess including school, we are from 10 to 90. Up until a year ago, we had someone 106. Absolutely. If everyone was 90, you couldn't learn anything. Someone who is younger learns more about life then gardens from the older people. & when I came in the garden, the older people did not want to be bothered with the younger people, but I made a concerted effort to get them, anytime a younger person wanted to know something, I would purposely send them to an older person. & consequently, the found out that the younger people weren't bad & the older people weren't bad. & then they get along now pretty good. But they had to be introduced, you know. The only difference was, neither one was respecting the other's space. & once you learn to respect each other & their space there's a perfect match. Psychology 101. To run a community garden you need all the different types of psychology just to make it work. Unbelievable. I think I had a quote one time in some book, I don't know whether I made it or somebody made it & attributed it to me, but "in a community garden there are 50 different ideas & 50 different ways to do it & all 50 are right." So somehow the coordinator has to assimilate it or correlate it into one peaceable idea.

VW: How do you do that?

HF: Sheew! It's not easy. It's hard, believe me. Sometimes you go home with a headache & you wonder what happened. But you have to correlate it so nobody's upset. & if you can do that, you'll have a somewhat successful garden.

VW: Sounds like an important job you have.

HF: I don't know how important it is, but over the years have enjoyed it, I think I have. Maybe I'm too numb to know better.

GENERAL / MISC:

VW: If nothing stood in your way (money, time, help, etc.), what would you say would make the best community garden?

HF: A group of people, dedicated people that can help you fulfill a vision. It has nothing to do with money. & like-minded people who can work on one vision & bring it to fruition.

VW: Please add any additional comments on your community garden experiences that we have not talked about or that you wish to elaborate on.

HF: We have a new program for the expansion of community garden & preservation. A young lady in the NGA. She is a beautiful person. She was in the Penn State Urban Gardening Program for 20 years & I hired her away & now she's director of the NGA. [She took Hayward's place as director of NGA] She would be a beautiful person to talk to. Carrie Mishovic 215.988.8798. Tell her I told you to call. She can talk to you about preservation. That is now the new thing in urban gardening. There were community gardens originally, & then when they turned away from community gardens they went into sustainability, & now it's stabilized, they are going into preservation. So preservation now is the thing. Why – the land in PA is so expensive, they want to put houses & what not on vacant land. & they're fighting for preservation for community gardens. So I think she could steer you in a good way.

VW: Now the focus is on keeping the community gardens that were already there?

HF: Exactly. For the last 10 we were trying to get money to keep them & that was sustainability. So now we're still trying for money but they are somewhat stable. Now they are going for preservation to keep them from being sold off. That would be your next step.

VW: What are some ways PA or Philly are preserving community gardens?

HF: Trying to put them in the land trust. Or some groups are trying to buy the land or getting a long-term lease. Or we might earn the right to mortgage. Or if a piece of land is unsellable, like mine was, we got it donated for a couple of bucks. The city had like \$170,000 that it was worth, but nobody could buy it because the creek ran under it, so they gave it for a dollar. & In essence we gave it to the NGA to put in the land trust, so we don't have to worry about it anymore. So all kind of little things like that.

VW: Who do you use to get preservation of community gardens going?

HF: I started my own 13 years ago. & then I started working with Phil. Green & then went to NGA. Then we all 3 started working together. & so when "I", there's no "I" in community garden! You have to get everybody & sometimes you still don't get it done.

VW: Sounds like there's a lot of politics in gardening.

HF: that's all it is. Young lady I wish I could tell you how many meetings I've been in. & how many times you fight for the same thing. You know the city has a meeting so they can have another meeting. But it all works out. I've been around in one council or committee for the last 25 years, I think of them as my children. Each one is a new challenge – can we get it done. Or maybe I'm too numb to give it up.

VW: How many gardens are you working in now?

HF: There's about 500 in the city. & whichever one has a problem, that's where we go.

VW: & you still have time to garden?

HF: Oh yea, sometimes I garden at 5 in the morning. My thing is, if you want to do it, you'll find time to do it.

APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH DON LAMBERT

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS for community garden participants

BACKGROUND:

Name: Don Lambert – EAST DALLAS CG, Dallas, TX

Gender: Male

DL: I think that people don't use the outdoors for recreation in this hot, oppressive climate we have here. Couple of months, maybe weeks. & gardens require a lot of weekly activity through the whole year. The main growing season is not comfortable. In some places where they have comfortable environments people are always looking for lots of different ways to get out & within that is gardening. Gardening is not easy. It's based on skills that have to be learned by a lot of trial & error. You don't discover a whole lot by yourself; you've got to find out things from other people & observing & what not. So it's a fairly difficult area to do real well in & be successful. You need lots of opportunities to see lots of people gardening & have lots of chances, maybe at your school, your church, around the community, lots of gardens to happen on in a place where it's great to be outdoors. We haven't adequately factored in environmental aspects of it on the human animal, what are the stresses of gardening in particular places. A garden has to be a great place to get to be. So if you're being eaten up by mosquitoes & you're sweaty & fungus starts to grow on you if you're out there too long its just really difficult, people start to get heat rashes, so you really have to want to be there. So you have to have other reasons besides "I'm gardening for fun" "I want to go out & play in the dirt" things like that. & what we found is that when we get people who come to us & they want a garden plot & that's their whole attitude, they just want to have some fun, they always thought they wanted to grow some stuff & what not, they usually haven't thought thru what it takes to stay out there & their not prepared to be out there in the summer. In addition to having a climate that is not really conducive to people getting outdoors & not making gardening fun, we have soil which is this sticky black clay, "gumbo" they call it, & its impossible to weed, you can't get the roots of Bermuda grass out of it, you can't separate the roots from the soil, you can't dig it – when its dry its like a rock & when it gets wet it turns into this sticky stuff. You get so tired of scraping the clay off your tools & the bottom of your shoes. Most people don't know enough about organic gardening to make it as easy as possible. Because basically if you use lots of compost & mulch & things like that you can amend the soil& make it fairly nice to work with. But if you don't know anything about that & you go out there & try to work up the soil & its sticky & wet or its hard, you can't control the weeds, its hard to water, & a lot of people get discouraged. You hear about people who go to the nursery in the spring & they see tomato plants, buy them, and take them home. They try to find a place, they go out & take some lawn out, which is all Bermuda grass, & they find the soil is much harder than they imagined, etc., & they plant their tomatoes in an area that's not well prepared & they don't get any tomatoes. Bankers would stand up in meetings & say "I planted tomatoes & I didn't get any so I don't think gardening is feasible & you're wasting your time." So there's a lack of proper training & education, difficult soil. It doesn't get cold enough in the winter to kill the weeds & bugs or enable

you to take a break, because if you rest in the winter the weeds take over your garden. So you just have to learn so much more to garden successfully here than elsewhere. A study done by Heifer International, on the economic viability (lives improved) of urban gardens, found that programs fail if their major objective is to create gardens. They have to have an objective of gardens that do something, & it has to be something meaningful, something worthwhile, something achievable. & a lot of programs just want to build a community garden. & they never get past the fun aspects of it, they just want to garden. Or they measure their success by how many gardens we have. & those programs don't seem to make it, because you get a lot people who have no real mission. The ones that are successful are the ones that take on a really strong mission like environmental stewardship - they want to become the best organic gardeners they possibly can, they want to train other people, or they want to involve youth, kids in the neighborhood, do something to benefit the gangs in the neighborhood, the kids that are getting locked up for various things & what not, they want to do it as horticultural therapy, seniors, disables, they want to help refugees adjust & adapt to American life, for economic goals, to improve people's incomes, people's health & diet, attack problems of obesity, better food habits. The programs that have those kinds of missions, the gardeners that get involved with them get caught up in the missions & become better gardeners & are able to link themselves to the rest of the community in ways that makes them successful. They can also adjust & adapt over time, change their vision to fit the need. & I was thinking that's so true in our case. We started thinking that if we could get 10 gardens, we pulled that number out of the air, then people would see how great it was. But that didn't work. The thing that worked was the garden we had working with Cambodian refugees, just help them grow what they can to sustain their families & supplement their incomes & help their culture survive, adjust & adapt, that garden thrived without us doing an awful lot. Just solving problems. But the people who came & gardened were just gung ho to garden & didn't need us to go around all the time talking about how great community gardening is. So we just helped them reach their mission & it kind of took care of itself. & now that we've started doing the donation type of garden people join the garden because they like the idea of being able to grow some stuff for themselves & be able to donate the surplus to the food pantry. They really get into that. & churches & businesses & schools & everybody in the neighborhood sees a reason for the garden. It's just a not a bunch of people showing up, like an elitist thing, you know, these outsiders don't get the neighborhoods as involved in the garden as we'd like as we'd like to. Of course we want to get the neighbors involved but that doesn't often happen, the neighbors are busy, right. So we get people who have time who come from other places to this one little vacant lot. But the fact that their growing food that's going to the food pantry to feed the poor & what not is something that everybody understands.

VW: How did GICD get started?

DL: It started in the late 80s really. GICD became a nonprofit in 1994. There were a number of people involved in gardens in various ways before that. I pretty much did a lot of the stuff myself. What I found was that all of the gardens that I discovered, there were some 6 or 8 out there, had no interest in being connected with anybody else. It

was just their little private thing. I would come in & say “wouldn’t it be neat if we could put together some kind of coalition or something & all the little gardens could all get together & share information & tools & seeds & plants – they weren’t interested in that. They wanted to do it; they didn’t want to be involved in any way with anyone else. None of those gardens survived. & it’s continued to be that way. Almost every time we discover a group that’s put together a little garden it’s just kind of kept it to themselves. It’s a fun thing for a couple of years & then it goes. There’s one exception – there’s a guy that’s got a garden, he called it ‘sunshine garden’ & it’s in a vacant lot beside his house. It’s because, I think he lives right there. & he just controls it – he’s the lord of the garden. He’s got a few crazy friends who like to come over & drink beer & hang out in the garden. Its not like most community gardens its just a place for some old guys in the neighborhood. It’s survived for maybe 10 years. They don’t particularly care if anyone else knows about this garden. I think they have a purpose, a major purpose besides just gardening, there’s the social aspects & hanging out. They like being different. Their neighborhood assoc tried to ban them a couple of times & that encouraged them to be even stronger.

And schools do the same thing. A teacher or principal thinks it would be really neat to have a garden & they can find some volunteers or parents that like the idea. It takes off for a little while. Those volunteer’s kids graduate & those parents are gone. If the school doesn’t have built into its curriculum this functional rule garden plays in the education & social life of the school or something it doesn’t have any real life other than a few hours of thought they put into it & it goes away. It’s mostly in grade schools. They are usually associated with science teachers. They read about other schools with these great outdoor classrooms, etc. & so they do it too. But for some reason we don’t have a whole neighborhood, a whole community, a support group, that sort of responds to all of this. They [master gardeners] don’t see that gardening in schools is like a vital part of children’s education & something that should be in the schools & that’s an opportunity. They just don’t see the opportunity. They just see it as they would be a cheap source of labor.

I think that’s what makes community gardens work: in a real community garden people have this sense that they’re doing something in the garden that improves their neighborhood, community, & part of that space is theirs. While they’re using it it’s really theirs & its like, if they don’t have any place to garden because they live in an apartment or their backyard is shaded with big trees or something, to have a space that they can garden in is really important to them. As I’ve said, it seems like here they’ve got to have some bigger mission than just gardening themselves, something they’re doing as members of a group. [In other cities is a mission needed?] I don’t think it’s as necessary. Its very hard to train people here. Its hard to have workshops & classes. People won’t make the time to go to them. People who are gardening just want to get out & garden & learn it while their doing it. & we as an organization say “ok we’re going to have a workday” & there always has to be some education training as part of it, because we’re not going to find the time to get these guys & sit them down in front of a

blackboard & do a real formal training. Which then we worry because Heifer is giving us money & they expect us to be training & its like were are the trainings at? It's a training every time we go out & pick vegetables for the food pantry together, every time we chip the pathways, etc. People aren't going to come out & be involved in the project if they don't have some say-so in what's going on. If they're not participants at mulitlevels, they wouldn't know what to do if there wasn't some training going on somehow. I think the proof is in getting stuff done, in the sustainability, an on-going sustainable project. There's a certain number of things that are getting done in some way, including the members' training. Involving people in the overall scope of the project. & what I've learned over the years it that its hard to just step back & get people doing it instead of you doing it. One thing I've learned is that people are pretty good at, if anybody will step forward & do something I just let them do it.

The guy that just came out [of the store] has been in the hospital several times. Particularly with the Cambodian community have health problems; their mental health, physical health is just in sad shape. Most of them have alcohol problems. Almost everyone of them has gotten to the point where if they don't stop drinking its going to kill them. So we banned drinking in the garden (really hard to monitor), but its gotten better, but its taken people going to the hospital, some of them multiple times. Really severe problems, smoking & emphysema. The refugees were often settled here as families. Not only did they lose everything they had, but they have this situation where the older generation looses all its credibility because they come here & its harder for them to learn English & adjust & adapt. So the kids become bilingual & translate & they are elevated to a level of society that normally they would be sitting a corner quiet & only the adults would be talking & they are doing all the talking for them. All their sense of self worth is gone. Everything's turned upside down. & the garden has been really good because this is something they are highly skilled at, something they know how to do & their own community sees it as special, too. But the younger generation doesn't' always appreciate it as much. There are only about 3 households that live near the garden from the 20 families gardening here. They carpool & get rides from the suburbs into the garden. Its still a meeting place for these families. Most of the families that garden here came from different parts of Cambodia or are in different social classes & there are these rivalries, these families don't necessarily get along. They are very close as families, as households, but they really don't like doing this stuff much with others, there are conflicts based on that all the time. We try to do things like have a garden leader & we'll go to the leader & say call everybody for a meeting or share these seeds with everybody but they won't function that way. Among these 20 families, there are 5 or 6 sub-groups that avoid each other as much as they can. That makes it tough. It's always hard to introduce new ideas to groups like these. To explain scientific, ecological principles just doesn't seem to work. They are very clever & ingenious & come up with all kinds of ideas & sometimes they are totally wrong. If one is more successful they all follow it. [For example, protecting vegetables in the cold weather...].

This lot was vacant when we got it. This is the second garden, or maybe the third. The first one belonged to the YWCA or some women's group came out with some women & kids refugees & tried to garden on this lot, there used to be stories about this a long time ago. They'd plant & the street people would come & pull the plants up & destroy everything. Wasn't fenced in. & the street people had total control of this place to have a bunch of Asian refugees come in, you know, they just weren't going to let them have any space. So they gave that up. Every apartment where they had put the refugees were going out & trying to grow stuff on the grass. Drove the apartment managers mad. There were little gardens in the flower beds. In Thailand & Cambodia, people don't grow trees for shade, only for fruit. & they thought every tree on the apartment property was a fruit tree. So when they started gardening around the apartment, they didn't see any value in the landscaping so they thought they were doing everyone a favor by pulling the shrubs out of the ground & plant vegetables. Eventually there was a group of about 20 people who worked with nonprofits; there were a couple of people out of city departments, arboretum, ag extension, civic leaders of different kinds, put together a little coalition to start a garden for the Asian refugees. They called themselves the East Dallas Community Garden Alliance. There were 2 guys who owned the 2 lots that made up this property & these people thought the land was not worth anything & you might as well garden on it – they thought they were going to get their lots cleaned up for free. This was all overgrown with trees & there car parts & bodies & couches & refrigerators everywhere. They had been bringing in their trucks & dumping concrete in here & a community of people lived here on this lot basically. They got youth from prisons, like chain-gang sort of thing, & started cleaning up & all the scout groups & everything. They worked for like 2 years cleaning this place. I wasn't involved in it at all at the time, I came in about '82. so the only way they thought they could keep it secure was to put up an 8' high fence with razor wire on top. We've managed to get the wire off a few parts of it. The street people would go around the neighborhood & collect old couches & furniture & mattresses & heave it over the fence every night, & bottles & what not. There were street people camped in the front who would harass anyone who approached the garden. The alliance got the ag extension to come in with tractors & fill the place up & gave them some kind of a plan for the community garden. They got someone to donate putting in the water system. They roughly laid out the beds with stakes & strings & had a big opening ceremony. That's all that the Alliance had, they were done. They didn't know that it needed managing. Their view was these people are farmers & they know what they're doing & they thought that within a year there would be a managing group from within the gardeners who would come together & they would just hand over everything to them & it would be self-sustaining. (paraphrasing): The ag extension said they would teach the Asians to garden in Texas. A group of Vietnamese came up with a list of things they wanted to grow, but all the things were foreign to the ag guys. They heard about Don's home garden in Richardson & his cultivation of Asian veggies, in a newspaper article & 3 ag guys came to ask him about these plants. They were afraid they were invasive, etc. Don translated the plants (beans & mustard greens, etc) & offered alternatives. Then he drew them a demo plot & how to grow all these things in one bed together with

trellising. The ag people went & bought seeds & kept waiting until the weather was just right & in the meantime the Asians went & planted the garden themselves, the demo plot never got built. The ag guy was furious & went thru the first year feuding with the gardeners & then withdrew from the project. Don didn't have time to do CG at the time, he was teaching an anthropology class at UTD. He assigned students projects in East Dallas & he began to study the garden (for 3 years). Bermuda grass was everywhere, the gardeners were flooding the beds, working them wet as in their homeland, & ruining the soil. They were down from 30 families to 8 or 10. They were basically hunting & gathering the various mint & herbs scattered around. They were losing the garden rapidly. Trash was piling up. In 1991, there were 2 members on the Alliance left that the garden had fallen to: the East Dallas Police storefront, with the Asian police officers, & Save the Children. Save the Children called Don & asked him to help with the garden. He consulted with them off & on. They set up plot fees for the gardeners & came up with a plan to revitalize the garden & rebuild it. Wider paths for wheelbarrows, woodchips, boxed raised beds, etc. We quadrupled production within the first couple of years & its gotten better since. We changed the water system; put the faucets up in the air, changes so they could manage it. It's just been a game of doing things that they didn't understand at first & trying new things. They started using organic fertilizers & the gardeners liked it better. The picky buyers used to look at every item & say the food was not great & didn't want to pay much for it, but when the organically grow food came out, they would buy the first thing they saw, they noticed the difference. Greensense from Rhody in Garland. The soil used to be so hard, you could not break up a clod of dirt, but now it has changed so much. Now they notice it, but it took a lot of time. Molasses stimulates the microorganisms.

Its hardly been 2 years ago there would always be at least 6 or 8 people even in the slack part of the day, because when they lived next door it was so much more pleasant to be out here in their apartment. The guy over here moved out, this lady moved out, her son has to bring her here. Year round people would have lunch out here.

APPENDIX E

TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH LEE COBLE

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS for community garden participants

BACKGROUND:

Name: Lee Coble – OUR SAVIOUR CG, Balch Springs, TX

Gender: Male

SPECIFIC TO COMMUNITY GARDENS:

VW: Do you live in a place where you have your own yard?

LC: Yeah.

VW: Do you do any gardening at home?

LC: Yeah I try to do some gardening. I mostly plant flowers now. I tried to grow some tomatoes at one time. I have a lot of shade in my backyard so its not an ideal place for vegetables. We're going to try & put in some watercress, & see what happens. It doesn't need much light.

VW: Is that part of the reason you have a plot in the community garden?

LC: That's a good reason, to grow vegetables there. Plus the main reason was I wanted to learn how to do it – I started off with – I have an interest with insects, butterflies-and so I was trying to grow some plants that would attract butterflies & act as host plants for caterpillars & things like that. But I didn't know that much about growing plants so this community garden thing was less than a mile from my house, was conveniently located. So I thought I would just go up there & learn about just growing plants in general. I not that, I eat the food from there but that's not the primary reason that I grow there, it more just to learn how to grow stuff. I give a lot of the stuff away to the garden, to the food center, or just people around me. I cook some with it also. But that's not really the main reason I do it. Learning to grow plants & mainly grow plants for insects. It's sort of shifted since then. It's become more; yeah I've met a lot of people up there, so it's become more of a social activity also. So its, yeah I enjoy doing it.

VW: How can landscape architects, city planners, etc. help to make community gardens more feasible / valuable / self-sustaining / successful / enduring?

LC: All I know really is what Don has talked about it that area. I don't really have a personal opinion about it. He said that it's difficult to work with the city as far as getting a community garden going. It doesn't fit into their zoning plan apparently. That's sort of what he said. I don't know. As long as they don't give me any problems I don't care. That's part of the city people [citizens] doing pretty much what they want to & they kind of ignore zoning laws & stuff like that anyway & permits, 'we don't need no stinking permits' you know so, you can get away with a lot over here.

SPECIFIC TO CULTURE:

VW: Does community gardening create recreation and exercise for you?

LC: Yeah, I think its getting out. I work at home all day pretty much, inside the house & on a computer and so it gets me out & interacting with people & touching the real world you know earth & plants & things that are alive & gets me out in nature a little bit.

VW: Does community gardening create a kind of therapy or promote your mental health? In what way(s)?

LC: eah, yeah, sure it is. Yeah, it really is.

VW: Does your community garden feel peaceful and/or tranquil? Is it bustling with activity? Does it seem to reduce your stress level? Why or why not?

LC: It's pretty peaceful, I mean, there's not often a lot of people up there, even on our work days.

VW: What do you teach others in your community garden?

LC: They get me up there with the kids & I do this only because they ask me to, it's not because i, well I do enjoy, I like kids, too, so I don't mind talking to them but groups of kids, I'd rather deal with them on an individual basis, but groups of kids are ok, too, I guess. I lead groups through & I talk the them about the, something interesting to me is about the insects, I talk to them about what kind of insects eat on what plants & things like that & then I'm also interested to see how the seeds form behind the flowers & where to find the seeds. That's another thing I wanted to learn about is, well, how do you go out & find theses wild plants that these insects feed on & how do you get the seed, you know how do you find it, where's it located. & so I told them that generally the seed forms behind the flower in a certain area & blah blah blah. Stuff like that.

VW: What do you learn from others in your community garden?

LC: Yeah I don't know if I would hang in that long if it hadn't been for Don. Because Don has been doing this for so long that he has so many good ideas & he really directs a lot of people on how to garden. I guess we do have some other master gardeners up there that could probably guide us, too. But he's been the main person. He's just a great resource for information that I think that's what really got me hooked into it. I realized that I could learn a lot from him.

VW: Are there young and old alike in your community garden? Is a mix of ages important? Why or why not?

LC: Its mostly middle age to older, people in their 60s, 40s to 60s. We got some younger, we got a younger couple in right now that's probably in their 20s. But most of the people are middle-aged.

VW: Mix of ethnic groups – a good mix?

LC: Not really. We had some Hispanic people, we don't have any African-Americans at all, I don't think, no I don't think we do. It's mostly been just middle-aged white people. My wife is Asian, anyway that's another story, she comes up & helps now & then, & don's wife is Asian, I mean if you're counting heads & ethnicity. But generally no I don't think we have a real diverse group. & it doesn't really reflect the community here either. Because its like 85% Hispanic or something like that & the rest are black & maybe less than 1% is other.

VW: Does gardening in a group (community gardening) help you to feel closer to nature or your culture/community than gardening by yourself? Why or why not?

LC: It does both. I guess I don't really, I guess its part of nature in the sense that things are alive & there's dirt there & things like that. But I mean its not like nature like being out in the woods or in a wild environment. A few of the people are actually from this immediate area. Don lives up in Richardson, we have some other people that are generally from Garland or some place like that, but I know some people who live within 5 miles of the garden. So you know & some of the people who go to church there at that location they may not live in this area but they go to church there so they do have a link to the community. & the food center that they provide food for is very close by also. Southeast Dallas Emergency Food Center. & I've volunteered there, I began volunteering there over 5 years ago, 5, 10 years ago. I began with their immunization program on Saturdays that I could volunteer with. They've actually been on 60 minutes. I got involved with them & then my kids got to an age where they were playing soccer & I couldn't come in on Saturdays as much. So I still know the people up there & I used to work with them maybe on thanksgiving or something like that & volunteer then. So I've had sort of a connection to it & the garden has a connection to it & so I help support an institution I already know. So that's not really the reason I do it. I really do it because I want to learn how to grow things. You know, grow plants & stuff. That's just a secondary benefit to the community really.

VW: Do you want to know how to grow vegetables or kind of anything?

LC: Well I mean if you can grow vegetables its, you know, the concepts are the same, I mean different plants have different requirements, but it's a combination of different elements you know, weather its water & sunlight & soil quality or whatever. I just wanted to generally learn about raising plants. It didn't really have to be, as a matter of fact, I volunteered, before I really got into the garden, I was volunteering at the Dallas Discovery Gardens down at Fair Park. & so they were growing all kinds of different plants, native stuff & all kinds of other stuff, too. & they also have a program, a butterfly garden, of course, & that's where I primarily worked. But I guess, I worked in their green house a little, too, and so I learned a little more. But I didn't get to actually learn to plant the plants & how they grow & all that so I really, this gave me a better opportunity actually from seed to harvest or whatever I got to deal with plants & learn about them.

VW: What motivates people with yards to participate in CGs?

LC: Well I really do the extra work, like planting the trees & stuff; I mean that's of some interest to me. We recently planted a bunch of trees; well you know that, you were there. But I sort of did that as pay-back. I mean Don teaches me a lot of stuff so I do him favors. You know & he needs help with planting trees so I go up there & help him plant trees. It's not necessarily my primary interest but its pay-back & that's why I do that. They were trying to get me to be on the board but I've been on other boards in schools & other community organizations & I just got so tired of going to meetings & not actually getting something done I mean as far as building something or raising something or some sort of tangible product from your work you know so that's why I told him I didn't want to do that anyway. I just want to be in the garden & grow stuff.

Now I'll build fences or whatever, but I just don't to be on board. I understand his need for that also I know its important but there are people who will fulfill that role & they have no desire to get their hands dirty either, I just prefer to get my hands dirty.

APPENDIX F

TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH DENNIS VIRGADAMO

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS for community garden participants

BACKGROUND:

Name: Dennis Virgadamo – 17TH STREET CG, Houston, TX

Gender: Male

SPECIFIC TO COMMUNITY GARDENS:

VW: Describe your garden.

DV: it is on a lot that had some abandoned town homes on it , they was on the lot for 13 ½ years, they were never finished, they was tied up in an estate & just a really big mess. They finally got the city to tear them down. Of course we're in an inner-city neighborhood that's revitalizing and coming back around & the lot was just there. There was still a wood fence & they started putting graffiti on the fence & selling used cars on the lots & so forth, the neighbors were. [Torn down 2 years this coming June.] So they finally got torn down & we got some friends & neighbors together & thought there's got to be something better. & I had seen these community gardens around town & also we had just visited Italy where they have something like that, where they have community gardens a lot since there's not that much land in the inner cities of Italy. Everything to them is really precious, their land is precious, and their fruit & vegetables are precious. So what we decided is on community gardens so we've gotten about 9 people together & we got the funds, they put up the funds for the soil & all of our beds are raised up, we got all new soil & raised the beds up. It's easier to maintain & weed & easier to just, plus its looks nicer, too. You don't have to do the plowing & all that. So that's how we got started basically. Of course in Houston you can grow all year long. We fenced it in, built the rows & started gardening. We contacted Urban Harvest. They teach you how to grow things & how to garden.

VW: Describe the neighborhood.

DV: It was a run down neighborhood & back in the 50s & 60s all the people moved out to the suburbs, newer subdivisions. Most of the homes became rent properties. Back in the 80s the neighborhood started going into revitalization. They started tearing down some of the older homes which was good & bad, and building new homes. There were these little bungalows & they tore them down & started building \$350,000 - \$1 million homes on this property. So the neighborhood has a lot of trees & the lots, the new houses that they're building are big houses on small lots, so the people have no way to do any gardening because there's no property, you know. The value of the property is really expensive. & like I said its shady & just no room to grow anything. So this is a good thing for the neighbors who have too much shade in their yard. They can come out & garden. Their garden is approximately 100'x100', it's got plenty of sunshine. We've got a water hydrant on the lot, where we have to hand water, but that's ok. & like I said, the neighborhood is coming around. Building big homes & there's really no room in their yards to do any gardening, even the bungalows it's just too shady because it's an older neighborhood & there's just too much shade. The lots are really getting expensive, so if there's any lots that are still available we urge the people to get these

lots & if they're vacant to go on in & put a garden on it even if its for 2 or 3 or 4 years until they build something.

VW: Do you think your lot will remain a community garden?

DV: Hopefully it won't be built as a house, you know maybe we can keep it as a garden, because the city of Houston does have some gardens, quite a few. They loan the property to different garden associations.

VW: If land is so valuable, why does the city allow a garden there?

DV: If there are a lot of taxes & things due on the property, & you have a community improvement & the city acknowledges that & the property really don't belong to anyone, what they do, they take the property & make a city park out of it. & so then the city will lease the property back to a garden association or they'll put a garden on part of the city park. Its kind of like, they have a program here where the school district & the city of Houston parks partnership with each other & they call it a "spark". It's a park within the school lot. The city will come in with the school district & build these "sparks". & also the Urban Harvest organization will help start gardens on the school property also. It just really is a good thing to have these parks & these gardens because it improves the neighborhoods & makes the neighborhoods so much better. So that's what the city is kind of going towards. The city likes to plant trees on the boulevards and bayous & this is another green space that enhances the city.

VW: I didn't realize Houston was so proactive in this.

DV: In the last 20 years it's starting to come around. People are speaking out more & going for bicycle trails & parks & that sort of thing. & a lot of these gardens are in the poor part of town where people are not that well off & people grow food for the neighborhood. They have plenty of food & they pass it out & its helps the elderly. Of course we received a community improvement award from the [Heights?] neighborhood association & also our garden has been designated as a butterfly garden. We have a lot of butterflies because we have plants that attract the good insects, which enhances the growth of the vegetables & so forth. So that's another good thing. We really get a lot of good response with the community for doing this. I just wish much more of these could be done in Houston & other Texas towns.

VW: Do all 9 people live in the same neighborhood?

DV: Yeah, they're all in the same neighborhood. We have a couple of them that are master gardeners. We have several of them working in the garden. & we have a neighbor who home-schools her children & she brings the home school kids out. & then we have another group of people who, well we have one row that is set up as a therapy row. The beds are raised up like 3 feet, so if they're in a wheelchair or something they can work in the garden. We have several of them that are handicapped that come out & works in this therapy row. & we have one row that's designated for children where we all maintain & we try to children to come in & work, like from certain schools or neighborhoods. We have a dance group in the neighborhood & they bring the children over & they work in the garden. It's just a mixture of children, old folks, & we have some elderly people that come & work. & we have another row that

is just maintained by neighbors & friends, mostly neighbors. So we have 9 rows & each row is either maintained by one or a group of people. We have one African American, most are Anglo, but we do have one African American working.

VW: Is this representative of the neighborhood?

DV: No, the neighborhood is probably 40% Hispanic & maybe 10% African American & the rest Anglo.

VW: Do you live next door to the garden?

DV: Yeah, so I kind of watch over it & do the maintenance, some of the maintenance that the other gardeners aren't able to do. We also have, on the outside of the garden, a wildflower bed planted all along the outside of the gardens where wildflowers grow. We've had just all kinds of people who have helped us out, donate soil, donate concrete blocks, donate plants, we've even had people stop by & just give us seeds. We have one lady who just stopped & had a gift certificate to a garden shop she had gotten for her birthday or something & she didn't use all of it so she gave us the gift certificate to go down & buy some plants you know. It just had a real good response from people in the neighborhood.

VW: Do you do any gardening at home?

DV: I did when I was living out in the suburbs, because out there you have more land. & of course I was always raised up around gardening. Both my grandfathers gardened a lot. It's just really something just to get out there in the sunshine & get away from the telephone & computers & just get out there with nature & work with your hands. & that's the way the other gardeners feel.

VW: How can landscape architects, city planners, etc. help to make community gardens more feasible / valuable / self-sustaining / successful / enduring?

DV: Yeah we do [have a good working relationship with the city]. We have one garden [In Houston], close to Richmond Street, & the landscaping is fabulous. They have wet pond, the real fancy concrete blocks, & between all the rows its concrete pavers, they have an iron fence around it. I mean it looks like something you would see at the White House or something. It's just immaculate, the way it is. You know, people can take a little 4'x4' bed & plant something to eat on it instead of plain flowers, because the produce also creates flowers. If you plant peas you have the beautiful flowers & the okra has nice yellow flowers. So to me, if the cities would just get involved, like I said our garden has really, I'm not bragging on it, but a lot of the neighbors have seen it & they go back home & they try to do a little landscaping in their yard & its really nice to drive thru the neighborhoods & see the little plots of gardens that are starting to spring up because of the community garden, which is the focal point. We're on a busy street so it's real visibly to cars going down the road.

SPECIFIC TO CULTURE:

VW: Does community gardening create recreation and exercise for you or a kind of therapy or promote your mental health? In what way(s)?

DV: It's kind of like therapy really. We'll have several gardeners working out there together & you have a connection, a good friendship out there. Camaraderie. Like I

said, we're in an older neighborhood, there's no place to garden & we had a lot of responses from people trying to get in & help garden too but you can only have so many work in the garden. They have to decide what to plant, when to plant, it only has several people making the decisions.

VW: Does gardening in a group (community gardening) help you to feel closer to nature or your culture/community than gardening by yourself? Why or why not?

DV: Yeah I think it does because we share ideas about what we're going to plant. We kind of teach each other, like if someone has a question or doesn't know how to do something we'll find a book or something & learn how to do it. So we're sharing ideas of what to plant, & how to plant it & how to grow it how to put up a trellis & we grow a lot of herbs. We've even gotten into cooking & recipes & better eating, because we're eating fresh. You can go out in the garden & pick it & cook it. Even if you get something in an organic store, it may have been picked 2 weeks ago. They pick it green before it's ripened. We've even had kids come in the garden that didn't like certain vegetables & they taste our vegetables & decide they like it because it tastes better. It's better to communicate with the people in the garden, we just learn a lot from them. Of course we have our own time, too. There's one woman who has young children & they come out in the garden & just to read & spend time in the garden. The children read their children's book & get close to nature & see things grow - how you just plant the seed & 3 months later you have a big plant putting out produce. & so it's real rewarding to see that.

APPENDIX G

TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH JANET NEATH

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS for community garden participants

BACKGROUND:

Name: Janet Neath – THE MEREDITH CG, Houston, TX

Age: 60

Gender: Female

School(s): SMU

Trade or profession: teaching

How many years in chosen trade or profession: 24 years

SPECIFIC TO COMMUNITY GARDENS:

JN: I love community gardens! I've been involved with this for 13 years. I took a leave-of-absence from teaching & I always made fun of gardeners. I was a mountain climber & ran marathons & didn't have time for that. & it was like that piece that was missing in me. It grabbed me. So for the first year I worked with the compost, I didn't do any planting. I was in the Meredith Gardens & someone came by & said "you guys need help" because our soil was so bad. So it was good to learn the foundation & then gradually got into planting. & of course that's a whole other amazing experience & hooks you all the more. What it has done for me, it's like anything else, it's a community & you get the rich experience of working with all different types of people. Everyone brings a different viewpoint, so it expands you in many ways. We had some medical students who came & one was from India & she would bring her family ideas on planting. All those experiences have been so rich.

VW: Are you coordinator?

JN: I am co-facilitator. Really it's got to be a group process. The other lady is Lauralie(?) – She does the communications & I work with the volunteers. But I like to shovel & work with the people. They never used it for a library – weren't we lucky. Then we paid \$1 to the library fund for the next, maybe 12 years. Then we started getting nervous because there's a lot of development around the garden & its prime real estate. So we got busy & went to meetings & the greatest thing that happened was that a survey came out saying that Houston was one of the largest cities with the smallest amount of green space, which was helpful to us. So we wanted to get it under the park's department so it was protected. Another benefit for us was it was bought when real estate was really high, so the library couldn't sell it unless it was for the price they paid. So now it's a city park, it happened last year. This whole time it was under Castle Court, which is a neighborhood association. They paid all our bills which was wonderful, water & seeds etc. now its under a non profit organization called Friends of Mandel Park. So it has a tax #. & they want to raise money so we'll have an architect design a plan, so it will be coordinated. So that's what's happening now.

VW: How many plots?

JN: Individual areas & it keeps growing. Its been our experience that people come & get really excited & they'll buy plants or do seeds – we recommend seeds mostly - & they get these plants up & we'll never see them again. So now what I say is how about working with us for a month & see if it's a match. Because it is like a relationship. See

if you like us & if this works & we really work on trying to be loose about rules & things. & then if a person is really interested, there's plenty of land for them, plenty of plots. Because all the existing beds are usually done by 3 or 4 of us. So we do want to give it away, we want to share it. One area's called the butterfly bed & it's for cultivating chrysalises, everything before & after they enter for their food. Then we have an herb bed which now has everything in it. & we have 2 main beds that have been there for the longest. & then we have another bed then a bed just for flowers that just kind of happened. Then another one, so I don't know how many we're on. Then we have something that we call the hill. At one time someone just came & dumped cement & stuff there – one of these midnight dumps. So we just kept cultivating it with soil & now it's really a mound, but we call it the hill. & then we have something called the forgotten bed because it's kind of shady. Then we started the blueberry berm. & of course our compost. So it sounds like a lot but their just little areas. [

VW: Is the food produced for communal use?

JN: It is communal. In some CGs the gardeners can't have any, but I tell everyone I'm using it for bribery. & I'm so serious. People stop & my little schpeal is one hour a week & you can pick all the greens you want. We used to give to the Aid[?] society but that place closed so now we give to a food bank. We do that on Wednesdays. Collards & mustards, etc. It's really about education, showing what organic can do. Attracting beneficials & letting people know we don't use any pesticides.

VW: Do you have your own plot in this garden?

JN: I have a plot, but the thing is seriously we all work it. We try never to say "my plot", it's like saying we own the earth. Lauralie is very sensitive to these sorts of things & she's helped my awareness. So I have an area I tend, but luckily other people tend it with me. & we all do the herb bed & we're on the hill & so we get together on Wednesday's & Saturday's & say "what do we need now? What area needs our help?" Except for one of the main plots is gardened by two people. They have a different style so they are dividing the bed.

VW: do you live in a place where you have your own yard?

JN: I don't & I bet you will find that with a most of the gardeners.

VW: Do you do any gardening at home?

JN: No.

VW: Is that part of the reason you have a plot in the CG...?

JN: I live in a condominium & so the garden is the way I get to garden.

VW: What motivates people to use CGs?

JN: There's one lady, probably 60, they were going to sell their house, a nice house in West University. She kind of panicked because she thought I can't move somewhere I don't have a garden. & that got her to our garden. & this other young man had a wonderful garden with butterflies & his daughter is 3 & that was really exciting for her & now they've moved into an apartment. So he gardens. It's usually that reason. You have your own garden. There's one lady named Tonya & she came because she wanted to raise tomatoes & she couldn't do that at her house. Doug has too much shade in his yard. He has a home & he's an amazing gardener. But that's why he comes. & one lady, Betty, she has amazing gardens at home & she just believes in this concept so she

garden's at two CGs. One is with a group of nuns, their just hysterical, & she gardens in ours. & she believes in Urban Harvest.

VW: Describe the neighborhood

JN: I'd say its white with a few Hispanics. I don't know what the homes sell for, its close to downtown so it's a nice place to live. They're not lavish homes. Middle income. One street over is where they are building all those homes that are really nice. We're next to Montrose; Montrose & Richmond is where we are.

VW: Are the gardeners mostly from this neighborhood?

JN: No, that was the interesting part. A few people in the neighborhood will mow, but the gardeners came from other areas. Like one young man, his name is Payterof[?], he's Japanese. He comes from the Univ of St Thomas, because we're near that. & then we used to have Rice grads who would come. We're near Rice Univ. But no, most of us don't live right around there. Well that's not true now, there are 3 or 4 who live in the neighborhood. So that's been great. One man would drive like 35 minutes to turn the compost. He considered that his civic duty. But now he maintains trials because he's a biker & he doesn't come & we miss him. Isn't that something?

VW: How can landscape architects, city planners, etc. help to make community gardens more feasible / valuable / self-sustaining / successful / enduring?

JN: We have an architect who wants to do the plan, but we really want someone who is steeped in landscape architecture. & the thing is, people like you with degrees would be great but these community gardens don't have much money, so we always have that rub.

VW: University student's involvement?

JN: I brought that up. I'm on the Friends of Mandel Park board & what their challenge is that you get the students & they do the design & all & then they move away. Where if you get an architect in Houston who is established of something then they can nurture this along for a longer period.

SPECIFIC TO CULTURE:

VW: Does community gardening create recreation and exercise for you?

JN: Oh yes. We go out & get manure, we'd the shovelers. I guess it would be recreation, but for me its like a meditation. & it also can be like a zoo, you know.

VW: Does your community garden feel peaceful and/or tranquil? Is it bustling with activity? Does it seem to reduce your stress level? Why or why not?

JN: It can be peaceful at times & bustling at times. Busier on weekends and Wednesdays. Those are the 2 official gardening days, those mornings, you know if you go then there will be other people around.

VW: What do you teach others in your community garden?

JN: I teach about soil. I think really, there are 3 women, Debbie, Jackie & I & two of them grew up in the country. Jackie knows about shrubs & farm crops & Debbie does

too so. I teach vegetables & how to propagate. Mainly from seed, & what to amend the soil with, & things like that.

VW: What do you learn from others in your community garden?

JN: Oh my gosh, diversity, being able to see a challenge, a question from all the sides, patience, & trust, that the situation will work or that the plant will either work there or it won't. & a lot of humor.

VW: Does gardening in a group (community gardening) help you to feel closer to nature or your culture/community than gardening by yourself? Why or why not?

JN: Well definitely your community. & as I said it just broadens you in a community garden, because you're going to have so many different ideas, ideas you never even thought of. & you'll try adventures because you have more land, the kind of things you wouldn't have at home. You wouldn't have a blackberry berm or grow corn.

VW: Main motivation for you to work in this garden?

JN: To see things grow. For me to witness the complete cycle of growing something & let it go to flower so all the beneficials come & then saving the seeds. To really get to just marvel in the cycles of nature.

VW: Sounds like you are a plant person.

JN: never before, until I started doing this. I was a teacher at Montessori for 24 years. For me, I just knew something was missing. & I was probably the right age. I had taken a leave of absence from teaching; I was about 47 or something. I wanted to get quieter. I think ladies at a certain age they do that inward journey. & I had done all those other things, those cool things & this was just such a wonderful meditative practice. & I'm sure that's not, but anyway at my age that's what it was.

VW: Seems to be a meditative thing for many]

JN: ...& to see all the butterflies & everything. One lady though, I remember, she came to the garden, & it was going to be, I think she wanted a community or group of people & it didn't work for her. It's not a guarantee that these are going to be the people you want to see outside the garden. Although in my life it has developed that whole other culture of people.

VW: A garden is an activity that most regular parks don't offer for its citizens

JN: Exactly. & since I don't live in the area, but I hear all the time from Jackie, who lives across, she's like our protector & all the people who come & they'll use the swing & walk around the beds, they say this is just such a nice place for us, or the workers will come eat lunch there. So that's really great.

VW: when people feel ownership of the plot they take care of it, maybe better than the city would]

JN: I think that's really true. & one lady, Camille Waters, she makes a living off of friends who have property they are not using right then & she has these amazing lettuce gardens & she sells to the high-end restaurants.

VW: Entrepreneurial.

JN: Yes, absolutely. You know now we have 3 farmers markets, so that's great too. That's another flow[?] that can happen

GENERAL / MISC:

VW: Please add any additional comments on your community garden experiences that we have not talked about or that you wish to elaborate on.

JN: Just how amazing they are. Come see us. I went to school at SMU so I would love for Dallas to, "hello!". It just takes somebody. There is one garden in Houston for people who are sick, therapy garden. Like for prisoners, I totally believe in that. I think that would be just great

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Valerie Dawn Warner received her five-year Bachelor of Architecture degree from Texas Tech University in May 1996, graduating Cum Laude and second in her class. She practiced architecture for roughly eight years, obtaining her architectural license in 2001. In the fall of 2004, she enrolled at the University of Texas at Arlington in pursuit of her Master of Landscape Architecture degree. In May 2006, exactly ten years after receiving her first professional degree, she received her MLA. She plans to practice in a landscape architect's office, preparing to obtain her landscape architecture license, while also maintaining her architecture license.