



Ginter Gardener Group

Jackson Ward
& Fulton



Litter



AO
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lets
love
come

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our
community



..Peaceful Progress

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Forecast

//Introduction of Findings



Figure: First cohort outside of the conservatory

The Ginter Urban Gardeners are an emerging, collaborative force of leaders addressing the social inequalities of the urban environment of the Greater Richmond region. The narratives of the first two cohorts are unique in how they helped shape the direction of this leadership program, specifically in regards to their role in providing public services to disadvantaged communities. Both the Jackson Ward and Fulton neighborhoods served as an ideal testing ground for the development of this program, especially with these areas' challenging urban history. The participants in these cohorts develop considerable experiences and technical skills that are now being employed in a variety of spin-off projects throughout the metropolitan area. These projects are critical

in regards to the principles of sustainable community development, which requires organic continuation by the community. The Ginter Urban Gardeners have started making progress towards this through expanding collaborative partnerships as well as promoting awareness by civic leadership in the region.

This report provides an in-depth analysis on the development of these two cohorts of Ginter Urban Gardeners. It addresses the collective experiences and lessons learned by the participants, who provided the research team with in-person interviews on their personal accounts of the program. Utilizing primary new reports, photos, and other internal documents from this organization, and relevant outside literature, a more comprehensive understanding has been obtained of these cohorts' development.

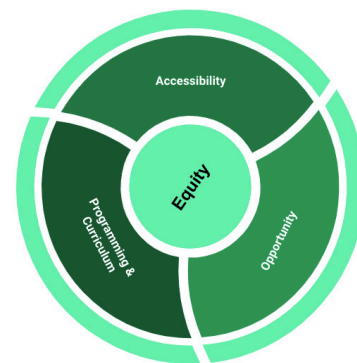


Figure: Equity is the epicenter of equal opportunity, easy accessibility, and mindfulness of programming



Introduction

// Building Community



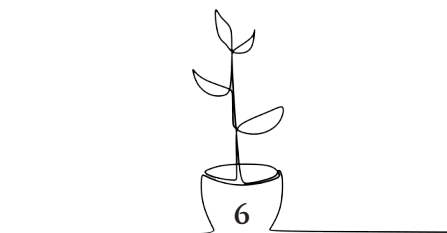
Figure: Duron Chavis, Manager of Community Engagement, helping prior cohort members on a community project

“ Environmental improvement and economic growth at the expense of social equity does not count as urban sustainability ”

~ Gould & Lewis

Ginter Urban Gardener Program

A 12-week-long program through Beautiful RVA [that] teaches sustainable horticulture, urban greening and community building, to provide citizens with the skills necessary to increase community-supported green spaces. Beautiful RVA is a regional collaborative and social movement of public and private agencies, organizations, and individuals all invested in improving the quality of life in Richmond.



ABCD Methodology

//Story Mapping



Figure: Visualizing Asset-Based Community Development

The primary methodology used in this research was the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, which allowed for meaningful dialogue and reflection by past Ginter Urban Gardener cohort members. This approach emphasizes the empowerment of residents as actors of change. By working with an individual through the process of self-discovery and identifying their gifts, it allows for a comprehensive approach in nurturing community development.

Analysis of these gifts are examined in the context of individual community members, associations that are serving as platforms for these activities, and the participation of other residents in producing citizen power. Synergy created by this collaborative effort by a local community can have a tremendous impact in altering the built environment while empowering residents to address systemic issues that have inhibited their growth.

Story map figure (next page) shows the spread of community resources and gifts noted



Space //place

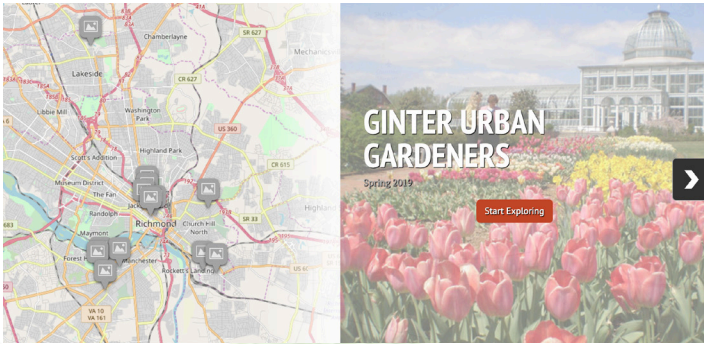


Figure: Introduction page to the resource story map we created for Lewis Ginter using an ABCD framework



Figure: Transforming a physical space into a personal place.

In the early-to-mid 1900's, both Fulton and Jackson Ward were thriving neighborhoods filled with growing majority populations of African Americans. However, by the mid-to-late century Urban Renewal in the form of highway 95 construction and demolition of buildings, the neighborhoods had hollowed out. In present day, they are current targets of gentrification within Richmond, Virginia. One of the main focuses in the Ginter Urban Garden curriculum is creating green spaces in urban places. Many of the skills taught revolve around the fact that the students can contribute to the garden during the session but can also take these skills to their own personal spaces. Throughout the process of building the narrative between the two cohorts (Jackson Ward and Fulton) neighborhoods, there were several similar themes that prevailed; transformation and equity. Not only do these themes stand alone and have context within themselves, but they also intersect within each other. This makes the Ginter Urban Gardener program that much more unique and successful.

From Space to Place

The Ginter Urban Gardeners are taking an approach that is a mixture of grassroots and urban tacticalism in order to address the ever-changing spaces of Richmond by teaching the people within the cohorts how to create green spaces in urban places using the natural



Scan this square code to see our story map



The Ginter Urban Gardeners are taking an approach that is a mixture of grassroots and urban tacticalism in order to address the ever-changing spaces of Richmond by teaching the people within the cohorts how to create green spaces in urban places using the natural and built environments. Within this theme, three separate forms of transformation can be identified. Each can stand alone as well as impacts the other two.

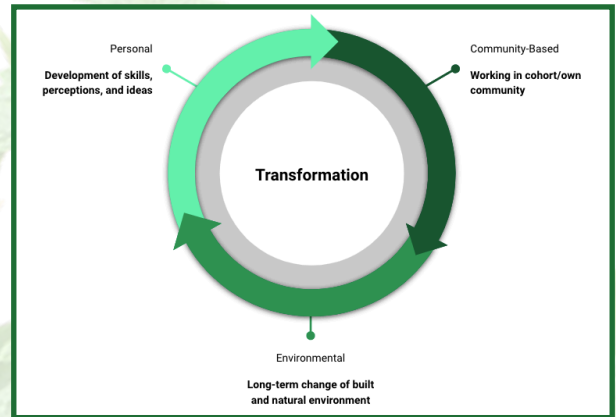


Figure: Showing our literature's connection to the themes

Personal

This is the development of skills, perceptions, and ideas for each individual person participating. It includes takeaways and experiences that changed the previous abilities and opinions everyone had. Participants not only learned how to create a garden, but how to identify and solve community issues of the natural and built environment. Many people have spoken to taking what they learned and starting their own personal gardens because of their growth of gardening knowledge.

Community-Based

Cohort members were able to learn cohesive practices of teamwork within their specific cohorts as they each cultivated individual skills. They were also able to learn skills about interaction with local community members in the neighborhoods assigned to their cohorts. Working within a specific neighborhood created a space for participants to form relationships outside of the cohort and understand the importance of community engagement.

Environmental

While the program is still young, it has long term impact potential. Sustainability is the ultimate goal of the program and the city of Richmond is the scope. The most tangible outcome of the Ginter Urban Gardeners at the end of each session was a garden built within the community which is an obvious change in space. With the continuation of this program, there will be long-term changes within the built and natural environments all around Richmond.



Figure: Personal transformation through conversation



Profile

// Jackson Ward



Figure: Mural in Jackson Ward district

Jackson Ward is located less than one mile from the Virginia State Capitol building. It was listed as a National Historic Landmark District in 1978. "Jackson Ward" was the original name of the area's political district from 1871 to 1905. Though this nomenclature is now outdated, the name has remained in use long after losing its original meaning (Virginia Department of Historic Resources. 2019).

The neighborhood developed before the Civil War and originally was populated primarily by citizens of German and Jewish extraction but with many free blacks. After the war Jackson Ward gradually became predominantly black. Redevelopment and expressway construction have reduced its size, but the remaining blocks place Jackson Ward among the nation's largest historic

districts associated primarily with black culture.

Jackson Ward is significant as the center of Richmond, Virginia's African American community. The neighborhood is the last surviving residential area in downtown Richmond with great architectural and historical interest. The entire Jackson Ward Historic District is one of two districts in the City of Richmond that are National Historic Landmarks. This recognition was spurred by the importance of Jackson Ward in African American History. Jackson Ward was the largest African American community in Richmond, as well as a national center for African American economic and cultural activity. The neighborhood was home to banks, insurance companies, clubs, and other commercial and social institutions. Jackson Ward was home to Maggie Lena Walker, the first woman in America to found and lead a bank in the United States when she opened the St. Luke Penny Savings (National Park Service, 2019).

Jackson Ward also hosted a thriving entertainment district centered around the infamous Hippodrome theatre. Among the names that appeared regularly were Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, a Richmond native. Jackson Ward was also the home to a number of large and well-known African-American churches, including the Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, founded by famous orator John Jasper.



Profile

//Fulton Hill



Figure: Mosaic signage in Fulton Hill

Historic Fulton was once around 350 acres of Richmond's East End, including the neighborhood now known as Rocketts Landing. Once a neighborhood comprised of churches, doctor's offices, fire stations, schools, restaurants, and stores, all of Historic Fulton Hill was razed -- uprooting several thousand people in the year of 1970. The demolition was directly related to Urban Renewal policies that destroyed black communities in Richmond and across the United States. What makes Fulton's urban renewal experience different than other neighborhoods in Richmond is that the entire neighborhood was demolished, not just a section. Part of the reason that Fulton was picked under urban renewal policies is around the 1960s the neighborhood was in a physical decline because of poverty and negligent

landlords. In recent years and through community action, Fulton Hill's community is returning strong and is now one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Richmond. The community pride and desire for neighborhood identity made this a perfect second location for the Ginter Urban Gardeners.

Part of the reason that the Fulton neighborhood was chosen for the second cohort is not just because of the history and the impact that had on modern day Fulton but also because one of the participants was a resident of Fulton. The garden that the cohort designed and implemented was a plan developed by one of the second-cohort's members. In an interview with Randee Humphrey, Community Engagement Coordinator, she stated "my recollection of [why Beautiful RVA chose Fulton]... it was quite serendipitous: here's someone that has a project and here's an organization and group of people that are looking for a project." There was an emphasis placed on getting community engagement in both the implementation and the design. "We endeavored to get people from Fulton involved in the envisioning session when a community meeting gave us the idea to reach out to people in the east end." It was less about what Beautiful RVA wanted in the garden or even the cohort but more of a focus on what the community wanted and what the community thought the neighborhood needed.



Program Impact

Currently, the Ginter Urban Gardeners curriculum is sustainability-based. The measured impact can be defined in three categories: plants, people, and places.

Plants

This boils down to not just plants, but natural resources and their location. It is typical for lower-income neighborhoods to be located in areas away from natural resources such as rivers, lakes, forests, etc. and are instead located near “blighted” areas such as garbage dumps and power plants. In these places it is not only more difficult to grow natural life because of the soil, but it is a health hazard to live near the mass pollution as well. So in their processes of planting these gardens, they are combating the natural state of pollution with every carbon-absorbing plant placed.

People

The next step in the ring of sustainable outcomes is sustainable people. This involves actively engaging and understanding the community being served as well as figuring out ways they can continuously be involved in urban greening. Teaching people how to garden, how to responsibly recycle, and how to advocate for accessible healthier food options are all focus areas impacting people. These were not community gardens built for the community, these were community gardens built with the community. Every community has different wants, needs, and ways of addressing them. As the Ginter Urban Gardeners learned this, they transformed as people. So inherently, people impacted people, who then impacted people. That is wholesome community development.



Figure: Three prongs of sustainability (people, place, and plants)



Literature Findings

Places

The ultimate goal of environmental sustainability within a city is to create something that either is or mirrors a Biophilic city. This incorporates abundance of green spaces, cohesion between the natural and built environments, and people actively engaging in waste-eliminating habits. In many ways, a community garden is the first step to local, community-driven sustainability. Upon completion of this program, many Ginter Urban Gardeners either created their own personal garden or joined another organization to continue gardening practices elsewhere.

Biophilic Cities

As Richmond moves toward becoming a more Biophilic City, the Ginter Urban Gardeners Program can become a leader in the manifestation of this designation. Through the transformation of vacant land, the implementation of sustainability, and the development of equity, all of which are the key assets of the Ginter Urban Gardeners Program, Richmond will set an excellent standard as part of the Biophilic Cities Network.

The Biophilic Cities Network is a concept created by Timothy Beatley at the University of Virginia. He created this concept from E.O. Wilson's teachings on biophilia. As a Harvard entomologist, Wilson defines biophilia as the innately emotional affiliation of people to other living things (Beatley, 2016). Modifying



Figure: Sifting through transcriptions for key themes

this concept and applying it to cities, Timothy Beatley connected the love of nature (philia) and the natural world and living things (bio) and applied this to modern city planning and design (Beatley, 2016).

The connections with nature, the nurturing, the protecting, the involvement with the natural world around us, are the key activities in which people need to participate to improve their health and wellbeing. The Biophilic City concept emphasizes the importance of urban nature. (Beatley, 2016). Some pre-existing conditions that indicate a city is ready for a biophilic designation are as follows: percent of city population living or working within 300 meters of a green space or natural element, percentage of city budget devoted to nature conservation restoration and education, percentage of primary school student exposed to nature education, percentage of population



that is outside and doing physical outdoor activity for at least 30 minutes a day, percentage of low income/minority neighborhoods with access to nature and measurable progress to overcome inequitable distributions of urban nature through planning (Standards and Protocol for Participation in the Biophilic Cities Network). This is the niche the Ginter Urban Gardeners Program can fill to assist Richmond as a biophilic city.

Transformation

Vacant urban land as broadly defined by Pagano and Bowman (2000), is different types of land that is non-utilized or underutilized such as raw dirt, perimeter agricultural land that is not cultivated, brownfields and greenfields, land that supports abandoned structures, and/or land that is not currently used by humans. Though vacant land can be anywhere, Nemeth and Langhort note (2014) that urban vacant land will most likely occur along transportation corridors, and areas of transition (former industrial or commercial areas), city edges and suburbs, or random individual lots in downtowns or neighborhoods. Developability can be influenced by physical conditions of the land, regulations on the land, and/or the real estate market. As a result, the impending use of vacant urban land can be unsettled and uncertain. However, it should also be viewed as an opportunity. As Berger (2006) theorizes in *Drosscape*, urban vacant land is a natural component of an evolving city and an indication of healthy growth patterns. Cities go through cycles: production, growth, waste, shrinkage; vacant land is part of the cycle. Thus urban vacant lands have the

potential to be commoditized once an urban economy improves.

Open land has the potential to support many new planned and unplanned activities. Vacant land can be viewed as a resource that can provide opportunities for transformative social and ecological processes; community gardens, urban agriculture projects, reuse of buildings, alternative business venues, stormwater management, heat island mitigation, improved soil, air and water quality (Nemeth & Langhort, 2014). Using urban vacant land as community gardens provides the most comprehensive use of the space and can address the majority of the issue incurred by vacant urban land. Gardening has developed as an alternative to vacancy and has led to increased security, beautification and cooperation within communities (Schukoske, 2000).

Furthermore, Drake and Lawson (2015) state that community gardens and vacant land are readily at the center of urban policy and planning issues to the point where transforming vacant land into urban green commons and community gardens has entered planning and policy discussions. These efforts are beginning to correct the past with the lack of social planning in comprehensive plans (Schukoske, 2000).

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Agricultural Sustainability

Food security is an issue for inner cities, suburbs and rural communities in North America. Some areas may have no local grocery store selling healthy food or families may not have the money to purchase healthier choices (Wheeler, 2004). Concerns about the quality and cost of food and food security have increase the interest in growing food locally. (Guitart, et al. 2012). Community gardens can supply this demand; community gardens encourage agro-biodiversity which supports food security. (Guitart et al. 2012).

Industrial agriculture has created a disconnect between people and the food system. Community gardens can provide a reconnection point for people and the food system (Turner, et al. 2011). Carney et al's (2012) study found that vegetable consumption increased among adults and children who participated in their community gardening study, and the participants' concerns regarding food security decreased from 31% to 3% after the gardening project. These findings support Lyson's construct of civic

agriculture as the answer to the local problem of food security (2005). Therefore, community gardens can resolve food security issues in an urban setting.

Equity

Social equity is a requisite for a biophilic city. Ginter Urban Gardeners' diversification is partly the reason for their outstanding biophilic status within Richmond. From Richmond's history comes a inordinate unbalance in residential neighborhoods based on race and income. As a biophilic city, Richmond will need to address these issues sooner rather than later. The term "green gentrification" has been developed from similar literature on environmental injustice. It represents the environmental wrongdoings in society, such as toxic pollutants and locally unwanted land uses, which are disproportionately found in minority and poor neighborhoods (Gould & Lewis, 2018).

Though social justice is supposed to be a part of any definition of sustainability, usually it is not. Sustainability is often associated with the environment, ecology and/or energy usage, thus the social dimension is obscured. Yet, sustainable development can provide communities with alternative ways of thinking about economic development, resource use, and social justice (Curran, W., & Hamilton, T, n.d.). The Ginter Urban Gardeners has the resources and talents to address all facets of sustainability. The program can lead Richmond into a complete biophilic future.




Listening to Members

In utilizing Asset-Based Community Development in this project's research, a variety of interview techniques were chosen for implementation. In-person interviews were obviously the optimal method for conducting this research for a number of reasons. First, they provide the respondent with a more personal form of contact with the researchers, which has the capacity to help build trust in the interview situation and potentially encourage a more natural exchange of information. Next, the in-person interviews were recorded with a camera and can be referenced in the future, as well as provide audio and video media clips that can be inserted into the story map and enhance the themes by providing a personal connection through hearing a story told through the voice of a real person who actually experienced what they're discussing, not just through the lens of the researcher. Additional survey methods were chosen for this research for a number of reasons, more importantly of which was a lack of in-person interviewee responses. Surveys were created online and emailed to Ginter Urban Gardener cohort members, providing an easier method for respondents to provide data.



Interview Methods



In total, the combined cohorts provided the research team with nine interviews, four of which were taken as online surveys and five of which were conducted in-person. The Richmond Public Library - Main Branch was chosen as the site for conducting in-person interviews because it is a more easily accessible location and provided a place free from distraction in which interviews could be conducted.

Past Member Reflections

Interview Results

From the information gathered over the course of two months, we were able to interview ten different people, either in the development of the program or participants of the program. We were able to gather what aspects of the Ginter Urban Gardener program are impactful and what aspects need change or adjustments. All interviews were positive with their experience in the Ginter Urban Gardener program and the direction Duron Chavis, the Manager of Community Engagement, is taking the organization. There were few recommendations on things that Chavis could change to improve the program beyond expanding the curriculum and offering activities post-program.

One of the things that saturated the interviews was the desire for structured activities after the program ended. Many participants felt that they did not have the

personal time to dedicate to creating their own events and want to rely on Beautiful RVA to offer space and time for them to regularly meet. This is something that is already being addressed by Beautiful RVA with January 2019 starting the first of many quarterly meetings throughout the year.

This opportunity, as stated by Randee Humphrey - the Community Engagement Coordinator, the quarterly meetings "get people together face to face to learn what is motivating them...[Beautiful RVA] can report out from an organizational standpoint but also invite [participants] to give their updates". The interviews led to back recommendations for future sustainable development of the Ginter Urban Gardeners program, understanding the time limitations of both the staff and the participants.



Recommendations

//Locating the Resources



Figure: Urban development can only be achieved when everyone is hands-on and passionate about the goal

From both the Jackson Ward and Fulton cohort interviews, the outline below represents the recommendations mentioned by the Ginter Urban Gardeners. Other recommendations listed, we created as a group based on problems and solutions that we feel need attention. The following categories are the focus of the Ginter Urban Gardening program: Sustainable Plants, Sustainable Places, and Sustainable People. Our recommendations are centered around these topics.

Follow Up Meetings

Ginter Urban Gardeners' Program should offer discounts on Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden classes. "I took urban gardening because I wanted to get better at being a gardener and learning how to take care of the plants, I probably could use another session...there's a lot of information if your not doing it everyday you tend to now hold onto it...maybe a webinar every month that reflects on what we have learned". This would act as an incentive to registering for Gardening Master classes so that participants plant level education base is retained.

Seasonal Plant Packages

As Toni, a Cohort Fulton participant stated, "To expand my skill set and become a better asset to the community". Ginter Urban Gardeners' Program should offer plant packages on a scheduled basis for Gardeners to help them continue to add to their gardens or help to develop a new garden in a new community area.



Recommendations

//Locating the Resources

Mentoring

The Community Engagement Manager should have space to teach participants some of the program duties to expand the capacity of both the Director and the Ginter Urban Gardeners. This can go beyond participants in the program, Participant Kai felt strongly that, "One of the exciting things for me is getting the kids involved... what I realized in the city there isn't a lot of green space so [growing food] can be a foreign concept to the kids".

Communication Training

Ginter Urban Gardeners should be trained in presentation skills and offered the ability to sit on panels, table, or present to free up time for the Manager of Community Engagement. Participants in the program all have different backgrounds that led them to the program. This would be an opportunity to allow this message to be branded for different communities that may not have considered food access and urban greening. "Pull in folks that may not gravitate towards it on their own, but like I said we all eat...engage the community more...the folks that may not have an interest to get interested".

Social Media Internship

Social Media, Events, Marketing, Editorial, etc. Interns will allow structured and natural growth of the Ginter Urban Gardeners Program by providing the ability to broaden the scope and outreach of the program beyond people that are interested. "All aspects of the food system, I mean we're putting it in our body...my passion having the next generation know these things so that our world will still be somewhat intact for years to come".



Figure: Visualizing good communication and mentorship by using pictures from a prior Ginter Urban Gardeners project



Alumni Network

A regularly updated list of contact information and gardening information for each participant in the Ginter Urban Gardening Program. This will make it easier to offer continued education and program outreach methods listed in the above recommendations. As Randee Humphrey, the Community Engagement Coordinator stated there is a “desire to get people together face to face to learn what is motivating them...we can report out from an organizational standpoint but also invite [participants] to give their updates”.

Slack Channel

A digital platform to allow Ginter Urban Gardeners the space to communicate in real time and gather cohort knowledge on a variety of topics that can pop up in community gardening. “A platform to stay connected and reinforce what we’ve learned”. And as Participant Toni Cohort Fulton stated, “this group is full of talented people that I have been able to learn from and share with”.



Figure: Image used in story map to exhibit the importance of building a “social community”





Gardening-Specific Events

Gardening specific events so that cohort members can work with each other in the garden and allows guaranteed participation days for each garden in the Beautiful RVA portfolio. "[Neighborhood Resource Center] had a program where you come help out in their garden and they'll come help you with a garden. If you're building a garden and you don't have a group of friends that are gardeners you're kind of on your own. So knowing that the community had that piece for me once I get a house in the area was really cool".

Certifications

Upon successfully fulfilling all obligations through the duration of this program, participants should be incentivized for their time. A certification shows growth, credibility, and action-orientation. This will also open doors of opportunity for participant's futures outside of Lewis Ginter. "Having opportunities outside of the program supported by Lewis Ginter has been the most important factor to my continued participation in the urban gardening community"



Conclusion

//Future Goals

Beautiful RVA

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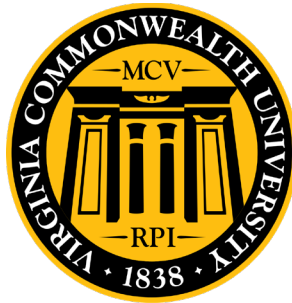


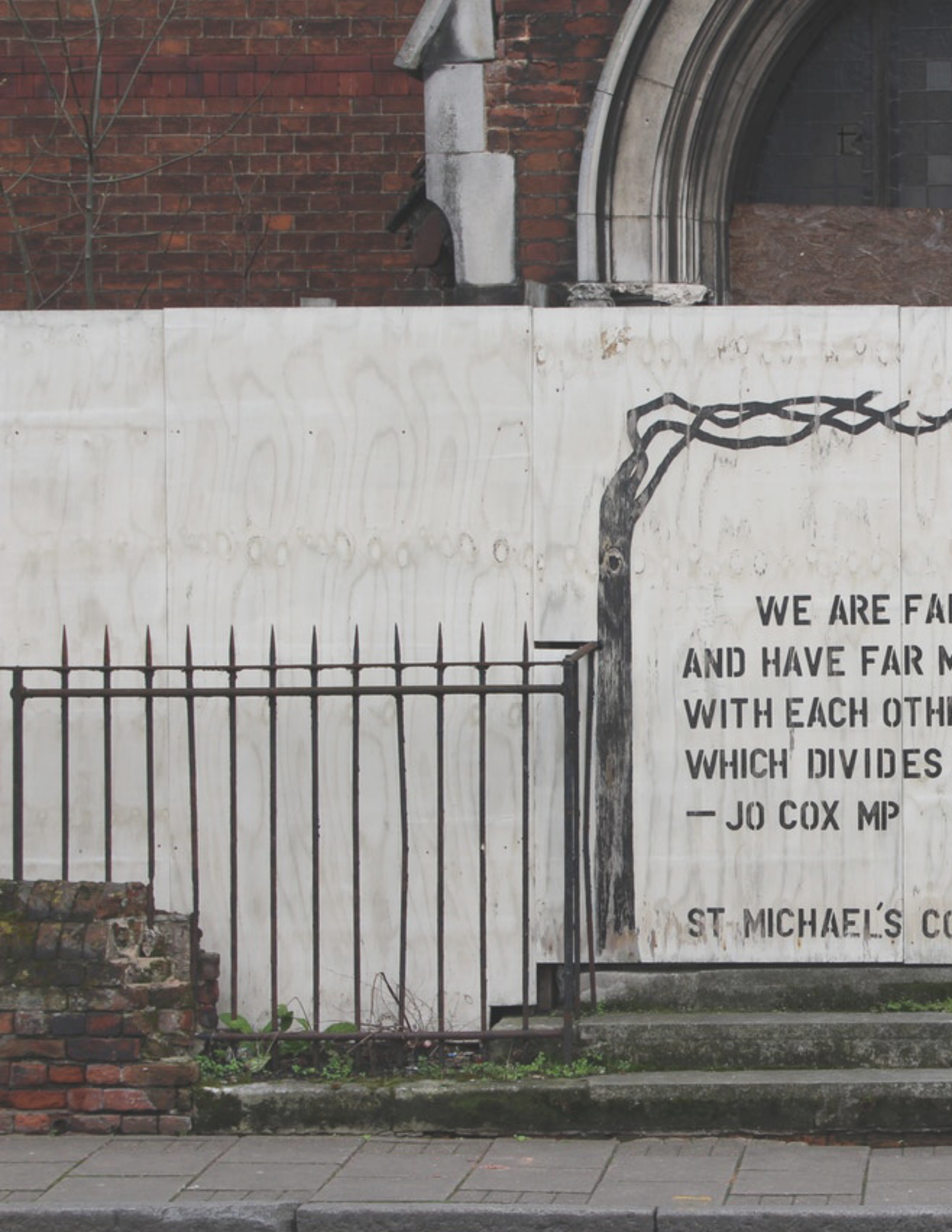
Figure: Providing logos of programs involved to conclude by acknowledging every part in this project

Social justice is supposed to be an explicit part of any definition of sustainability. Both, environmental and social equity must progress simultaneously for justice to unfold.

The research conducted in this project sought to uncover the themes emerging from the different spaces enhanced and fostered through the Ginter Urban Gardeners program in Richmond and further submit recommendations to support community-building based around urban greening through the lens of Asset-Based Community Development. Although some limitations in the research process presented themselves, the team was able to recognize the themes of equity, transformation, and sustainability developed from the GUG program and inherent in the work carried out by its participants and community residents.

Furthermore, the recommendations provided through analysis of this research encompassed the three categories of sustainable plants, sustainable places, and sustainable people, all of which can be applied to diverse urban greening projects with the goals of ABCD in mind. While the collaborative continues to foster civic engagement development through preparation of new cohort members, Lewis Ginter is actively taking measure to express appreciation for their foundational urban changemakers rather than shifting focus entirely to GUG participants. That, in itself, speaks to the strong sense of community they've already preached and procured from within.





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Meet The Team



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Environmental improvement and economic growth at the expense of social equity does not count as urban sustainability.