

NEIGHBORHOOD OPEN
SPACE MANAGEMENT:
COMMUNITY GREENING
SURVEY AND LAND
TRUST STRATEGIES FOR
BALTIMORE CITY

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The Urban Resources Initiative is a partnership with Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks and several academic institutions, and is an innovative applied research program that offers opportunities for students and educators in the environmental sciences and natural resource fields to gain valuable work experience, while meeting the research needs of community-based nonprofits and government agencies. URI engages the strengths and resources of higher education to assist underserved urban communities in finding practical, community-based solutions to urban environment and natural resource management issues in Baltimore City and the surrounding region.

This is the third study in a series of reports on the subject of *Neighborhood Open Space Management* prepared by the Parks & People Foundation relating to vacant lots and community-managed open space. Earlier reports in this series included *A Report on Greening Strategies in Baltimore and Six Other Cities* (Spring 2000) and *Report on the Vacant Lot Restoration Program in Baltimore City* (Fall 2002).

COMMUNITY GREENING SURVEY ANALYSIS

I. Introduction

In the summer of 2003, Charm City Land Trusts, Inc. (CCLT) requested that the Parks & People Foundation (through its Urban Resources Initiative's Internship Program) conduct a survey of previously identified neighborhood greening activists to create project profiles and to better understand the benefits and barriers of increased community-based greening activities in Baltimore City. Greening is defined as community-managed neighborhood scale open space affected small vacant lots and neglected public parks, or other public and private open spaces. The *Community Greening Survey and Land Trust Strategies For Baltimore City* fulfilled several purposes: (1) to identify the extent of need, based on factual data, for the land trust services of CCLT in the City of Baltimore; (2) to serve as a detailed baseline of current community greening activities in Baltimore that will, at some point in the future, inform and direct outreach and training activities and prioritization of land protection and/or acquisition activities of CCLT; and (3) to contribute to the series of studies on community-managed neighborhood open space by the Parks & People Foundation, focusing on vacant, abandoned and neglected public and private open space.

Charm City Land Trusts is a Maryland 501(c)-(3) nonprofit charitable corporation established in 1999 to work toward permanent protection and conservation of threatened urban natural places, to create perpetually affordable housing from abandoned buildings, transform vacant lots into community parks and gardens, and assist in raising the quality of life of all residents of Baltimore through its land trust activities. CCLT hopes these efforts will help to reduce urban blight and improve the livability of Baltimore's neighborhoods. CCLT has an active Board of Directors and Officers, which has identified four initial partnership projects including Amazing Port Street, Patterson Place, Upper Fells Point, and the Woodberry Land Trust's Neighborhood Forest (see case studies presented later in this report). CCLT intends and expects to work cooperatively with Baltimore City to effect the transfer of city-owned property for community use and maintenance as either a donation or less than market value acquisition. CCLT also encourages private property owners to donate land for community use and protection. Currently, CCLT accomplishes its work through its voluntary Board members, but is seeking staff funding to begin a process of accepting title and easements to real property that community groups wish to see protected and have agreed to maintain. The Board is also seeking to identify funds for liability insurance.

Since 1984, the Parks & People Foundation has worked to improve the quality of life in Baltimore's neighborhoods. The Parks & People Foundation is dedicated to supporting a wide range of recreational and educational opportunities; creating and sustaining beautiful and lively parks; and promoting a healthy natural environment for all. Since 1993, Parks & People's community volunteers have planted over 5,500 trees in 45 Baltimore neighborhoods and have transformed over 200 vacant lots into community-

managed gardens or open spaces. Parks & People works in partnership with many organizations to build capacity and empower community groups to improve the quality of their neighborhood life and sustain stewardship of urban natural resources.

This survey and the work of CCLT are timely given the recent experience of the Eastside Garden Club. In 1995, residents of Washington Square organized this garden club as a part of the Washington Hills Beautification Committee. The Committee has maintained and improved street trees and adopted four lots for a community garden and as landscaped community open space. As a result of redevelopment activity and a complicated land swap between the city and developers, the community garden was taken away and will be converted to surface parking for the adjacent development. With support of the Planning Commission and Baltimore City Office of the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service, the Eastside Garden Club was able to re-establish their community garden at City Spring Park. The Parks & People Foundation and several other nonprofits, including Anne E. Casey Foundation and Citizen Planning and Housing Association, invested grant funds in the development of the original community garden and open space. This community's investment was lost and could not be transferred to another site. This example demonstrates that Baltimore City must better plan and coordinate community use and maintenance of neighborhood open space. With CCLT's help, Baltimore City should support efforts to protect specific abandoned land that can serve the needs of residents on a long-term basis, and through permanent protection of conservation areas, encourage and empower neighborhood residents to invest community energy in stewardship projects.

While community management may not an appropriate long-term strategy for every vacant lot, it can be an important component in the city's strategy for better managing vacant lots and neighborhood open space. Well-maintained open space can provide Baltimore City with a valuable opportunity for neighborhood revitalization. Yet, an effective management strategy cannot be implemented unless city officials change the approach to managing vacant lots and neighborhood redevelopment. Until the late 1950s, open space was a valuable public commodity, used to stimulate redevelopment of neighborhoods by creating new parks. Since then, Baltimore has experienced a major exodus of people and open space creation and management has slipped as a city priority.

Baltimore City struggles to manage its 6,000 acres of formally designated parkland. Vacant lots, pocket parks, and other small open spaces are difficult for the city to maintain. These open spaces are often trash strewn, overgrown eyesores, and nests for drugs. This neglect is a very visible sign and symbol of a neighborhood's decline. Fortunately, many community groups in Baltimore are committed to transforming vacant lots in their neighborhoods to attractive green spaces that can contribute to the health of the urban forest.

In the earlier *Neighborhood Open Space Management: A Report on Greening Strategies in Baltimore and Six Other Cities* (Spring 2000), we learned that other cities have taken a more strategic view toward resolving the problem of vacant lots and unmanaged open space. A key finding in this earlier study was that Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, and

New York have developed public-private cooperative and coordinated programs to help communities with vacant lots and to increase community stewardship of city parks. We also found that municipal support was crucial to long-term sustainability of community-managed open space projects. City policy guidance and commitment were usually spelled out in an Open Space Plan. Most importantly, successful cities had developed a triangle partnership structure involving three key roles: 1) a project organizer that provides planning and community organizing assistance; 2) a greening organization that provides technical, training and logistical assistance; and 3) a property manager, usually in the form of a local land trust such as Chicago's nonprofit entity called 'NeighborSpace' that provided real estate and insurance services. NeighborSpace is a nonprofit formed as a long-term, public-private partnership. NeighborSpace holds land, often transferred from the city, in trust for community groups that enters into maintenance and management agreements with NeighborSpace. NeighborSpace provides the community stewardship group with real estate and trust services, liability insurance, guidance for site development and use, and arranges for project technical assistance by a greening organization.

This community greening survey and analysis is reported in three sections. The first section gives a broad statistical overview of the findings of the survey. The second section deals with a specific subset of survey respondents, those that indicated interest in permanent protection and/or acquisition, and are most likely to be future projects of Charm City Land Trusts. Finally, this section concludes with remarks and recommendations for future actions. This report also provides an assessment of community need for land protections services and concludes with six greening project case studies.

II. General Findings

The Community Greening Survey was developed in respond to the stated needs of the CCLT. Surveys were sent to a targeted list of neighborhood greening activists currently engaged in stewardship projects that have been ongoing for at least one year. New and anticipated projects were not considered in this survey because it was felt that stewardship projects that have been sustained over time may have reached the point when they are focused on securing the future of their project investment in time, labor and financial resources. With the exception of the two above-mentioned constraints, steps were taken to make the survey as inclusive and representative as possible.

Several existing databases and other sources aided in the selection of community groups for participation in the survey. These sources included the Parks & People Foundation's Community Grants Program and their 2002 inventory of Baltimore's community gardens. Additionally, the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service, the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods, and the Baltimore Community Foundation's Neighborhood Grants Program provided additional project contacts.

From a universe of several hundreds of community greening projects a sample of 109 surveys were mailed. Fifty valid responses were received, representing a 46% response rate. The responses comprise a geographically diverse set, with all areas of the city

represented. Areas of concentration include Southeast Baltimore in the neighborhoods proximate to Patterson Park and Southwest Baltimore near the Baltimore County line. Additionally, most of the projects for which data has been collected are located in designed reinvestment zones, as noted by the Baltimore City Department of Planning's *Neighborhood Typology Map*. Greening activities can be an important strategy to stabilize and reinvigorate these areas and this is also where the majority of the city's vacant land is located.

Stewardship Project Type

Survey respondents were able to self-report one of nine different stewardship project types that best represented their particular project. The breakdown of responses to project type can be found in Table 1. Forty-six percent (46%) of respondents indicated that the primary purpose of their project is beautification. Such an overwhelming interest among the respondents in beautification activities shows the desire of community groups to improve blighted areas and a commitment to improve their neighborhoods. The second largest project type includes vegetable gardens (16%) and vegetable/flower gardens (12%). In total, these categories represent 74% of the surveys returned. Further, it demonstrates the positive effect these types of projects have had on their respective neighborhoods, as they have had a relatively long history in Baltimore and have been replicated throughout the city.

As John Haily with Midtown Edmondson Improvement Association reports: "Restoring vacant lots helps people to perceive their neighborhoods as safe, clean places to live. When community residents work to improve their own surroundings, they become invested in the neighborhoods and more likely to maintain the improvements. The restored vacant lots are a symbol for the community, giving us a sense of pride and ownership. The area is graffiti free."

Stan Edmister with Woodberry Land Trusts stated, "the priority should be on stewardship care of all of the city's natural places providing an 'evergreen' quality of life experience for all charm city residents."

Table 1: Project Types

<i>PROJECT TYPE</i>	<i>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL</i>
Flower Garden/Beautification	23	46%
Vegetable Garden	8	16%
Vegetable/Flower Garden	6	12%
Pocket Park	5	10%
Playground/Playing Field	3	6%
Natural Places/Woodlands	1	2%
Tree Nursery	1	2%
Neighborhood Sign Lot	1	2%
Other	2	4%

Ownership

Respondents were asked for information regarding ownership of the vacant lots or land area on which they were working. The responses to this question, as detailed in Table 2,

indicate that 42% are city-owned and only two lots are currently community owned. Historically, Baltimore City’s policy has been to avoid assuming title to abandoned or tax delinquent properties in the hope of encouraging re-use by private owners. However, as a matter of public necessity, the city has been required to assume responsibility for these properties and sometime assumed title as well. Almost all respondents said they have permission from the current owner for their project. Current ownership is a crucial piece of the puzzle for CCLT, as the Land Trust’s primary protection strategy may be fee simple acquisition. The high percentage of stewardship projects located on city property should be seen as a positive sign, as the city is may be willing to transfer vacant lots for community use and maintenance relative to other landowners. Additionally, there is an established process for working with the city to transfer vacant lots to nonprofit organizations. Assuming that community-owned and managed land is a desirable outcome for greening groups and the city, a topic that will be discussed in some detail later, this demonstrates a need for CCLT as it can facilitate ownership of neighborhood stewardship project sites for community groups that agree to manage and maintain the property for community benefit.

Table 2: Current Ownership

<i>LAND OWNER TYPE</i>	<i>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL</i>
Mayor and City Council	21	42%
Private Owner	14	28%
Multiple Lots/Multiple Owners	9	18%
Community Owned	2	4%
Don't Know	4	8%

Access and Use of the Project Site

Almost all the projects surveyed provide for public access and use of the site. Most of the sites (45%) are physically open with 27% of the projects having fences. Only a few of the projects are controlled by locked fences. Some 15% of the projects surveyed provide for public art and 35% organize a wide variety of special community events using the project site. Projects provide community benefits through access to community-managed open space and as gathering places for neighborhood residents. Having an accepted and valued community use or purpose for restoring a vacant lot or other open spaces is very important to maintaining interest in caring for the property.

As Diane Wheaton with Waverly Improvement Association reports: “We worked for three years to have the house torn down. The city kept its word and I was left with the rubble. Since there was “hot” soil (lead contamination), we built raised beds for vegetables and had a bumper crop of pumpkins this year. The kids have enjoyed planting and harvesting the vegetables and carving the pumpkins. They put up a scarecrow in the garden this weekend. The front of the garden is more formal and manicured – ‘a gift to the street.’ At the back we planted flowering cherry trees and installed benches. Everyone in the neighborhood looks at garden and thinks, ‘we did that!’ The children who first worked to create the garden are now old enough to teach the younger children what to do.”

Volunteers

Table 3 reports that 56% of the survey respondents have 4 to 10 volunteers involved in the stewardship project. The number of volunteers actively engaged in a neighborhood greening project is one of the more compelling statistics from this survey. Having a large number of volunteers is, generally speaking, a guarantor of relatively high organizational capacity. A large number of volunteers generally indicates direct community investment and support for a project. This is not to say, however that a group with only a few committed volunteers cannot be capable and effective, but can they sustain their involvement over time? As CCLT looks for other community groups with which to work, organizational capacity and the ability to be self-sufficient in the day-to-day project operation is vital. That 42% of the respondents indicated they have more than seven volunteers is a heartening sign that greening projects are benefiting from dedication and commitment on the part of neighborhood residents.

Table 3: Number of Volunteers

<i>NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS</i>	<i>NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL</i>
0 to 1	3	6%
2 to 3	11	22%
4 to 6	15	30%
7 to 10	13	26%
11 to 20	6	12%
21 or more	2	4%

As Liz Alex of the Southeast Community Development Corporation in the Highlandtown reports: "Perhaps the greatest impact of our community greening project was the community connections that have been realized. Residents on these blocks have seen a high turnover in neighbors recently, and a consequent lack attention from civic and city services. This project helped the community association to reach out to these neighbors and begin to draw them into the organization. Since this project, several of these residents have become involved in other neighborhood association activities, including Citizens on Patrol and a community clean up campaign and have worked with the neighborhood associations to receive funding from the Baltimore Community Foundation to add carriage lights to the front of homes which will be a second visual statement as well as a step toward improving safety at night."

Project Duration

The length of time a stewardship project has been in existence is an important indicator of its success and sustainability. Twelve of the fifty respondents, or 24%, reported that their projects have been in existence for at least five years (since 1998). Clearly for some time, the grassroots response to urban decline in the face of increasing numbers of abandoned properties in Baltimore has been to get involved and become active in self-help projects. CCLT can support and strengthen this community movement through provision of land trust and liability insurance services.

Project Motivation

The reason for undertaking stewardship projects varies greatly, but most projects (82%) were started for the purpose of eliminating blight and helping to beautify the

neighborhood with enhancing community cohesion a strong second reason (43%). Other reasons or purposes served include creating a safer space (29%), conducting educational activities (25%), relaxation (23%) and personal and community memorials (12%).

As Janice Jacobs with Ashland Avenue Association reports: “Originally this was an area of abandoned houses used by drug dealers and squatters. We worked with the city to have the houses torn down, then cleaned up the lots, planted grass, and used the area as a football field for the neighborhood kids. Despite the fact that this open space is in the middle of the city, there has been no dumping there since we cleaned up the lot. People are even careful to pick up after their dogs, because they have a sense of ownership that did not exist before.”

Effect on the Surrounding Area

Thirty-three (33) respondents, or 64%, indicated that the immediate area surrounding the project has improved in some noticeable way, primarily improving physical spaces by bringing nature into neighborhoods, inspiring others to take positive action, and as a positive educational experience. Half the respondents felt the site was no longer a nuisance to the community. The perception of neighborhood enhancement by those involved with greening projects is an extremely positive sign. When people feel that they are making a difference and have a sense of efficacy, reason dictates that they are more likely to continue their work. Additionally, if neighborhood improvements can be connected to particular greening projects, support for it, in terms of money and volunteer labor, is more likely to grow and be sustained.

As Glenn Ross with McElderry Park Community Association reports: “We loved this project because of the partnership that have been formed with organizations able to provide technical assistance and resources. This project helped bind the faith community with the residents. It involved tearing down several burned out houses used for drug trafficking and prostitution. We created a labyrinth, a garden, and tree and flower nursery. Crime has been reduced. The alleys are cleaner and the stench is gone. The restoration of the vacant lot has had a major positive impact and is spreading to neighboring communities. People are asking for street trees and more gardens.”

Challenges Before and After the Project

Lack of property maintenance was the primary problem before the project was undertaken, as reported by 82% of the respondents. Only 15% report that maintenance is a continuing problem. 60% of the respondents said vandalism or other illegal activities were a problem before the project was begun. Thirty-five percent (35%) report that this is a continuing problem. About half of the respondents reported that dumping was a problem before the project was undertaken and about 21 report this is a continuing problem. Less than 20% of the respondents report that securing sufficient volunteer manpower is a continuing problem. Out of necessity, all respondents have found a solution to the need for water at the project site. Half of the projects receive water by donation from adjacent property owners, with 20% collecting water on site from rainwater and 17% securing water from fire hydrants. Only 6 projects have a water meter at the site. Access to water remains a challenge for many sites.

As Marion Sharif with Windsor Hills Neighborhood Association reports: “This lot was completely overgrown in a tangle of vines. We are now creating a garden incorporating a natural irrigation system and rain barrels. We have planted herbs, vegetables, strawberries and various annuals and perennial flowers. We even produced 5 giant watermelons we did not plant – a bonus for our efforts! We would like to network with other people around the city to enhance the community spirit. We would like to tour other projects.”

Permanent Protection

Thirty-four percent (34%) of respondents indicated an interest in permanent protection. For obvious reasons, an indication of interest in permanent protection of the project site was an important message of this survey for Charm City Land Trusts. Understanding that CCLT has done very little to date in the way of public outreach or education, this number is quite compelling. We can expect that this number would increase after a successful outreach and education campaign targeted to community greeners. To better understand this subset of respondents, section three of the report will deal specifically with these seventeen responses.

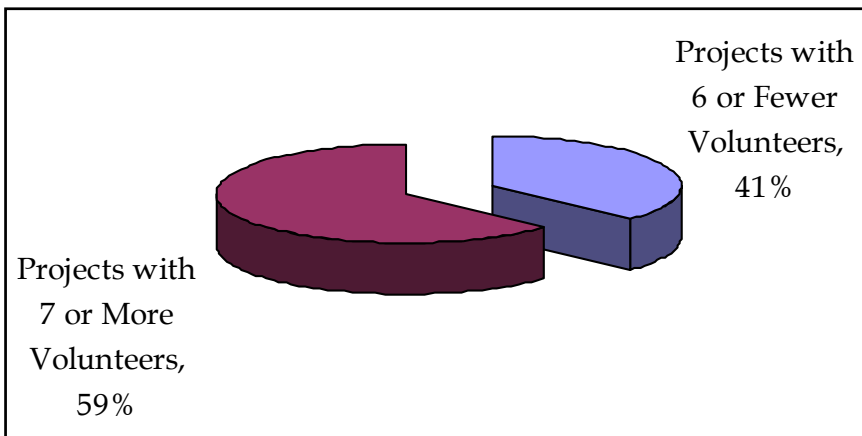
III. A More Detailed Look

By looking at the specific subset of respondents that indicated an interest in permanent protection, we can learn about the characteristics of a community group that desires this future for the land they maintain. Distillation of this information can and should inform future education and outreach efforts. Quite obviously, we can assume that if a neighborhood has indicated an interest in protection, the stewardship project is supported by several residents and the land is not owned by the community.

Number of Volunteers

Of the 17 respondents who volunteered an interest in permanent protection of their project site, 55% (10 of 17) indicated that they had seven or more volunteers working together on the project. Compared to the 42% of projects indicating the same level of volunteer support in the general data set, one immediately notices that this group enjoys broader community participation, which can be an impetus for seeking ownership.

Figure 1: Number of Volunteers Among Respondents Who Indicated an Interest in Permanent Protection



Project Duration

Of the 17 respondents, 14 provided information on how long the project has been in existence. Of these fourteen, only three, or 21%, have been established for less than five years. Seventy-nine percent (79%) have existed for five or more years, compared to 24% from the general data set. Additionally, 43% of these eleven respondents have had ongoing projects for ten years or longer. We can infer from these statistics that the more time residents have invested in a project, the more they are likely to be interested in ownership and/or permanent protection.

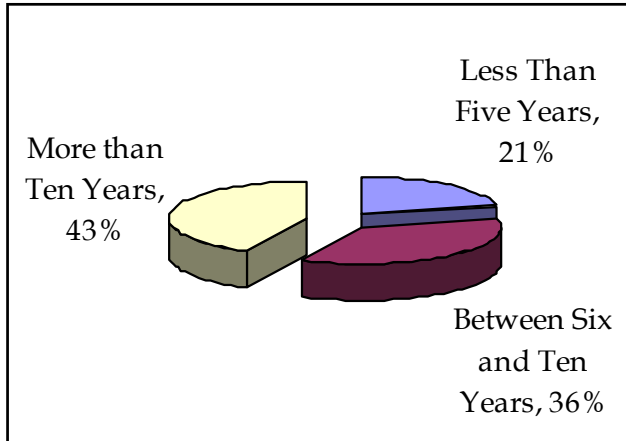


Figure 2: Duration of Project Among Respondents Who Indicated an Interest in Permanent Protection

Special Events and Community Activities

The respondents seeking protection in this subset use their green space for special events and community activities at a much higher rate than the general set. We can take this to mean that the neighborhood groups comprising this subset have attempted to make their green spaces central to their respective communities. Further, ownership of these lots by these neighborhoods will likely assure that these sites remain gathering spots for community members. Seventy-one percent (71%) of respondents in the subset interested in protection use their land for community social events, including meetings, parties, educational and recreational activities. This compares to only 40% of the general set.

IV. Recommendations and Conclusions

These survey results can be used to inform future decision-making by CCLT. By observing trends in the data, especially in the subset discussed in section three, recommendations can be made to help establish guidelines for the selection of CCLT projects for permanent protection and to organize a community educational campaign. Drawing on the survey results, conversations with neighborhood greening activists, and the examples set by other successful stewardship projects in Baltimore and other cities such as Boston, New Haven, New York, Philadelphia and Washington, DC, the following criteria and indicators of organizational capacity are presented to guide CCLT in selecting future community groups with which to work in securing project site for protection.

Organizational Capacity

Number of Volunteers – Projects that rely on only a few volunteers are susceptible to issues that groups with a healthy volunteer labor base are not. A significant number of volunteers, usually five or greater, as determined by this survey, generally means that the stewardship project has community support with residents feeling invested in the project and empowered by it allowing for ongoing leadership development.

Duration of Project – Projects that have been in existence for at least three years have likely weathered most challenges that befall community groups, such as leadership changes, demographic changes, funding woes, and issues with the city. These groups have dealt with a host of problems and persevered. One would expect them to be strengthened by permanent ownership of the project site.

Effective Leadership – In nearly every case, the most successful greening projects all shared one thing in common, identifiable leaders. Effective leadership in organizing volunteers, raising money, and other necessary tasks, is crucial to success. People such as Justine Bonner in Sandtown, Barbara Moore in Upper Fells Point, and Reverend Karen Brau on Port Street, and Jan Danforth, Tracy Brown and Stan Edmister in Woodberry, are leaders who have galvanized support for their specific stewardship project and encouraged people to actively participate.

Fundraising Ability or Self-Sufficiency – Those groups that have demonstrated success in either securing small grants or providing necessary services for themselves are likely good candidates for permanent land tenancy. These groups have been able to provide for themselves in the past and will have significant resources to bring to a partnership with Charm City Land Trusts.

Temporal Nature of Challenges – Nearly every survey respondent identified significant challenges to the project site before the project was implemented, such as lack of maintenance, dumping, and illegal activity. Nonetheless, about half of the projects showed to some degree that these challenges remained after the project was implemented. In an immediate area where dumping and drug trafficking have significantly decreased due to the presence of a greening project, such as the 3300 block of Woodland Avenue, we can assume that the community respects the project and will continue to do so.

Site Visits

The survey was designed to be as user friendly as possible in order to ensure a high response rate. This manifested itself as many check boxes and very few open-ended questions. The tradeoff that was made by designing the survey in such a manner was the inability to determine why people answered the way they did to certain questions.

Through follow-up site visits and interviews though, some of this insight was gained. For instance, we could not ask why only 34% of respondents indicated an interest in permanent protection as one possible answer responding to a general question about the future needs of the project. One obvious reason is limited public knowledge as to the

options and benefits of ownership. Therefore, outreach and public education should be a priority component of future CCLT activities.

Delving deeper, one could ask why there is not more community support for greening activities that provide tangible benefits to their neighborhoods, as evidenced by the nearly 30% of respondents who have three volunteers or fewer working on projects. The answer to this question, according to community greeners, is without certainty about the future of the project site as community ownership would provide, many residents are unwilling to invest themselves directly in a stewardship project. It is in this area that CCLT can fulfill its mission of connecting citizens to the land and improving the quality of life in Baltimore City by serving as a vehicle where community groups can own the green spaces they have or wish to reclaim and beautify.

As much as this analysis has tried to draw out similarities between greening projects in Baltimore, the most important lesson to come from this survey has been that stewardship projects are as diverse as the neighborhoods in which they are located. This is not to say that aggregated data cannot be useful in examining certain aspects of these projects, indeed it has been. But each community garden or open space has its own set of challenges, strengths, and needs. A coherent and unified strategy for approaching future stewardship projects should be coupled with an eye towards distinctiveness and exploration of specific projects. Any strategy put in place should, by its nature, be adaptive and able to change according to individual needs and contexts.

AN ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY NEED FOR LAND PROTECTION SERVICES

I. Community Leadership and Commitment

Even with the noblest of intentions and care in their design and development, community open space can remain lifeless without community members to use and appreciate them. Well-tended gardens and other successful examples of community-managed open space demonstrate that care and participation by communities foster a greater sense of pride and security among residents and visitors. With strong community organization and involvement driving the process of creating and caring for open space, technical assistance providers, like Parks & People Foundation and CCLT, can help provide materials and resources during the planning and installation phases to aid community members develop and improve their organizational and leadership capacity as well as laying the foundation for continuing maintenance and sustainability.

Parks & People and CCLT should support and encourage community-driven projects. This should be a guiding principle to ensure significant community involvement and commitment to help sustain open space projects into the future.

Baltimore is a city rich in diversity, and community greening projects reflect that diversity. Ranging in scale from one residential lot to hundreds of acres, and in type from traditional vegetable garden to meditation space complete with a stone labyrinth, to a woodland area with flowing streams, these community greening projects represent a direct investment on the part of a neighborhood in its future. Neighborhoods have been empowered by, as Jean Yehuda of the Woodland Nguzo Saba Neighborhood Association puts it, their own ability to “control [abandoned] spaces and determine the activities that happen on them.”

While no neighborhood have been able to overcome the complicated problems associated with vacant lots and unmanaged open space, there are several hundred examples of communities claiming and beautifying vacant lots and abandoned open space exist in Baltimore City. These exemplary neighborhood greening projects, which exist in all areas of the city, from Kensington in southwest to Woodberry in the north central, represent a spectrum of grassroots responses that have emerged in the face of this problem.

Recognizing that examples of beautification and reclaimed community green space are one of the best vehicles for neighborhood improvement, community associations, gardeners, and concerned citizens across Baltimore are taking steps to transform vacant lots into neighborhood assets. These efforts represent a wide range of activities, from encouraging greater involvement on part of the city, to simply clearing a lot of trash and debris, to planting vegetables and ornamental plants, promoting public participation, and using the space for community events.

II. The Need for Charm City Land Trusts

The 2003 Community Greening Survey found that support and assistance from city government, charitable foundations, and non-profit organizations has been critical to sustaining greening projects and community-managed open space. However, for projects to be implemented and succeed over time, residents must invest themselves in the project and feel a sense of ownership. In other words, there must be community acceptance and support as well as empowerment to directly address neighborhood problems and physical and social problems. Hands-on community greening projects can help create social benefits as well by increasing competency and confidence, thus empowering people at three levels, the individual, organization, and community.

CCLT can make a contribution toward encouraging neighborhood groups to actively support greening projects with time, labor, and commitment. By helping community groups to gain control of the land on which their greening projects are located and by providing liability insurance and other benefits of land trusts, CCLT can support local stewardship of green space and help to facilitate appropriate community use of that space.

Through the survey of greening activists and subsequent site visits and interviews conducted in the summer of 2003, we have identified the need for a stronger response to community commitment, involvement, and investment as one of the impediments to expanding the number of successful greening projects. One of the reasons for this limited community investment of time and effort is uncertainty about the future. Very few people are willing to give of themselves to a greening project when the land is not protected against future development activity or other threats. Other barriers to greater personal involvement include the many other challenges low income individual and families face in daily struggles to survive.

Charm City Land Trusts should agree with Patterson Place neighborhood activist Carol Hartke and Stan Edmister, community forester and environmental artist, who both indicated that the “reclamation of green space is undertaken to fulfill a neighborhood’s vision [for its future].” CCLT can help to suggest the range of options for community-managed open space that a neighborhood could undertake that would meet its standards for community-owned property held in trust by CCLT. It should work with other nonprofit providers, such as Parks & People, to help ensure the long-term community stewardship of land resources.

Charm City Land Trusts has identified permanent protection through easements or land management agreements, and/or ownership as mechanisms to facilitate community support and empower neighborhoods to strengthen efforts to reclaim vacant lots and abandoned open spaces. Providing ownership or other guarantees of permanent protection certainly fulfills CCLT’s stated mission to “connect citizens to the land.”

As CCLT grows as an organization and is able to serve a larger segment of the community, it should see its operational mission as two-fold: (1) to conduct extensive outreach and public education to neighborhood groups and community associations to

inform them of the benefits and responsibilities of ownership or permanent protection and of the variety of options available to groups interested in this option, and (2) to provide all the necessary services to enable community groups to legally control land, including serving as a land repository and property insurer.

III. Recommendations for Charm City Land Trusts

The Baltimore community is poised to blossom with regard to community-managed open space, community greening, and gardening in general. Recently, as a part of Baltimore City's Neighborhood Strategic Action Planning Process, the Planning Department surveyed neighborhood organizations that had completed community plans. When asked to state short-term goals, many of the communities surveyed identified the importance of community greening through vacant lot restoration and maintenance, street tree planting, and other beautification projects doable with community resident participation.

Why is transforming unsightly vacant lots to community green space so important? A recent study by a Cornell researcher suggests a house surrounded by nature helps boost a child's attention span. "When children's cognitive functioning was compared before and after they moved from poor to better quality housing that had more green spaces around, profound differences emerged in their attention capacities even when the effects of the improved housing were taken into account," said Nancy Wells, assistant professor of design and environmental analysis in the College of Human Ecology. "The findings suggest that the power of nature is indeed profound. The results suggest that the natural environment may play a far more significant role in the well being of children within a housing environment than has previously been recognized," Wells said. Other researchers have documented the varied and rich meaning that community green space has for many urban residents, workers and visitors.

The results of the 2003 survey can provide the CCLT with valuable insight, which should be used to help guide both how the organization prioritizes its goals and how it operates in the community. Partly due to the composition of the survey's mailing list and partly due to the nature of greening activities ongoing in Baltimore, nearly all the respondents represented vacant lot projects. There are certainly other timely and valuable endeavors in the city that cannot be characterized as vacant lot projects in the conventional sense, such as the Woodberry Forest project. This community group has formed the Woodberry Land Trust to propose a unique effort to secure conservation protection easements on city-owned property held by multiple agencies that has been in limbo since the mid-70's when the ColdSpring New Town did not proceed with further development. The area provides the headwaters of several local streams and many specimen trees composing a unique urban forest.

CCLT was created to ensure the long-term protection of both community-managed green spaces and perpetually affordable housing. While these two strategies for neighborhood improvement are quite different in application, there is one significant similarity; they both require capable community groups to act as partners with CCLT.

To be successful in fulfilling its mission, CCLT will want to collaborate with community groups that commit to bringing their resources to the relationship, that have a vision of their desired future, and have the administrative and organizational capacity to monitor and care for land resources.

Drawing on the survey results, conversations with neighborhood greening activists, and the examples set by other successful projects in Baltimore and other cities, the following criteria and indicators of project success are presented to guide CCLT in selecting future community groups with which to work in acquiring land.

Criteria for Defining Greening Project Success

How might a “successful” greening project be defined? Based on past experiences of Parks & People Foundation, we can describe the difference between a successful and unsuccessful community open space project as:

Successful Projects

- Community driven idea
- Accepted as part of the community
- Many doers, some planners
- People-power comes from community
- Community takes the initiative
- Evolves through stages and seasons
- Increase in horticulture skills
- Improved environment
- Gains official recognition
- Shares knowledge with others

Unsuccessful Projects

- Idea imposed from outside
- Used only by a few people
- Too few doers, too many dreamers
- People-power comes from outside
- Community waits for assistance
- 1st stage finished, does not evolve
- Not willing to learn skills needed
- No beneficial environmental change
- No one cares or recognizes
- No interaction with others

There are a few factors not included in the list above that should be identified, because they are often suggested as criteria for defining successful projects. These include the physical appearance of the site (maintenance standards), quality of materials used in the restoration, and elaborateness or uniqueness of project design. In our opinion, these should not be used as success factors, although sometimes viewed as highly desirable attributes, because the community does not have control over these factors and they are both subjective and culturally bounded. A green space that is a garden will not always look the same over time and is often at times “out-of-season.” This does not excuse poor gardening practices, but not all gardens need to look like those on private estates. The quality of design and materials should be appropriate for the intended use and consistent with the standards of particular communities as quality often varies depending on different values and priorities of communities. In other words, not all paths need to be paved with gold or brick, when gravel or mulch will functionally work and can be as eye appealing, depending on the context of the site improvements.

Benefits of Community-Managed Open Space

Just as the specific criteria for defining a successful project will vary, so will the specific benefits and outcomes. Some of the most important benefits of community-managed open space include:

- Aesthetic improvement
- Ecological benefits
- Recreational opportunities
- Income generation
- Positive activity for youth
- Improved community nutrition
- Transfer of knowledge and experience, e.g., between generations
- Community cohesion
- Training of participants in gardening
- Cost-effective to the city or property owner
- Increased community organizing capacity
- Ripple effect to other open spaces
- Asset to individual/group

The social benefits of community-managed open space are not as well understood by public decision-makers as they might be based on available research. Lynne M. Westphal and J. Morgan Grove, both urban forest researchers with the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, are involved in research studies of these effects in Chicago and Baltimore, respectively. They are working to better understand how different physical, social, cultural, and managerial factors affect urban residents and community groups. As stated above, community greeners can identify the benefits that accrue to individuals, but it is sometimes difficult to quantify benefits at the neighborhood organization and community levels, although empirical research has documented these values. Finally, of interest as well, is to better understand the role greening plays in community cohesion, perceived safety, economic development, and neighborhood revitalization. Thus far, research has found that stewardship projects are most likely to succeed when they are small scale, meet local needs, distribute benefits fairly, and are truly participatory. Increasingly, community groups are venturing toward undertaking management of larger scale urban forests in park and open space settings. Research indicates the strong emotional attachment and personal identification many people have for trees. Additional research opportunities are being pursued as community groups undertake nurturing natural areas through invasive control and watershed riparian enhancement.

Dynamic Nature of Open Space

As a community's needs change, the functional purposes and benefits of a community-managed open space may also change. The design of an existing open space may change over time, or open spaces may be incorporated into the redesign of an entire community as sections of the city undergo redevelopment.

In some instances, community-managed open space may be used as a short-term strategy to upgrade a vacant lot and stabilize a community before efforts to redesign or redevelop are implemented. In other cases, however, a well-tended, community-managed open space may serve as the catalyst for community revitalization. Thus, although it may not be practical or possible for every site to be maintained as permanent open space, careful attention must be paid during redevelopment not to remove the very thing that prompted reinvestment in a given neighborhood.

Recommendations for Strengthening Community Greening Activities

We have learned a great deal through our experience working with community groups on greening projects. Unless city agencies are willing to become a cooperative partner to help solve the vacant lot problem and are willing to share information and resources, the problem of communications and coordination of projects and resources among city and nonprofit organizations will continue. Nonprofits are not currently able to sustain these efforts given their project oriented funding that comes and goes. Parks & People Foundation has recommended that the city establish a Neighborhood Open Space Council to help improve communications and coordinate activities and stimulate needed public policy and funding changes.

In summary, the elements that need to be kept in mind when undertaking community-managed opens space and greening projects include the following:

- 1) Clarify roles, secure interest and commitments from all parties critical to success.
 - a) Define the government agency roles, point of contact, policies and services and secure agreement in writing for provision of resources as needed.
 - b) Create a strong working partnership among all parties that will withstand differences of opinion and approach, agreeing ahead of time on a clear decision-making process.
 - c) Improve communications among participating nonprofits and government agencies to create better responses and efficiency.

- 2) Stewardship and volunteer efforts that create community-managed open space can be a positive community building experience, but may not fit all circumstances or conditions in every community.
 - a) Stewardship is a local process best started on a block-by-block level.
 - b) Time is needed to build trust and a cooperative work environment that encourages participation.
 - c) Many people feel really good about greening their neighborhood and sharing pride in accomplishing hands-on projects to help people re-establish positive experiences in their communities.
 - d) Good stewardship projects lead to empowering residents and agency personnel who can share responsibility and accountability.
 - e) Community greening investments can happen more quickly than housing and economic development projects, but can also set the stage for these additional investments.
 - f) Some communities may need youth work crews to help sustain community volunteer efforts.

- 3) Put Communities First
 - a) Build on community ideas and priorities; value and use local resident knowledge.
 - b) Help residents map assets and resources and build on community traditions and strengths.
 - c) Incorporate social issues into the greening projects to deal with crime reduction, drugs, trash, education, recreation and social space needs.

- d) Develop a program that provides both economic relief (compensated work with work crews) and a skills training and education element. Find appropriate organizations to supervise and manage work crews such as community development corporations, empowerment zones, main street or community benefit districts.
- 4) Sustain Community Leaders
 - a) Improve hands-on training and teaching in the field as well as classroom training and technical assistance delivery.
 - b) Encourage people to problem-solve and support leaders to emerge.
 - c) Help get youth organized and identify adults interested in mentoring.
 - d) Help structure tasks starting with small steps by creating checklists of doable, hands-on activities.
 - e) Provide opportunities for networking and socializing; help make the hands-on activities fun.
- 5) Comprehensive neighborhood greening strategies are preferable to scattered site efforts.
 - a) Work through community-based organizations, including community development corporations that know local residents and have a stake in sustaining community-managed open space.
 - b) Ensure community readiness and properly assess community capacity; if low, develop program steps to improve readiness and capacity over time.
 - c) Projects should be selected that have real value to community livability and can be built on over time; incorporate into a community greening strategy and action plan.
 - d) For organizing, logistical, and efficiency reasons, projects should be concentrated and grow organically.
 - e) Target areas should be selected carefully, with planning work done in advance with hands-on project opportunities tackled as time affords and as an aid to help with community organizing.
 - f) Develop program and plans for sustainability of projects from the beginning of process.
- 6) Resources
 - a) Participating nonprofits involved in greening activities must all be assured of funding on an on-going, long-term basis; year-to-year uncertainty does not lead to well planned and adequately paced implementation.
 - b) Amount and quality of materials needs to be improved and the timeliness and process of assisting communities with delivery of materials needs to be improved.
 - c) The site budget should be realistic to accomplish the design desired by the community to better ensure permanency of installation.
 - d) Resolve ways of providing water to sites and improve the condition that the Department of Housing and Community Development contractors leave sites after housing demolition.

- e) Establish methods of loaning tools to communities or create tool banks strategically located among targeted communities.
- 7) Increase Effectiveness
- a) Develop a recruitment process that ensures community readiness and provides training and mentoring.
 - b) Do a better job of recruiting and organizing volunteers and identifying viable community open space projects.
 - c) Prepare training and educational materials relevant to the needs and encourage questions.
 - d) Create an incentive and awards program and organize celebrations to provide acknowledgement and recognition; invited elected officials and other business and institutional leaders.
- 8) Improve Evaluation
- a) Create measurable outcomes and agree on a way to monitor progress on an ongoing basis.
 - b) Use peer assessments to strengthen projects and exchange information and knowledge among communities and organizations.
 - c) Monitor the effective use of volunteers and agency time and resources.
 - d) Capture great stories about real people improving their communities and share with others.

Concluding Thoughts

The prospect of community groups receiving services from a city-wide land trust that can offer acquisition, legal, and insurance services is a big step forward for Baltimore City. The challenge for Charm City Land Trust is how to implement this opportunity in a manner that can further encourage community interest, stewardship and empowerment. We expect this survey and report can assist CCLT in making the right decisions as it moves ahead. We believe this report also documents the needs for a community-based land trust and hope the foundation and corporate community will respond accordingly as CCLT moves to an operationally phase.

CASE STUDIES

AMAZING PORT STREET COMMUNITY GREEN

KENSINGTON COMMUNITY GARDEN

PATTERSON PLACE COMMUNITY GREEN SPACE

UPPER FELLS POINT COMMUNITY GARDEN

**WOODLAND NGUZO SABA NEIGHBORHOOD
GREEN SPACE**

WOODBERRY NEIGHBORHOOD FOREST

AMAZING PORT STREET COMMUNITY GREEN

When the Reverend Karen Brau decided not to erect a fence around the green space that she, her congregants, and neighborhood residents reclaimed and beautified, she deviated from most neighborhood

WHO
 Reverend Karen Brau

WHAT
 Amazing Port Street Community Green

WHERE
 Port Street, Behind Amazing Grace Lutheran Church on 2400th Block of McElderry Street

WHEN
 Volunteers have actively beautified the site since 1999

WHY
 To show “that there can be beauty where there was none before.”

greening activists. She also made a bold statement of faith in the goodness of people, exclaiming that “all of us are worthy of this beauty and that’s why it’s been left open.”

Like so many other greening projects, the seed for amazing Port Street was planted when a house behind the church was demolished in the late 1990s. The progress that has been made since 1999 is a testament to Reverend Brau’s belief that “things can be accomplished when you work together.” The site boasts a stone labyrinth to be used for meditation, a park bench, ornamental plantings, and



notes that although several community members and neighborhood youth are connected to the space, the more beautiful the project becomes, the more difficult it is to maintain and protect. Consequently, persistence has become a hallmark of this group’s efforts. Faith also, and a belief that they are doing God’s work, is a driving force. Reverend Brau defiantly states that, “if somebody rips this up, I’ll just go out there and build it again.”

The project volunteers have been successful in leveraging funds from many sources to create a place of beauty and overcome, to some degree, the drug trafficking that has plagued the neighborhood. They also bring courage, faith, and a belief that they will prevail over time.

Their partnership with Charm City Land Trusts, and impending ownership of several of the lots, will allow the group to continue fulfilling its vision for their space. They hope to transform the space into a living laboratory, providing training for young people by teachers willing to use the site as an outdoor classroom.

colorful murals.

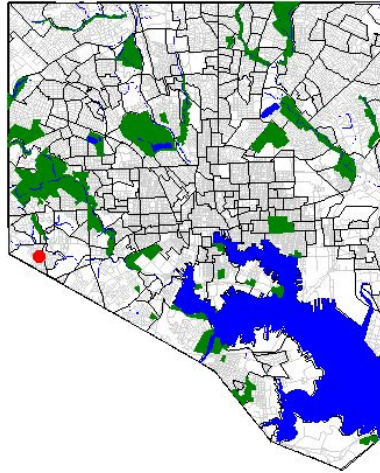
The project’s fifteen active volunteers have shown that there can be beauty where there was none prior to the regular discipline of working. Reverend Brau



The stone labyrinth and murals at Amazing Port Street.

KENSINGTON COMMUNITY GARDEN

Located along the historic alignment of the Catonsville Short Line Railroad, which operated from 1884 until 1973, the Kensington Community Garden is a lush oasis in this quiet city neighborhood that abuts the Baltimore County line. When the idea to transform this property into a neighborhood park and ornamental garden was first conceived in 1993, the land was a favorite dumping spot for landscapers and contractors. A fifty-person community clean-up team removed debris and fallen trees from the two block area nearly ten years ago, and thus began a decade of restoration efforts.



With an established annual cleanup and several funding sources that have contributed to the project in the past ten years, Mrs. Robinson sees no real challenges to the success and sustainability of the garden. By exchanging advertising in the community newsletter for free landscaping services and by securing support from organizations such as the Baltimore Community Foundation, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, National Tree Trust, Parks & People and others, Kensington gardeners have been ingenious in securing a place for the garden within the community.

Increasing home values and a scarcity of open land in the area has begun to cause feelings of trepidation for Edith Robinson and other gardeners.

Edith Robinson, a long-time resident of the Kensington neighborhood and gardening enthusiast, has long shouldered much of the responsibility for the maintenance of the garden since its inception in 1993. Her commitment and dedication have transformed this property into a tremendous neighborhood asset. Robinson, now retired, explains that it is “my time to give back to my neighborhood.” Considering the garden as “part of [her] family,” it is no wonder that anyone coming into the neighborhood, either passers-by or prospective homebuyers get a “caring impression” from the garden.

Although the topography of the property is greatly varied and the removal of train tracks would need to precede any construction, the thought of development is not a completely foreign threat. Robinson and others have proven themselves as good stewards of this land and are obviously invested in its success. Future partnership with the Charm City Land Trusts could be the next step for Kensington to ensure this neighborhood treasure remains a community controlled green space.

Gardener Edith Robinson feels that it is her “time to give back to the neighborhood.”



WHO
Edith Robinson, Garden Enthusiast and Neighborhood Resident

WHAT
Kensington Community Garden

WHERE
4200-4300 blocks of S. College Road

WHEN
The garden has been active since 1993

WHY
To improve a blighted area that had been used for dumping and drug activity

PATTERSON PLACE COMMUNITY GREEN SPACES

The varied types of green spaces in the Butchers Hill neighborhood adjacent to Patterson Park act as a microcosm of the entire universe of community greening projects in the City of Baltimore. Carol Hartke, a thirteen-year resident of the neighborhood and community gardener points out that the “reclamation of green space is undertaken to meet community vision.” This has resulted in beautification projects such as

WHO

Carol Hartke, Neighborhood Resident and Community Activist

WHAT

Patterson Place Community Green Spaces

WHERE

Various Locations in the Neighborhood North of the Park

WHY

To “fulfill the neighborhood’s vision [for its future].”

A botched home demolition of Montford Street resulted in four inner-block vacant lots. Residents of the block seized the opportunity to transform these lots into their vision of green space, a grassy, shaded area that could serve as a quiet, relaxing space.

When community greening takes place at this level, it is no wonder that particular block

Fairport

Square, which displays a garden mosaic, installed by local youth and a lush green four lot park on Montford

Street, endearingly called Pat’s Plot, for the space’s primary caretaker.

In a city where one block can stand in stark contrast to the next, it makes sense that greening projects reflect this diversity. In this neighborhood, directly north of Patterson Park, residents react to opportunity and desire.

organizers take pride in their projects. Where there once was surprise at green spaces in the middle of a busy urban neighborhood, there

now exists a quiet reverence for these spaces, fostered by this type of grassroots activism and support.

No community group is without challenges and Patterson Place is no exception. In addition to responding

to the northward revitalization of the Canton area and what that this may mean for neighborhood change, a community tree nursery to be located in an alley behind Port Street has been an unfulfilled dream of the group for several years. Support has been provided by Neighborhood Design

Center, Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention, and Parks & People Foundation, yet the tree nursery has experienced problems of overgrowth, lack of volunteer manpower, and physical constraints. Carol Hartke persists in pursuing the dream noting that “if we weren’t damn persistent we wouldn’t still be working on it.”

It is this attitude and a true pride in their work that has helped Patterson Place’s collaboration with the Charm City Land Trusts. Early this fall, it is hoped that CCLT will acquire six lots on behalf of the Patterson Place residents. The neighborhood has decided on an ownership approach to protecting their green spaces because certainty about their future may increase the residents’ stake in the project. With the positive reinforcement sure to come about by ownership, Hartke and other neighborhood leaders hope to lay the groundwork for future projects and protection efforts.



Neighborhood gardens and parks have been actively cared for by residents for years.



UPPER FELLS POINT COMMUNITY GARDEN

It would have been easy for residents of the Upper Fells Point neighborhood to accept the demolition of three houses on the 1800 block of

WHO

Barbara Moore,
Garden Manager
and
Neighborhood
Resident

WHAT

Upper Fells
Point
Community
Garden

WHERE

1800 block of
Pratt Street

WHEN

The garden has
been active since
the spring of
1990

WHY

To actively
beautify the
neighborhood
and contribute
to a sense of
community
cohesion

Pratt Street in the late 1980s as a symbol of Baltimore's decline. However, like so many other community gardeners in the city, Barbara Moore of the Upper Fells Point Community Association considered the situation as an opportunity for neighborhood beautification. After clearing the three vacant lots of trash and debris, Moore and other residents created a large community garden in the spring of 1990.

Over the years, the Upper Fells Point Garden has benefited from the combined efforts of a series of effective garden managers and a core group of long-time residents that has led to the long-term success and sustainability of the garden. Most garden activists have no intention of leaving the neighborhood and are

therefore directly invested in the vitality of the

garden and surrounding area. Even for those not directly involved, the garden offers aesthetic appeal and special community events, such as Halloween pumpkin carvings for neighborhood children. The larger community appreciates the tireless effort and dedication of the gardeners and the garden is a respected space in the neighborhood.

Despite being located on a block that suffers from illegal drug activity and absentee landlords, the Upper Fells Point Garden has thrived during its thirteen-year history. Self-sufficiency has played a large part in that success and Moore notes, "we have skilled people that are constantly keeping the [garden] maintained and upgraded."

The Upper Fells Point Community Association formally partnered with the Charm City Land Trusts in the summer of 2003. The opinion of the UPFCA was that the increasing gentrification

"We have achieved all of our goals and now it's just a matter of keeping it maintained."

– Barbara Moore,
Garden Manager

of the Fells Point area and parallel redevelopment of the neighborhood could present a threat to the

garden in the future. Until now, dedication, a diverse skill set, and community respect have allowed the Upper Fells Point Garden to be a tremendous asset to the neighborhood. "We have achieved all of our goals and now it's just a matter of keeping it maintained," garden manager Barbara Moore notes. Through continued assistance from several nonprofits, residents of Upper Fells Point hope to maintain the garden long into the future.



Upper Fells Point resident Barbara Moore enjoys the success and self-sufficiency of this garden located on Pratt Street.



WOODLAND NGUZO SABA NEIGHBORHOOD GREEN SPACE

The fenced-in green space on the 3300th block of Woodland Avenue has the appearance of an oasis when looked at in the larger context of the neighborhood.

WHO

Jean Yehuda, Neighborhood Resident and Activist

WHAT

Nearly 1 Acre of Community-Controlled Green Space

WHERE

3300 Block of Woodland Avenue

WHEN

Volunteers continuously worked on the project since 1993

WHY

To “control the space and determine what activities happen on it.”

Since then, the space has been used for weightlifting and recreation, private parties, community celebrations, and educational programs for children. Residents note that the neighborhood now “feels different.” As the green space has become more visible, dumping and violent activities have

decreased and drug traffic has moved from the area.

It has not been an easy road for the Neighborhood Association. The three or four people that have run the organization have always had difficulty recruiting volunteers from the neighborhood to work in the green space. Jean Yehuda bemoans the lack of community involvement in the project, despite the obvious benefit it brings to the neighborhood.



Neighborhood Residents and green Space Stewards Jean Yehuda and Mr. Jones.

This space, nearly one acre in size, is managed by the Woodland Nguzo Saba Neighborhood Association.

The project was started in 1993 when Jean Yehuda and a number of other residents decided to reclaim the vacant lots from drug activity and transform them into a community asset.

They have managed, however, to involve area children in maintaining the project, by offering small stipends for work and allowing high school students with community service requirements to work in the space. Additionally, several organizations including the Baltimore Community Foundation, northwest Youth Services Bureau, and the Governor’s office of Crime Prevention have offered their support to the continued success of the project.

With increased community investment and support, Jean Yehuda, Mr. Jones and the Neighborhood Association will continue to be able to “control the space and determine what happens on it.” Acquiring ownership of the property through a partnership with Charm City Land Trusts is something the group feels will lead to increased volunteerism. When residents can be assured that the land will remain forever in their control, Yehuda believes they will be more willing to contribute their labor to the project.

WOODBERRY NEIGHBORHOOD FOREST

Walking through the forest of Woodberry between Druid Hill Park and Cylburn Arboretum in the Jones Falls Valley, feels worlds away from urban Baltimore. The Woodberry Land Trust volunteers aim to keep it that way.

Scenic America recently recognized Woodberry Forest as a Last Chance Landscape, a place of natural beauty and distinctive community character that faces imminent and potentially irreversible harm.

WHO

Stan Edmister,
President
Jan Danforth,
Vice-President
Tracey Brown,
Secretary

WHAT

Woodberry
Land Trust
Forest
Protection
Project

WHERE

Over 130 acres
on more than 70
city-owned
surplus lots in
Woodberry
neighborhood

WHY

To permanently
conserve, restore
and manage a
forested
greenbelt
connecting
Druid Hill Park
and Cylburn
Arboretum.

MORE INFO

www.aboutwoodberry.com

brought greater cohesion among the four neighborhood organizations in Woodberry.



**Jones Falls
in Woodberry**

Since 1999, Woodberry residents have developed a vision and plan for protecting, restoring and managing over 130 acres of public and private woodlands within their community. These woodlands shelter four spring-fed streams and provide a haven for wildlife, hikers and a valued amenity for neighborhood residents.

Development threats brought together Woodberry residents to develop a Vision and create a Comprehensive Neighborhood Master Plan to promote greater public awareness of the forest as a valuable community resource and plan specific stewardship projects. Residents have invested thousands of volunteer hours to clean up trash, clear invasive plants, plant native trees, and build community access trails in their woodlands, and to develop a comprehensive forest management plan for long-term protection and maintenance. Their

Still residents are frustrated that their efforts to improve their neighborhoods and protect the forest have not been officially recognized by the city. An agreement still does not exist between the city, the communities, and the new developers to care for the forest as an irreplaceable community resource. With assistance provided by a Community Legacy Grant from the Maryland State Department of Housing and Community Development, the Woodberry Land Trust was formed in 2001 to address these issues by seeking to secure permanent conservation easements for protection of forest lands held by several city agencies. Woodberry Land Trust seeks to work with city agencies and developers to protect and enhance the forest and character of the Woodberry neighborhood.

The Land Trust has gained further support from the Maryland Environmental Trust, Parks & People Foundation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and is the founding project of the Charm City Land Trusts. CCLT is working with WLT to secure the permanent conservation easements from the city.

efforts have increased property values and

APPENDICES

June 25, 2003

Neighborhood Activist
Organization Name
123 Green Street
Baltimore, MD 21217

Dear Mr. Activist,

The Parks and People Foundation, on behalf of Charm City Land Trusts, Inc., would like to ask your participation in a new "Community Green Space Survey." Your response to this survey will help us to paint a clear picture of the many inspiring community greening projects occurring in the City of Baltimore. By publicizing these vibrant activities, we can justify increased support for them. Additionally, by filling out and returning this survey your project will be entered into a centralized database of neighborhood greening projects that will map out Charm City Land Trusts' future protection efforts.

We have utilized many existing sources of information to create this mailing list, including a 2002 Parks and People Community Garden Inventory, the Parks and Peoples' Community Grants Program, the Baltimore Community Foundation's Neighborhood Grants Program, and outreach to the Baltimore City Department of Planning and the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods. If you feel you have received this survey in error, please contact Adam Block.

SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Please complete the survey to the best of your ability and return it in the self-addressed stamped envelope by *Friday July 4, 2003*.
- 2) If you work on more than one project, please fill out a separate survey for each project. Photocopy as necessary or call (410) 448-5663 x177 to request additional copies.
- 3) If you have any comments, questions, or concerns, or you would like to complete the survey over the phone, please call Adam Block at (410) 448-5663 x117.

Thank You For Your Participation!

We greatly appreciate all the work you do to improve the quality of Baltimore's neighborhoods. Your participation in this survey will help to ensure the continued success of the City's community controlled green open spaces. Thank you.

Sincerely Yours,

Adam Block
Charm City Land Trusts Program Associate
adam.block@parksandpeople.org
(410) 448-5663 x117

GENERAL INFORMATION

The answers to these questions will allow us to become more familiar with the details of your specific site.

1) Name of Neighborhood Project	Name (Please Update if this name is no longer current):
2) Date the Project was initiated	Date:
3) Contact Information (Please update us if any of this information has changed)	Name: Address: Phone Number: Email:
4) Location(s) of Neighborhood Project(s) If you are unsure of the exact street address, please provide detail of the location, including street intersections, street directions, house numbers, and bordering properties:	Neighborhood in which the Project is Located: _____ Board Section and Lot Number (if known): _____ Street Address: _____ _____ _____
5) What type of project is this?	<input type="checkbox"/> Vegetable Garden <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Gateway or Sign <input type="checkbox"/> Flower Garden/Beautification <input type="checkbox"/> Pocket Park <input type="checkbox"/> Playground/Playing Field <input type="checkbox"/> Natural Places/Woodlands <input type="checkbox"/> Other, i.e. Potential Development Site (Please Describe): <input type="checkbox"/> Tree/Plant Nursery

6) What is the current land ownership status?	Who owns the land? <input type="checkbox"/> Private Owner <input type="checkbox"/> Community Owned <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor and City Council/HABC <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know	If you know the address of the owner, please provide it below: _____ _____ _____
7) What is the nature of your permission to use this property?	<input type="checkbox"/> We have permission from the owner to use the land <input type="checkbox"/> We have notified the owner that we are using the land but received no permission <input type="checkbox"/> We have not notified the owner and have no express written or verbal permission to use the land <input type="checkbox"/> We have asked for permission and have been denied	
8) What was the motivation for implementing this project? (Please check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> To Create a Safe Place <input type="checkbox"/> To Beautify the Neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/> To Enhance Community Cohesion <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Describe): <input type="checkbox"/> To Provide a Space for Relaxation <input type="checkbox"/> To Create Educational Opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> To Serve as a Memorial	
9) How many volunteers participate in the project on a regular basis (at least once every other week in high season)?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 to 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 to 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 to 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 to 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11 to 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21 or More	
10) What is the source of water? (Please check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Hydrant <input type="checkbox"/> Donated from a Household <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Describe): <input type="checkbox"/> Collected Rainwater <input type="checkbox"/> Its own private meter	

ACCESS ISSUES

Your answers to the following questions will give us a sense of how visible the project is to the larger community, whether or not the site is open to the public, and the level of visibility and openness you want for your site.

11) Describe the physical access to your site.	<input type="checkbox"/> Completely Open and Accessible <input type="checkbox"/> Enclosed by a Fence, Wall, Posts, or other Similar Barrier <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Describe):	<input type="checkbox"/> Site only allows for pedestrian access <input type="checkbox"/> Site allows for pedestrian & vehicle access <input type="checkbox"/> Locked/Access Limited to Specific Community Members
12) What are your provisions for pedestrian public access?	<input type="checkbox"/> The site is always open to the general public <input type="checkbox"/> The site is periodically open to the general public, for special events or open houses <input type="checkbox"/> The site is never open to the general public <input type="checkbox"/> We would be willing to provide some sort of public access in the future	
13) How visible is your site? (Please check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> The site is visible from the road/sidewalk <input type="checkbox"/> Visible from a Major Road <input type="checkbox"/> Visible from a Community Thoroughfare <input type="checkbox"/> Visible from an Alley or Alley Street	<input type="checkbox"/> The site is blocked from public view <input type="checkbox"/> The site has a sign identifying it to the community <input type="checkbox"/> We wish the site was more visible to the public <input type="checkbox"/> We wish the site was less visible to the public

CHALLENGES

The answers to these questions will give us an idea of the challenges your group is facing and what assistance might be needed at your site.

14) What type of challenges did your site experience <i>before</i> the project was initiated? (Please check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Dumping <input type="checkbox"/> Vandalism <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Describe):	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Maintenance <input type="checkbox"/> Illegal Activity
15) What type of challenges has your site experienced <i>after</i> the project was initiated? (Please check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Dumping <input type="checkbox"/> Vandalism <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Resources <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Describe):	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Maintenance <input type="checkbox"/> Illegal Activity <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Manpower

OUTREACH

The answers to these questions will help us to see how much exposure your project has in your neighborhood, what the community's vision for the project is, and what type of outreach programs or special events are held at the project site, if any.

<p>16) Does your site display any public artwork, such as murals, sculptures, etc...?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes Please Describe: <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>17) Do you hold special events at your project site? (Please check all that apply)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Community Meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Events <input type="checkbox"/> Community Celebrations <input type="checkbox"/> Private Parties (i.e. Birthdays) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Describe): <p>Do you plan to hold any special events or outreach activities in the future not already checked? If so, of what type?</p>
<p>18) In your opinion, how do you feel the project has affected the surrounding neighborhood? (Please check all that apply)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The area around the site has improved <input type="checkbox"/> The project has attracted new economic development <input type="checkbox"/> The project provides an educational experience <input type="checkbox"/> The project has created safer streets <input type="checkbox"/> The project has inspired others to take positive action <input type="checkbox"/> The project adds nature to the area <input type="checkbox"/> The site is no longer a nuisance
<p>19) As you look ahead to the future, what is your hope for the project? (Please check all that apply)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Permanently protect the site through ownership or legal restrictions <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please Describe): <input type="checkbox"/> Continue as is <input type="checkbox"/> Expand the project to new sites
<p>20) Would you be willing to have a Parks and People employee come for a site visit to learn more about your project?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p>

**PROJECT NARRATIVE/CASE STUDY TEMPLATE
CCLT SITE VISITS AND FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS
COMMUNITY GREEN SPACE SURVEY**

Key Contact Name:

Name of Neighborhood Project:

Size of Project/Number of Plots:

Date the Project Started:

Number of Active Volunteers:

Today's Date:

- 1) How did you originally get involved in this project? **OR** Why was this project initiated?
- 2) What factors have led to the long-term success and sustainability of the project?
- 3) What is your perception of the significance of this project to your neighborhood? For instance, what benefit does it bring to the neighborhood?
- 4) What degree of ownership do you feel the neighborhood has over this project? To what do you attribute this sense of ownership, or lack there of?
- 5) What challenges has your neighborhood group faced in the past and how were those overcome?
- 6) Has your group received any funding in the past? If so, from what funding sources?
- 7) What specifically are your needs in perpetuating the project's success?
- 8) What resources are you/your group bringing to the project (i.e. gardening knowledge, volunteers, youth group volunteers, etc...)

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