NEIGHBORHOOD OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT:

A REPORT ON GREENING STRATEGIES IN BALTIMORE AND SIX OTHER CITIES

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PARKS & PEOPLE FOUNDATION

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This report was prepared by the Parks & People Foundation. Formed in 1984, the Parks & People Foundation is Baltimore's leading nonprofit organization for providing creative solutions to recreation and parks issues. In close partnership with communities, other nonprofit organizations, businesses, and all levels of government, Parks & People is an innovator and advocate for environmental education and experiential learning; recreation programs; park development, restoration and maintenance; and urban resources management. The Parks & People Foundation has three program divisions: Great Parks & Stream Valleys, Green Communities, and Motivating Youth Programs.

This report was researched, written, and compiled by a team of people each of whom contributed invaluable insight into open space management issues in Baltimore and other cities. Katherine McManus and Karen Steer researched and wrote the sections on community-managed open space issues in Baltimore. William Schockner conducted research on Baltimore City's open space management practices. Katherine Cooper conducted research and wrote the sections on Boston, Chicago, New York and Philadelphia. Kristen Humphrey updated the Baltimore City section of this report two years after the initial research was conducted, as well as researched and wrote the sections on Atlanta and Detroit, and helped pull the final document together.

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In addition, the Parks & People Foundation created a Neighborhood Open Space Advisory Committee to help organize a public forum and development report recommendations. Special rep7section of7sectiine 5mneh,Tc b0 T sosb0 T70Bion Tj .tee membal 5 kiconarrris,ris Steele0.5602ng the docum. en

Neighborhood Open Space Management: A Report on Greening Strategies in Baltimore and Six Other Cities

By The Parks & People Foundation

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Executive Summary

Baltimore City, Maryland, covers approximately 80 square miles with an estimated population of 665,000 people in 1999, representing a major decline from the nearly 950,000 residents in the late 1950's. This decline in city population is the result of massive flight to the suburbs surrounding Baltimore. As a consequence, Baltimore City has had significant housing vacancies estimated at 12,000 units in 1999. As vacant houses fall into disrepair, they are often demolished, thereby becoming one of the city's vacant lots, already estimated at 14,000.

Well-maintained open space can provide Baltimore and other cities 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 and other cities have been experiencing a major exodus of people, and open space management has slipped as a priority of local government.

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 symbol of a neighborhood's decline. Fortunately, many community groups in Baltimore and other cities are committed to transforming vacant lots in their neighborhoods to attractive green spaces. For example, in Baltimore as of 1999, there were estimated to be about 200 vacant lots that community groups had adopted officially as "Adopt-a-Lot" properties and many more that have been adopted unofficially.

Neighborhood Open Space Management Project

As the Parks & People Foundation helped community groups transform vacant lots into green space, we recognized that a study of public policies and strategies for improving the management of vacant lots was also greatly needed. We sought and received a grant from the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC), which allowed us to undertake a research project to examine how vacant lots were managed in Baltimore and six similar cities. The study project provided an opportunity to change the way vacant lots are viewed, used, and cared for in Baltimore City. It stimulated the creation of a Vacant Lot Demonstration Project funded by the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development, which has allowed us to apply some of the lessons learned to actual community-managed open space projects. This report summarizes the research effort, the study findings, and recommendations for next steps.

Barriers to Better Management of Vacant Lots and Neighborhood Open Space

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 maintaining these

• The City's single program for transfer of management and maintenance responsibility to community groups, the Adopt-a-Lot Program managed by the Department of Public Works, is not currently a viable means of encouraging community stewardship. The program does not provide sufficient incentives for community groups to formally adopt lots, and leads them to assume informal responsibility.

• There is a lack of formal coordination among City agencies and non-profit organizations able to provide technical assistance and resources to community groups undertaking community greening of vacant lots, and of consistent support for these organizations.

Creating Opportunities for Neighborhood-Managed Open Space

While community management is not an appropriate strategy for every vacant lot, it can be an important component in an overall City strategy for managing vacant lots and neighborhood open spaces. In an effort to respond to the growing number of vacant lots in Baltimore and increased community interest in maintaining these spaces, the Parks & People Foundation established a Vacant Lot Restoration Program in 1998 funded by the City Department of Housing and Community Development. The Vacant Lot Restoration Program has provided training, technical assistance, and site improvement funding for 23 neighborhood-managed open spaces. These vacant lots are typically large, City-owned properties adopted by communities.

While the successes and failures of projects are in many ways unique to the sites themselves, they can also illustrate the challenges commonly experienced by communities everywhere. Adequate maintenance of community parks and gardens has emerged as the major issue facing many sites. Maintenance can improve once the responsible party is clear, whether an individual, family, or community group.

Based on the experience of the Parks & People Foundation, we found the following factors contribute to sustainable neighborhood-managed open space projects:

- A cohesive community.
- A well organized group with access to information, resources, and services, or
- A local person who acts as a catalyst to lead stewardship efforts and who can gain support from several City agencies.
- A community initiated and designed project that benefits the community.
- Appropriate site design in terms of community capacity to undertake maintenance.
- Clear delineation of and security for the space, usually in the form of fencing.
- Age diversity in the group managing and using the vacant lot.
- Adaptability of the space to the interests of users.

Providing Technical Assistance for Open Space Management

Several nonprofit organizations and government-supported initiatives work actively with community groups and Baltimore City agencies to improve the management of neighborhood open spaces, including:

The Parks & People Foundation provides technical assistance and training to community groups across Baltimore, helping them to turning vacant lots into community green spaces, e.g.,

parks, gardens, tree nurseries, urban wild lands, and school-yard habitats. The Foundation provides small grants to community groups for Neighborhood Greening projects and larger grants to organizations through Revitalizing Baltimore project, an urban forest management and

Figure 1 - Neighborhood Open Space Management Ownership and Management Spectrum

I. Government determined	II. Land Bank	III. Land Trust	IV. Community determined
• Government owns and manages land for community use. • Government disposes of land for public or private use.	• Government or non-profit organization holds land for future private use. • Community may use and maintain land on an interim basis for public use. • Ultimate disposal goal is private development and use.	• Government or non-profit preserves land for public use. • Land is made available for community use and maintenance, often in perpetuity.	• Community formally or informally adopts or owns land. • Community maintains land for public use.

What We Learned From Other Cities

Extensive research was conducted in six cities with similarities to Baltimore—Atlanta, Detroit, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York—to determine how they manage their neighborhood open space. While no single formula for success was identified, several key factors emerged.

- The presence of a charismatic and tireless leader is important for success.
- Project initiation must come from community members.
- A coalition of greening groups that help in securing government and citizen support.
- Government cooperation is important in achieving sustainability of projects, specifically the

An effective, citywide, open space (vacant land) management strategy is critically needed and should be based on the following principles:

- Natural resources and human communities are integrally linked, and the health and vitality of one affects the other, mandating equitable distribution of open space.
- Active participation by people who live in communities is vital to developing sustainable and equitable projects.
- Information sharing at all levels enhances the efficiency and adaptability of City agencies, organizations and communities.
- Strategies and management plans are not a final solution; they are the starting point.

With these principles in mind, the following specific recommendations are made:

Recommendation 1— Strengthen existing coalitions and partnerships working to support community greening, gardening, and urban forestry activities in Baltimore neighborhoods.

- Ensure the active participation of grass roots organizations, technical assistance providers, land managers, and policy-makers.
- Expand opportunities for public participation.

Recommendation 2—Promote greater public awareness of the benefits of well designed, maintained, and used open space to the quality of life.

- Conduct an information and education campaign.
- Elevate vacant lot and neighborhood open space issues as a public priority.
- Educate key decision-makers on the social, economic, and environmental benefits of safe, attractive open space.

Recommendation 3— Advocate and support development of a comprehensive, integrated open space management plan, specifically tackling the pressing concern and opportunity presented by the large number of vacant lots.

- Establish a vision and standards for open space management in Baltimore.
- Develop an effective, citywide open space management plan must be comprehensive and acknowledge both the occurrence and effect of large and small open spaces on the landscape.

Recommendation 4—Change current Baltimore City policies and procedures to create an efficient and effective program of mixed City and community managed open space and to support further community greening.

- Establish workable policies, procedures, and programs for disposal and reuse of vacant and abandoned properties.
- Improve the City's maintenance of the City-owned and privately owned vacant lots and small open spaces.
- Actively support community organizations working with neighborhood residents to turn vacant lots into "intentional" open space.

Recommendation 5—Establish as a priority an institutional means for preserving neighborhood open space, providing liability insurance, and securing guidance and monitoring of community managed open space.

Promising Actions Currently Underway

The Baltimore City Departments of Recreation and Parks, Housing and Community Development, and Public Works have begun to have a positive impact on the urban environment

by supporting neighborhood open space initiatives and partnering with organizations like the Parks & People Foundation to realize open space goals.

As a result of Parks & People Foundation's Neighborhood Open Space Management Project, there has been increased interest among community groups, nonprofit organizations, and City government agencies to improve the management of Baltimore's vacant lots and other neighborhood open space.

• In October 1999, the Baltimore City Planning Department announced its intention to develop a land use and open space plan and a neighborhood planning program for Baltimore in the near future as part of PlanBaltimore. Citizens have expressed hope that such a plan will result in a comprehensive strategy to address the City's vacant lot/open space issues.

• An Urban Parks Alliance has formed in Baltimore, which may play an active role in the development of the City's proposed open space plan and act as an advocate for all types of open space. This Alliance represents a variety of open space stakeholders.

• Several local organizations, including the Parks & People Foundation, Community Law Center, and University of Maryland School of Social Work, have begun discussions about forming a Community Land Trust that would help protect community greening projects. Such a land trust would be a separate organization that works collaboratively with open space policy groups, technical assistance providers, and community groups.

• The City government has been exploring options for creating a Baltimore Land Bank to acquire and dispose of vacant land. The land bank would operate differently than a Community Land Trust, by focusing on packaging vacant land for redevelopment.

All major players involved in improving the management and maintenance of Baltimore's many neighborhood open spaces are working to bring increased funding to this aspect of neighborhood revitalization. City officials have highlighted the need for additional funding of community greening efforts in the City's comprehensive PlanBaltimore.

Introduction

In an April 1997 *Baltimore Sun* article, former Mayor Kurt Schmoke was quoted as saying about Baltimore City's demolitions: "In too many cases we've replaced the eyesore of a vacant house with the eyesore of a vacant lot . . . [that] could be used for a garden or housing, or be turned over to community groups, churches or businesses." Baltimore's new Mayor Martin O'Malley and City agencies are increasingly looking toward city residents to become active participants in neighborhood open space management, to partner with the City in making unmanaged open space an asset.[1]ap7 TrB1312TD -0.35812TD -j 0s problem, cfferspen unpre2vee m (u12

Goals and Objectives

The Neighborhood Open Space Management Project is an effort to develop short and long-term strategies for improving the management of the growing number of small neighborhood open spaces in Baltimore. Strategies are needed not only to more efficiently and effectively maintain these spaces, but also to transform these liabilities into potential assets and opportunities for communities, individuals and the city as a whole.

The Neighborhood Open Space Management Project has four over-arching goals:

- Determine the role that Baltimore City government plays in the management of open space, with an emphasis on vacant lots.

- Examine the many ways in which individual communities in Baltimore are managing open space in their neighborhoods.

- Investigate the nature and extent of open space management in cities with demographics and socioeconomic conditions similar to Baltimore.

- Draw conclusions from these studies that would assist Baltimore City in forming a comprehensive strategy for neighborhood open space management.

Research Methods

This report was compiled using the results of a number of separate research efforts conducted as part of the Parks & People Foundation's Neighborhood Open Space Management Project. The information from the research was then analyzed and used to develop specific recommendations for improving neighborhood open space management practices in Baltimore. The specific research methods used in each aspect of this project are detailed below.

City Management of Small Open Spaces in Baltimore

Baltimore City government has a major role in managing the many vacant lots and small open spaces in Baltimore. The City is obligated to manage City-owned open spaces and often must deal with privately owned lots that have been neglected by their owners. During the summer of 1997, William Schockner, a student from Johns Hopkins University, conducted interviews with nearly 20 City agency representatives who have responsibilities relating to the management of small open spaces. In 1999, Kristen Humphrey, a student from Morgan State University's Institute of Architecture and Planning, conducted follow-up interviews with many key people previously interviewed to update the City section of this report. (See Appendix A for a list of agencies and the names of people interviewed.)

Community-Managed Open Space in Baltimore

In order to understand the dynamics of community-managed open space in Baltimore, Katherine McManus and Karen Steer, student interns from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, conducted in-depth research (1997) on four community-managed open space sites. These case studies:

• Focus discussion of open space issues on a visible and tangible subject.

• Provide a focal point to observe the interactions between community resources and groups.

• Facilitate the analysis of City policies on a larger scale and through time.

• Assist in the formation of generalizations for broader, Citywide findings and strategies.

In addition to an in-depth analysis of these four sites, the students examined approximately 50 other former or current open space projects. Information from the case studies aided the analysis of dynamics in other such projects. The following methods and techniques were utilized in this research:

• Interviews were conducted with representatives of City agencies, groups providing assistance to community groups and individual community leaders to provide an opportunity to hear first-hand from people working at a variety of levels on community-managed open space projects. Through these informal interviews it was possible to ascertain:

- Who is involved in community-based open space management.
- How groups involved in community-based open space management interact.
- The goals, objectives and policies that affect these groups and individuals.
- The constraints and opportunities they face in working toward their objectives.
- The scale of analysis relevant for the development of a Citywide strategy.

• Physical mapping was conducted on two levels. Using existing maps, the relationship between vacant lots, parks, recreation centers, and schools was analyzed on a Citywide level. At the neighborhood level, vacant lots, abandoned buildings, open spaces, street trees, schools, churches, stores, and other neighborhood resources were mapped in areas surrounding the four case study sites.

• Observations of the study sites were conducted to confirm and amplify the information that was gathered in interviews and literature searches. This allowed for a more complete understanding of the activities occurring in the open space and the processes and linkages to surrounding areas.

• Literature reviews were used to gather valuable background information. References included reports involving open space issues in Baltimore and other cities, literature on the socioeconomic and political fabric of the City, and community profiles. (See Appendix B for a complete list of references.)

Open Space Management Practices in Other Cities

As input into the investigation of open space management, the neighborhood open space management practices of six other cities were studied. In 1998, Katherine Cooper, a student intern from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, investigated community greening practices in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago and New York City, while Kristen Humphrey, a student at Morgan State University, researched greening practices in Atlanta and

Detroit. These six cities were chosen because they are facing the same high rate of vacancy and land abandonment as Baltimore, although perhaps to a different degree. The cities also share a similar history of industrialism and a long-standing trend toward greater suburban flight and urban blight.

Interviews with key people in these cities sought to:

- Determine the nature and extent of community management of open spaces.
- Examine the process by which various supporting, non-profit organizations and public programs became established, and determine their individual roles and missions.
- Identify the conditions that have allowed for successful open space management strategies, in general, and urban vacant land reclamation, in particular.
- Identify the primary barriers (e.g., institutional and economic) to community greening efforts faced by these cities and how these barriers were overcome.

Relevant organizations, agencies and individuals were located on the Internet. In addition, first-round contacts offered many referrals to other organizations. Most of the interviews were conducted via telephone, fax or e-mail. The interviewees were frequently self-selected, and not all organizations were responsive. Much of the resulting information consists of subjective interpretations of those involved in the programs. (A copy of the basic interview questions can be found in Appendix C.)

Development of Recommendations

A Neighborhood Open Space Advisory Committee was formed by the Parks & People Foundation to review the results of the studies of open space management in Baltimore and the six cities surveyed. Based on this information, the committee articulated the major challenges facing Baltimore and developed ideas for addressing those challenges. The committee presented this information at a public forum in March 1999 and solicited feedback from over 100 citizens who attended. This feedback was used to develop specific recommendations for Baltimore. The Neighborhood Open Space Advisory Committee then presented these recommendations to the City's Environmental Council.

Research in Baltimore

This section describes the roles of the key players involved in the management of neighborhood open space in Baltimore City and contains the findings of research efforts that examined City and community management of these spaces.

Background

Baltimore City covers approximately 80 square miles and is designated a separate county. The 1999 population was estimated at 665,000 representing a major decline from nearly 950,000 residents in the 1950's. This decline in city population is the result of massive flight to the suburbs surrounding Baltimore. Baltimore City now has significant housing vacancies estimated at 12,000 units in 1999. As vacant houses fall into disrepair, they are often demolished, becoming one of Baltimore's 14,000 vacant lots.[2] Vacant lots, pocket parks and the like are difficult for the City to take care of and can be a real drain on a neighborhood as they often become trash strewn, overgrown eyesores. Fortunately, many community groups in Baltimore are interested and active in restoring the vacant lots and pocket parks in their neighborhoods into attractive green spaces.

Small neighborhood open space is owned in Baltimore City by government agencies, private citizens and community groups. These groups, plus a variety of nonprofit organizations, play a major role in managing these spaces. The sections below describe the key players, some of the issues faced by each of these groups, and the various strategies that have been employed to address those issues.

City Management of Neighborhood Open Space

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. City government agencies are responsible for managing and maintaining all City-owned property as well as neglected, privately owned properties (for which the owners are charged). This responsibility is distributed among nearly 30 City entities with Public Works, Housing and Community Development, and Recreation and Parks having the largest number of holdings. (See Appendix D for a list of City agencies.) These agencies are responsible for trash collection and mowing of their properties as well as maintaining equipment such as on playgrounds. Management of vacant lots and other neighborhood open spaces has become a pressing issue for the City. As there is no comprehensive strategy for addressing the management of the small spaces, this study is intended to establish a foundation for such a strategy. [3]

[2] These are the official (City Department of Housing and Community Development) figures for vacant houses and vacant lots. Other researchers (including the authors of this report) have estimated the number of vacant houses and vacant lots to be as high as 40,000. Typically, older, formerly industrial American cities have from 10-15% land area in some state of underutilization or abandonement.

[3] In mid-1999, Baltimore's Planning Department proposed a comprehensive neighborhood planning process in its draft document *PlanBaltimore!*. The management of open spaces and vacant lots is proposed to be addressed as part of this process.

Management Responsibility

Given the wide array of City agencies responsible for managing and maintaining neighborhood open space, one objective of this research was to determine how responsibility for maintaining a particular property is assigned to a specific agency. The consensus among representatives of various agencies is that the approach follows a certain "logic." For example, "leftover" land from road construction remains the responsibility of the DPW Bureau of Transportation; vacant lots resulting from housing demolitions become the responsibility of the Department of Housing and Community Development; and sites of razed schools come under the authority of the Department of Education. However, some officials believe this logic is not always followed, i.e., that their agency maintains properties that should "belong" to another.

As a consequence of the ad hoc approach to assigning property, the procedure for assigning responsibility for properties and

City-held small open space presents significant obstacles to managing these properties in a comprehensive fashion. As a result, various agencies have adopted piecemeal methods for tracking vacant lots. For example, as of mid-1997, DPW was using a 1995 book of property tax records or calling the City Office of Property Location; the Department of Education was consulting with the Department of Housing and Community Development about specific lots; and the Department of Recreation and Parks was inquiring directly to BOMIS.

Strategies to Address Neighborhood Open Space Management Issues

In the past several years, Baltimore City government has recognized that vacant lots and neighborhood open space management issues have grown beyond the capacity of the current management system. A variety of strategies have been used to help address some of the more pressing problems. Several of these strategies are described below.

The Clean Sweep Program

The Clean Sweep Program was initiated in 1997 as a joint effort involving the Department of Housing and Community Development, the DPW Bureaus of Sanitation and Solid Waste, and the Department of Recreation and Parks. Working together and with neighborhood groups, crews from these agencies cleaned neighborhood areas, including vacant lots and other open space, on a scheduled monthly basis.

The program, however, suffered from a lack of knowledge about which properties to include or exclude in maintenance efforts, because partner agencies had no comprehensive list of City properties. According to Reginald Scriber, Coordinator of Clean Sweep, and Assistant Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development, another problem was that not every community needed *all* services *every* time regular maintenance was scheduled. As a result, some crews, such as a rat-baiting team, discovered they had nothing to do when they arrived at a site.

While the Clean Sweep Program still exists, it has been modified to deal with its initial problems. Currently, City-run Neighborhood Service Centers (NSC) respond to issues related to unmanaged vacant lots and open space. Scriber reports that they rely heavily on community volunteers. DPW provides trash bags, rakes, shovels and brooms to the NSCs for community use. DPW also attempts to clean alleys, streets and vacant lots on a 30-day cycle. Yet, it is still unclear whether or not all City-owned, small open spaces are covered in the rotation. Despite continued confusion, Clean Sweep seems to demonstrate the potential for cooperative management of open spaces and vacant lots by City agencies.

On March 24-25, 2000, Mayor Martin O'Malley initiated a citywide neighborhood cleanup day called "Super Spring Sweep Thing." This effort, coordinated by the Mayor's office, solicited five lots in each neighborhood from community groups for coordinated cleanup using City equipment and staff in partnership with community volunteers.

The Baltimore Clippers

Prior to the formation of Clean Sweep, the Baltimore Clippers, a partnership among the Department of Public Works, Recreation and Parks, and Education took over responsibility for cutting grass on a variety of open spaces—large and small. Through a somewhat informal process initiated in 1985 by former Mayor William Donald Schaefer, participating agencies shared and

coordinated resources, crews and responsibilities for grass mowing. According to Raymond Short of the Department of Education, the Baltimore Clippers were at one time projected to become an independent agency of the City government, providing centralized mowing for all City-owned properties. Such an agency was never realized, because the Clippers lacked a single administrator and there was no separate, dedicated budget. There were also disputes among those involved about which department was enjoying disproportionate benefits from the program and which was bearing a disproportionate share of the costs. These "turf wars" contributed to the demise of the effort in April 1997.

In Short's opinion, the collapse of the program was a reflection of difficulties in cooperation among the "bosses." He felt that the ground crews worked well together and were the main reason for the longevity of the project. Indeed, Short believes the workers on the ground understand the issues best and appreciate the benefits of cooperative management of open spaces.

Organizational Shift in Park and Open Space Management

In 1997, the City government reorganized open space maintenance responsibilities and shifted the responsibility for maintaining City park property from the Department of Recreation and Parks to DPW. Three bureaus within DPW now perform tasks such as mowing grass, collecting trash, and trimming trees: the Bureau of Transportation, the Bureau of Solid Waste, and the Bureau of General Services. Recreation and Parks is still responsible for the overall management and programming of Baltimore's parks, although most staff members have been transferred to Public Works. Recreation and Parks staff typically receives the bulk of citizen comments and complaints and passes these requests on to DPW. Unfortunately, no maintenance standards exist to help guide this interagency effort.

DPW staff feel the responsibilities between DPW and Recreation and Parks are clearly defined and that there is a clear division of labor among bureaus. DPW staff state:

> The new system is working fine: things are being maintained at least as well as before. One advantage [to the new system] is that City crews are now performing all the work, whereas before a lot of it was done by private contractors. Under the new system, we are able to consolidate manpower and equipment, especially when it comes to mowing. [However], we still work closely with Rec and Parks, especially when there is a problem of any kind. In particular, when there is a history with a particular site, such as repeated problems with vandalism, we will contact Rec and Parks.

In terms of vacant lots, DPW is responsible for the "lion's share," taking care of approximately 2,500 of City-owned lots.

Department of Recreation and Parks staff, agree that roles are clearly defined among Departments. However, they point out that having the same tasks divided among three bureaus within DPW is confusing and difficult to coordinate. Further, for the public it has to be confusing to determine who to contact with a concern or complaint." There are programmatic inconsistencies, for example, Recreation and Parks still funds the planting of street trees, although DPW plants them. Moreover, many DPW workers, in the Transportation Maintenance Division

who are responsible for street tree and park maintenance have had no specific training in tree care techniques or other aspects of natural resource management.

The new system utilizes only City crews, rather than the former mix of City and contractor crews, which has advantages and disadvantages. One disadvantage is that, in the past, contractors performed about half the mowing (approximately 1,000 acres), which enabled Recreation and Parks staff to do the detail work of trimming shrubbery, edge-trimming, weeding and spraying. According to Recreation and Parks staff, park maintenance is no longer being viewed in a comprehensive manner. Instead, they are seen in terms of grass, trash and repairs. Moreover, the Forestry Division no longer deals with trees in the parks unless a problem is brought to their attention. Their focus is now on street trees.

Maintaining a park is very different than maintaining a street median. A lot of things need to be done in a park that can be overlooked in a median. For example, the wood chips under play equipment need not only to be periodically replaced, they need to be cleaned regularly. It's not enough to simply pick up the large pieces of trash—the wood chips must be raked or sifted on a regular basis to remove potentially dangerous needles and glass. When Rec and Parks staffers maintained the parks, they systematically performed these tasks.

Perhaps the most important element missing in the current system is the sense of pride and ownership Recreation and Parks staff had in the parks they maintained. This often meant that the person who did the mowing also opened and cleaned the public bathrooms, picked up trash, trimmed hedges, weeded flower beds and at times provided information to park users. Under the new system, workers are too specialized. Those who mow, only mow; those who pick up trash, only pick up trash. Workers are unaware of a site's history or of a local community's concerns and desires concerning the park. This situation has resulted in community concern about the adequacy of maintenance efforts.

The long-term efficiency and effectiveness of the new organizational format remains to be tested. There are certainly potential weak points in the areas of inter- and intra-agency coordination. A better understanding of the programmatic biases of each agency (e.g., the Solid Waste Bureau is interested in trash, not the uses or user groups of open space) must be taken into account in determining the best ways to maintain parks and open spaces. This factor is nearly as important as attending to the management goals for any given open space.

Contracting Maintenance Services

Another strategy used by City agencies to address the multitude of vacant lots under their care is subcontracting maintenance services to community organizations or private contractors. In this scenario, the City pays local organizations to maintain existing neighborhood parks, medians or vacant lots in a given area. This practice has the potential to be more cost effective and reliable than direct City services. Neighborhoods benefit from the creation of jobs and from a sense of ownership and control over local vacant lots. Three City departments have used contracting as a means of managing their open space: Housing and Community Development, Education, and Recreation and Parks. All three have contracted with private firms, and Housing and Community Development and Recreation and Parks have contracted directly with neighborhood groups. These contracts are awarded to the lowest bid offered, however, in most instances involving

community groups there is no real competition. A community group is likely the only group seeking to take on the management responsibility and, consequently, is the most likely to have the greatest vested interest.

Several years ago, the Baltimore Clippers investigated the feasibility of instituting contracting for the maintenance of all City-owned open spaces, including vacant lots. Based on the results of their research, they decided not to pursue wide-scale contracting. The major obstacle appears to have been logistical in nature. Each property would have to be reviewed, bid, awarded, and monitored separately. It was determined that the administrative effort required to establish this program would not be cost-efficient. Another question involved which agency or bureau would actually implement and oversee this system. This became an important consideration, since there was no Baltimore Clippers Authority, but only a loose coalition of City agencies. Since the demise of the Baltimore Clippers, there does not seem to have been any additional research on resolving obstacles to broader use of contractors for maintaining City-owned properties. This strategy warrants further study.

Encouraging Community Management of Neighborhood Open Space

An increasing number of neighborhood open spaces are being maintained by community groups and individuals at their own expense, often creating productive uses of these sites. Baltimore City government can play a major role in encouraging and assisting residents in assuming the management responsibilities for local vacant lots and other neighborhood open spaces. From the City government perspective, community management of these spaces represents a productive use of otherwise unused land as well as reduced investment of money, time and labor that must be devoted to maintaining open spaces. The following are some of the programs and initiatives that facilitate or have the potential to facilitate community management of neighborhood open spaces.

Adopt-a-Lot Program— ofc 0.3of these sites.

property for its own purposes at any time with 30-days notice. Concern about losing a site can put a significant damper on a community's sense of ownership of, or investment in, a vacant space. In addition, adopted sites are only supposed to be used as vegetable and flower gardens. Engaging in money-making activities, planting trees and erecting permanent structures such as gazebos, play equipment or tool sheds are all prohibited. The City government does not want permanent structures to be placed on adopted sites that may be developed later. These policies limit the usefulness of the Adopt-a-Lot program, may discourage community groups from adopting sites, and certainly inhibit community investment in sites that are adopted.

there seems to be no formal means of obtaining them. Residents need to know where to go and whom to call to obtain assistance. The availability of services and materials is too often based more upon the resourcefulness of residents than on the strength of coordination of the programs or agencies offering them.

Discussion

The management of small open space, particularly vacant lots, is highly fragmented, decentralized, poorly planned, and inadequately monitored in Baltimore. The existing management structure was developed when Baltimore City had far fewer vacant lots, and the system no longer has the capacity to effectively manage and maintain the City's many vacant lots. Due to constraints in the existing system, neighborhood open space problems are often addressed on a lot-by-lot basis. The City clearly lacks a comprehensive strategy for addressing the management of these lots.

In addition to logistical and organizational hurdles, the management of open space faces political constraints. The demolition of buildings is fairly straightforward, a building that is beyond repair and uninhabited is marked for removal and razed. At least in the short-term, an eyesore ("attractive nuisance") is removed. Management of the newly created vacant lot is a more daunting task that involves long-term commitments in planning and maintenance. As a result, many politicians—and agencies—are reluctant to address the issue, given the complexity of the problem.

The scenario is exacerbated by the fact that there is federal funding available for housing demolitions, while little or no money is dedicated to managing the aftermath. As more houses are demolished, remaining properties become less desirable and marketable and, in turn, more people flee, leaving empty, abandoned houses. Thus, it is important to recognize the political and economic context surrounding this problem in developing a comprehensive strategy for management of small open spaces.

It is clear that the problems posed by vacant lots in Baltimore have outgrown the City's capacity for dealing with them. Many City officials have recognized the shortcomings of the current system and are slowly starting to address problematic issues. However, the problems are numerous and complex, which will necessitate comprehensive policy changes and restructuring of government responsibilities.

Private Ownership and Management of Open Space

Most privately owned vacant lots in Baltimore have resulted from City demolition of abandoned houses. Landowners are responsible for keeping their properties clean and mowing high grass and weeds, but many privately owned vacant lots are not maintained to this standard. The City cites negligent property owners, cleans up the site, and places a lien against the property for the cost of maintenance. However, care of privately owned vacant properties tends to be reactive and complaint-driven because of the scope of the problem and the fact that the sites do not stay clean for long.

Some vacant lots and other small open spaces are purchased or acquired by community members interested in using the land as gardens, community parks or extensions of their private

yards. Individual residents may purchase vacant or abandoned properties from private landowners

green spaces that have helped improve conditions in some Baltimore neighborhoods could become targets for development as property values increase.

Recognizing the above issues, a group at the University of Maryland School of Social Work initiated a dialogue on the development of a community land trust in Baltimore in the fall of 1999. The group began to develop specific options for a Citywide land trust based on a model employed by the Institute of Community Economics in Springfield, Mass. The model focuses primarily on housing issues; however, past models have recognized the importance of open space preservation and vacant lot restoration. Such models have been successful in Durham, N.C., Albuquerque, N. Mex., Camden, N.J. and Burlington, Vt. The model remains to be employed on a large scale in a major metropolitan area.

Baltimore also lacks any kind of land bank. The City Departments of Planning and Housing and Community Development have investigated options for establishing a land bank, which

Baltimore Case Studies:
Community-Managed Open Space

Community-managed open space refers to instances in which community groups or individuals assume responsibility, formally or informally, for maintaining open spaces that are used as community gardens, neighborhood parks, tree nurseries, play areas, parking lots, etc. This land may be City-owned and officially adopted through the Adopt-a-Lot program; or it may be privately owned and used with permission of the owner or acquired by the community through legal processes. Just as often, communities and individuals claim vacant land in Baltimore without any legal formalities by simply planting a tree or a garden.

Community-managed open spaces are a "win-win" proposition for the City and its communities. Individuals take control of their environment as they improve the quality of life in their community. The City benefits because the burden of maintaining the vacant land in the city is now shared, saving time, resources and money. Visitors to the city see attractive and positive images of city life. Although community management is not an appropriate strategy for every small open space, it can be an important component in an overall strategy for managing neighborhood open spaces.

The following case studies describe different types of community-managed open space in Baltimore. These case studies were conducted at the outset of this research effort in 1997 as a way of better understanding the dynamics of community-managed open space projects. Each case study includes a basic description of the site (e.g., history, size, locaand , lf5nducm0e pen 8ive imagorganizcm0e mmunvolve 0 -1dpenlopics of chist. TD 0 98Tc 0 Tw ( ) Tj -324.75 -14.25 98Tc 0-7 Tc-0
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Discussion: In the beginning, the project had a large influx of outside technical support and funding. It is the most elaborate and expensive effort observed on a space of its size. The park contributes to community aesthetics and cohesion and is cost effective to the City. Although it is low maintenance, the park is now showing signs of wear and tear. Both the business association and the community recognize the need for an improved maintenance plan. However, the business

There are three informal garden managers who oversee maintenance of the space, and individual gardeners are responsible for maintaining their own plots. Each gardener pays dues of $1.00 a month, which is used to pay the water bill. PACA has monthly meetings to discuss the management of the garden and other community matters.

The primary constraint faced by the Duncan Street Garden is a lack of age diversity. Most of the gardeners are elderly and attempts to recruit youth into gardening activities have not been successful. However, the garden has brought many benefits to the community. Aesthetics of the area have been improved; gardeners enjoy better nutrition and an outlet for recreation; the City's expense for upkeep has been reduced; the community has gained a sense of cohesion; and the garden has served as a catalyst for the development of other gardens.

Discussion: Community residents are the major force behind all aspects of the Duncan Street Garden. While other organizations are involved and gardeners receive support from outside

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Research in Other Cities

Atlanta, Georgia

The City of Atlanta covers 131.6 square miles and contains two counties. In 1994, its population was estimated at 396,052, ranking it #36 among the most populous U.S. cities. Like Baltimore, Atlanta is experiencing the widespread effects of "suburban flight" and has recently earned the dubious distinction of having the longest commute times in the country. Although the explosion in Atlanta's downtown business district and advent of the Olympics in 1996 seemed to promise unprecedented levels of urban renewal and community revitalization, the burned out shells of crack houses and countless vacant lots can still be seen in many neighborhoods. Unlike Baltimore, most houses in Atlanta are single family dwellings on generously sized lots. Thus, when buildings are abandoned and torn down, the size of the resulting open areas is staggering.

According to the Bureau of Planning, there are approximately 1,036 acres of vacant residential land within the City of Atlanta, 75% of which is privately owned. There are currently no specific policies that address the maintenance or use of vacant land. The governmental agencies having control and/or ownership of those vacant parcels that are not privately owned are the City of Atlanta, generally, and the Atlanta Development Authority and Georgia State Department of Transportation, specifically. The Department of Parks and Recreation is largely responsible for maintenance on City-owned lots, but maintenance is driven almost entirely by citizen complaint.

The City does not actively acquire vacant parcels, nor does it have a proactive policy or procedure for encouraging their resale. In addition, the City has no strategy for the temporary or permanent reuse of these spaces. Nonetheless, according to Dan Cohen, Principal Planner for the Planning Department, there is a modest and perhaps growing market for at least some of this land. He believes that lack of staff and inadequate resources are the main obstacles to addressing the problem and could be alleviated by increasing the City's tax base.

Government Supported Programs

There are currently no urban greening/community gardening programs run by the City of Atlanta, however, the **Atlanta Department of Public Works Recycling Program** provides community gardens throughout the city with mulch and compost free of charge. Atlanta uses a system of "complementary incentives" to encourage the recycling of organic materials. The City contracts out the pruning of trees and leaf pick-up to private contractors who must then provide the material free of charge to City agencies/properties that request it. At the end of a specified time, the contractors may sell on the open market any material not requested by the City. Thus, the contractors have an incentive to generate as much material as possible, and the City has an incentive to use as much of this material as possible. This system of competition for the same material ensures that the works gets done and the materials are not wasted. It represents a creative solution to what many cities view simply as a solid waste disposal issue, with the added bonus of benefiting community-managed open spaces

Atlanta had an adopt-a-lot program that was part of an array of ambitious urban revitalization plans that were explored around the time of the 1996 Summer Olympic Games.

However, it has fallen by the wayside as the publicity and attention brought by the Games has receded.

The state-run Georgia Cooperative Extension Service is actively promoting community management of open space through its Atlanta Urban Gardening Program (AUGP).

The Atlanta Urban Gardening Program—The mission of this program is to "provide technical assistance to the under-served and disadvantaged communities in the area [in order] to maintain green space and improve quality of life." As a result, AUGP's focus is largely one of community building and developing leadership skills among community members.

AUGP staff claim to support about 200 community gardens. Although many of the gardens are little more than containers on school grounds or gardens at rehab centers or shelters, the AUGP is credited with bringing increased public attention to the complex issues surrounding vacant land and urban open space in Atlanta and capitalizing on the community-building effects of gardens and greening projects.

Non-Profit/Technical Assistance Organizations

There is a powerful link between community gardening and food security in Atlanta. The Community Gardening Initiative of the Atlanta Community Food Bank (ACFB) is the leader in supporting community-managed open spaces. Founded in 1979, the Food Bank's mission is to "fight hunger by engaging, educating and empowering our community."

The Community Gardening Initiative—The Community Gardening Initiative is one of the Food Bank's many projects. Its mission is "to increase the quantity and quality of community gardens in metropolitan Atlanta." The Initiative was begun in 1996, with the Food Bank employing a full-time Community Garden Coordinator. In addition, the Initiative now has a Volunteer Coordinator who organizes volunteers from area churches, schools, and businesses for weekend work projects. With these resources, the Initiative currently provides technical assistance to 55 community gardens around metropolitan Atlanta, in partnership with approximately 35 Food Bank member agencies. (There are over 700 member agencies that distribute food to those in need within northwest Georgia alone.) They also work cooperatively with churches, recreation centers, schools, civic centers, senior communities, and prderds, civic ce4.25 TD -0.3307 Tith

In 1998, the Food Bank helped to start 11 new gardens and, as of March 1999, had helped to start four more. The Food Bank has also established a seed bank that distributed nearly 3,000 packets of seeds last year, free of charge to area residents.

The Community Gardening Initiative focuses its attention on the needs of Atlanta's children and senior citizens, understanding that these groups are often the most subject to the vagaries of poverty and hunger. However, despite its bias toward food production for the hungry, nearly all the community gardens in Atlanta are multi-use spaces, serving also as play areas, offering educational opportunities for school-aged children, or providing flower gardens and sitting parks for members of the community.

While they may approach the problems facing Atlanta's neighborhoods from somewhat different angles, AUGP and the Food Bank generally agree on the main obstacles to their community gardening/greening efforts: fragmented efforts by, and excessive bureaucracy in, area government agencies; lack of funding and the difficulty community groups face in obtaining funding; and the practical challenges of gaining access to water and other much needed services.

Despite these obstacles and the frustrations that arise from a lack of a comprehensive open space or vacant lot strategy, Fred Conrad, the Community Garden Coordinator for the Food Bank remains optimistic. He points out that many problems have been adequately addressed on a case-by-case basis. "Every garden start-up has been a collaborative effort that involved several partners, which has lent resources and flexibility to the process." He also acknowledges Atlanta's Department of Public Works as his greatest ally, in particular, the free mulch and compost provided through its Recycling Program.

people in low-income neighborhoods who have to deal with the consequences of vacant lots that have taken the initiative to remedy.

LBA is more of a reactive organization than a proactive one, as it responds

Detroit, Michigan

Detroit covers an area of 138.7 square miles and encompasses one county. The city's population was estimated at 1,000,272 in 1996, which ranked it #7 among the most populous U.S. cities. Perhaps no other America

Government Supported Programs

Since the time of the above interviews, Detroit has stepped up its efforts to sell off City-owned vacant lots through its side-lot/abutter program. According to an article in the *Detroit Free Press*:

> The City's fire sale on vacant lots in residential neighborhoods is long overdue. The City plans first to offer the lots to neighboring homeowners, and then perhaps to nonprofit groups, for $50 a lot. It's an excellent idea. In many cases, neighbors and block clubs are already tending the lots to keep them from becoming midnight dumpsites. The City's offer should encourage even more people to turn them into gardens, play yards or picnic areas.
>
> The City should certainly extend the offer to community-based housing development groups such as Habitat for Humanity and Blight Busters. Those groups could do much more to revitalize neighborhoods if it weren't for the bureaucratic disarray and the strangling regulations that afflict so many City programs.
>
> If the plan to offer some 11,000 vacant lots for sale means the City has finally gotten a handle on what it owns and where, so much the better. The title mess surrounding City-owned land and buildings has for too long discouraged and frustrated residents and developers.
>
> The gain comes later in enhanced property tax revenues, in the greening and revitalizing of hundreds of city blocks, and the affordable housing built by community-based developers. The Archer administration has come up with a smart, creative idea. Carried out right, it will perk up and alleviate a property management problem that has dogged the city for years.[9]

Significantly, the article does not address the issue of whether or not Detroit's beleaguered communities can absorb all of these 11,000 properties, not to mention the cost of long-term maintenance. Nor does it address the fact that these properties represent only about one-fifth of the city's total "reserve" of vacant properties. Nonetheless, it is undoubtedly a first step in addressing the problem and permits the use of these properties as community-managed open spaces.

The Farm-A-Lot Program—Farm-a-Lot was started in 1975 to address the growing problem of vacant lots and to provide sources of fresh, inexpensive produce. The use of the terms "Farm-a-Lot" and "urban agriculture" expresses not only a Midwest, farm-belt point of view, but also speaks to the tremendous quantity and large size of most parcels.

To participate in the Farm-a-Lot program, applicants must seek the permission of neighboring property owners and obtain a permit from the Recreation Department, which manages the program. To date, permit holders include community groups, neighborhood organizations, churches and schools. The program provides spring tilling, mulch and/or topsoil,

[9] *Detroit Free Press*, January 28, 1999, p. C2. (No author indicated). "Lots of Potential: Vacant property sale can build a better city."

4,000 to 5,000 packets of seeds and a large number of seedlings to participating groups each

community organizations to monitor, maintain and improve Detroit's 391 parks and playgrounds" that total nearly 6,000 acres. To date, nearly one-quarter of the of city's parkland has been adopted and is being maintained through this program.

Adopting organizations such as churches, schools, and neighborhood associations, are required to work with the Forestry District Supervisor in their area to set the terms of their participation and carry out routine maintenance. The program is centered on three main activities:

- Watching the park and reporting crimes, vandalism or illegal dumping.

- Cleaning the park of debris, weeds and undesirable tree growth.

- Improving the park by painting play equipment, pruning and cultivating trees and shrubs, planting and maintaining flower beds, or donating funds.

Although this program does not address the problems posed by vacant lots, Adopt-a-Park does address the problem of ever-shrinking City resources available for parks and open space management and seeks to foster improved levels of stewardship by people living in areas around city parks. Furthermore, by involving residents in the care of these spaces, the City succeeds in placing more "eyes on the parks," effectively making them less attractive places for illegal activities. Without a doubt, such programs represent creative solutions to these problems in the face of persistent and repeated budget cuts.

Non-Profit Organizations

There are many open space organizations in the Detroit area focusing on one or more aspect of the urban greening effort and the reclamation of vacant land. In addition, many members of these groups serve on more than one board of directors or steering committee and/or are employees of city, state or regional agencies. Among these groups are Healthy Detroit, the Detroit Agricultural Network, the Hunger Action Coalition, and The Greening of Detroit, all of which operate citywide and serve as umbrella organizations for, and provide liaisons among, many smaller groups. In addition, Detroit has developed a strong alliance between anti-hunger/food security groups and urban greening efforts.

Healthy Detroit—Healthy Detroit was founded in the mid-1990s based on the Healthy Cities model developed by the World Health Organization. One of the seven initiatives—the Green Zones Initiative—was aimed at promoting youth and community-

such as local farmers' markets. The title Green Zones now refers to the group's bimonthly newsletter, *Green Zones Grapevine*, which is the main publication on urban greening in the Detroit area.

community gardeners through its Farm-a-Lot program. However, restrictions on permanent structures discourage not only a sense of permanence to sites but also the development of mixed-use spaces. The restrictions also encourage community groups to operate outside the auspices of City-supported programs.

Despite what could be argued as a reasonably cooperative relationship between some City agencies and area non-profits, it is really more a matter of the energy and participation of a few sympathetic individuals within City government rather than a commitment at the City or agency level. In addition, Detroit has no citywide open space policy or strategy. These factors ultimately hinder the ability of community groups to easily and effectively manage open spaces in their neighborhood.

There are currently no urban land trusts or other groups seeking to preserve community managed open spaces in Detroit. Some may say that such an organization is not needed, given that in Detroit, like Baltimore, there is so much vacant land and relatively little development. In such a situation one does not expect development to compete with land occupied by community gardens. However, two recent controversial issues facing Detroit have prompted members of the DAN to examine the possibility of forming an urban land trust. The first of these events was a decision by the City to give portions of local parkland to commercial development projects. DAN stepped in and was instrumental in preventing the City from apportioning part of McHarris Park to a private developer.

The second issue involved DAN's efforts to bring attention to the problem of competition between local gardeners and developers of new, large scale casinos for land occupied by existing urban gardens. As of August 1998, a casino developer had arranged to buy out and/or relocate at least one of the garden sites operated by a local church. Despite some urgency felt by area organizations such as DAN, as of the writing of this report the development of an urban land trust in Detroit is still in a developmental stage.

Even in a city with as great a surplus of vacant land as Detroit, there can still be competition for available open space. The importance of examining the issue of interim versus permanent use of vacant land and the need for a formal mechanism to preserve community-managed open spaces is highlighted by the case of a casino vying for the same property as a community garden, when only a short time before the property was considered of no value. Such cases provide persuasive evidence for the development of urban land trusts, even in cities where there is thought to be little or no competition for space.

Perhaps the greatest lesson to be learned from Detroit is one that remains to be seen: The success or failure of the City's side-lot or "abutter" program. Only time will tell whether this program is truly effective at returning control of open spaces to communities or is simply a way of shifting responsibility for the care and maintenance of vacant lots from the City to private citizens who may not be able to shoulder the burden.

Boston, Massachusetts

The City of Boston covers 48 square miles. Its population totaled 574,000 in 1990. Urban gardening became an established, City-sponsored activity in during World War I when about 30,000 residents were involved in the War Gardens Program. The current urban gardening movement began in the 1970's when increasing numbers of vacant lots became available for cultivation, there was accepting political climate of community empowerment, and a large wave of immigrants from China, Puerto Rico, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the rural south came into Boston. Indeed, immigrants from many rural agricultural areas took advantage of the City's willingness to have gardens established on City-owned land. In 1975, Mayor Kevin White created the Revival Gardens program and began funneling Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds through the Public Facilities Department for the creation of gardens on vacant land in blighted areas of the city. This program lasted for two years and created 30 gardens. Some of the gardens that began as Revival Gardens continue to be cultivated.

By the late '70s, the high cost of the City's active involvement in gardening led to the demise of these public programs. In order to provide a means for the maintenance of existing Revival Gardens, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), which is the planning body for the City of Boston, contracted with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to establish some of the gardening groups as non-profit land trusts. Because of TPL's work, Boston Urban Gardeners (BUG), Boston Natural Areas Fund (BNAF), and the Dorchester Gardenlands Preserve and Development Corporation (DGP) were established in 1977. While the BRA continued to work with the land trusts to identify City-owned vacant lots suitable for gardens, this marked the end of active, City support of gardening. The City gave the remaining $40,000 of CDBG funds for the maintenance of the Revival Gardens to Boston Urban Gardeners. In addition to the funds, the City transferred title to a number of gardens and "urban wilds" to BUG and BNAF because of "widespread community interest in protecting [the gardens] permanently." The City of Boston revived its support of urban gardening in the early '80s, when development pressure had led to the demise of a former garden site in Chinatown. Reacting to the public outcry over this event, the City established the Grassroots Program in 1985.

Government Supported Programs

As of the summer of 1998, the City of Boston had about 150 permanent, community-managed green spaces. Eighty of these are owned by private non-profit land trusts, and 70 are owned by the public sector. The largest land trusts are BNAF, BUG, DGP, and the South End/Lower Roxbury Open Space Land Trust (SELROSLT), together owning 70 gardens. Fifty gardens are on state or city parkland and are considered as protected from development as those on private land. Even the gardens on public land receive assistance from the non-profit groups in the city. The Parks Department does not assist in the maintenance of gardens.

Grassroots—This program, housed in the Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) provides funds for non-profit groups to use the City-owned land. Now in its 12th year, Grassroots funds 10 projects a year, with two funding cycles per year. Grants are of two types: technical assistance grants that range from $4,000 to $20,000 and construction grants, which reimburse 80% of the cost of construction ranging from $50,000 to $100,000.

community organizing, and advocacy to low-income residents. DGP is a membership organization composed of community gardeners and their supporters."

South End/Lower Roxbury Open Space Land Trust—This land trust was founded in 1991, with help from the Trust for Public Land, to protect nine gardens in Boston's densely populated South End. Similar to DPG, it is a neighborhood-based land trust, focusing on community building, public outreach, and organizational skills. This small land trust focuses its efforts on raising funds for capital improvements to gardens. Its gardeners get horticultural assistance and gardening supplies from BUG and Garden Futures.

Garden Futures—In 1994, the four primary, non-profit land trusts in Boston (BUG, BNAF, DGP and SELROSLT) created Garden Futures, an umbrella group to organize the various land owning and gardening groups in the city. While not itself a land trust, Garden Futures works with the land trusts in the city to help prioritize tasks and administer public funds. Betsy Johnson, the director of Garden Futures, explains that the group was established to provide a unified voice for the gardens in the city. With the establishment of one central group, citizens and City officials alike would know where to go with questions about gardens. In addition, Garden Futures does a lot of fundraising on behalf on Boston's gardens. It receives corporate and foundation grants and determines which projects will receive the funds.

Summary

The above organizations perform a number of key functions and provide needed services to community gardens in Boston:

Land Security—Eighty gardens are owned by private non-profit land trusts; 70 are owned by the public sector. In addition, there are approximately 20 unofficial "guerilla gardens." The land trusts all came about due to widespread community support for gardens as well as a City government that saw the value of open space. The Grassroots program administers a two-year lease of City land for gardens, with a 90-day notice of termination. Boston's land trusts as well as the leasing option offered by the Grassroots Program are important services as there is significant development pressure in many areas of the city making community gardening difficult without land security.

• Insurance—Each of the land trusts insures its own property. Gardeners are also required to show proof of insurance in order to obtain a lease from the City. Boston's land trusts will include sites leased from the City on their insurance policies. In effect, Grassroots will only lease to groups that are affiliated with one of the trusts.

• Technical Assistance and Training—BUG provides gardening supplies and training in horticultural techniques to gardens throughout the city. Garden Futures runs the City Gardener certificate program, modeled after the Cooperative Extension's Master Gardener Program but geared specifically to the needs of urban gardeners.

• Organizational Assistance and Networking—All of the neighborhood land trusts train community members in organizational development and management skills. Of the organizations that operate at the city scale, BUG is the most focused on helping groups with organizational

development. In 1997, Garden Futures studied the gardens in the city and the various organizations that made up the gardening community. The study identified "a need for improved networking among garden coordinators, development of a resource clearinghouse and training in leadership and garden organizing." As a result, Garden Futures began to include community organizing in its City Gardener Certificate program.

• Advocacy—BNAF and Garden Futures are the groups most involved in advocacy of open space concerns in Boston. Garden Futures focuses on making the City see that gardens can be a viable part of the city's network of permanent open spaces.

Discussion

Initially, Boston did not intend to establish permanent gardens in the city. The intention was to use Community Development Block Grant funds to support a successful and popular means of staving off blight. The idea of permanency came about when it became clear that temporary plantings did not occupy the sites in the long dormant season. This led to the establishment of the Grassroots program, which allowed planning and construction funds to go directly into gardening. The drive for ownership of gardens reached critical mass in the mid- to late '80s when the city's inventory of vacant land began to diminish with the onset of a housing boom—not an ideal time to think about acquiring gardens.

While there is some variation in the services offered by Boston's many land trusts, they all provide liability insurance and funds for major improvements to the gardens and leave small-scale fundraising and coordination of routine maintenance up to the gardeners. Gardeners generally charge a plot fee of between $5 and $30 a year to cover cost of supplies. The land trusts raise funds to cover major capital improvements.

With the establishment of Garden Futures in 1994, the focus changed from establishing more gardens to bringing existing gardens up to a similar level of improvement in order to make them a recognizable part of a system. Garden Futures works hard to get gardeners to see that gardens that look good will be protected, and gardens that are protected need to remain in good shape to help the cause of other gardens waiting for protection. The four core land trusts that make up Garden Futures aim to acquire between three and five new gardens a year. These gardens have usually been running well for a few years, and the gardeners have approached a land trust with interest in permanently protection.

Finally, examples from Boston demonstrate the importance of both community and City government support to the success and survival of community gardens. Laura Petrucci of the Dorchester Gardenlands Preserve and Development Corporation notes that effective, localized community organizing is a common weak point in community greening. Increasing local interest in greening generates more votes in favor of greening-friendly policies. This idea is echoed by Ann Cherin, who found in her research of gardening in Boston that, "Without the support of the Mayor and City Council, gardens must fight an often losing battle to obtain land and the political support to survive."

Philadelphia Green's outreach program provides training and technical assistance with urban horticulture and community leadership. The program aims to build leadership in the community by focusing on vacant lot rehabilitation and street tree care. Project's such as Garden Tenders, provide community members with training as well as a basic set of gardening materials to start a project.

Throughout the 1980s, Philadelphia Green's Greene Countrie Towne program marked a departure from the scattered, citywide approach to greening that was practiced in the 1970s and introduced concentrated neighborhood-based greening efforts in eight low-income communities throughout the city. This approach revealed that greening was a highly effective tool to help revitalize neighborhoods. In the 1990s, Philadelphia Green began working with neighborhood-based community development corporations (CDCs) to incorporate the management of vacant land into their plans for new housing and commercial development. These initiatives are based on the premise that proper neighborhood planning can ensure the establishment and maintenance of many types of community open space while preserving land for the development needs of future generations. Community gardens serve as a basic tool for teaching CDCs and neighborhood residents an effective way of dealing with problem of vacant land.

West Philadelphia Landscape Project—The West Philadelphia Landscape Project was established in 1987. It is based in the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning. Faculty and students from the university work with community organizations, neighborhood groups, and teachers and students in West Philadelphia's public schools to design urban gardens and other community spaces.

Neighborhood Gardens Association: A Philadelphia Land Trust—In 1986, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and the Penn State Urban Gardening Program founded the Neighborhood Gardens Association/A Philadelphia Land Trust (NGA) to preserve some of the long-standing gardens in the city. In the summer of 1998, NGA owned 25 community gardens, 10 of which were transferred from the City with a restricted deed. Services provided by the trust are limited to ownership and liability insurance. While NGA does not assist in the maintenance of any of its sites, gardeners benefit from the help of Philadelphia Green and Penn State's Urban Gardening Program. NGA visits each site once a year to ensure that sites are adequately maintained. Abandonment has not been a problem, perhaps due to a strict screening process. The main criterion of the screening is the existence of a highly organized group of gardeners interested in the site's permanent protection. Philadelphia Green and NGA work together to identify potential sites to acquire. With the establishment of NGA, Philadelphia Green invests money and time only in projects with some degree of land security.

Summary

The greening organizations listed above perform a number of key functions and provide needed services to Philadelphia's many gardens and neighborhood open spaces.

Land Security—Most of the lots revitalized by Philadelphia Green and other groups are owned by City agencies. While the City is not willing to lease lots to community groups, it does have a formal gardening agreement. The abundance of vacant lots may explain why there has not

Chicago, Illinois

The City of Chicago covers 228 square miles. Its population is over 2.7 million, but according the HUD, it declined 7.3% during 1980s. Chicago has approximately 55,000 vacant parcels of land totaling 13, 769 acres—14% of the city's total area. Thirty percent of the vacant land is owned by local public agencies or non-profit agencies, and another 17% is tax delinquent.

Government Supported Programs and Initiatives

Since his election in 1989, Mayor Daley has focused on improving the quality of life in the city. A large-scale greening initiative, including programs for planting street trees and increasing public open space, is part of this quality of life focus. Programs and projects of the CitySpace Plan have augmented existing non-profit greening programs.

Chicago Wilderness is a regional biodiversity program of demonstration projects coordinated among over 100 organizations. (One reason for the interest in biodiversity is the realization that Chicago's metropolitan area is actually more diverse that many others parts of the state that are intensely farmed). This regional biodiversity initiative includes tall grass savanna and oak forest restoration. Chicago is fortunate that at the turn of the century, forest reserves were purchased to protect water supplies.

Thirty-four Chicago Wilderness partners pooled their resources and strengths to form the **Chicago Regional Biodiversity Council**, which now has more than 50 members. The Council is organized into several teams who work on science, land management, policy and strategy, and education and outreach. The Council has prepared an Atlas and Biodiversity Restoration Plan.

owned lots and tax-delinquent parcels to community groups has been made easier over the past five years," but it also recognizes areas that could be improved. For example, the Chicago Tax Reactivation Program allows the City's Departments of Housing and Planning and Development to establish criteria, guidelines, and procedures for screening and recommending applicants interested in acquiring tax delinquent property for low- and moderate-income housing and commercial and industrial developments. The CitySpace Plan recommends that this program be expanded to include open space as a specific use, which would facilitate the creation of open spaces not associated with a development or institution.

To solve the problem of who would own land once it is acquired from the City, the CitySpace Plan recommends the establishment of a non-profit organization to own and insure "vacant lots destined to become parks, vegetable and flower gardens, sculpture gardens, natural areas, protected river edges, or scenic landscapes." This recommendation led to the development of NeighborSpace. In addition, CitySpace has created a citywide land inventory and mapping system to identify vacant land resources. This inventory includes both private and City-owned lots. The Department of Planning and Development can use this inventory to identify suitable areas for open space development.

Greencorps—In 1993, the City of Chicago established Greencorps to address the problem of a lack of open space in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. The Department of the Environment in partnership with the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service administers the program. Groups get assistance from Greencorps to set up gardens on City-owned land. Applications are accepted only if the group has permission to use the site for at least three years. Eligible properties include vacant lots, school grounds, public housing property, parkways, and library grounds. While Greencorps initially provided funds for gardens, it now assists gardeners by supplying materials, labor, and training. Basic assistance is usually worth between $300 and $500, and comprehensive assistance grants are worth $3,000. In addition, Greencorps distributes free gardening supplies four times each year for use in public landscapes and gardens. Greencorps has a staff of 25 people who work throughout the city. About 100 community groups receive comprehensive assistance for 171 sites, and as of 1997, approximately 300 sites have received either comprehensive or basic assistance. The number of Greencorps assistance applications has increased each year.

Other groups in the city, such as the Botanic Garden and the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension provided garden assistance in the past, but now that Greencorps has taken on that role, these groups are not as active.

Non-Profit Organizations

The Openlands Project—The Openlands Project is the oldest of the urban conservation organizations in Chicago. Since its establishment in 1963, it has helped to protect 43,000 acres of land in hundreds of projects for parks and public recreation. In 1997, Openlands Urban Greening Program established 30 new gardens and parks on formerly "debris-strewn vacant lots, school grounds, youth and neighborhood centers." The Urban Greening Program helps groups organize and provides technical assistance and training for gardeners. The Urban Greening Program's mission is to stabilize "edge communities" and empower area residents. According to Glenda Daniel, Director of Urban Greening, "The best scenario is to go into areas that do not have

[development] pressure" and start the process of setting up gardens and community parks in an effort to slow the decline of the neighborhood. She adds, "Openlands is really focused on social issues and community development." Its staff brings together residents who are interested in open space management to decide what types of spaces would be useful in what areas. The planning and design process alone can take about two years.

Groups who receive assistance from Openlands must have permission to use the land, and in most cases, it is easier to get a reliable gardening agreement from the City than from a private

NeighborSpace's ownership and is not maintained, the unrestricted deed reverts to the City and could be sold for any use within zoning limitations.

To avoid this chain of events, staff at NeighborSpace is careful about what sites it purchases. NeighborSpace's main criteria in determining which sites to acquire is the existence of a dedicated gardening group. Most green spaces are acquired after they have been running well for a number of years, however, land that is not yet developed as a garden would be considered if a group is really committed to it. Community members agree to a strict maintenance agreement for their site before the land trust makes the purchase.

Summary

Chicago's many greening organizations perform a number of key functions and provide needed services to area gardens and other open spaces.

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and competition among member groups. While this network has recently been reestablished, inconsistency of missions remains a significant hurdle to effective cooperation among members.

One of the major struggles for Openlands is finding adequate funds for its primary goal of community organizing work. Open space creation is its secondary goal, but the organization has found it easier to raise money for developing spaces, because foundations are interested in producing a more tangible product.

Without exception, the groups contacted in Chicago stated that the initiative for the improvement of a vacant space should come from community members. Successful projects usually begin with a group of dedicated people who want to make a change in their neighborhoods. It is also clear that the strong support of Mayor Daley has been of tremendous benefit for Chicago's open space system and the people who use it.

New York, New York

New York City covers 322 square miles and has five administrative boroughs. In 1990, the total population was 7.3 million, a number that had increased by 3.5% in the previous decade. As of 1998, the city had 14,000 vacant lots. Community greening has a long history in New York. Each of the five boroughs contains at least one garden that is 20 years old. On average, the city's existing gardens are nine years old.

Since the 1970s more than 750 community gardens have been formed on vacant, City-owned lots across New York City. Most of these sites have operated under short-term licenses from the City Parks Department's GreenThumb Program and are subject to eviction with 30-days notice. The weak hold that gardeners had on these sites became very apparent in April 1998 when the gardening agreements on the 750 GreenThumb gardens were transferred from the Department of Parks and Recreation to the Department of Housing Preservation and Development. The economic growth in the city had led to a housing crunch, so the City opted to make many community garden sites available to developers. A total of 113 of the transferred community garden sites were slated for public auction in 1998.

In a city like New York where open space is limited, community gardens are critical social spaces for cultural events, outdoor classrooms, and informal interaction among neighbors. The immediate threat of losing so many community gardens in 1998 caused New Yorkers and gardening advocates from across the country to rally in support of New York City's community gardens. Four separate law suits were filed against the City by environmental justice groups, community gardening became a major political issue in New York, Bette Midler's New York Restoration Project and other groups raised substantial funds in support of community gardens, and the national Trust For Public Land was pressured into getting involved in saving the gardens.

In May 1999, 113 gardens were saved from destruction at the eleventh hour. The Trust for Public Land reached an agreement with the City to purchase 63 of the gardens that had been slated for auction for a price of $3 million. The remaining 50 gardens were purchased by the New York Restoration Project for $1.2 million. After the deals, Rose Harvey of the Trust for Public Land noted, "As a deal, it is a good one; but as public policy, it sets an unwelcome precedent. Today's agreement will be a good one only if it marks the end of private garden purchases and the Land no54 (LardeGoardre fi S1.75 0n Py Parksf iTj 167rt of New ing the gardens.) T1499 Tc garden purch-1

GreenThumb uses Federal Community Development Block Grant Funds to provide lumber, tools, materials for fencing, picnic tables, plants, seeds, and bulbs to gardening groups once they have attended workshops in garden design, horticultural techniques, construction and planting. Usually groups that are interested in gardening contact GreenThumb and are steered toward a City-owned site, which is one reason why not many gardens are on private land. The agreement on these City-owned sites stipulates that gardens may not contain any permanent structures, cars, or moneymaking activities; they must be open for five daylight hours per week between May and October, and the hours must be posted. The agreement may be terminated (with reason) with 10-days notice. Groups are not required by GreenThumb to provide their own insurance, but they usually purchase insurance from the Neighborhood Open Space Coalition for about $250 a year.

In addition to the purchase of 113 GreenThumb sites, the public outcry over the transfer and potential bulldozing of these spaces caused the City to transfer some of the older sites to the Parks Department. As of July 1998, 36 sites had been transferred. Although Parks owns the property, the City provides no maintenance—the transfer is at no cost to Parks. Jane Cleaver of Planning for Parklands explained that the most important determining factor in selecting sites for transfer to the Parks Department is "that the groups are organized and can assure a second generation of leaders in the future. We chose the gardens with the most continuous community leadership." Another criterion was the existence of good financial backing, as the Department is not receiving additional funds to maintain the new sites. In the past, many of the garden groups sought corporate and foundation grants to cover routine maintenance costs, and this will no doubt continue.

Non-Profit Organizations

While GreenThumb is a large and well-known program assisting gardens on public land, there are many non-profit greening groups in the city providing help to gardeners on private land as well. GreenThumb estimates that there are more than 20 organizations working to make the city a greener place. These groups are involved in creating community parks and gardens, planting and maintaining street trees, and beautifying the city's many parks.

Council on the Environment of New York City—The Council on the Environment of New York City (CENYC), founded in 1970, is a privately funded, citizens' organization that promotes environmental awareness and solutions to environmental problems. CENYC operates the Open Space Greening Program that works closely with GreenThumb. The Open Space Greening Program's Plant-a-Lot initiative has provided technical and material assistance to about 50 sites since 1978. In addition, through Grow Truck, the program loans garden tools, provides technical assistance and distributes donated plants and garden materials to community gardening groups. CENYC's focus now is putting money into community garden sites that have a five- to ten-year expected longevity. Therefore, they work primarily with sites that are privately owned or City-owned and in a situation that guarantees that they will not be sold for development in the near future. For example, CENYC assists 13 gardens on City-owned land adjacent to daycare centers. This land, according to Gerard Lordahl, the director of the Open Space Greening Program, is considered nearly as protected as the sites that were recently transferred to the Parks Department. The organization also assists 13 gardens on private land. Plant-a-Lot completes two or three new garden sites each year.

Ten of the 36 sites that were transferred to the Parks Department as of July 1998 were Plant-a-Lot sites that had been assisted by CENYC for many years. The transfer to the Parks Department requires that gardeners adhere to certain maintenance standards. Parks is primarily concerned

they are threatened. Indeed, thoughts of owning green spaces commonly emerge in response to the threat of development, but it is typically costly to purchase sites once there is development pressure. This lesson should be taken to heart by cities such as Baltimore where land prices remain affordable and community gardening is on the rise as a use for vacant open space.

Research Findings

Findings from Research in Other Cities

While there may be no single formula for success in promoting community management of open space, it is possible to identify those factors that appear to play a pivotal role in some of the most successful programs around the country. There are two equally important ingredients:

- One key ingredient is a citywide open space plan or strategy and local government support and leadership for community greening.

- Another key ingredient is a strong partnership among three types of service providers:

  • **Grass roots organizations**, most often community gardening groups that perform the physical labor and community organizing aspects of projects.

  • **Technical assistance groups**, usually non-profits, that provide support to the gardening groups through training sessions, start-up grants, grants for capital improvements, and a variety of other resources such as seeds, plants, mulch, compost and tools.

  • **Urban land trusts** that lend stability to projects by acquiring title to the properties, thus protecting them from the immediate pressures of development and in many cases preserving the sites in perpetuity.

Effective examples of this three-partner system were observed in Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago and, despite recent controversy, to some extent in New York City. The most outstanding example of a city having *both* of these ingredients is Chicago, with the twin forces of its CitySpace Plan and a land trust such as NeighborSpace. Chicago has the additional benefit of having one of the most elusive and enviable ingredients of a successful program—strong and

and

them. The end result is that open space functions less as an integrated, deliberate part of city fabric and is treated as a luxury rather than an essential part of a healthy, livable city.

Findings on Baltimore City Management of Open Space

Baltimore has a variety of institutional, bureaucratic, attitudinal, economic, political and legal barriers to effective management the City's neighborhood open spaces. Taken individually, these barriers are not insurmountable. Potential solutions have been proposed and piloted (some successfully) in Baltimore and other cities around the country. However, a fundamental obstacle that must be overcome with regard to City management of open space is the lack of recognition of vacant lots as a critical issue confronting the City. It is essential to begin to view vacant lots as an urgent problem having legal, economic, social and political dimensions and ramifications, rather than viewing them as an incidental and unavoidable characteristic of the City. Such a perspective is essential to the success of any comprehensive strategy for managing neighborhood open space in Baltimore. With such a strategy must come a recognition that well used and maintained open space makes a valuable contribution to a neighborhood that should be considered a permanent use of land rather than an interim use to ward off future blight. In addition, Baltimore needs a greater commitment from C219 Tosr15 Tc -0.2l5 Tc -h Tj -28.5 -iI

- Adequate funding.
- Age diversity among project participants.
- An organized and well-connected principle group with knowledge of available resources.
- A clear understanding of each person's role and responsibility.
- Support from City agencies or other service providers in terms of water, mulch, fencing, garbage collection, and other services.
- Presence of clear delineation of the open space, fenced in areas of high disturbance.
- Presence of a community-based or community-assisting organization to support the project and offer resources when necessary.
- Adaptability to changing interests over time.

Just as the specific objectives for creating and managing open space will vary so will the individual 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.
- 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.
- Transfer of knowledge and experience, e.g., between generations.

The Importance of Participation—Community-managed open space assumes that there is a sense of ownership of the open space—a sort of "privatization" of the space by either a group or an individual in order to improve the quality of life for the community as a whole. While, it does not require that the entire community be involved in managing the space, some community participation in each phase of the project (planning, design, implementation, maintenance) is essential. In most cases, there is a direct connection between the depth of community participation and the sustainability of the project.

Indeed, factors such as community cohesion, community interest/involvement, the existence of strong organizations, and access to information and resources seem to be the most likely indicators of whether or not a project will work. Information such as aggregated census data, crime statistics or numbers of abandoned property in a neighborhood are helpful in providing a "big picture" of the area, but do not appear to be of great importance in planning for community-managed open space.

On-going maintenance of a community-managed open space frequently requires efforts greater than that expended in the initial implementation of a project. Unfortunately, most project planning emphasizes implementation and gives little thought to how roles and responsibilities can be coordinated to maintain the site for the length of its existence. Depth in community participation and making participants aware of the maintenance needs of a given open space site during the planning and design phases are critical to the long term survival of community-managed open space sites.

Dynamic Nature of Open Space—As a community's needs change, the functional objectives 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 permanent, careful attention must be paid during redevelopment not to remove the very thing that prompted reinvestment in a given neighborhood.

Access to Information and Knowledge—The interaction, cooperation and information sharing between Baltimore agencies and other organizations need to be improved if increased community management of vacant open spaces is to be encouraged. Agencies and individuals tend to interact informally and on a case-by-case basis. City agencies are often not sure who is in charge of vacant lots and open spaces; community groups and individuals frequently do not know what resources are available to them or which agency to contact for specific needs. Links are seldom made between urban revitalization issues, such as economic development or drug abatement and the potential for community improvement through open space management. As a result, communities do not receive the support necessary to maintain vacant lots and other open spaces. Baltimore could do much to improve the availability of City resources, such as water on a site and access to good quality soil, compost, edging materials and fencing.

A partnership must exist between City agencies and community members if the communities are expected to manage at least some of their vacant lots and open spaces. One aspect of such a partnership would be the City's notification to the community association of an intended demolition, followed by cleaning the lot of debris, fencing and seeding the area, and posting relevant information on the property. Many organizations, such as churches and schools, are community resources that go unrecognized and under-utilized. If the City had a plan for notifying various groups about the availability of vacant lots, then open spaces could be created near City schools, used as outdoor education centers, or maintained by church beautification committees.

Neighborhood Service Centers (NSCs) are intended to be the City's "fingers" into the neighborhoods, yet they are largely uninvolved in open space issues. NSCs are designed to house a variety of City resources and staff contacts from key agencies. However, due to lack of funding, personnel, and/or training, they spend most of their time boarding up houses and reacting to crises, such as fires, rats, and crime. This leaves little or no time for any strategic planning or maintenance of vacant lots/open space.

Summary of Project Findings

• **Local government support is critical to the long-term sustainability of open space projects.** Partnerships and divisions of labor among community groups, non-profit organizations and local government agencies will likely yield spaces that meet community requirements as well as City goals.

• **Community participation and support is also critical to the short-term and long-term sustainability of open space projects.** Technical assistance organizations can help ensure successful open space projects. With strong community support driving the process, technical assistance providers can: provide materials and resources during the planning and installation phases; and help community members develop/improve their organizational and leadership capacity.

• **Cities with strong, effective open space programs often have a three-partner structure consisting of organizer (grassroots groups), greener (technical assistance organizations), and property owner (typically land trusts).** Nonetheless, cities that lack this structure may also have innovative programs supporting community management of open space. Baltimore can learn from both examples.

• **Cities with organized, proactive umbrella organizations of greening groups are better equipped to solicit and benefit from the support of local governments. (Boston, Chicago and Philadelphia are inspiring examples).** Cities with smaller, more decentralized greening programs are generally less able to garner significant governmental support.

• **A fundamental obstacle in Baltimore is the lack of recognition of vacant lots and other small open spaces as a critical issue confronting the City.** It is essential to begin to see vacant lots as an urgent problem having legal, economic, social and political dimensions and ramifications, rather than viewing them as an incidental and unavoidable character of the City.

• **Well-tended gardens and other types of community-managed open space demonstrate care and participation by communities and foster a greater sense of pride and security among residents and visitors.** Such visible signs of care can attract additional development, which can, in some cases, compete with the very spaces that fostered it. Therefore, cities and local communities should develop a means of protecting these spaces while development pressures are low.

• **Community-managed open space provides community benefits in numerous (direct and indirect) ways and must fit the needs, resources, and objectives of the group using and/or maintaining the site. Such sites should not be classified as successes or failures based on appearance alone.**

Recommendations

Following the research phase of this project, a committed group of people representing public agencies, community groups and nonprofit organizations came together to suggest

- Conduct neighborhood-based auctions of surplus pub

should recognize the benefits of community greening to include community building, food production, open space maintenance, recreation, education, and job development.

- Explore contracting with community groups interested in assuming maintenance responsibilities or bid out the maintenance work to other private entities.
- Implement and promote a long-term lease or "lot-steading" program for City-owned properties.
- Coordinate management responsibilities for vacant lots among interested and capable non-profit organizations.
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Finally, all the major players involved in improving the management and maintenance of Baltimore's many neighborhood open spaces are working to bring increased funding to this aspect of neighborhood revitalization. City officials highlighted the need for more funding of community greening efforts in the City's comprehensive plan with recommendations for increased funding.

The initiation of detailed planning for Neighborhood Planning Program should aide in undertaking open space planning and projects within the context of a neighborhood plan.

As a result of preliminary findings in this project, the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development provided funding to the Parks & People Foundation to establish a Vacant Lot Restoration Program that has provided assistance to 25 community groups. Baltimore is also fortunate to have a new local foundation, the TKF Foundation, interested in community greening activities.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this report are based on a brief but intensive study of selected community-managed open space in Baltimore and a review of greening programs in six other cities. While the successes and failures identified are in many ways unique to the sites themselves, they also illustrate the challenges commonly experienced by communities everywhere in managing open space. The breadth of these challenges suggests a variety of possible solutions, including some common sense measures that Baltimore should incorporate into its open space management practices. However, just because these ideas seem straightforward does not imply that the institutional obstacles are not substantial. The most urgent need is a comprehensive policy for open space management that addresses the ever-pressing issues of vacancy and land abandonment and supports an array of open space management schemes. To implement such a policy means a thorough re-examination of current practices.

Supporting research and generating new options for open space management is an important first step. But the problems of vacancy and land abandonment have grown too great for the City to delay any longer, and it is time for action. Policies and procedures at all levels of City government must be adapted to current demographic and economic realities. Community-managed open space must be recognized as one part of a larger, Citywide strategy for open space. Communities that are already struggling simply cannot support the vast quantities of vacant lots on their own, nor should they be expected to. A proactive approach to land use management that makes the connection between the economic, environmental and social health of Baltimore is *essential* to meeting the challenges posed by the changing urban landscape.

Despite its struggles with a dwindling population and shrinking tax base, Baltimore has often been an innovator and leader among American cities. Large capital projects such as those at the Inner Harbor and Camden Yards are much envied and have been replicated elsewhere. The City's "dollar house" program in the 1970s transformed and preserved a number of historic

Appendix A

Interviews

City Management of Small Open Spaces in Baltimore

Department of Recreation and Parks
Gennady Schwartz
Mary Porter
Fran Spero

Department of Planning
Jim French
Peter Conrad
Myra Brosius

Department of Housing and Community Development
Dennis Taylor
Denise Duvall

Department of Education
Raymond Short
Albert Harris

Department of Public Works
Warren Williams
Kurt Kocher
Christy Guadnagna
William Beatty

Department of Law
Leslie Winner

Office of Real Estate
Anthony Ambridge

Bureau of Management Information Systems
Jim Huculak

Office of City Council President
Jody Landers

Community-Managed Open Space in Baltimore

The Duncan Street Gardeners, in particular Francis Brown, Earl Fields, Alan Thorton, Mr. Howard and Mr. Lewis

The Harwood-26ers Community Association and the 25th St. Business Association, in particular Betty Palmer-Gregg, Nathaniel Gregg, Betty Wilson, Hillary Mettsinger and Alan Klug.

The Sandtown-Winchester Community Gardeners: Joe Morris, Dorothy Snead, Elizabeth Rollins, and John Alvez

Appendix B

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Appendix C

Vacant Lot to Green Space Survey: How Do Other U.S. Cities Manage Their Vacant Land and Encourage Development of Green Space?

The following questions were asked via telephone interviews as well as some written responses. All questions were not relevant to all informants. Interviewees were instructed to ignore those they could not answer, but to try to provide other contacts where possible.

What is the mission/purpose of your agency or organization?

- What is your position there?
- What are your primary responsibilities?
- What are the main obstacles to achieving your agency/organizations goals?

Community Management Questions:

What incentives does the City offer community members for participating in its vacant lot programs?

- Guarantee of security?
- Long term leases?
- What do you think community groups want from the City?

To what extent is community management happening?

- How widespread is it in the city?
- What types of uses occur on community managed lots?

Where does community management of open space occur?

- What neighborhoods and why?
- Why not other neighborhoods?

What was the process that led to establishment of these community-managed sites?

- Who owns these lots?
- How does the owner acquire the property?
- How is the issue of liability/liability insurance handled?

Questions for City employees :

What agency plants and cares for street trees?

- Who removes concrete to create tree pits?
- Are any non-governmental organizations that are active in tree planting?
- Who would a homeowner call if he/she wanted a tree planted in front of their house?

Other Contacts (in your city or others):

Land Trust Questions:

What is the need for urban land trust/s in your city?

What land trust/s exist in your city? When were they formed, why and by whom?

What is the purpose of the land trust/s (if more than one type, are their functions/purposes different?) – preservation of open space, gaining control of properties for future use, pooling insurance needs, technical/legal assistance in getting access to properties?

What scale does/do the urban land trust/s operate on (number and size of properties in your city?

How does/do the land trust/s deal with maintenance on the spaces they own?

What is the screening process for land trust member groups?

What services does the trust provide (to member groups)?

Does the trust operate on City owned or private land or both?

Appendix D

City Departments, Bureaus, and Agencies Involved in the Management of Open Spaces

1. Baltimore City Hospital
2. Department of Public Works - Bureau of General Services
3. Department of Public Works - Bureau of Solid Waste
4. Department of Public Works - Bureau of Water and Waste Water
5. Department of Public Works - Bureau of Transportation

Parks & People Foundation
1901 Eagle Drive, Baltimore, MD 21207
TEL: (410) 448-5663
www.parksandpeople.org