



BUILDING AND NURTURING SAFE AND VIBRANT COMMUNITY SPACES

GRANTEE PARTNER: CLEVELAND BOTANICAL GARDEN

Cleveland Botanical Garden's Green Corps program builds life, work and leadership skills by employing and educating high school youth (ages 14 to 18) through sustainable agriculture, place-based learning and community engagement. The Garden's Vacant to Vibrant program improves urban vacant lots to manage storm water and bring park space to neighborhoods that need it.

WHAT WE FUNDED: The Foundation's grant (\$158,000) supported neighborhood green infrastructure through the addition of two Vacant to Vibrant storm water parks, along with supporting Green Corps operations at the Buckeye Farm in Woodland Hills.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

- Problems of vacant land and abandoned property in the Saint Luke's neighborhood
- Lack of access to healthy produce
- Need for developing life skills in many young people in the neighborhood
- Negative impact that poor surrounding physical conditions have on quality of life
- Lack of green space and consequent disconnect between urban youth and nature

WHY WE FUNDED THIS WORK: Putting once vacant land to productive use (farming, green space, and storm water treatment) provides access to locally grown produce and creates an opportunity for youth to learn important life skills.



A Strong Neighborhood

Program Strategy Overview

We catalyze and sustain opportunities to improve social conditions and improve physical environments in the Mt. Pleasant, Woodland Hills and Buckeye neighborhoods.

GOALS FOR THIS GRANT

- Improvements at the site
- Enhance community outreach and increase contact between Green Corps and neighborhood residents
- Expand teens' skills and concept mastery through Green Corps
- Continue farm production and farmers market
- Improve neighborhood walkability and residents' well-being
- Build capacity for sustainable neighborhood greening projects

OUTCOMES

- This project was identified as a best practice model for transforming vacant land to productive use and released a white paper and toolkit.
- Number of parks on vacant lots in Buckeye-Woodland Hills expanded from three to five (in progress).
- Over 90% of youth participants reported that they learned about gardening, tried new foods, and brought produce home for their families.
- Over 70% of participants reported that they now eat more fruits and vegetables and fresher foods.
- Number of farm stand customers increased from 166 to 208 in one year, but WIC, SNAP, and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program use was low.
- Garden beds were made available for community use
- Partnership with The Intergenerational School paired Green Corps teens with 4th graders to learn about gardening.

THE APPROACH WE SUPPORTED

- Participation in a multi-city applied research project that is using green infrastructure to stabilize neighborhoods and improve water quality in our Great Lakes.
- Conversion of a liability (vacant land) into a community asset.
- Quality educational, workforce, health literacy and life skills opportunities for Green Corps.
- Outreach, engagement, and educational opportunities for community residents.
- Strengthen connections between/among Green Corps and neighborhood residents.
- Development of innovative land-use practices that promote environmental stewardship.

REPORTED GRANTEE-LESSONS LEARNED

- Community input is a key component at all stages.
- The work of maintaining garden beds was met with inconsistent interest (or sporadic interest from residents).
- The area's manufacturing legacy has made remediation of some sites cost-prohibitive.
- Signage that explains the objective of the project to residents and visitors is important.
- A strong community-based organization in Buckeye is needed to serve as a go-between/facilitator between the Garden and the community.