Social Enterprises
Knowledgeable Economies
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Eat Where You Live

Building a Social Economy of Local Food in Western Canada

Joel Novek
Cara Nichols

A research report prepared for the Northern Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan Regional Node of the Social Economy Suite

Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
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Entreprises sociales
économies intelligentes
et communautés durables

Eat Where You Live

We acknowledge with gratitude the contributions made to this project
by our community partners, the Manitoba Food Charter
and the West Broadway Development Corporation.
Without their participation, this research would not have been possible.

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initially the Winnipeg Inner-City Research Alliance
and now the Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Winnipeg,
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The project also includes more than fifty community-based organizations
in four provinces, the United States, Colombia, and Belgium.

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Further acknowledgements are found on page vii.

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Eat Where You Live

The Project

The eat where you live research study commenced in the spring of 2007 with a grant of $13,100 from the Winnipeg Inner-City Research Alliance (WIRA), one of the partner organizations in the Northern Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan Regional Node of the Social Economy Suite. The project began on 11 April 2007 and received ethical approval from the University of Winnipeg Senate Research Ethics Committee on 2 May 2007. It was granted a one-year extension ending 15 June 2009. The goal of the study was to learn as much as possible about food security concerns in the inner cities of Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan — areas characterized by low incomes, multifaceted social problems, racial divisions, and dependence on emergency food. They have also been termed "food deserts" — neighbourhoods where access to good food at affordable prices is significantly lower than in other parts of the city. We wanted to find out whether community economic development initiatives and improved access to local food could alleviate the food security concerns of low-income, inner-city residents.

The Team

Joel novek, a professor of sociology at the University of Winnipeg, served as principal investigator. His expertise is in the organization of the industrial food economy and the interrelation among food production, distribution, and retail sectors. Shirley Thompson, assistant professor in the Natural Resources Institute at the University of

Manitoba, was the co-investigator. Her expertise is in local food systems and farmers' markets. She also has considerable experience, both academic and practical, with community gardens. Two graduate student interns, Cara Nichols and James Kornelsen, rounded out the initial research team. Cara was a master's student in Urban Planning at the University of Manitoba, while James was a master's student in the Natural Resources Institute at the University of Manitoba. Cara's experience lay with community gardens; James's was with alternative food markets. We hoped to integrate these diverse areas of expertise into a coherent project.

In addition to a university-based research team, our project required committed and involved community partners. Initially, the Manitoba Food Charter and the Mount Carmel Clinic served this role. The Manitoba Food Charter is an innovative organization dedicated to working with many groups and organizations to make Manitoba's food system more sustainable and secure. "The Manitoba Food Charter offers support to groups and individuals, helping them develop commitments towards a just and sustainable food system in which all Manitobans are food secure." The Food Charter's central role in the project was to serve as a clearinghouse for contacts and information, providing details to researchers on innovative food initiatives starting up or underway. At the same time, it would create channels through which findings from the projects could be circulated to community organizers and residents who would benefit from them. Paul Chorney, the urban regional liaison, was our contact at the Food Charter.

Mount Carmel Clinic is a full-service health and social support agency located in the low-income and ethnically diverse North End of Winnipeg. It has a strong community focus. According to Mount Carmel managers, the agency had become convinced in recent years that inadequate nutrition and food insecurity were endangering the health of many of its clients and thus challenging its mission to improve their quality of life and well-being. As a result, the agency decided to adopt a more proactive approach to food security, with specific steps to supply good food to community residents. Mount Carmel offered us a chance to examine first hand a start-up project in local food security — a new community garden dedicated to providing local residents with nutritious food. Kim Bailey, the community development co-ordinator, was our contact at Mount Carmel.

The two university researchers, Joel Novek and Shirley Thompson, and the two community representatives, Paul Chorney and Kim Bailey, were responsible for managing the project in the best interests of all concerned. Their responsibilities included framing research

questions, supervising the student interns, reviewing research documents and manuscripts, presenting findings at academic and community forums, and evaluating the overall progress of the project. The goal was to fashion a study that would be beneficial to everyone involved. As we would discover, this goal was well intentioned but in practical terms extremely difficult to achieve.

THE FIRST STEPS

THE PROJECT MANAGERS decided that the first phase of the study should consist of initial interviews with community organizations and social enterprises operating in the inner cities of Winnipeg and Saskatoon that were concerned with improving the food security of community residents. Our objective was to map out the most active organizations in this area, determine their roles and functions, and highlight the ones we wished to pursue for follow-up interviews and further investigation. In the summer of 2007, therefore, we conducted exploratory interviews with a number of community organizations in Winnipeg and Saskatoon that met the above criteria. In keeping with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the University of Winnipeg's research ethics guidelines, we will mention the names of organizations subject to initial interviews but not the names of specific individuals who represented these organizations.

We conducted initial interviews with the following organizations in Winnipeg: The Garden Project and The Healthy Living Program of the St. Matthews Maryland Community Ministries; the Spence Neighbourhood Association; The Food Connections Program of Wolsely Family Place; Winnipeg Harvest; The Good Food Club of The West Broadway Development Corporation; Neechi Foods; The Manitoba Council on Child Nutrition; and Wiens' Shared Farm. In addition, we met with officials from Mount Carmel Clinic, our community partner, to discuss the food security situation in Winnipeg's North End

In August of 2007, we undertook a field trip to carry out initial interviews with organizations engaged in inner-city food security in Saskatoon. We met with CHEP Good Food, the Quint Development Corporation, and the Saskatoon Farmers' Market. In addition, we examined publicly available material about these organizations from a variety of published or on-line sources.

As a result of these exploratory interviews and also of discussions that took place between the academic investigators and their community partners, an early blueprint of our project began to emerge. First, we would focus on activities that were likely to benefit food-insecure, inner-city residents in terms of supplying nutritious food at affordable prices and educating consumers about healthy eating. These would include co-operative stores, co-operative buying clubs, collective kitchens, school food programs, and community gardens. We decided not to concentrate on direct marketing strategies such as community-shared agriculture and farmers' markets. Although these institutions are extremely valuable in terms of improving local food distribution and breaking down the barriers between agricultural producers and consumers, the benefits may be less obvious for low-income, inner-city residents. In many cases, cost and access remain problematic for those lacking money or transportation. This is especially the case in the depressed inner-city cores.

Second, we would focus on community organizations that emphasized local development or local economic development. This excluded for-profit enterprises and public-sector agencies. The organizations should have significant local involvement in their governance. They should pay attention to community learning — to instructing community residents about good food, food preparation, and nutrition. They must not be simply food suppliers; they ought to follow a broader mandate to improve the quality of life of the communities in which they operate. For these reasons, we excluded food banks from the study. Emergency food plays an essential role in the social safety net of low-income, inner-city neighbourhoods. Until there is fundamental change in our economic institutions and political culture, some degree of dependence on emergency food will remain a reality. Food banks, however, are unlikely to make a major contribution to economic development, community learning, or quality of life in the areas they serve. We preferred to focus on organizations that could.

Finally, we directed our attention to organizations with a relatively long lifespan, institutions that had served their communities for at least a decade or more and stood a good chance of remaining in business for many years to come. These organizations had weathered economic ups and downs, shifts in political winds, funding uncertainties, and changes in neighbourhood demographics. They had a proven ability to implement programs in the past and thus a likelihood of being able to do so in the future. Little is certain in the world of community food security, but we chose to concentrate on those organizations with a greater likelihood of successful program delivery.

As a result of these deliberations, we chose the following three community organizations

as the objects of our study: CHEP Good Food of Saskatoon, a broadly based co-operative food distributor featuring school food programs, collective kitchens, a consumer buying club, and a new co-op store; Neechi Foods, a worker co-op in Winnipeg's North End with an Aboriginal mandate, which operates a grocery store; and our community partner, Mount Carmel Clinic of Winnipeg. We assigned one student intern, Cara Nichols, to study and assist Mount Carmel Clinic in their community garden project. Departing from the organizational suitability criteria outlined above (no point in being too rigid!), we assigned the second student intern, James Kornelsen, the task of assessing the potential for developing alternative inner-city markets in Winnipeg that would feature local food. A market in Central Park, proposed for downtown Winnipeg, would be a good example. This would clearly be a study of emergent rather than established institutions. For reasons that will be outlined in the next section, this aspect of the project was never realized.

CHALLENGES AND CHANGES

IT WOULD BE A MINOR MIRACLE if a project directed by two academic investigators, along with two community partners plus two student interns, could proceed without any problems or disruptions. Sadly, no miracles occurred in this project. We had to deal with personality conflicts as well as changes in organizational goals and individual circumstances. By the fall of 2007, it was obvious that the principal and co-investigator had developed differences of opinion on the conduct of the research. While keenly interested in the subject matter of the project, the co-investigator made it clear that she had only so much time to devote to it. Being a relatively junior assistant professor at the Natural Resources Institute, she reasonably made the case that the preponderance of her efforts should be directed to activities — notably research and publications — that would earn her tenure and promotion. Some relatively quick academic publications derived from the project would, from her perspective, be a goal that would merit the investment of her time and energy.

The principal investigator, equally reasonably, held a different point of view. He believed that all those involved in the project should be fully committed to it and that the task of

conducting research and authoring papers should be shared. Furthermore, he felt that academic publications and other communications aimed at community groups and the general public should wait until all information was gathered and the research was completed. The two investigators could not reconcile their differences and in December 2007, with regrets, the co-investigator left the study. The principal investigator agreed that the co-investigator could use the material she had gathered for her own academic purposes. Although the departure was a loss, the principal investigator decided that he could complete the project without a co-investigator.

In the winter of 2008, student intern James Kornelsen began to experience difficulties carrying out his assignment dealing with downtown markets. Financial circumstances had forced him to take on a new job that commanded much of his time. Consequently, his work for the project and his graduate studies at the University of Manitoba suffered. Although efforts were made to accommodate his needs, he too, regretfully, left the study in January 2008. As we had no one to step in and replace him, the Central Park market project could not be included in our research.

Things got even worse. During the winter of 2008, communications between the principal investigator and the key community partner, Mount Carmel Clinic, deteriorated. It became difficult to arrange meetings, and phone messages and e-mails often went unanswered. In the spring of 2008, Mount Carmel informed the principal investigator that they could not supervise Cara Nichols in her study of their community garden. Kim Bailey, the contact person, had been promoted and her new responsibilities left less time to devote to food security matters. The individual who had been responsible for developing the community garden and for conducting most of the communications between Mount Carmel and the project had left the clinic. Since Mount Carmel had no one to supervise Cara, they could not allow her to conduct a study of their community garden and consequently withdrew from the project. We were now down to one academic investigator, one community partner — the Manitoba Food Charter — and one student intern with nothing to study. We seemed to have hit rock bottom.

But our prospects soon began to improve. After consulting with Anita Friesen, then co-ordinator for Winnipeg Inner-City Research Alliance (WIRA) projects, and Paul Chorney of the Manitoba Food Charter, our remaining community partner, we decided to approach the West Broadway Development Corporation, "a not for profit organization that co-ordinates neighbourhood renewal in [Winnipeg's West Broadway] inner-city community." It is stable

with a strong track record in housing and urban development. It has also become more involved in food security. The Good Food Club has been in operation since 2002 and West Broadway also supports five community garden sites and one for urban agriculture. It was a good fit for our project. We reached an agreement in the spring of 2008 and West Broadway became our second community partner. Molly McCracken, the executive director, was the contact person. We agreed that Cara Nichols would conduct a study of the Spirit Garden located in the West Broadway area. Staff from West Broadway would actively participate in the research by framing questions, supervising Cara, and introducing her to local residents.

THE NEXT STEPS

DURING THE SPRING AND SUMMER OF 2008, the project began to actively engage its research subjects and community partners in the research process. After discussions with Anita Friesen, then WIRA co-ordinator, the principal investigator made a commitment to do more to encourage the active participation of research subjects and the community. He scheduled follow-up interviews with CHEP Good Food in Saskatoon and Neechi Foods and the West Broadway Development Corporation in Winnipeg. He made a return visit to Saskatoon to find out more about the involvement of CHEP Good Food in the Station 20 West community development initiative. He encouraged research subjects and community partners to pose questions for further study. Following interviews, conducted in person or by phone, he followed up with e-mail communications to clarify points, enhance dialogue, and gain a better understanding of existing on-line or published material. In the case of Neechi Foods, it involved access to unpublished material dealing with its operations. The principal investigator submitted advance drafts of all papers to the subjects and partners for comments, suggestions, and revisions. The research process consequently became more interactive and more responsive to changing situations in the community.

The situation at the West Broadway Development Corporation was somewhat different because that organization was responsible for supervising the work of Cara Nichols on their site. West Broadway workers monitored her gardening activities at the Spirit Garden, pro-

vided her with information, and introduced her to fellow community gardeners and residents. They were reimbursed for their work according to the terms of the WIRA grant, which allowed for salary replacement for time allocated to the project. At West Broadway's request and using her access to City of Winnipeg sources, Cara expanded her work at the garden site by conducting archival research on the history of the Spirit Garden. In the course of her investigations, she discovered some important documents unknown to current West Broadway staff, which will contribute to our knowledge about the history of community gardening in the area.

ACTIVITIES

THE EAT WHERE YOU LIVE PROJECT necessitated a high level of engagement in both community-focused and academic forums. On the community side, the principal and co-investigator served on the research and policy committee of the Manitoba Food Charter in 2007–08. This committee concerned itself with strategic policy directives, as well as applied research, in the struggle to improve food security and local food access in Manitoba. As part of this mandate, the principal researcher served on the organizing committee of the first "Getting Vocal, Growing Local" food security conference held at the University of Winnipeg 7–8 March 2008. He was responsible for helping to secure University of Winnipeg sponsorship for the conference. He also organized the sessions that addressed university-based research dealing with sustainable food production and consumption. He strongly believed that he should seek to bridge the gap between academic and community perspectives on food security issues.

The principal researcher also served on the steering committee of Growing Up Organic — an associate of Canadian Organic Growers — concerned with adding more local and organic content to the food served in childcare and educational institutions. A member of the University of Winnipeg's Social Sustainability Committee, he had a particular interest in the introduction of more local and organic food into university cafeterias and invited Paul Chorney of the Manitoba Food Charter to speak to this committee. As a follow-up, he helped open up communications between the University of Winnipeg food services manager

and members of Manitoba's food security community as represented by the Food Charter. Success will mean more local food available in food service outlets at the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba, and at Red River College. As part of community service, the principal researcher gave two interviews with the press about food security matters. In June 2008, he spoke with Mary Jane Eason of Mary Jane's Cooking School on CKUW (University of Winnipeg Radio), and on 7 April 2009, with Jennifer Heinrichs of *Western Farm Family* magazine.

Cara Nichols also engaged in a significant amount of community service as part of her research program. An avid gardener, she worked as a volunteer community gardener at West Broadway's Spirit Park. She also served on the Spirit Park Committee, the management board for the community garden, and acted as plot co-ordinator. In addition, she was a guide for Spirit Park during the City of Winnipeg's 2008 Garden Tour. She attended workshops organized by West Broadway's Greening Co-ordinator that dealt with conflict resolution and other strategies for the smooth running of community organizations. In what we expect will be a major contribution, she took photos and compiled architectural plans of Spirit Garden, which will be made available as part of the project.

On the academic side, the Eat Where You Live project has produced a number of research papers and workshop and conference presentations. The principal investigator and the two student interns presented their work at the WIRA/Provincial Social Economy Workshop in Winnipeg, 11 January 2008. The principal investigator also discussed the project at the "Getting Vocal, Growing Local" Conference in Winnipeg, 7–8 March 2008, and at the Canadian CEDNet Conference in Saskatoon, 21–23 May 2008. With Cara Nichols, he delivered a paper entitled "Does Community Economic Development Promote Community Food Security?" at the first annual ANSER Conference held in Vancouver, 3–7 June 2008. In addition, he and Cara attended the Food Forum Workshop at the Canadian CEDNet Conference held in Winnipeg, 3 June 2009.

The principal investigator has written a paper entitled "Urban Food Initiatives in Saskatoon and Winnipeg: Refashioning the Social Division of Labour," which focuses on CHEP Good Food in Saskatoon and Neechi Foods in Winnipeg. It appears in the fall 2009 edition of *Prairie Forum* (vol. 34, 2). A second paper, designed for a general readership and entitled "CED Food Initiatives in Inner-City Saskatoon and Winnipeg: Very Much Alive at the Twenty-Year Mark," was published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in November 2009. Cara Nichols has completed a report on her work at Spirit Park titled

"Planting Vegetables, Sprouting Social Networks: Learning from the Spirit Park Community Garden." It will form the basis for her master's thesis in Urban Planning at the University of Manitoba. The co-authored paper delivered at the 2008 ANSER Conference and Cara's report are attached to this document (beginning on pages 22 and 30 respectively).

OBSERVATIONS

THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED FOR THIS PROJECT has led to a number of observations about urban food security, which are outlined and discussed below. The observations are presented at a very general level and direct attention to further research or community development work that needs to be undertaken. More specific and detailed case studies of community organizations in Saskatoon and Winnipeg can be found in the two published articles and the attached research papers.

1. There is a "food gap" between rich and poor in North America

Mark Winne (2008) has introduced the concept of a "food gap" between rich and poor in the United States. The food gap is based on the prevalence of poverty plus lack of access to affordable and nutritious food for the poor. He states that there are essentially two food systems: one for the affluent and the other for those who are without means. The food system for the affluent comprises supermarkets, specialty and organic stores, farmers' markets, and restaurants. The one for the poor comprises food banks, emergency pantries, school feeding programs, soup kitchens, and other voluntary/charitable undertakings. These are at best a temporary band-aid in the effort to confront the overwhelming problems of poverty and food insecurity. Although Winne's analysis focused on the American situation, it is also applicable to Canada, where national studies have identified the presence of the linked variables of low incomes and food insecurity in many communities and regions (Health Canada 2007). Food insecurity affects nearly one in ten Canadian households (Health Canada 2007, Fig. 3.1), while food bank usage has doubled since 1989 (Canadian Association of Food Banks 2006, 12).

2. Inner-city Saskatoon and Winnipeg are examples of urban food gaps

Saskatoon and Winnipeg are two western Canadian cities that provide examples of the kind of urban food gap that can develop in the presence of multifaceted social problems. Saskatoon is smaller than Winnipeg; their populations have been estimated at 225,927 and 671,274, respectively (Statistics Canada 2001). Despite differences in size, the two cities are close in the population characteristics that have been found to correlate with food insecurity (Nord et al. 2006; Power 2005). These characteristics are generally indicative of poverty: high proportions of low-income households and lone-parent families; a significant population of Aboriginal people; and high numbers of renters rather than home owners (Health Canada 2007, Fig. 3.1).

Table One: Correlates of Food Insecurity, Saskatoon and Winnipeg Census Metropolitan Areas, 2001 Census of Canada*

	Saskatoon	Winnipeg	Canada
Population	225, 927	671, 274	_____
Median Household Income	$43,392	$44, 562	$46,752
% Below Low-Income Cut off	17.7	18.9	16.7
% Lone-Parent Families	17.6	17.7	16.5
% Aboriginal Identity	9.1	8.4	2.5
% Rental Dwellings	34.9	34.4	35.3

* Sources: Tom Carter, Chesya Polevychok, and Kurt Sargent, *Canada's 25 Major Metropolitan Centres: A Comparison*. Canada Research Chair in Urban Change and Adaptation, 2005. Accessed 18 January 2007 from http://ius.uwinnipeg.ca/CRC/RH-06.pdf ; Statistics Canada, "Community Profiles, Saskatoon and Winnipeg Census Metropolitan Areas, 2001." Accessed 20 January 2009 from http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/cp01/Search?SearchForm_Results.cfm; Statistics Canada, "2000 Household Income and Household Size for Canada, 2001 Census." Accessed 20 January 2009 from http://www12.statcan/english/census01/products/standard/themes/RetrieveProductTable.cfm; Statistics Canada, "Low Income in Census Metropolitan Areas, 1980–2000." Accessed 18 January 2009 from http://www.statcan.ca/pub/89-613—m/2004001/4193746-eng.pdf

Census data shows that compared to other Canadian metropolitan areas, Saskatoon and Winnipeg share a distinct profile that suggests relatively high concentrations of poverty. This includes a median household income below the national norm; a proportion of low-income earners greater than the national average; a percentage of lone-parent families above the national average; and the two highest proportions of persons declaring an Aboriginal identity (Carter et al. 2005). Only in the percentage of dwellings rented are the two cities in line with the national average. In addition, Saskatoon and Winnipeg report high food bank usage —

more than 12,000 and 36,000 monthly visits, respectively (Winnipeg Harvest 2005; Saskatoon Food Bank n.d.).

Much of the poverty in these two Prairie metropolitan regions is spatially concentrated in the inner-city cores. The inner cities of Saskatoon and Winnipeg are marked by a high incidence of low-income households, significant unemployment, low levels of education, and many lone-parent families (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives — Manitoba 2007; Grosso 2003). These problems are particularly acute among the large Aboriginal population that inhabits the core of each city. In Saskatoon, concentrations of poverty can be found in the city's core West Side. This includes the neighbourhoods of Westmount, Pleasant Hill, King George, Caswell, and Riversdale, where more than 40 percent of residents live below the Statistics Canada low income cut-off (LICO) line (Grosso 2003, 7). In Winnipeg, poverty and related social problems are concentrated in the city's North End, including North Point Douglas, where more than 50 percent of households live below the LICO (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Manitoba 2006, 7), and nearby Lord Selkirk Park, where the figure is an astonishing 87.8 percent (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives 2007, 4).

Furthermore, the two inner cities have become "food deserts"(Winne 2008, 93), defined as poor and minority areas vacated by supermarkets. Compared to other sections of both cities, there is a comparative absence of grocery stores and supermarkets offering nutritious food at affordable prices. The closing of the Extra Foods supermarket in 2004, following a spate of other grocery store closures in Saskatoon's core, dealt a serious blow to those needing access to healthy food in the downtown (Gillis 2008; Woods 2003). The situation is similar in Winnipeg. Recent surveys have found a minimally nutritious diet to be more expensive and less accessible in core areas like the North End than in more affluent sections of the city (Skerrit 2009; Rideout 2008). The difficulties faced by core area residents in finding accessible sources of reasonably priced and nutritious food compound the barriers of affordability. The food system for the affluent does not work very well in the two inner cities.

3. A major responsibility for combating food insecurity in these neighbourhoods has devolved to community organizations

As a result of changes to Canada's social policy regime, a major responsibility for combating the twin challenges of poverty and food insecurity has devolved to community organizations. Political authorities have transformed the means by which social services

are delivered (Teeple 2000). Many social programs have been reorganized and cut back; others have been off-loaded onto the private sector, social enterprises, and nonprofits. As part of this transition, federal and provincial governments have promoted Community Economic Development (CED) as a pathway to job creation, local empowerment, and poverty reduction (Shragge and Toye 2006; Shragge 1997). The aims of CED are social and political as well as economic. It takes the position that communities have needs that cannot adequately be met by either the capitalist market or the bureaucratic state (Loxley 2007). Economic development must be directed by the community from the ground up. It should result in employment opportunities and job training for residents that makes a long-term difference in the quality of their lives.

Manitoba and Saskatchewan have promoted CED as a form of local economic development. Manitoba has established a "CED lens" (Loxley and Simpson 2007) to incorporate community economic development principles into the government's policy-making practices. Saskatchewan created a network of twenty-eight Regional Economic Development Authorities to promote CED goals throughout the province (Fernandes 2003). The election of the centre-right Saskatchewan Party as the provincial government in 2007, however, placed a question mark over Saskatchewan's future commitment to CED initiatives. The new government's more sceptical lens in this area is based in part on a preference for purely charitable activities funded by private donors (Coolican 2008).

The reorganization and devolution of Canada's social safety net has offered new opportunities and challenges for community organizations as actors in the arena of social policy. They can expand their role as service providers, make claims for additional resources, and advocate on behalf of their clients. On the negative side, they face almost insatiable demands on their labour, resources, and funding, and chronic uncertainties about the viability of their programs. This is evident in the field of food security, where a government policy vacuum has opened up a niche for CED initiatives to provide greater nutritional access for the poor and an end to the cycle of dependence on food banks (Agriculture and Agrifood Canada 2007; *Making Waves* 2006).

CHEP Good Food in Saskatoon and Neechi Foods and the West Broadway Development Corporation in Winnipeg are CED enterprises that have tried to implement both economic development and food security goals. They exemplify a commitment to what Shragge (1997, 13) has termed a "progressive" version of CED. This means that they have outlined well-articulated principles of social and economic development that stress empowerment for

the depressed inner-city communities they serve. They have striven to fulfill their communities' needs for food security through co-operative enterprises emphasizing training and skills rather than short-term job creation. In a related fashion, their strategies reflect Loxley's notion of a "convergence" approach to local economic development (Loxley 2007, 14–15). The goal is a greater degree of local self-sufficiency. Food distribution outlets, community gardens, and collective kitchens feature locally produced and processed food, and create employment for community residents. At least some of the money spent in the community stays in the community, while local residents gain access to nutritious food at affordable prices and learn about gardening, nutrition, and health.

None of this would be possible without partners, who provide the fresh and processed food that organizations distribute directly to clients or indirectly through various programs. In addition to food, partners supply funding, financing, and a variety of business and other services that enable community groups to carry out their mandate. CHEP Good Food contracts with eighteen Saskatchewan farmers for fresh local food and maintains a funding relationship with the Saskatoon Health Region and The United Way, among others. Neechi Foods gets wholesale groceries from Federated Co-operatives Ltd. and financing from Assiniboine Credit Union. West Broadway relies on Wiens' Shared Farm for fresh vegetables and on the Province of Manitoba program Neighbourhoods Alive, among others, for funding. Finally, in order to function, community groups need volunteers, without whom they would not be able to carry out their activities. In sum, public and private sector partners and volunteers are the fuel that keeps community organizations running.

4. Community organizations have only a limited capacity to resolve the problems they confront on a daily basis

Community based co-operatives and social enterprises, however, lack the resources to resolve the problems of poverty and food insecurity that they confront on a daily basis. They face daunting challenges as they take on the responsibility for the food security of their clients in an era of a shrinking safety net, high rates of poverty, and dependence on food banks. These problems have been concentrated in the inner cores of many western Canadian metropolitan areas. In response, CHEP Good Food, Neechi Foods, and the West Broadway Development Corporation have created alternatives to the dominant market system to supply their clients with fresh, nutritious food at reasonable prices, and at the same time, building a sense of solidarity among residents. To a considerable extent, they have suc-

ceeded in this endeavour and have made us aware that alternative, community-based forms of economic organization are possible. Nevertheless, the major problems of poverty, inequality, social exclusion, and precarious living conditions remain largely unsolved in Saskatoon's and Winnipeg's core areas. There is only so much that community organizations with limited resources can accomplish.

CONCLUSIONS

THIS RESEARCH PROJECT has examined the operations of CHEP Good Food in Saskatoon and Neechi Foods and the West Broadway Development Corporation in Winnipeg. As our study has shown, CHEP, Neechi, and West Broadway have taken an important first step towards the goal of what Winne (2008, 93) calls "restoring" the urban food deserts of inner-city Saskatoon and Winnipeg. In the face of great difficulties and the fact that many similar efforts at co-operative food provisioning elsewhere have failed, they have survived as progressive CED organizations dedicated to community empowerment. As a result of their success, low-income and potentially food-insecure core area residents of Saskatoon and Winnipeg have better access to reasonably priced, nutritious food than was formerly the case. These organizations have created jobs, enhanced community pride, and given local farmers, fishers, and harvesters outlets for their produce. Collective kitchens and community gardens enable some degree of self-provisioning by individuals, families, and households.

Despite real accomplishments, successful CED organizations can only go so far in closing the food gap. They cannot guarantee a resolution of food security concerns in the communities in which they operate. To what extent are citizens of Saskatoon better off because CHEP Good Food has evolved as a co-operative food distributor and marketer? Similarly, how much has the survival of Neechi Foods as a worker co-operative been beneficial to Winnipeg's large inner-city Aboriginal population? Will West Broadway's network of community gardens bring about a significantly greater degree of local self-provisioning? It is tempting to say that CED initiatives improve food security, but we don't know to what extent this is true. These programs have emerged at a time when the safety net has been stretched and the eco-

nomic and social conditions of many of the working poor remain precarious. Since poverty and food insecurity are interrelated, such initiatives would most likely work best with concurrent efforts to improve employment and job-training opportunities, raise minimum wages, and strengthen the safety net.

APPENDIX 1: Expenditures

THE EAT WHERE YOU LIVE PROJECT started with an initial grant of $13,100.00. After two years, we had spent $9,868.02, leaving a balance of $3,231.98. The largest expenditures were $6,618.95 in salaries for the two student research assistants, $1,534.97 in travel expenses for conducting research and attending conferences, and $870.00 in contracted services, which comprised salary replacements for employees of the West Broadway Development Corporation involved in the study. The unspent funds reflected the fact that the two student research assistants did not furnish as many hours of employment as originally expected. As mentioned above, James Kornelsen left the project for personal reasons, while Cara Nichols was away for a five-month maternity leave. As mentioned above, this temporary absence in no way prevented her from making an extremely positive overall contribution to the project. Table Two provides a detailed summary and listing of project expenditures.

Table Two: Expenses for the "Eat-Where-You-Live" Social Economy Project, 11 April 2007 to 15 June 2009

Detail	Amount
Student Research Assistants	$6,618.95
Canada Pension	$146.05
E. I.	$161.32
Payroll Tax	$142.05
Office Supplies and Admin. Exp.	$394.42
Contracted Services (WBDC)	$870.00
Travel	$1,534.97
Total	**$9,868.02**

Original Grant	$13,100.00
Expenses	$9,868.02
Funds Remaining	**$3,231.98**

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Does Community Economic Development Promote Community Food Security?*

Joel Novek and Cara Nichols

According to Health Canada (2007), food insecurity affects one in ten Canadian residents. Community economic development (CED) has been promoted as a means of tackling food insecurity through local empowerment, capacity building, and self-provisioning (*Making Waves* 2006; Agriculture and Agrifood Canada 2007). Critics, on the other hand, have argued that community organizations lack the resources to make more than localized and ad hoc changes in food access and distribution (Tarasuk and Davis 1996; Power 2005). Given these limitations, the success or failure of CED food initiatives depends on the ability of not-for-profit organizations to mobilize, command resources, and generate support for measures that will improve food access and nutrition (Dahlberg 1999). This poses the question: what factors influence the comparative success or failure of CED initiatives dedicated to providing community food security (CFS)? What criteria shall we employ to judge their success? Finally, what might be learned that could be helpful to CED organizations attempting to supply food and nutrition services in an urban environment?

Research Criteria and Methods

The empirical core of this paper is an examination of food security social enterprises in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, two western Canadian cities with metropolitan populations estimated at 694,000 and 233,000, respectively (Statistics Ca-

* Presented at 2008 ANSER Conference, Vancouver BC, 3–7 June 2008

nada 2006). The rationale for comparing the two cities is that they are similar in the population characteristics that correlate with food insecurity (Carter, Polevychuk, and Sargent 2005). These characteristics are indicative of poverty and include high proportions of low-income households and lone-parent families; a significant population identifying as Aboriginal; and a high percentage of renters as opposed to home owners (Health Canada 2007).

The two cities are also similar in their approaches to social policy. Manitoba and Saskatchewan have promoted CED as a pathway to job creation, local empowerment, and poverty reduction. Manitoba has established a "CED lens" (Loxley and Simpson 2007) to incorporate community economic development principles into the government's policy-making practice. Saskatchewan created a network of twenty-eight Regional Economic Development Authorities to encourage CED goals throughout the province (Fernandes 2003). And there are a number of food-related CED enterprises in both cities. Researchers conducted twenty-five interviews with the directors and staff of eight CFS initiatives responsible for farmers' markets, consumer buying clubs, school meals, and co-operative stores. They studied the following organizations: CHEP Good Food, Saskatoon Farmers' Market, and Quint Development Corporation in Saskatoon; St Norbert Farmers' Market, Manitoba Council on Child Nutrition, Mount Carmel Clinic, Neechi Foods, and the West Broadway Development Corporation in Winnipeg.

Theoretical Perspectives

How do we explain the success or failure of CED initiatives dedicated to community food security? Social movement theory (McAdam et al. 1988; Morris and Mueller 1992; Dobson 2001) provides a dynamic analysis of how social movements emerge, confront challenges, and grow or decline. It helps us understand CED urban food initiatives as social movement organizations that have arisen in "residential communities of consumption" (Lo 1992, 242) with the goal of achieving food security. In order to survive and grow, they must mobilize individuals, secure resources, and seek adherents (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Social movement organizations are key actors in the creation of trust, cohesion, and social capital (Putnam 1995) at the community level. This social bonding enables community organizations to overcome the "free rider" problem (Olson 1971; Hardin 2003). Free riding occurs when individuals are unmotivated to commit time, effort, or money to collective action, believing they will reap the same benefits by doing nothing.

Social movement theory looks at factors such as mobilization, leadership, support, external alliances, relations with government, and ideological "framing" of issues (Snow et al. 1986). Community organizations follow possible evolutionary trajectories (Friedman and McAdam 1992). They emerge in a context of small groups or "micromobilization" (Dobson 2001); may achieve growth and stabilization; and may even become co-opted in local governance as social service providers. Outcomes are uncertain. Accordingly, the study draws on social movement theory for the analysis of those factors responsible for the emergence, success, or failure of food-related CED enterprises in Winnipeg and Saskatoon.

Observations

From the perspective of social movement theory, community organizations in Saskatoon have been more successful than those in Winnipeg in developing themselves as "social marketers" (McAdam et al. 1988) in the area of community food security. CHEP Good Food and the Saskatoon Farmers' Market, in particular, have reached the stabilization stage as service providers with a distinct "collective identity" (Friedman and McAdam 1992) at the local level. CHEP emerged as a facilitator of school meal programs in 1989, first in a few schools, then on a city-wide basis. This gave it recognition as a social marketer whose prime focus was food security, but one not wedded to the charity model. CHEP offered school meals to all children, regardless of income. In terms of a mobilizing frame, the notion of assured access to quality food for all, not just for the poor, was helpful in recruiting adherents. As CHEP grew, it gained market leverage through its buying power in the wholesale food market. CHEP's success as a school-meal provisioner helped build capacity for the next step — a "good food box" program that supplies a healthy produce box to consumers at a reasonable price. The close working relationship with Quint Development Corporation, a housing co-operative, and the active role of the neighbourhood volunteer co-ordinators, were important factors in convincing citizens to sign up (Brownlee and Cammer 2004). The good food box was offered to all comers and, like the school meals, could not be stigmatized as a service for the poor. At more than a thousand boxes per month, it is Canada's second largest co-operative food buying club.

The implementation of school meals in the public education system can be a critical micromobilization point for food initiatives in Canadian urban communities and a wedge for the further development of nutrition programs. In the case of CHEP, parents, students,

teachers, and administrators, working from a CED model, co-operated to make school nutrition programs a reality. In the process, they developed the collective action and capacity-building to scale up to more generalized food security programs. In order to accumulate this social capital, community organizations must overcome the free-rider problem (Hardin 2003) — the tendency, mentioned above, of citizens to refrain from contributing time, effort, or money to a cause when they believe they could gain the same result by doing nothing. Community initiatives face a particular version of the free-rider problem in the form of food banks, which distribute food as a public good. Many low-income urban residents have been habituated to food banks as their main experience of institutionalized food provision. They are understandably suspicious of programs that require them to contribute money and effort in order to receive produce of uncertain value. School nutrition programs provided an opportunity for low-income parents in Saskatoon to come together to develop networks of trust and accomplishment. That was sufficient social capital to combat the free-rider problem.

CHEP has concerns about its dependence on government, and to a lesser extent private foundations, for core funding. The organization has promoted partnerships with major funders such as Saskatoon Health Region, the City of Saskatoon, and The United Way. It requires substantial public funding to maintain its status as Canada's second largest community food distributor in a comparatively small city. Maintaining its autonomy as a community organization with a vision of food security and resisting integration into the service delivery apparatus of government will be a crucial challenge for CHEP.

Like CHEP, the Saskatoon Farmers' Market has also reached the stabilization stage in its development. A co-operative, it has gained a collective identity in the community as a place for visitors and residents to gather, shop, and eat. Two factors account for the comparative success of the Saskatoon Farmers' Market. First, unlike many other markets in Canada, it operates year round, supplying meat, dairy products, eggs, and seasonal vegetables in winter. Second, it now occupies an indoor downtown location, which is what makes year-round operations possible. The Farmers' Market, however, faces some limitations as a social marketer in the community food security (CFS) field. Its share of Saskatoon's retail food market remains relatively small and it is not designed to provide benefits to the city's neediest citizens.

Saskatoon's success in implementing city-wide CFS endeavours has not been duplicated in Winnipeg, where most CFS enterprises have remained at the emergent stage, relatively fragmented, and small scale. They lack core funding from government or private founda-

tions and there is little evidence of strong popular support.* They have not been able to obtain the same level of collective recognition as their counterparts in Saskatoon, nor have they been able to generate a mobilizing frame to attract resources and adherents. Winnipeg's efforts in the area of school nutrition programs, for example, have been fragmented rather than co-ordinated. Food security organizations have missed the opportunity to build up the kind of grassroots support and capacity necessary to make a dent in the city's retail food market. This was the case with the West Broadway Development Corporation, a housing facilitator, which unsuccessfully attempted to introduce a good food box into its catchment area in 2002 (Maunder 2002). Local skepticism and the free-rider problem got in the way. Food banks were a familiar part of the safety net, a reality that could not be overcome. The recent efforts of Mount Carmel Clinic, a health agency, to establish a buying club in the city's low-income North End also failed to come to fruition. Social initiatives tend to be more successful when their goals are clear and focused (Dobson 2001). Neither the West Broadway Development Corporation nor Mount Carmel Clinic saw food security as their primary objective, and this factor may have militated against their efforts in this area.

Although this paints a somewhat troubling picture, there are some important exceptions. The St. Norbert Farmers' Market, a co-operative with 130 vendors, has achieved a degree of success as a direct marketer to consumers. The market must surmount several obstacles, however, if it is to attain a prominent place in Winnipeg's food security system. It has a distant and suburban location; it is open only four months a year; and, like the Saskatoon market, has yet to address the problem of how to get fresh produce to the city's poor. Neechi Foods, a grocery in Winnipeg's North End, is an established social enterprise organized as a worker co-operative. Its main concern is food security, its focus the largely low-income and Aboriginal client population it serves. While Neechi is clearly successful as a CED enterprise, its scale is too small and its focus too concentrated on its target population to act as a springboard for city-wide food initiatives. In Winnipeg, as compared to Saskatoon, emerging food security initiatives have had a more difficult time growing and stabilizing into service providers with a strong collective identity in the community.

* Winnipeg Harvest, the food bank, is by far Winnipeg's best known food security organization and the one that garners the most community support in donations and volunteer labour.

Conclusions

Social movement theory helps us understand some of the factors that make for success or failure in CFS/CED initiatives. First, it draws our attention to the micromobilization context in which they emerge. The CHEP experience has demonstrated that school meal programs can be magnets for recruiting people and for building local capacity. Established community organizations such as housing co-operatives can also furnish the micromobilization context for food security programs. Second, these groups require strong leadership and a mobilizing frame to move their projects forward and overcome the free-rider problem — the widespread presence of emergency food that can act as a disincentive for food security initiatives. In the case of farmers' markets, small groups of vendors can be effective incubators for the emergence of urban food-marketing enterprises. This is particularly notable in the success of the Saskatoon Market.

If CFS/CED initiatives can evolve to the more mature stage of stabilization and change, they face another set of problems. They must maintain a steady flow of recruits and resources and command a social market for their services. They also need to form partnerships with public- and private-sector funders, while maintaining their autonomy as community organizations. CHEP and Neechi Foods are now confronting these issues with some success. Social movement theory can only give us part of the picture, however. It helps us understand how CFS/CED organizations emerge, and how they thrive or fail, but an assessment of their overall contribution to food security in the communities in which they operate requires additional research.

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Planting Vegetables, Sprouting Social Networks

Learning from Spirit Park Community Garden

Cara Nichols

Flowers in Spirit Park Community Garden. Photograph courtesy Cara Nichols.

The Study

This paper looks at an established inner-city community garden, Spirit Park Community Garden, located in the West Broadway neighbourhood in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The West Broadway Development Corporation oversees the operations of Spirit Park Community Garden and also supported this study. The idea for the project was conceived following an examination of community gardening literature, which for the most part lacks a social approach. Utilizing qualitative research methods such as informal interviews, conversations, and observations, this paper examines the social aspects of community gardens through the perspective of community gardeners.

Although community gardens have been around for a long time, the understanding of their value has evolved over the years. They began as a result of the need for affordable food and have since evolved to focus on the activities that take place (Holland 2004, 290). A community garden is not the outcome of a problem, but rather a tool that stimulates and encourages neighbourhood participation and interest.

Community gardens are particularly significant because gardening is an activity that is inclusionary and accessible to all. Community gardens provide much more than a space to grow plants; they provide an opportunity to share knowledge, experience, friendships, food, and vision (Lind 2004).

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

THE ENVIRONMENT IS A SOCIAL SYMBOL and plays a significant role in the social lives of citizens (Appleyard 1979, 152). Community gardens are good examples of a part of our urban environment that plays an important role in promoting a healthy social life for those involved.

For the purposes of this paper, a community garden is defined as

> plots of urban land on which community members can grow flowers or foodstuffs for personal or collective benefit. Community gardeners share certain resources, such as space, tools, and water. Though often facilitated by nonprofit organizations, apartment complexes, or grassroots associations, community gardens nevertheless tend to remain under the control of the gardeners themselves (Glover 2005, 454).

There are many benefits related to community gardens: environmental, health, economic, and social. They provide not only a source of fresh, healthy food, but also a place where important social interaction occurs. The social interaction can be as basic as acknowledging another gardener or as complex as developing a system of support and friendship among the gardeners.

Since gardening is an activity that is accessible to people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds, it offers a setting for the development of social relationships that would not have occurred otherwise. Community gardens provide the opportunity for seniors, youth, and the disabled, for example, to work together and learn from one another, transgressing social barriers and building understanding and co-operation (Hall 2000, 39).

Community gardens offer benefits not only to the members involved in maintaining the garden, but also to the surrounding community. They can provide an educational experience for everyone, whether physical or visual, and residents can choose to enjoy them actively or passively. The social interaction that occurs within community gardens can also offer a form of therapy; it is said that city gardens are "more for therapy than economic reasons" (Winkeller 1986, 13).

Community gardens are unique and come in a diverse range of shapes and sizes. The gardens may be divided into individually owned plots, or may be communal, with everyone sharing the work and harvest. Generally, those running the garden decide how it should be managed (Public Health Agency of Canada 2004).

Regardless of how gardens are set up or function, they are all a "collective venture that entails the formation of a social network, which voluntarily brings together the collective resources of neighbours to address pressing neighbourhood issues, notably urban decline and the criminal activity often associated with it" (Glover 2004, 143). Important social connections are made through participating in the shared act of gardening and other related activities such as fundraising efforts and harvesting parties. In this sense, community gardens are less about gardening than they are about community (Glover 2004, 143).

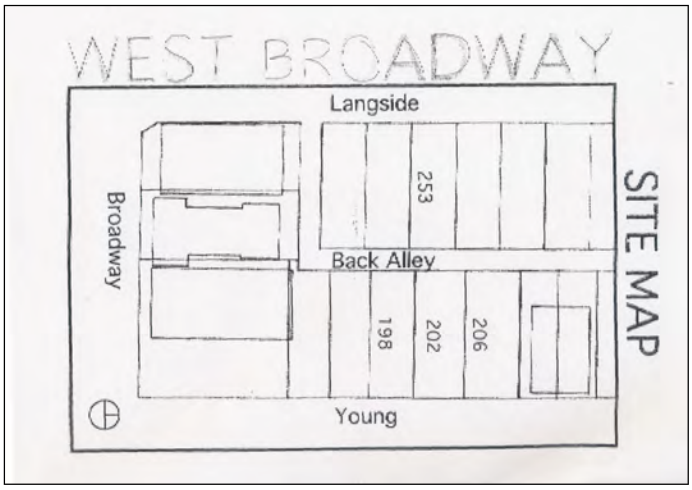
Community gardens offer "third places" (Glover 2004, 143) outside of work and home where people can gather, network, and identify together as residents of a neighbourhood. The social interactions facilitated by a garden can "foster norms of reciprocity and trust, conventional forms of social capital among members of the garden network. Indeed, garden friendships often become year-round social ties for those involved" (Glover 2004, 143).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SPIRIT PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN

AS NOTED ABOVE, Spirit Park Community Garden (SPCG) is an established inner-city community garden located in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The creation of Spirit Park involved the West Broadway Development Corporation (WBDC), the City of Winnipeg, and residents of the West Broadway neighbourhood.

The name is derived from the existence until 1901 of an Aboriginal village just down the street from SPCG at the junction of Spence Street, Young Street, and Portage Avenue. West Broadway residents believe that the spirits of those who lived in the village remain on the site today (Grant 2008).

The SPCG site, which consists of four city lots (253 Langside Street, 198, 202, and 206 Young Street), was occupied by derelict homes until the mid-1990s, when all but one were demolished. The remaining home was taken down in the late 1990s and the site remained vacant for more than ten years, but it did not go unused.



Spirit Park Community Garden site. Courtesy Donna Beaton, City of Winnipeg.

Local residents guerilla gardened[1] on the land throughout the years and more than a hundred people have put their mark on the site since (Grant 2008).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the West Broadway Neighbourhood (WBN) experienced a decline characterized by boarded up houses, vacant lots, and drugs in abundance (Prins 2009).

In an effort to create a more cheerful neighbourhood, the WBDC sent out a survey in the summer of 2001 asking residents what they wanted: student housing, new single-family housing, multiresidential housing, or green-space development. The most prevalent answer was more housing and green space (Prins 2009).

This response made it clear that revitalization projects in the WBN had to incorporate a new perception for the residents about the neighbourhood where they lived. The resulting guiding principle was to initiate "beautification projects" for the whole community to participate in and enjoy (Grant 2008).

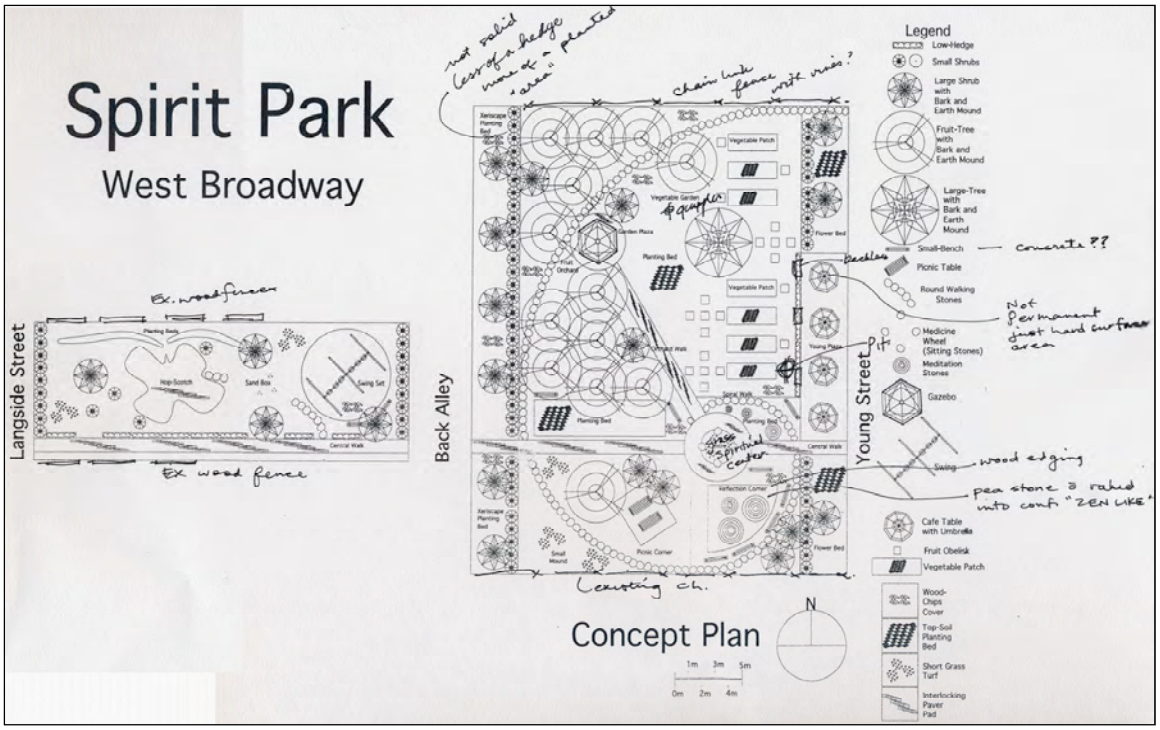
With the results of the survey in hand, Brian C. Grant, the Housing Development Coordinator for the WBDC, and a landscape architecture student, Bobby Mitra from the University of Manitoba, began the eight-month process to come up with a plan for the site. In addition to the survey, they conducted ninety interviews and engaged in a community consultation (Grant 2008). Jeneva Storme, the Greening Coordinator for the WBDC, was instrumental in working with Bobby on the initial design and writing funding proposals that resulted in support for the park from a number of foundations (Chorney 2009).

The survey had indicated that most community members were interested in a park setting mixed with garden plots and an orchard. A final consultation process occurred in the winter of 2002 at the West Broadway community centre, where Brian, Bobby, and Jeneva displayed an original master plan. It was decided to proceed with green-space development of Spirit Park Community Garden on Young Street and an all-season play structure known as Butterfly Park on Langside Street (Grant 2008). City Councillor Jenny Gerbasi was critical at this stage of the process, dedicating $30,000 from municipal funds as "seed money," which would act as leverage for financial partners and sponsors.

With positive recommendations from community residents and the approval by WBDC,

1. A term used for a person or group of people who garden a piece of land — usually public land — that does not belong to them (Dave's Garden 2009).

architect Wayne Kinrade was hired in January 2003 to oversee the implementation of the master plan. Wayne oversaw the "scope of work" with community residents, who were hired for most of the above-ground work such as moving gravel, laying soil and sod, setting garden boxes, and so on. Donna Beaton, landscape architect/urban designer from the City of Winnipeg's Planning and Land Use Division, in collaboration with Wayne Kinrade, WBDC, and WB residents, provided the general design criteria required to establish a city-owned park that would include both a community garden and a children's playground.



Concept plan for Spirit Park Community Garden. Courtesy Donna Beaton, City of Winnipeg.

In November 2003, WBDC and the city's Planning, Property and Development Department entered into a written agreement governing the operation and maintenance of the park and community garden. In brief, the agreement states that the city owns everything on the site located below the ground such as sewers and water lines, and the WBDC owns everything above ground and is responsible for its upkeep. The maintenance includes the public and private community garden plots, lawn and tree care, perennials, compost, litter, and recycling.

Once the agreement was signed and Wayne Kinrade (with direction from the city) com-

pleted the final design, construction of the park and community gardens began. The WBDC engaged local adult community members to participate in the planting process; they, in turn, included youth from the local community centre. The total cost of SPCG was approximately $88,000. Almost half the money ($45,842) was obtained through a grant from Neighbourhoods Alive!, a Manitoba government initiative that provides community organizations in designated neighbourhoods with funding and planning support for rebuilding (Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs 2009). The City of Winnipeg's Community Incentive Grant Program (CIGP) provided $20,000. The CIGP is designed to encourage nonprofit community recreation and sport organizations to undertake capital projects that will result in long-term benefits to the community (City of Winnipeg 2009). The remainder was donated by The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba, Investor's Group, Assiniboine Credit Union, EJLB Foundation, TD Friends of the Environment, and the Government of Canada's Eco-Action.

The community garden area is divided into thirty-one individual plots (raised beds) and eight common areas. The ten raised beds closest to Young Street are designated a public pick area, where anyone in the neighbourhood can come to get fresh vegetables, herbs, and flowers. The remaining twenty-one private plots are maintained by individuals who live in the neighbourhood; the plots are flanked by six compost bins and a water shed. Residents interested in obtaining a plot must register with the WBDC and are placed on a waiting list until a plot becomes available. Details of the plot allocation process can be found in the appendices at the end of this document.

Spirit Park Community Garden facing Langside Street. Retrieved from http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/profile.php?id=617822039&ref=ts

A private plot in the garden. Photograph courtesy Cara Nichols.

Once a plot becomes available, the gardener must sign an agreement (see appendices) to maintain his or her plot, pay a $10 annual fee to cover the cost of water, and agree to use organic practices as no pesticides or herbicides are permitted in the garden (McCracken 2009). The gardeners take care of the public areas on a voluntary basis. Prairie Naturals donated all the native plants for the public areas for the garden's official opening on Friday, 26 September 2003, which was attended by City Councillor Jenny Gerbasi, Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Initiatives Rosann Wowchuk, funders, and community members of all ages (Grant 2008).

In 2004, a sculpture was incorporated into the park but was removed after a year due to vandalism. In May 2005, residents made a second attempt to add a community art piece to the area, with the West Broadway Development Corporation working with Art City Inc. and the SPCG gardeners to develop a plan for the new piece. Art City is a nonprofit community art centre in Winnipeg's West Broadway neighbourhood dedicated to providing free, high-quality art programming to participants of all ages (Art City Inc. 2009).

Katharina Stieffenhoffer, a past board member for Art City, came up with the idea of a concrete mosaic dome, ideal because it is not only durable but allows everyone in the community to participate, regardless of artistic ability or experience working in the medium. Mosaic tiling is also symbolically very similar to building a community. It takes many people to collaboratively put each piece in place, and in the end you have something far greater that the mere sum of its parts (Granger 2008).

An acquaintance of Katharina's, Vancouver artist Bruce Walther, who specializes in working with communities doing mosaic tiling, was hired to implement the art piece.

Residents participated in a community consultation process to generate ideas regarding imagery and subject matter. Once the theme was decided upon, Bruce facilitated two weeks of workshops at Art City in August 2005, during which community members of all ages created mosaic designs on mesh panels that Bruce later transferred to the concrete dome (Granger 2008).

The project was funded by a number of organizations: the West Broadway Development Corporation Small Grants Fund through Neighbourhoods Alive!; the West Broadway South Sherbrook BIZ; the City of Winnipeg Per Capita Grant, with assistance from Jenny Gerbasi; and Art City through a grant from The Winnipeg Foundation (Granger 2008).

Benches and evergreen trees were added around the perimeter of the park, and Rob Altemeyer, MLA for Wolseley, donated a large tree on Young Street, which was dedicated as part of an "Arbor Day" celebration in 2003. Other amenities were later added around the dome for people to sit on and contemplate (Grant 2008), to eat a sandwich, or to watch the neighbourhood children, who are constantly playing on and around the dome (Prins 2009).

Spirit Park Community Garden is not only a beautiful green space, but a place of special significance to many, where anyone can enjoy the beauty of the garden and find peace or serenity, whether they are gardening or not (Grant 2008). Spirit Park Community Garden has become an important and integral part of the West Broadway Neighbourhood.

Mosaic dome.
Photograph courtesy
Cara Nichols.

THE WEST BROADWAY NEIGHBOURHOOD

NESTLED BETWEEN DOWNTOWN AND WOLSELEY near a bend in the Assiniboine River, the West Broadway Neighbourhood is one of the oldest in Winnipeg. More than half of the houses in the neighbourhood were built before 1946. The neighbourhood has fought for more than a decade against a reputation for crime, poverty, and violence that has given it nicknames like "murder row" (CBC 2005).

Today, crime is down. Businesses are opening on the Broadway commercial strip. Houses are being renovated and people are moving back into West Broadway (CBC 2005). Between 2001 and 2006, the population in the neighbourhood increased 5.6 percent, the first growth since 1986. Some wonder if the revitalization isn't really gentrification, forcing low-income residents out of the area (CBC 2005).

Average household income in 2006 was just $19,385 in West Broadway, compared with $33,457 in the rest of Winnipeg. In fact, 31 percent of households make do with less than $10,000 a year. More than 90 percent of residents rent their homes, as compared to 35 percent in the rest of the city (City of Winnipeg 2006). The high percentage of renters may be explained by the fact that 65.3 percent of the residents are single.

The resident base is very diverse. Out of the 5,325 people who live in West Broadway, 1,275 are of Aboriginal descent and 710 have declared themselves to be a visible minority (City of Winnipeg 2006).

The residents are unique in another way; many use walking as their main mode of transportation — 23.4 percent as opposed to only 6.2 percent in the rest of the city. This may be due to the fact that WB is centrally located (City of Winnipeg 2006).

RESEARCH METHODS

THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS PAPER is to identify the social aspects of community gardens through an interactive research process with community gardeners. This approach will assist the researcher to comprehend the gardeners' interpretations of the social processes that occur.

The study follows the perspective of an interpretive branch of science that studies "meaningful social action" (Neuman 1997, 69). An interpretive researcher is concerned with what is important to those being studied and how they "experience daily life" (69). The researcher discovers this by choosing a particular social setting and "seeing it from the point of view of those in it" (69). It is an approach that sees "human social life as an accomplishment" (69).

Interpretive researchers generally gather detailed qualitative data in order to gain a better understanding of how people create meaning in their social activities, such as a community garden (Neuman 1997, 68). "It offers a deeper picture than the variable based correlations of quantitative studies" (Silverman 2006, 26).

The qualitative approach chosen for this particular study consists of informal interviews, conversations with, and observations of, the community gardeners from SPCG. The subjects are all the people who signed up to garden a private plot in SPCG. There are twenty-one private plots, which provided the study with twenty-one gardeners of various ages, sex, ethnicity, and backgrounds. I, the researcher, was both a participant and an observer in the garden. A large portion of my research was gathered while I was gardening. I am also a member of the Spirit Park Gardeners' Committee and attended various workshops, funded through the WBDC, with other gardeners year round, which facilitated more research opportunities.

Because of the more developed responses, a qualitative study generally relies on a smaller sample (Weiss 1994, 3). Good qualitative research can also offer a new perspective on issues that are usually taken for granted, or not fully understood (Silverman 2006, 351). Weiss (1994) notes that "[q]ualitative data relies more on interpretation, summary, and integration" (3), and based on this approach, my findings will be supported "by quotations and case descriptions rather than by tables or statistical measures" (Weiss 1994, 3).

FINDINGS[2]

THE STORY THAT EMERGED from this interactive research process with the community gardeners from Spirit Park Community Garden is interesting and engaging.

I volunteered to garden in one of the public plots during the summer of 2008 and again in 2009. In 2008, I accepted an invitation from one of the experienced gardeners to become a member of the Spirit Park Gardeners' Committee. The committee oversees the daily management of the park and reports to the West Broadway Development Corporation (WBDC 2009), which also provides it with support. This partnership is discussed in more detail in the appendices at the end of this report. The committee meets every two weeks during the gardening season and every few months during the winter. Maintaining a plot at SPCG and being a member of the committee helped me to better comprehend the social aspects of the garden.

The Spirit Park Gardeners' Committee is a standing advisory committee responsible for overseeing volunteer gardening activity as well as the community gardens located in the park. It also provides support to the community gardeners.

The committee has evolved from three members in 2007, to eight members in 2008, and thus far ten members in 2009. This season, committee member Kendall drafted a terms of

2. In order to ensure anonymity, the real names of the participants will not be used in this report.

reference (which will be reviewed and updated annually) because "things are getting larger and more complicated." Things have become larger because of the growing committee, and more complicated because of funding. The WBDC has a small-grants fund that can be accessed through proposals. The committee reviews the proposals, and based on the amount of money in the fund, which varies yearly, decides what it will be spent on. This fund is also used annually for tools for the garden.

Committee membership is open to any active plot holder or active and registered volunteer of Spirit Park Community Garden. Volunteers must register with the West Broadway Development Corporation's Greenspace Development Coordinator. The committee is made up of an executive (chair, vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer) as well as other subcommittee co-ordinators and members-at-large (WBDC 2009). This year (2009), the positions of chair and vice-chair are being shared by two gardeners (co-chairs), and the positions of secretary and treasurer are still unfilled, since most of the gardeners have chosen to be "members at large." The committee offers an opportunity for democracy in action.

Like any collective undertaking, Spirit Park Community Garden has both positive and negative aspects. For starters, Winnipeg's climate is an influential factor. The gardening season is rather short, which offers less time for social interactions to occur in the garden. Although SPCG is used as a "gathering space, composting space and pedestrian thoroughfare all year round" (McCracken 2009), it is full of life in the summer, and a longer gardening season would allow for more random encounters. One of the gardeners, Michelle, said, "I like going to the garden at different times throughout the day, because you never know who you are going to run into." These encounters offer an exchange of information and can be very educational. Shelly gardens "to be a part of the West Broadway gardening community. It allows [her] to meet new people and pass on knowledge." Chantel's favourite thing about the garden is the stimulation. "Gardening on one's own is nice, but the interaction last year with experienced gardeners with different styles and information was entirely stimulating."

Not all encounters in the garden are positive. Politics come up in any collective venture, including the garden. Kendall explained that one of the main problems at SPCG is "that there are a lot of different personalities in the garden and it's a challenge to get them working together." Because of this, heated arguments have erupted amongst gardeners, making it uncomfortable for bystanders. Shelly said she "gardens early in the morning to avoid certain people." An argument occurred between two experienced gardeners last summer over differences of opinion regarding what should occur in a public area in the park. Voices were

raised, yet the two couldn't come to terms on how the public area should be used because both felt ownership of that specific spot in the garden. After the fact, Lola, one of gardeners involved in the argument, called the dispute a "power struggle." No resolution occurred, and the Spirit Park Gardeners' Committee finally decided the fate of the area in question.

The Spirit Park Gardeners' Committee not only helped resolve the issue, but came to a collective agreement that all gardeners should attend a conflict resolution seminar (paid for by CED Technical Assistance Services, CEDTAS) in order to give everyone the skills to resolve individual conflicts.[3]

Although some gardeners don't see eye to eye, others have formed special bonds. Many have developed a common vocabulary, using the word "we" when talking about themselves in the garden. Calling themselves "we" reinforces the idea that community gardens are a "collective venture that entails the formation of a social network" (Glover 2004, 143). Chloe used the word "we" when describing certain aspects of the garden.

> We actually have monarch butterflies in the garden, which is amazing because they are so rare. The neighbourhood kids are just amazed by the caterpillars and how they grow into butterflies … just amazed. Teaching them about the life cycle of the butterfly teaches the kids respect … [pause] … we tell them you can watch it, you can look at it, but you can't touch it. You have to respect them 'cause they are so rare. The kids were like, wow, that's so cool; then when they bring their friends to the garden to see them, they make sure to teach their friends the rules … and we could hear them saying to their friends … and you can't do this … and you can't do that … so it passes that information on.

Chloe also spoke about the generational barriers that have been crossed because of the garden.

> What twelve-year-old is going to just come up and talk to a forty-year–old?… [pause] … He may say hi while walking by, but that's about it … [pause] … but now when Mikey walks by he asks how a certain plant is doing 'cause he wants to know what's happening in the garden. The garden's

3. CEDTAS is a program hosted by SEED Winnipeg Inc., a nonprofit agency that fights poverty and helps renew Winnipeg's inner city. CEDTAS helps community-based groups to identify the assistance they need and then brokers an agreement with volunteer professionals while providing ongoing assistance (Canada Business Network 2007).

> a tool which allows people to be more social as they can talk to people they normally wouldn't socialize with about gardening.

This comment also reinforces the fact that community gardens "provide the opportunity for seniors, youth and the disabled to work together and learn from one another; transgressing social barriers and building understanding and co-operation" (Hall 2000, 39).

The garden functions as a "collective venture that entails the formation of a social network, which voluntarily brings together collective resources of neighbours to address pressing neighbourhood issues, notably urban decline and the criminal activity often associated with it" (Glover 2004, 143). This is well illustrated by Chloe's comments below.

> The area in which the garden is now located used to be called needle park 'cause drug users would dump their needles there, and it was a horrible area to walk through. When I first moved here I would avoid that area at all costs. Putting the garden in has made it safe, there's less violence. Someone's always out in the garden so it's a safe place to be. Criminals don't go where there are a lot of people … so they don't come around. It prevents vandalism on the street.

Shelly made a strong network of friendships within the garden that became "year-round social ties" (Glover 2004, 143). As she said, " I have met people in the garden who have become great friends. I could call some of them at 2 a.m. to say I needed help with whatever, and they would come right over."

Some people work in Spirit Park Community Garden to achieve serenity. As Kendall explains:

> Spirit Park gives me a place to come and be quiet, be still. My job is always hectic and busy, and words fill up my days. Digging dandelions is the closest I've ever come to meditation … it's just nice to have a place where I can go and get my fingers dirty, and just tend to the things I've planted and be still, be quiet. I can take a few moments to recharge my batteries, recharge my spirit.

It also became apparent that community gardens are not fully understood by all community members, and are perhaps even "taken for granted" (Silverman 2006, 351). This is evident in Chloe's remark that "[p]eople often think community gardeners are a bunch of wacky environmentalists out there planting weird stuff."

Spirit Park Community Garden sign. Photograph courtesy Cara Nichols.

CONCLUSIONS

THIS PAPER EXAMINES the social aspects of community gardens and, based on observations of the Spirit Garden, offers an explanation and some understanding of what they are. The perspective is interpretive, drawing on the literature that theorizes on the subject.

Some of the social benefits noted in the research are as follows: the garden fosters the formation of a social network; it transgresses social barriers particularly with regard to age; it cultivates norms of reciprocity and trust; it creates lasting and intimate friendships; it promotes the sharing of information; and it is a place where people can go to find peace and serenity.

There are also some social negatives associated with the garden: Winnipeg's relatively short growing season offers less time for gardeners to create friendships and share information; and it is sometimes difficult to get the different personalities in the garden to work together.

A key finding was the particular vocabulary that the community gardeners used when referring to the garden. Rather than saying "I," many gardeners say "we," which emphasizes the strong social networks created in community gardens. It also shows that they are collective ventures that result in the formation of a social network.

Furthermore, a link was found between the community garden and its ability to bridge generational gaps. The gardens created a topic of discussion amongst those who would not have anything to talk about otherwise, and an activity in which both young children and older adults could participate.

Other key findings related to the ability of the garden to create lasting and intimate friendships, and the opportunities it affords for sharing information. It is also a place where people can go to recharge their spirit.

In keeping with the literature, the results found in this study have confirmed that this particular community garden offers social benefits, but more research on the topic is needed. Additional literature is also required so that those who do not fully understand all the benefits associated with community gardens can develop a new perspective on the topic and perhaps benefit from the social rewards offered through community gardens themselves.

The qualitative research process was an extremely effective tool for gathering information about the many social advantages offered by a community garden — benefits that are relevant not only to individuals working within the garden but also extend out into the broader community.

Clearly, the positive social benefits derived from Spirit Park Community Garden far outweigh the negative. The garden has enriched and broadened the social lives of those involved both physically and emotionally, myself included.

APPENDIX A

Memorandum of Understanding between West Broadway Development Corporation (WBDC) and Spirit Park Gardeners Committee (SPGC)

WBDC's responsibility to the SPGC, Gardeners, and the City of Winnipeg is to:

1. Support the Spirit Park Coordinating Committee and gardeners to maintain the park in good repair and neat and tidy condition
2. Uphold the Spirit Park Maintenance Agreement with the City of Winnipeg
3. Maintain adequate comprehensive general liability insurance coverage
4. WBDC will advise SPGC if WBDC comes aware that projects conflict with insurance policy or City policy
5. Not erect or permit the erection of buildings or structures on the land without the written permission of the City of Winnipeg and the Spirit Park Coordinating Committee
6. Register all gardeners and ensure they sign the gardener's contract, collect $10 per gardener for water costs and provide copy to SPGC and gardener
7. Ensure water access and arrange for the water to be turned on in the Spring and shut off in the Fall, informing gardeners when it will be done with one week's prior notice
8. Maintain the compost bins and allow the Spirit Park gardeners first access to compost
9. Ensure the public has access to the park at all times
10. Arrange for grass-cutting if Spirit Park Coordinating Committee and gardeners unable to do so
11. Consult with Spirit Park Coordinating Committee on any special events proposed at the Park or proposed changes to the Park
12. Ensure there is a Facility Use Agreement with the City of Winnipeg Community Services for special events
13. Register Spirit Park as a mosquito spray buffer zone every Spring with the City of Winnipeg
14. Collect $10 water fee at beginning of each year
15. Supply garbage bags, organic garden supplies for common areas (i.e., vinegar, sulphur)

APPENDIX B

Process for Allocating Plots in Spirit Park (SP)

1. Identifying How Many Plots Available

- SP volunteer coordinator calls all plot holders from previous year by April 15th to ask if they are keeping their plot
- SPGC identifies how many plots are available for upcoming year, shares this info with WBDC

2. Registering Gardeners

- Interested residents register with WBDC that they want a plot
- No plot is committed at this time; residents are told they are on waiting list
- If a resident approaches a Spirit Park Coordinating Committee member wanting a plot, please refer them to WBDC to register

3. Allocating Plots

- SPGC tells WBDC how many returning gardeners there are and how many plots are available; WBDC calls people on the waiting list and allocates available plots on a first come, first served basis to residents
- A map of the plots and who they are held by is made; SP and WBDC both have a copy and it is updated as necessary

4. Registering Gardeners

- WBDC calls residents who get plots and asks them to come to WBDC office within one week to read gardeners' guidelines and rules and sign declaration and pay $10 for the plot; once this is signed then they are registered
- A copy of all declarations will be given to SP designate and the gardener; WBDC retains originals

- Those who did not get plots are also called and told there is a waiting list; they are offered other plots in other locations if available

5. Spirit Park Gardeners' Orientation

- Spirit Park Coordinating Committee and WBDC host a short evening orientation to Spirit Park, go over the guidelines and procedures, plans for the garden, work parties, compost, plot training, etc.

6. Ongoing Plot Management

- SPGC Volunteer Coordinator informs WBDC if a gardener gives up their plot or if there is no plot activity by June 1st
- SPGC contacts gardener by phone twice and by letter if necessary to tell them they have seven days to use their plot or it will be allocated to the next on waiting list

7. Forfeiting a Plot

- Gardeners forfeit their plot if:

  a) an extreme violation of the agreement has occurred (i.e., physical or verbal abuse)

  b) the gardener violates the agreement three times

WBDC contacts the gardener and informs them they are not upholding the agreement and therefore their plot will be allocated to another.

Timeframes

- Gardens must show activity by June 1st

If not, the gardener is phoned twice and a letter is sent informing them that if it is not planted by June 7th then it will be allocated to the next person on the waiting list. Gardens must be cleaned up by October 1st.

APPENDIX C

Gardeners' Guidelines and Rules 2008

SPIRIT PARK IS A VERY UNIQUE PARK! While the land is owned by the City of Winnipeg, the community takes ownership and responsibility for the maintenance and development of the park, including both public and private community garden plots, lawn and tree care, perennials, compost, litter and recycling, etc. The Park operates with the values of respect, courtesy, communication, and co-ordination. The Park is supported by the West Broadway Development Corporation, and the daily management of the Park is overseen by the Spirit Park Gardener's Committee (SPGC).

Please read these Guidelines and Rules carefully; they must be upheld to ensure Spirit Park is maintained in an orderly manner. Failure to follow these rules may result in gardeners losing their plots. These rules have been agreed upon by the Spirit Park Gardeners' Committee and the West Broadway Development Corporation. Two compost sifting and turning parties will be held, in spring after thaw, and fall. Plot holders will be eligible for one inch of compost per plot based on two hours of compost party sweat equity on a first come, first served basis.

Plot holders are encouraged to contribute time and effort to maintain public plots and common areas of Spirit Park by signing up for volunteer opportunities including work parties and events. Family and friends welcome, pets on leash only please. For other updates please check the notice board in Spirit Park for information.

Roles and Responsibilities of Garden Plot Holders

1. I will:

   a) pay $10 to WBDC to cover the cost of water (if you cannot afford to pay this cost, please speak to WBDC staff)

   b) participate in two work parties or alternative volunteer equity

2. Plot activity must take place by June 1st.

   If not, gardeners will be given notice with one week to have activity in the plot. If no activity takes place, the plot assignment will be cancelled without refund.

3. I will use organic gardening applications only; no synthetic chemical applications may be used. I will endeavour to use materials and products from renewable, sustainable sources (e.g., straw vs. plastic mulch).

4. I will conserve water and access water during designated hours posted. Mulching reduces need for watering, and one inch per week of rainfall is usually adequate.

5. I will supervise and clean up after children in my care.

6. Weed maintenance:

   a) I will regularly keep the pathway around my plot weed free

   b) I will not allow weeds in my plot to go to seed

   Failure to keep plot pathway free of weeds, or allowing weeds in my plot to go to seed will result in a one-week written reminder/grace period. Failure to comply will result in withdrawal of plot assignment at the end of the season, and volunteers will be designated to remove weeds in the pathway around my plot, or weeds going to seed in my plot.

7. I will be responsible for finding someone to plant or maintain my plot in the event of absence for vacation, medical, or personal reasons. I will call a Spirit Park co-ordinator listed below to request assistance when necessary.

8. I will take responsibility for my own tools, seeds, and supplies. Garden tools are not supplied.

9. I will notify the Spirit Park Volunteer Coordinator and/or WBDC when I wish/need to give up my plot.

10. Tall plants and trellises will be planted or installed so that no shade will be cast on neighbouring plots without their consent.

11. I will cover bare soil with mulch between rows and after harvest to prevent animal deposits. I will tidy up and remove trellises in my plot by October 1st.

12. I will respect the garden. This means:

    - Not removing plants from another plot without the gardener's permission
    - Threats or abuse will not be tolerated
    - Consumption of alcohol or substance abuse will not be tolerated
    - Please respect the City of Winnipeg's noise by-laws

13. Special events require a permit from the City of Winnipeg and permission from SPGC and WBDC.

14. I will not erect any permanent structures.

15. I will advise the Spirit Park Volunteer Coordinator and WBDC of any change in:

    - My address and telephone number
    - If I can't tend to my plot or find someone else to tend to it

    It is the responsibility of gardeners to notify SPGC and/or WBDC of any address change. Any correspondence delivered to the address on file is considered delivered.

16. One plot per person; there is a waiting list!

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