

Waite House: Phillips Community Healthy Living

Impacts and opportunities: Results from a discussion of Waite House's work under the Phillips Community Healthy Living initiative

In 2013, Waite House received funding from the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota to implement policy, systems, and environmental changes to address health inequities experienced by low-income communities of color living in the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis. Three coalitions were established through the initiative: the 24th Street Urban Farm Coalition, the Fitness Coalition, and the Healthy Food Access Coalition. The 24th Street Urban Farm Coalition has worked to engage and educate Phillips residents in all aspects of urban farming through work in the 24th Street Urban Farm (Mashkiikii Gitigan, or “Medicine Garden”) and several other community gardens, including the new Infinity Garden which opened during the gardening season in 2014. The Fitness Coalition has worked to increase Phillips residents’ access to and involvement in physical activity by administering micro-grants to community members and local organizations to lead activities, classes, or programs related to physical fitness. The Healthy Food Access Coalition has worked to increase access to healthy foods by advocating for changes in local food shelf policies, as well as food policies in their own organizations.

In November 2014, a group of 14 project stakeholders were invited to a Ripple Effect Mapping discussion about the project’s impact in the community. The discussion group was made up of members of each of the three coalitions, organizational partners, community residents, micro-grant recipients, and Waite House staff. The discussion was intended to not only provide the participants a chance to consider how successful the project has been in achieving its intended goals, but also to identify the indirect or unexpected project impacts. In addition, follow-up interviews were conducted with two staff members from a partner organization who were not able to attend the discussion, but who had been involved in Phillips Community Health Living’s (PCHL) gardening work.

What is Ripple Effect Mapping?

Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) is an evaluation tool used to better understand the intended and unintended impacts of a project. It is particularly helpful when evaluating complex initiatives that both influence, and are impacted by, the community. REM is a facilitated discussion with project staff and local stakeholders that creates a visual “mind map” during the discussion that shows the linkages between program activities and resulting changes in the community.

This approach is intended to help demonstrate the project’s impacts more holistically and to describe the degree to which different types of impacts are observed by project staff and community stakeholders.

PROJECT IMPACTS

During the discussion, all participants had opportunities to describe PCHL’s achievements and to discuss the indirect impacts of their work. The participants grouped each of these observed impacts into six main types of changes that had taken place as a result of the project: new or strengthened relationships between organizations; greater food availability and access; policy changes; increased knowledge, experience, and awareness; deeper connections to culture and the land; and stronger relationships among residents. Participants were not asked to rank the relative importance of these impacts in relationship to one another. However, the graphic included in this summary does show how many times the participants identified a change in each key area and offers a few examples of key impacts identified by the participants. A summary of the discussion related to each area of change is included in the summary, and the specific impacts identified by the participants during the mind mapping exercise are listed in the appendix.

Ripple Effects Mapping: Phillips Community Healthy Living

FOSTERING CONNECTIONS AMONG COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Participants are making new connections to other members of the community through gardening and physical fitness programs

Participants are finding opportunities to give back to the programs through continuing involvement and sharing skills learned

23%

BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS AMONG ORGANIZATIONS

PCHL is supporting opportunities for organizations doing similar work around healthy food access to connect

Organizations represented on the coalitions are sharing resources, making referrals to each other, or developing new partnerships

PCHL is helping organizations outside of the Phillips neighborhood connect to residents within the community

20%

STRENGTHENING CULTURE AND THE CONNECTIONS TO THE LAND

Youth are developing stronger connections to the land through the community gardens

Communities are connecting around land, food, and culture

15%

INCREASING KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE, AND AWARENESS

Participants are trying new foods and increasing knowledge of and interest in nutrition and gardening

Micro-grants supporting physical fitness are helping women in the community develop new skills and greater confidence

Organizations are incorporating practices such as composting into their work

Programs are developing new knowledge of community needs

17%

CHANGING POLICIES

PCHL is advocating for staple food ordinances supporting healthier staple foods in pharmacies and corner stores

15%

PCHL is working on changing foodshelf policy related to food sharing

There is evidence of growing political support for urban agriculture

CONTRIBUTING TO GREATER FOOD AVAILABILITY AND ACCESS

Produce from Mashkiikii Gitigan is being distributed through local foodshelves, community cafes, farmers markets, and other avenues

11%

PCHL is working to keep food grown in the Phillips neighborhood distributed locally

Phillips Community Healthy Living



Building and strengthening connections among organizations

One in five of the changes identified by the group participants related to new or strengthened relationships with other organizations. PCHL has supported a network of organizations doing related work, especially around healthy food access. Group participants indicated that PCHL has also provided opportunities for large institutions such as the Children's Hospital and the Minneapolis Health Department to sit down with smaller community organizations. These connections have helped organizations share resources including volunteers, training materials and food, make referrals to one another, and form new partnerships both within and outside of the coalitions. Group participants also shared that they are more aware of different events and happenings in the community as a result of informal discussions they have had at these gatherings.

One micro-grant recipient located outside of the Phillips neighborhood also reported that PCHL has helped them to make connections to residents in that community. As a result of the micro-grant, the organization also formed working relationships with Minneapolis Parks and Recreation and a local business.

All these organizations are within a few blocks of each other and weren't connecting on anything. The farm and garden projects brought everyone together.

Children's Hospital is a large institution. Large institutions don't always sit down together in their neighborhood. They don't always think about how they can be connected with other residents. That has been an advantage - collaboration with larger organizations.



Contributing to greater food availability and access

The discussion participants identify a number of ways that PCHL has contributed to greater food availability and access within the Phillips neighborhood through its urban farming and healthy food access work. Produce from Mashkiikii Gitigan has been distributed to food-shelves, including Second Harvest Heartland, for two seasons, as well as to other organizations that have used it for cooking and composting. Produce from the garden has also been used in the Waite House kitchen, which serves free meals to residents. One group participant also noted that compared to other community gardens, Mashkiikii Gitigan is focused more on plants that can be used for food and medicinal purposes. A new initiative, the Karma Market, was established as an offshoot of Mashkiikii Gitigan, where produce was sold at a price that residents felt they were able to pay instead of set prices. Group participants felt that the Karma Market was well received and that other organizations may be interested in adopting this approach.

Finally, the initiative has begun discussions with a local grower, Stone's Throw Farms, to develop ways to sell more produce in the neighborhood, rather than at markets in other parts of the city.

Mashkiikii Gitigan produces a spectrum of calorie-dense foods. The urban garden scene produces a swath of green, but Mashkiikii Gitigan really feeds people.

The Karma Market provides a new way of looking at financial sustainability. Food that is harvested is brought to the market, and no prices are set on it. People are asked to contribute what they think it is worth based on the whole idea of karma, meaning what you give comes back to you. It's a very interesting approach that's worth exploring, both sharing nutritious food and respecting the need to pay for supplies for farming.

Changing policies

Participants also identified ways that PCHL has engaged in and supported advocacy efforts targeted at food and urban agriculture policies. The Healthy Food Access Coalition has worked to change policies within Second Harvest Heartland so that they can share the food they receive with other food shelves, churches, health care clinics, and community organizations. This policy would help prevent produce from going to waste and provide greater access to residents who are not reached by food shelves alone. These advocacy efforts began with food shelves represented on the Healthy Food Access Coalition sharing food with food shelves outside of the Phillips neighborhood to understand the feasibility of a more widespread policy change.

The PCHL coordinator also spoke at a public forum advocating that for the strengthening of a 2008 staple food ordinance, increasing the amount of healthy food options available at licensed grocery stores, including corner stores. The ordinance was subsequently passed by the Minneapolis City Council. The coordinator and several residents also spoke at a hearing held by the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board to call attention to racial inequities in past funding for urban agriculture. New language focusing on equity was eventually included in the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board's Urban Agriculture Activity Plan.

We're going to save a lot of produce that was going to waste and get that to people who can use it. Some of it is going to other food shelves, some will go to other types of organizations to get to people who aren't going to a food shelf due to need, stigma, timing. They can have more access points for healthy food. We are so close to implementing this policy.

Increasing knowledge, experience, and awareness

Participants also shared ways in which their involvement with PCHL led to new experiences, knowledge, or awareness. Many of those involved with Mashkiikii Gitigan shared stories of residents trying new foods or learning new skills related to gardening and cooking. Micro-grant recipients who started physical fitness programs saw participants develop new canoeing and self-defense skills, as well as reflect on their own culture.

Organizations also gained new knowledge through their involvement with PCHL. Little Earth, a subsidized housing development serving Native American families, began discussions about the health of the soil in their urban farm and began composting as a result of their involvement with Mashkiikii Gitigan. A representative from Kwe.Strong, one of the micro-grant recipients that promotes health and wellness in the Native American community, reported that they developed new knowledge of the needs of Native American women related to physical fitness and learned that there is strong interest in programs supporting physical fitness in this community through the micro-grant-funded program.

The garden is a way to help people get new experiences. I didn't know that eating the stem of the corn like sugar cane was so good. I didn't like eating raw tomatoes. After eating tomatoes from the garden, I really liked them.

The women's self-defense tradition that came through feminism in the 1970s is pretty white. It comes from a middle class white woman's lens. The class definitely got everyone who participated thinking in a different way about their own cultural identities and how we're programmed by our cultures to think in certain ways.

You have to have healthy soil to have healthy food.

Strengthening culture and the connections to the land

Throughout the discussion, participants also noted that many of the programs under PCHL help cultures that have traditionally had strong connections to food and the land join together to produce, prepare, and consume food. Mashkiikii Gitigan is the Ojibwe term for “Medicine Garden,” and the garden tries to reinforce traditional Ojibwe values by using established Ojibwe planting techniques, growing medicinal plants, and focusing on sharing knowledge, skills, and food. Another participant talked about the importance of supporting connections to the soil for young people, for people who come from cultures with traditionally strong ties to the earth, and for renters, who may feel more disconnected because they do not own the land. PCHL is also working to engage Native American women from a nearby housing development through opportunities such as internships, skill-building, or tending to chickens.

Through its canoeing program, the Kwe.Strong program also provided Native American women an opportunity to connect with each other and with water, considered the source of life in many Native American cultures.

The garden in general is medicine in the community.

I think when you're talking about the dirt, there's something really important to that. Not feeling alienated from a space, because you don't own it.

Fostering connections among community members

Group participants provided examples of PCHL strengthening connections among community members. Mashkiikii Gitigan was described as a community gathering space where participants built new relationships to other residents and developed a stronger sense of community. A participant also noted that the garden affects those not directly involved with the Mashkiikii Gitigan but who are able to experience living in a community with an urban farm. Another participant shared that residents have enjoyed working in the Infinity Garden as a way to give back to Waite House and feel more connected to the organization.

Micro-grant recipients also observed participants in the physical fitness programs forming new connections. A representative from Kwe.Strong noted that many of the women invited friends and relatives to participate in the program, and others came to the program on their own and made new friendships that have endured. The program was also able to engage non-native women as participants, volunteers, and supporters. A recipient of a micro-grant to teach a self-defense class for women noted that many of the women have continued to stay involved through becoming co-teachers of the class or teaching it in other communities.

It's clear that the connections among Mashkiikii Gitigan participants are genuine human connections. That's the fabric of society. Gardens deepen those connections.

The micro-grant built our community of women through weekly canoeing. Some weeks there were over 20 women, with children and grandchildren. Some women would come solo and would find a partner.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There are a number of health promotion and systems change initiatives happening right now, including the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) and initiatives within other organizations that may offer opportunities for coordination of work. However, participants also identified this opportunity as a challenge in that programs may have different priorities or timelines that may impact the ability of organizations to coordinate work. The limited resources within non-profit and public sectors also can create competition among organizations.

It's crazy how even a garden can be political. Or even a canoeing event. That's the bewildering part of this.

Another participant noted that it can be a challenge to determine when to accept outside resources when it may involve compromising the project's goals or approach to working with the community. Finally, a member of the Fitness Coalition reflected that she felt the committee had made less progress on their goals, but that the Ripple Effect Mapping session provided new energy to move forward with their work.

The following questions may be helpful for PCHL and the coalitions to consider as they plan their future work:

- Are there opportunities for projects doing work in similar areas to coordinate aspects of their work, share information or resources, or facilitate connections? What are the barriers to coordinating work across initiatives, and how might those barriers be addressed?
- How should the initiative proceed when opportunities arise for funding or other resources that may involve compromising the project's priorities or methods of engaging the community? What other opportunities exist that might better align with the work?
- How can the work of the Fitness Coalition be supported moving forward?

APPENDIX: Project impacts identified by discussion participants



BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS AMONG ORGANIZATIONS

PCHL has allowed opportunities for organizations doing similar work to meet each other and be a part of the discussion about healthy food access.

Many of the organizations that are involved with Mashkiikii Gitigan were within several blocks of each other and were not connecting on any projects. The garden helped to bring many of these organizations together.

Waite House has strengthened its relationship with Hope Community, Inc. through gardening and healthy food access work.

Hope Community, Inc. and Waite House staff are sharing resources and attending one another's events related to gardening.

Informal discussions that happen at committee meetings and gatherings help stakeholders hear more about what is going on within the community.

Large institutions such as the Children's Hospital do not always sit down with smaller community organizations and consider how they can become better connected with residents. This project has allowed the Children's Hospital to do so.

Organizations that are doing food access work are connecting around the Second Harvest Heartland food shelf policy.

Waite House has strengthened its connection to the Minneapolis Health Department.

Waite House and the Minneapolis Health Department work on similar initiatives so they can share ideas and practices. They have worked together to put on trainings for food shelves.

Neither organization would have been able to do the trainings as well as on their own.

The Infinity Garden has more volunteers than it can currently handle, so the garden has partnered with Mashkiikii Gitigan and Little Earth to provide opportunities for volunteers.

During the first triathlon for Kwe.Strong at Lake Calhoun, program managers met a woman of color at the lake who helped them build new connections.

She helped Kwe.Strong navigate the permit process with the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board.

She offered to host a fund-raiser at her business, the Park Tavern, which had over 100 community residents in attendance.

Kwe.Strong is located outside of the Phillips neighborhood, and so Waite House has helped them to make connections within the community.

A Healthy Food Access Coalition member from Open Arms developed a new connection with Community Emergency Services' Thanksgiving Meals on Wheels program.

Open Arms provides meals at Thanksgiving but are not able to accommodate demand and so now have another resource to whom to refer people.

The initiative is also collecting spoiled produce from grocery stores and coffee grounds from Pow Wow Grounds to start composting.

The coalitions have strengthened members' abilities to make referrals among local organizations.



CONTRIBUTING TO GREATER FOOD AVAILABILITY AND ACCESS

Produce from Mashkiikii Gitigan is being distributed to different locations, including food shelves, for various uses including cooking and composting.

This distribution process creates a larger network of organizations.

Mashkiikii Gitigan produces nutrient-dense foods, even more than other urban gardens in the metro area. The "urban garden scene produces a swath of green, but Mashkiikii Gitigan really feeds people." - participant

Mashkiikii Gitigan has contributed food to Second Harvest for two seasons.

Produce from Mashkiikii Gitigan is used in the Waite House kitchen to serve free meals to community residents.

Mashkiikii Gitigan is beginning discussions with Stone's Throw Farms, which grows food in the Phillips neighborhood but has traditionally sold their produce at upscale farmers markets like the Mill City Farmers Market. They are interested in keeping more of their food in the Phillips community and are working with Waite House to explore ways to do that.

Mashkiikii Gitigan has also begun the Karma Market. Food that is harvested from the garden is brought to the market, and there are no set prices. People are asked to contribute what they are able and think the produce is worth.

The Karma Market has been well-received in the community.

The Karma Market is a way to share nutritious foods while also respecting the needs of farmers in compensating them for their supplies and labor.

The Karma Market is a model that could be shared and replicated.



CHANGING POLICIES

The Healthy Food Access Coalition has worked on changing food shelf policies with Second Harvest so that food can now be shared across food shelves and with other organizations such as churches and health care clinics.

This new policy will help save produce from going to waste.

These changes will also help to reach people who may not go to food shelves for a variety of reasons including need, stigma, or access.

Initially there was some debate about the need for the policy in terms of whether there was interest or if has been already an unspoken policy among food shelves.

The Healthy Food Access Coalition began with smaller food shelves in the Phillips neighborhood that are represented on the coalition.

Lessons learned from food shelves represented on the committee may serve as a model for other food shelves across the community.

It is easier for small food shelves in the Phillips neighborhood to make these policy changes when there is a cohort of food shelves making the same change.

There is growing political understanding of and support for urban agriculture.

The city council is beginning to change ordinances about farming in the city.

The PCHL coordinator and several Phillips residents spoke at a public hearing held by the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board about racial inequities in past funding.

Other organizations attended the hearing as well and spoke to this issue.

New language was incorporated into the urban agriculture plan focusing on equity, including low-income neighborhoods and communities of color.

The PCHL coordinator spoke at a public hearing about the importance of a staple food ordinance for the health of Phillips residents.

The Minneapolis City Council strengthened staple food ordinances to get healthier staple foods in pharmacies and corner stores.



INCREASING KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE, AND AWARENESS

Mashkiikii Gitigan is "a way to help people get new experiences." - participant

A participant did not like raw tomatoes before but came to like them after working in the garden.

A participant learned that you can eat the stem of the corn, "like sugar cane." - participant

A stakeholder to the project served collard greens in the Heart Health class at Indian Health Board that were harvested from Mashkiikii Gitigan. Three people in class had never tried collard greens before, and they found them to be tasty. "I was going to buy [the] collard greens but then I thought no I'll just walk across the street and pick them." - participant

Vida Sana has seen an increased interest in healthy living among its participants as a result of its work with Waite House and Mashkiikii Gitigan.

A participant learned new information and skills through attending classes on food preparation and nutrition and doing projects in the garden.

A self-defense class funded through a micro-grant helped shift perceptions among participants.

At the beginning of the class, participants were asked to write down three words to describe self-defense. Participants were asked to complete the same exercise after six weeks. Almost all of the participants changed at least one of their words. Those who used mental words like "confidence" and "attitude" at the beginning shifted to more physical words and vice versa.

The women's self-defense tradition that came up through feminism in the 1970s reflected a largely white, middle class, female lens, and this program brought more voices to that discussion. Participants also started to think more critically about their own cultural identities and how culture influences the ways in which we think.

The instructor witnessed personal transformations among some of the women who had experienced trauma in their lives.

Kwe.Strong staff developed new knowledge of community needs through their program that was funded through a micro-grant.

Through the program, Kwe.Strong staff discovered that there is a strong need for and interest in programs promoting physical activity in the Native American community.

Kwe.Strong does not currently have the capacity to expand the program to working with youth but sees the potential in building in a youth component through partnerships with other organizations.

The Vida Sana program through Waite House has shown increased interest in food, nutrition, and health.

Native American women learned to canoe through Kwe.Strong as part of a triathlon training program.

Little Earth has begun to incorporate composting through their work with Mashkiikii Gitigan. "You have to have healthy soil to have healthy food." - participant

A participant learned about the history of the soil in Little Earth related to its toxicity.



STRENGTHENING CULTURE AND THE CONNECTIONS TO THE LAND

The Kwe.Strong program helped indigenous women connect to water, the source, and each other.

The program included canoeing in the first year, but not the second, and the program manager noticed the difference that canoeing made in helping strengthen the women's connections to each other and their culture.

Programs under the PCHL initiative help cultures that have traditionally had strong connection to food join together in the production, preparation, and consumption of food.

Mashkiikii Gitigan is an Ojibwe term for "Medicine Garden" and reflects traditional Ojibwe values.

Traditional medicinal plants are grown in the garden.

Part of the mission is to preserve, grow, and share knowledge, skills and food.

Production, seeds, and preservation processes reflect traditional methods and beliefs.

"The garden in general is medicine in the community." - participant

There is a need for greater connection to the earth, especially among young people.

A participant noted that lead poisoning from industrial waste in a nearby lot means that her daughter cannot play in the dirt in the neighborhood.

A participant who works with middle school students observed that young people have little experience with the earth, thinking that it is dirty.

Many residents in the community come from countries where cooking is done on the ground or over open flames, which is lost in the United States.

"I think when you're talking about the dirt, there's something really important to that. Not feeling alienated from a space, because you don't own it." - participant

The program is working differently to engage residents from nearby public housing developments, who are mostly Native American women, including opportunities to serve as interns, learn skills, or take care of chickens.



FOSTERING CONNECTIONS AMONG COMMUNITY MEMBERS

"The Kwe.Strong program, funded through a micro-grant, helped us build our community." - participant

Over twenty women with children and grand-children attended on some weeks.

Some of the children had never been to a lake before.

Some women attended on their own and were able to make new connections through partnering with other women to canoe.

There was a broad network of participants from many different locales as women invited friends and relatives.

Kwe.Strong organized the events on Facebook and began to see informal connections being made through posts after the events.

Kwe.Strong has gained support from non-Native women as participants, volunteers, or supporters.

Mashkiikii Gitigan has fostered connections among community members.

A community resident became connected to Mashkiikii Garden through a friend and has made connections with other people in the garden through sharing produce freely.

Residents are working with their "hands in the dirt together," which helps to strengthen the sense of community and belonging. - participant

It's "clear that the connections [among participants] are genuine human connections. That's the fabric of society. Gardens deepen those connections." - participant

Participants show strong devotion to the garden. "Christina [the program's farmer] calls and we show up." - participant

Beyond those directly involved in the garden, Mashkiikii Gitigan also affects those living in the broader community, such as the children experiencing a garden as part of their community and residents who come by and sample the cherry tomatoes.

Participants have maintained these new connections into the snowy season.

Mashkiikii Gitigan has become a community gathering space with activities such as art, music, food, and yoga. The "community is hungry for that space." - participant

The garden will be doubling in size in the next year and the committee will look for ways to preserve and expand the activities.

Many of the participants in the self-defense class funded through a mini-grant have continued to stay involved in bringing what they learned to others.

Twenty-four people completed the self-defense class, and another 16 people began the class but were not able to complete it.

Several participants went on to teach self-defense through community education.

Another participant wants to co-teach the class in the future with the instructor.

Other organizations have asked the instructor to continue the class.

Working in the Infinity Garden has been appealing to participants because they felt that it was a way to give back to Waite House.