

NOFA Conference 2009

Overcoming the Affordability Barrier: Connecting Low-Income People to Fresh Food

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Groundwork USA

The Groundwork USA Network

26 communities across the United States and growing



● Established

GW Bridgeport (CT)
 GW Concord (NH)
 GW Dallas (TX)
 GW Denver (CO)
 GW Dona Ana (NM)
 GW Elizabeth (NJ)
 GW Gary (IN)
 GW Lawrence (MA)

GW Milwaukee (WI)

GW Minneapolis (MN)
 GW New Orleans (LA)
 GW Portland (OR)
 GW Providence (RI)
 GW San Diego (CA)
 GW Somerville (MA)
 GW Hudson Valley (NY)

● Under Development

Anacostia DC
 Buffalo NY
 Richmond CA
 Springfield MA
 Wyoming County WV

● Interested Communities

Charleston WV
 East Cleveland OH
 Easton PA
 Kansas City, KS/MO
 Oklahoma City OK

What Groundwork Does

- **For people** - creating opportunities for people to learn new skills and take local action
- **For places** - creating better, safer and healthier neighborhoods
- **For prosperity** - helping business and individuals fulfill their potential



Groundwork USA



GroundworkUSA®

Changing places, Changing lives



Groundwork USA Network Accomplishments In 2008

(preliminary results: 14 of 16 GW Trusts reporting)

Project Mix:

Total number of projects worked on	224
planning and design	88
construction and implementation	83
natural resource conservation	83
community planning initiatives	54
Total number of projects completed	142
Total number of programs delivered (e.g. youth, climate change, food and nutrition, community gardens, civic engagement, stewardship, storm water reduction)	77

Physical Improvements: (total number)

Trees planted	862
Shrubs planted	2,217
Bulbs, perennials, flats of flowers & vegetables planted	10,805
Large amenities installed (e.g. benches, playgrounds, raised beds, rain gardens)	88
Small amenities installed (e.g. flower boxes, signs, trash cans, recycling bins)	92
Acres of brownfields/derelict land improved	67
Acres of open space/parkland improved	77.8
Miles of sidewalk, paths, trails built or improved	44.5
Sites cleaned up (one time)	133
Sites maintained (regularly)	212
Tons of trash/debris cleaned up	1,326.25
Feet of riparian habitat cleaned up, conserved or restored	114,320
People benefiting from projects (live within 500 ft or pass by daily)	365,987

Integrating the Economy and the Environment:

Total number of businesses involved	406
Number of jobs created (full, part time, interns, summer)	150
Weeks of environmental and green job training (1 student for 40 hours = 1 week; 3 students for 20 hours each = 1.5 weeks)	472.25

Benefits to Climate Protection:

Tons of CO2 sequestered through projects and programs	440
Tons of CO2 emissions reduced	251.2

Community Involvement and Education:

Number of youth (<18 yrs) engaged in volunteer activities	6,385
Number of adults (>18 yrs) engaged in volunteer activities	2,507
Number of seniors (>60 yrs) engaged in volunteer activities	471
Total volunteer hours	26,940
Number of schools involved	90
Weeks of environmental education (1 student for 40 hrs = 1 week; 3 students for 20 hours each = 1.5 weeks)	1,660.75
Number of community events	145
Number of people engaged at events	10,376
New partnerships established	182
Partners engaged in projects and programs	362

Leveraging Resources:

Public sector funding (federal, state, local)	\$1,629,793
Private sector funding (business, foundations, civic, private)	\$1,695,375
Value of donated goods/services (not volunteer time)	\$ 386,811

Groundwork Network Highlighted Achievements

- GW Denver established a climate change program that engages volunteers to help their neighbors reduce energy consumption reducing \$ and CO2.
- GW Elizabeth completed a 4 + year effort to convert a small site brownfield into a pocket park.
- GW Hudson Valley took ownership of "the Science Barge", a floating environmental classroom that will serve 3000 students annually.
- GW Milwaukee built two rain gardens that provided job training for young adults and reduced storm water overflows in their neighborhood.
- GW Somerville engaged 1500 youth in environmental education, stewardship and improvements in their communities.
- GW Lawrence and GW Somerville were named *Conservationist of the Year* for improving urban environments in Massachusetts.
- GW Dallas partnered with Eagle Scouts to build trail signage and benches.
- GW Lawrence distributed 7000 lbs. of locally grown produce to Lawrence food pantries increasing access to fresh produce for low income families.

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The Groundwork Mission

To bring about the sustained regeneration, improvement and management of the physical environment by developing community-based partnerships which empower people, businesses and organizations to promote environmental, economic and social well-being.



How Groundwork Lawrence Got Started

- 2-year feasibility study supported by the National Park Service (NPS).
- Led by a Steering Committee comprised of local stakeholders and leaders.
- Today new Trusts are supported through this process by NPS and Groundwork USA, our umbrella organization.



Our Projects & Programs are Designed to:

- Increase Opportunities for Physical Activity
- Increase Access to Healthy Food
- Improve the Quality of Our Air, Water and Land
- Support Biodiversity
- Reduce Energy Consumption



Some of GWL's Accomplishments

- \$5+M of capital improvements to parks & public spaces
- \$3.2 M of projects in the pipeline
- 370+ acres of public parkland improved (*75% of City's total green space*)
- 4,900 youth & 4,800 adults engaged in volunteer clean-ups and stewardship
- 80 tons of trash removed from the Spicket River
- 360 trees, 492 shrubs, and 3,150 bulbs and perennials planted
- \$40,000+ fresh locally-grown produce provided to low-income families annually





Lawrence, Massachusetts: View looking east
over the Great Stone Dam

Lawrence in Context

Demographics

- 30 miles north of Boston
- One of the poorest & most heavily Latino cities in NE
- Population approximately 70,000
- Per capita income of just \$14,753
- Over 25% of families below poverty line
- Homeownership rates 35% citywide (*1/2 state average*)
- Unemployment rate 14% (*twice state average*)
- 37% of residents hold HS degree
- Young population (~30% under age 24)
- Diet and lifestyle-related disease rates soaring
- Highest rates of foreclosure in MA

Projects & Programs Based on Community Mandate

- Community Meetings
- Design Charrettes
- Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Neighborhood Summit
- Partnerships with other community groups



Community Food Programs

- Lawrence Downtown Farmers Market
- Community Supported Agriculture
- Share-a-Share CSA Subsidy and Fresh Food Donations
- Community Gardens



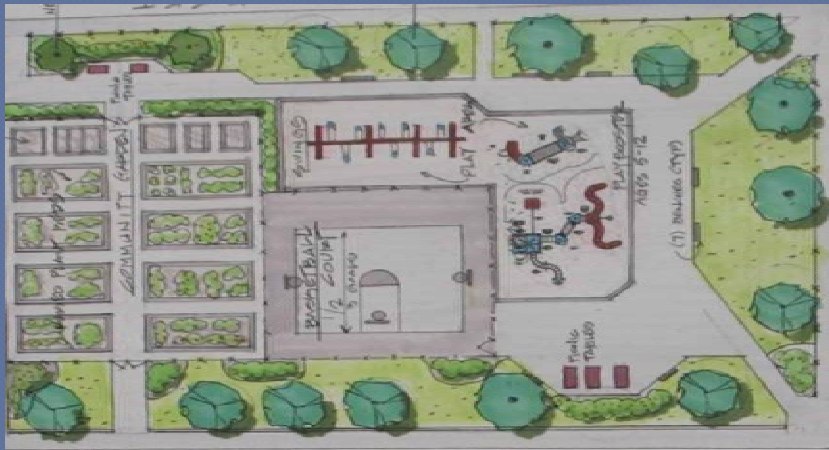
Youth & Community Education Programs

- Green Team
- Schoolyard Gardens
- Healthy Habits and Healthy Living workshops



Environmental & Open Space Programs

- Park development and design
- Alleyways and Urban Trails network
- Volunteer neighborhood and river cleanups
- GreenStreets tree planting initiative
- Spicket River Greenway



Lawrence: a Food Desert

Lawrence's lack of a diverse, competitive marketplace—especially the presence of safe, well-stocked supermarkets selling locally-grown produce, whole grains, locally-produced foods, vitamins, or other healthy goods and services—has created a “food desert” where few nutritious goods can be found.

- 72,000 residents are served by just 2 grocery stores featuring limited whole food selections
- 77 bodegas in Lawrence stock culturally relevant but non-perishable processed foods (laden with sodium, fat, and preservatives), sell goods at premium unmarked prices, and offer a line-of-credit option for weathering money shortfalls.
- Lawrence Public Schools rely heavily on State aid (80% of budget from the Commonwealth), forcing Lawrence's students to rely on unhealthy, heat-and-serve meal delivery for their cafeterias



Poverty, Hunger, and Illness Facts

- 1 in 7 Lawrence families is a food stamp recipient while several hundreds more qualify for but don't receive them^[i];
- in 16 low-income areas of Lawrence, 1 child in 3 lives in a family unable to meet its basic need for food
- the prevalence of hunger can be nearly 6 times greater than the statewide average^[ii];
- 82% of Lawrence children enrolled in school are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals;^[iii]
- exceedingly high rates of diet-related illnesses like Type II diabetes, coronary heart disease, obesity, and stroke abound in Lawrence
- rates of diabetes in Lawrence are 76% higher than those observed more widely across Massachusetts;
- 31% of Lawrence families with children under the age of 18 living in poverty

^[i] Project Bread, 2007

^[ii] Project Bread, 2006

^[iii] Massachusetts Department of Education, 2007

Groundwork Lawrence

Our focus on food

- Lawrence Downtown Farmers Market
- Community Supported Agriculture
- Share-a-Share CSA Subsidy and Fresh Food Donations
- Community Gardens and School Yard Gardens



Lawrence Downtown Farmers Market

- Celebrating it's 15th season this year
- GWL has managed since 2006
- 3 main farms and a prepared food vendor
- 2 arts & crafts vendors
- several nonprofits participate, including UMass Nutrition Extension Program (provide food demos with seasonal produce), local WIC office, and others
- Accepts Credit, Debit, Food Stamps, WIC, and Senior Farmers Market Coupons in addition to cash
- Highest in the state for value of WIC & Senior Farmers Market coupons redeemed (nearly \$50,000)
- One of the highest in the state for EBT (Food Stamp) usage, so far this year a 180% increase in EBT sales



Lawrence Downtown Farmers Market

Challenges

- Lack of support from local Department of Transitional Assistance office (operates Food Stamp/SNAP program)
- Using a public space is an advantage and a challenge: accessible but limited in terms of sound (for musicians), space, and parking
- Not enough staff time to devote to education and awareness that Food Stamps can be used at market
- Many in Lawrence are eligible for Food Stamps but are not applying



Community Gardens



Community Gardens

- Brook Street Gardens:
 - Built in 2006 as part of Scarito Park in the North Common Neighborhood
 - Houses 17 raised garden beds
- Union & Mechanic Alleyway Garden:
 - Reclaimed unused alleyway built in 2006 in partnership with a local community development corporation
 - Houses 17 stone garden beds
- Manchester Street Park Gardens:
 - Just completed! (part of park build)
 - Houses 30 raised garden beds



School Yard Gardens

- Leonard School (5th-8th):
 - Built in 2007 as part of adjacent park renovation
 - Houses one large garden in enclosed school courtyard
- Tarbox School (K-5th):
 - 20 beds to be built in 2009 or 2010 with Cronin Park renovation



Community Gardens

Challenges

- Vacant lots prevalent in city
- Coordination and property issues with adjacent landowners
- High turnover by residents
- City water supply at times unreliable
- Vacant lot gardening-contamination concerns
- Difficulty getting schools and teachers on board for programming with students



Community Supported Agriculture

- Pilot in 2007
- 3rd season with Farmer Dave's of Dracut, MA
- Partnership with Neighbors in Need, a local food pantry(donated 6000 lbs of food)
- Success with Share-a-Share (raised almost \$3000)



Community Supported Agriculture

Challenges

- Requires heavy staff input(looking for successful volunteer model)
- Fundraising for Share-a-share *while* marketing shares
- Low numbers of Lawrence residents in program vs adjacent communities
- Spanish outreach and cultural relevance
- Low-income members are few amidst our member base
- High drop out rate year-to-year (many like the concept but cannot adjust to seasonal eating)



Spicket River Greenway

- 11 city parks and a historic cemetery are located within 1/4 mile of the Spicket River
- 12 schools are located within half a mile of the Spicket River
- Potential for 15+ acres of new riverfront parkland on already vacant land
- Greenway could encompass approximately three miles of riverfront walking/cycling trails



Other Opportunities (and Challenges) in the City

- Partnerships with local non-profits for collaboration on workshop programming
- Vacant lot gardening
- Lack of open space (270 acres of open space, equivalent to 3.7 acres per 1,000 people; by contrast, Boston has 9.3 acres per 1,000 people)
- Community Gardening is “in”



Examples of Vacant lots in the City



Alleyway Reclaimed



Union Mechanic Alleyway Community Garden



Union Mechanic Alleyway Community Garden



Manny and Victor-Stewards in the Garden

Union Mechanic Alleyway Community Garden



Changing Places ~ Changing Lives

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Groundwork Lawrence - www.groundworklawrence.org



Discussion Time

- Why did you choose this workshop? (Thanks!)
- Why did your organization send you to NOFA?
- Are there others in the audience that have experienced similar challenges?
- How did you overcome those challenges?
- What strategies worked and didn't work?

