

**Motivating and Sustaining Urban Ecological Stewardship  
at the Neighborhood Scale:  
Case Studies in Three Baltimore Neighborhoods**

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## **Introduction**

In an increasingly urban world, social and natural scientists have come to recognize cities as ecosystems with interactions and interdependence as complex and dynamic as natural ecosystems (Cadenasso et al. 2006; Grove & Burch 1997). Social ecologists are still at the beginnings of understanding how the spatially heterogeneous social dynamics of urban environments impact vegetation structure in cities. Through the research of the Baltimore Ecosystem Study (BES) these new methods are being used to describe associations between social and vegetative structure and to begin to characterize variation across heterogeneous urban communities.

Although urban ecological research is on the rise, and continues to incorporate new and exciting advancements in remote sensing and geographic information systems, the focus of analysis in emerging work has tended to be at the landscape scale (Grove et al. 2006; Troy et al. 2007). Despite the importance of this wide lens view, BES researchers also recognize a need to understand the processes of vegetation management at the neighborhood level (Grove et al. 2006:118). As Svendsen and Campbell write (2007): “local is the primary scale where abstract environmental principles or values intersect with immediate quality of life concerns.”

The ongoing Stewardship Mapping and Assessment Project (STEW-MAP) in New York City, first piloted in six cities on the east coast, suggests that a new class of “ecologically minded” community-based organizations has begun to emerge in urban centers in the last two decades (Svendsen & Campbell 2007). Among them are the recipients of neighborhood greening grants in Baltimore City. For more than ten years the Parks and People Foundation in Baltimore has

been providing grant monies to community members and organizations for neighborhood greening projects on public lands, including vacant lots, public rights of way and schoolyard areas. These projects have included tree planting, streetscaping with potted plants, establishment of community gardens and stewardship of existing parks.

In order to better understand and describe neighborhood level stewardship in the places where it is currently taking place, this study used ethnographic and qualitative methodologies to explore the motivations for neighborhood-level stewardship projects in three low-income communities of Baltimore City, as well as the resources, both material and social, depended upon to sustain them.

A more nuanced understanding of the community motivations for taking on and maintaining these projects has critical policy significance at a time when local urban afforestation efforts are on the rise. The ecological, economic and social benefits of green space in urban environments has received growing attention in the last several years (Lohr et al. 2004; Nowak & Dwyer 2000; Troy et al. 2007). Baltimore, along with a growing number of cities around the country, has recently adopted an urban tree canopy (UTC) goal in order to increase the ecosystem services, social and economic benefits provided by urban trees (City of Baltimore Recreation and Parks 2007). The Baltimore urban forest management plan suggests that the city will rely heavily on citizen participation in urban forest management and highlights the need for capacity building in the city's community forestry programs to engage citizens city-wide.

## Research Questions

In general, I wanted my research to stand in contrast (and supplement) to the remote sensing and GIS research being carried out by the Baltimore Ecosystem Study at the landscape scale. I wanted to bring some similar questions back to the human scale--to draw understanding from conversations with individual people involved in neighborhood-level urban greening what it is that motivates their acts of stewardship. My research questions can basically be distilled into 'the *why*' and 'the *how*' of these projects. Stated another way, I was interested in the following:

- a. What motivates urban stewards to initiate neighborhood-scale projects?
- b. What resources, both material and social, do urban stewards depend upon to sustain these projects?

## Methodology

To do this, semi-structured interviews were held with community stewards in three different *Community Statistical Areas* (CSA), as defined by the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance<sup>1</sup>. Participant observation was also used during public greening events, gatherings and grant workshops held in the three chosen CSAs during the study period. Initial interviewees were selected from among recipients of the Parks and People Foundation's "Neighborhood Greening" and "Partnership for Parks" grants from the last ten years of grant cycles. Additional informants were identified using snowball sampling methodology. All interviewees were asked to mention other community stewards in their neighborhood and contacts provided were checked against the P&P database. Every attempt was made to set up interviews with any and all those

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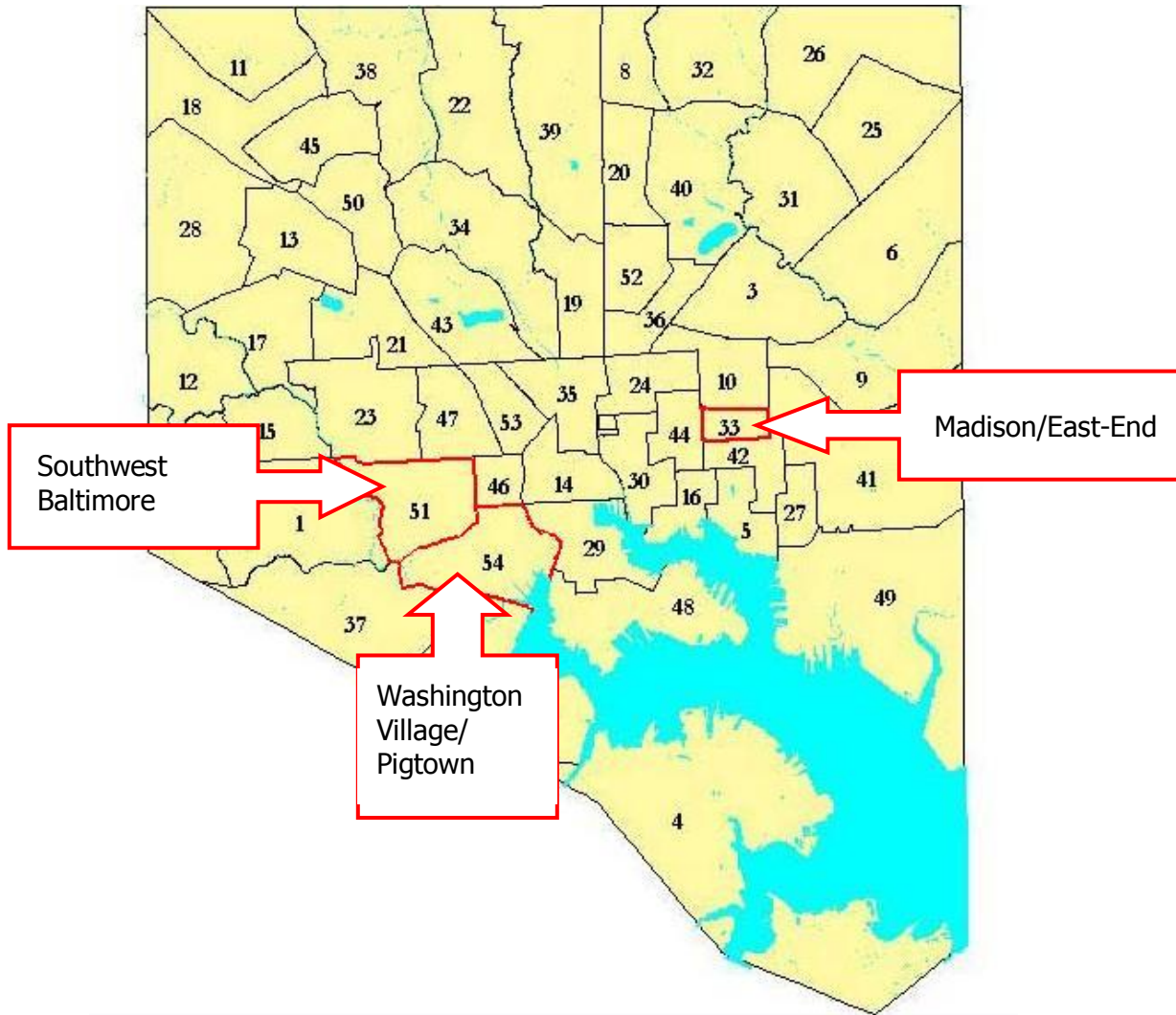
<sup>1</sup> As defined by the BNIA, a CSA is a cluster of neighborhoods delineated along census tract boundaries to facilitate comparison across a number of demographic indicators. see: <http://www.ubalt.edu/bnia/definitions.html>



individuals identified by community informants that were not included in the initial sample. I defined stewardship and community greening broadly, as do the major funding organizations for these kinds of projects in Baltimore, including myriad activities from community vegetable gardening to vacant lot reclamation, streetscaping with flower pots and treeplanting. Anyone identified by an interviewee as a fellow “greener” was contacted. Key community informants were also selected from within non-profit, city government and other neighborhood organizations mentioned by community stewards or other informants. Interviews varied in length and content depending on the willingness and candor of the interviewee. Interviews averaged about an hour, with the shortest lasting around twenty-five minutes and longest lasting just over three hours. I asked similar questions of each interviewee but as the questions were open-ended, I allowed the interview to progress naturally. Questions asked of all interviewees included how individuals became involved in stewardship activity, what work they had been involved in, if and how that work had continued beyond initial plantings and what resources (both monetary and material) had been depended upon to sustain the work (a complete interview protocol is included in the appendix of this paper).

## Study Area

Interviews were conducted in the following CSAs: Southwest Baltimore, Washington Village/Pigtown, and Madison/East-end, indicated on the map below of Baltimore City.



I chose areas that were similar in terms of median income and owner occupancy rates, but that showed differences in housing value trends, and differences in racial diversity.

The Parks and People Foundation's database indicated that at least 15 community greening grants had been awarded in each of these three areas over the last ten years.

Median Household Income in these neighborhoods (as of the 2000 census) is in the bottom half of neighborhoods in Baltimore and within \$4,000 of each other. The three neighborhoods show different trends in terms of housing values (based on residential property sale prices) though, with Washington Village/Pigtown experiencing significant increases in housing values between 2000 and 2004, Madison East End staying basically the same, and Southwest Baltimore seeing a significant fall.<sup>2</sup> The three neighborhoods also have different racial demographics, with Madison East End over 90% black, Southwest Baltimore 71% black, and Washington Village/Pigtown about 44% black (and 48% white). They all have about 1% Latino populations. Maps of each of these areas are provided below. For additional information about each of these community statistical areas, please see Human Ecosystem Framework summary data tables in the Appendix.

### *Madison-Eastend*

This area contains (all or part of) the five neighborhoods of Middle East, Milton-Monford, McElderry Park, Ellwood Park/Monument and Madison-Eastend. This was the smallest of the three areas, at only 454 acres.

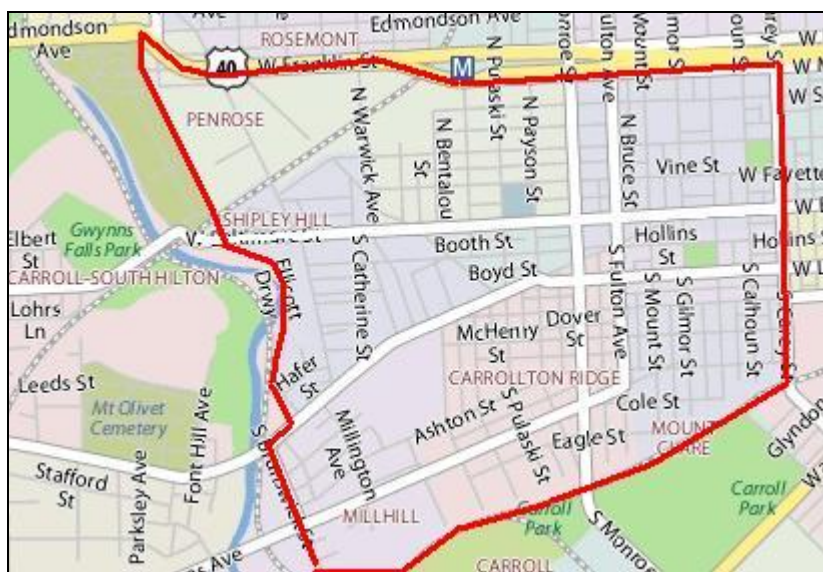
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<sup>2</sup> More current data from the Metropolitan Regional Information Systems (compiled from real estate agents and not including sales by owner) on the neighborhoods contained in these three CSAs suggests positive trends in housing values for all three areas between 2003-2008, with percentage change 75%, 56%, 10%, respectively), see <http://www.livebaltimore.com/resources/stats/salesbyneighborhood/>



## *Southwest Baltimore*

This area is the largest (in population) of the three study communities, including all or part of ten residential neighborhoods: Booth-Boyd, Carrollton Ridge, Franklin Square, Harlem Park, Midtown-Edmondson, Millhill, New Southwest/Mt. Clare, Pentrose/Fayette Street Outreach, Shipley Hill and Union Square.



## **Findings and Analysis<sup>3</sup>**

The following section is a summary of my major research findings, with an analysis of the implications of these findings for ongoing urban afforestation and community engagement efforts in Baltimore. The section is split into the following subsections: a typology of urban stewards by motivation, pathways of motivation in different neighborhoods, support networks for urban stewardship, and the role of social capital.

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<sup>3</sup> With the exception of institutional informants, I made the decision to change the names of all the interviewees who contributed to this research, as some expressed hesitation about the publication of their personal responses. Each of the names used in quotes refers to a specific individual interviewed.

### *Typology of Urban Stewards*

As I revisited interviews and considered the emphasis and direction taken in my conversations with project leaders, I began to see a typology emerge across neighborhood types. There was overlap, of course, and there were individuals who mentioned more than one motivation for starting their projects or becoming involved in greening, but in general, folks tended to fall into one of four different types, to which I've applied the following descriptive names:

- *the green thumbs*, or those who talked about their personal interest in or love for plants, or their desire to increase the green in the city.
- *the beautifiers*, who were primarily interested in cleaning up their neighborhood, or making their block stand out in comparison to other blocks.
- *the reclaimers*, who talked about defending their space or 'taking back' their neighborhoods from criminals or drug dealers.
- *the communitarians*, who talked about these projects mainly in the context of community participation, or as part of larger community or voluntary efforts

### *The Green Thumbs*

I've given the name 'green thumb' to the group leaders who talked first and foremost about their personal interest in or love for gardening or growing plants. Several of the interviewees in this category spoke of a parent or grandparent that kept a garden when they were young, or who taught them how to take care of plants. For these folks, greening projects were often one way of maintaining a lifelong interest in making things grow. "Sonia", the heart behind a very successful community vegetable garden in the Madison/East-End area said, "I was always

interested in plants and when I was growing up in South Carolina, my grandmother always had a garden, you know, and we lived off the land, you know...gardening is just in my blood.”

Although this garden was her first experience with community gardening, she described how it was an easy step from her own cultivation of ornamental plants: “I just love dealing with plants and like to grow things. And it just spilled over from...like I said, when I was growing up.”

“Helen”, who runs a park friends’ group in Washington Village/Pigtown, described inheriting a similar heritage from her father: “I’ve always loved plants. I have my little oasis in my backyard. That’s how I think of Carroll Park, in relation to the city. As a nice oasis, away from the concrete...My father was a horticulturalist, so I kind of grew up with that.” “Jean”, who has been involved in creating several pocket parks in lots around Southwest, also spoke of her father: “My father was a gardener so I just picked up the love of gardening from him.”

As “Helen’s” comment above signifies, several folks in this category also spoke generally about ‘getting dirty’ in terms of an escape from the urban environment. Although she admitted having limited gardening experience, “Mary” reclaimed a lot near her house in Southwest Baltimore and spoke of her joy at working in the soil: “I got started with an empty lot...and just to be able to see what could come out of it was satisfying. Just anytime I can get my hands dirty, I’m good.”

“Doris”, who also spoke of family members who had taught her about gardens from a young age, added: “city is just not my thing. I love getting out there and getting dirty.” “Lynn”, of the Madison/East-End area, had a similar sentiment, and stretched this to a general desire to bring green into the urban environment: “My concept is to improve my environment, to add nature to the cement jungle that we live in. It’s not a jungle, but it’s a community, we need to bring more of a natural concept to the city.”

For some of these leaders the interest in gardening went beyond personal interest to a professional endeavor. “Sally”, a resident and project leader in the Hollins Market neighborhood of Southwest, described her floral shop—which sells flowers and horticultural supplies. “Jean”, mentioned above, makes indoor flowerpots and sells them. Both have worked as consultants, provided landscaping advice to other groups and individuals within their neighborhoods and have been used as resources by neighborhood community associations. For both of these individuals, gardening is a central focus of their professional lives, beyond their neighborhood greening projects.

In a couple of rare cases, interviewees spoke of larger-scale environmental goals. “Doris”, mentioned above, also spoke of the impact of greening projects on the environment city-wide: “it’s exciting when you seen something come bloom... and the trees started coming up, even though we had to plant em, it looked better around the whole city--just these vacant lots, the whole city.” “Dan”, who heads a community garden in the Hollins Market neighborhood of Southwest, related his gardening interest to wider international movements: “I’m into permaculture...the peace movement, intentional communities movement...I’m very much a sustainability type person.”

### *The Beautifiers*

This group refers to those whose primary motivation was the clean-up and beautification of their block or immediate area. Individuals in this category spoke of cleaning up trash and stopping dumping, and tended to speak with great pride about their neighborhoods and their individual



efforts to 'bring them up' or make them more beautiful. Several interviewees related a desire to make their own block stand out against other blocks. "Pam", whose efforts had been mainly focused on streetscaping (flower pots, tree-planting) on the block of Madison-East End where she owns a home, told me: "If it looks good, it makes us feel good. At one time we couldn't sit out there because it looked so trashy. I wish somebody had took some pictures of this area of this block about three or four years ago--I mean it was hard. Now everybody's sayin' it looks nice..." She told me repeated stories of passers-by from other neighborhoods stopping to compliment the beauty of this particular area: "it was so beautiful out here, this man stopped in his truck, and he said 'Miss,' he said--I was fixing a bow on a wreath--and he said, 'ya'll have the beautifulest block in East Baltimore.' And I said 'thank you.' People kept going on and on..." Notably, "Pam" described putting up flowerboxes on the fronts of vacant houses on the block and caring for the plants in them. She told me: "People said, why would you put a flower box in front of an empty house. I said, to make it look livable. Because if it doesn't look livable, everything else is fixed up and that house is ran down and nothings on it, people are gonna go in it, they gonna trash it up, they may even set it on fire." "Ann", who had become recently involved in reclaiming a lot in the Southwest, also spoke of pride: "You should take pride in where you live and want to do it too... next year I'm hoping that we can make this even prettier, fill in the spots where we don't have any plants right now and just make this a beautiful little spot here, where everybody will take pride in it."

"Darlene", who was involved with a project in Pigtown, before moving and starting her own garden on a vacant lot in Southwest Baltimore said, "I just like to plant. I mean I like flowers, and I'm just tired of trash. Even when I lived down in Pigtown I used to sweep the streets and

pick up trash. That was just the way I was raised up. You keep clean. You keep the front of your house clean and the street clean, in front of where you live. So, cleanliness. And beautification.”

“Cheryl” whose projects in Southwest had been less successful spoke of looking at community gardens in other neighborhoods, communities that weren’t much different from hers, and wanting the same thing for her own block. She said: “I just want to see the neighborhood look like it used to. ...Just want the neighborhoods, the community to look good...”

Although many spoke of wanting to make their communities attractive or less threatening to outsiders, there was very little mention of improving property values or attracting new development to the neighborhood. Only one interviewee, a newcomer himself to the New Southwest/Mt. Clare neighborhood, mentioned the relationship between greening and continued neighborhood investment. He said: “it’d be nice to have something that says we live in a respectable neighborhood... ‘gentrification’ generally means people that want to care for some things.” A community leader in Southwest also described how maintaining land on vacant lots when new investors *weren’t* coming was an important part of maintaining community morale: “...we can not get a developer to come into the area, so let’s show the people in the community that it can still be a somewhat decent neighborhood, or an improved neighborhood, let me put it like that...”

### *The Reclaimers*

The Reclaimers were motivated to start greening projects as a way of defending a space, or “taking back” their neighborhoods. Those in this category often described their projects in a somewhat similar way to the beautifiers, however their language tended to be more vehement.

Like the beautifiers, they tended to show a great deal of pride in their neighborhoods, but they also spoke candidly about the threats of bad elements (usually drug dealers or violent criminals) and described their greening activities as acts of resistance, or even vigilante justice, against these elements.

The most dramatic of the reclaimers was “Jack”, who spearheaded a garden in the Madison-East End area, and described having to carry weapons to defend himself and other community activists against drug dealers who threatened the tranquility of his block. He spoke passionately about the sacrifices made by community members to reclaim a peaceful space:

Every day--I ain't saying no every other week--every day there was shooting in this neighborhood. In '92, we went right around the corner on Rose Street, and we took over a vacant house and turned it into a community center. And the drug dealers burnt it down to the ground. So then we went out right out on that corner...and we built a tent...we lived on that corner for a whole year. All of us went and got guns. That's how bad it was... Guys were shooting at us...that's what we had to do to take this neighborhood back... I worried about my family getting killed, worried about myself getting killed. They'd put contracts out on me to kill me, so I had to go right to their head drug dealer and say hey, look, I'm in here to help the people, I'm here to help your kids and your family too.”

He went on to say:

That's why when I speak out...it's from experience. Nobody told me this, I lived this. And it's not over...But when I look back and say, I'm able to sit out on this front here. Sit out and read a book. Without 50 drug guys down here shooting each other. It's worth it. You know? It's worth it.

“Jack” also described other community members’ projects with the same language. Speaking about “Martha”, who created a rose garden out of an empty lot on a neighboring block, he said:

And the impact of what she doing there, the impact for the whole area...those stories you can write about! That lady she put her life on the line, because of all the violence around there, she took the area and created...sit down [give up] on that garden there, guess what's gonna happen? The drugs and the violence's gonna be back up there. But they got a opportunity, a gateway of time that if they help out then the young people can look at her and say, heh, I want to do that too.

“Martha” herself also described her experience with a tone of defiance and emotional weight:

I was *not* gonna have people throwing trash, garbage, everything on this lot. Cause we had cleaned this neighborhood up...I was not gonna let that be a dumping ground for trash, that I live across the street from. I've been in this house too long, 50 some years, to let that get that way. We clean up our corners...you don't see nothing on our corners, we don't have it [referring, presumably, to drugs].”

Just as several of the ‘beautifiers’ quoted above, she voiced a hope of displaying her block as an example to others in the area: “What I was trying to do is make one modeling block, so then other people could see what their neighborhood would look like...”

On the other side of town, “Lois”, a long time resident in an area of Washington Village/Pigtown referred to by locals as “the triangle”, described her passionate resistance to the trends she saw in her neighborhood: I refuse to live in a neighborhood where, its just torn down, run down, dirty, look bad, whatever, because I still have to live here. I still live here!” Although the larger area is seeing ongoing economic revitalization, she described the impacts on her own little corner of Pigtown:

Meg, maybe its just me, but I feel like with...all of these new people coming in and the developers coming in, and the renovation that's coming in, I feel like they're saying to the drug market, *stay in the triangle*...and we don't have to worry about you coming up in Camden Crossing...and Ridgley's Delight and all of those places, if we just keep you right in the triangle, there's a lucrative market here, you stay in here--that's where you've been all these years, stay in there we don't have to worry about you branching out to us.

In another moment she echoed “Jack”'s sentiments almost exactly:

They can say anything to me that they want. But I've seen, you know? When you experience it, when you live it, when you see it? The other people can say what they wanna say...that's just the way I feel about it....So, I have to do what I have to do to survive. And to be comfortable and to be happy. Mmmhmmmm...because I refuse to live here and be disturbed...be worried, be afraid. I refuse to...I'm gonna like living in the triangle and whatever I have to do to be that way, that's the way I'm going to be and I'll do it. Yeah. So.

### *The communitarians*

Some project leaders related their projects to larger aims for community cohesion or public participation. Project descriptions in this category differed widely, but *communitarians* shared an interest in advancing social goals and building community.

For one interviewee the greening project he initiated in Madison/East-End was one of many community projects focused on youth in his neighborhood. He described beautification and other goals as secondary to youth development:

It's good to have greening, its good to build houses, but if you don't build the character of the child, you don't have anything...Deep within we have to bring them up to that point. We have to teach em about cleanness, we have to teach them about public safety, we have to teach them about being useful and positive, we have to teach them about being independent and responsible and all that leads up to greening...

“Ellie”, another project leader in Madison/East End, talked about her own family history of community projects: “I just kind of natural did those things because that's what we did.” “Ellie” had been involved in other large community projects, and saw the opportunity to leverage outside resources for her own little block. “Erin”, from a neighborhood in Southwest, spoke of looking for a way to contribute to her neighborhood association: “I think every time new residents come in there's always, you know, what can we do to get involved? For me it was: ‘what can I do and what skills do I have?’ This is a very visible thing you can do by planting new plants.”

“Jennifer”, pastor of a local church in Madison/East End, wanted a community project for her parish that would make use of newly abandoned land, and also bring community members together. Although she spoke of her own personal interest in gardening, she also spoke of a

garden's ability to bring people together and its spiritual power: "I think it's good for people's souls. It is a way to build community. An opportunity to come together...Some people won't ever come to church, but if you build something like a labyrinth. It has a spiritual power to it. Create spaces that are sacred."

Other leaders saw initiating greening projects as only one part of their larger personal responsibility for public participation. Asked how he got involved with greening, "Mack", from Washington Village/Pigtown, responded, "I just graduated into different things." He described his involvement on the boards of six different community organizations.

Ultimately, the initial motivations described by these categories may be seen as 'points of entry' for community projects. These describe the immediate and pressing interests of the community members who initiated stewardship projects in their neighborhoods. However, peripheral and unexpected benefits realized over the course of a project's life were often cited as motivations for sustaining activities or for beginning new projects, blurring distinctions between initial categories. The following section suggests some of the ways that initial motivations to begin a stewardship project open pathways to other values, ideals and desires.

### ***Pathways of Motivation***

In addition to the categories of motivations described in the previous section, some interviewees appeared to follow a kind of path between multiple categories. Although it was often clear which category a person initially fell into--the way they described their story, their *first* or *primary* motive--at times it seemed they'd be starting to leak into another category, or to describe a *secondary* concern, that often appeared after the project began. Even if a project leader

described clear motivations for initiating a project, the realization of peripheral benefits seemed to provide reinforcement or encouragement to continue the work, and would appear in the retrospective analysis of the project leader as another motive. There were several examples of this.

*Beautification → Wildlife habitat*

As I described in the previous section, “Pam” specified quite clearly that the primary motivation of her project was the beautification of her block, however as she recounted its implementation her voice brimmed with pride and excitement over the return of wildlife to the area. “Another thing,” she said, “even the *birds* is loving it. We got birds in this neighborhood out here singing louder than they ever sung before. I’m serious, I noticed it...” It became clear as she spoke that this effect had become another important justification for the project, and for future efforts on the block, which include additional tree-planting plans. It seems unlikely, however, that she would have undertaken the project with this result in mind.

*Community-building → Wildlife habitat*

“Ellie” made a similar observation about the return of wildlife: “So the monarchs have come here, and they come stop by on their way to Mexico I guess...I was really surprised. There’s been like praying mantis’ all these insects have come back, and the birds, and stuff like that.”

*Neighborhood Reclamation → Ecosystem Restoration/Beautification*

As a reclaimer, “Jack” specified his primary goal as taking on crime and reclaiming space from criminals for use by the residents in the neighborhood, especially children. However, he also described the unexpected results of the project—from beautification to environmental remediation to community building—as strong motivators to continue the work. In his words:

Actually how I first got involved was the crime. The crime kind of motivated me to come outside... kids in the neighborhood... try to make the space that they need. And as we started doing that, we started cleaning. And as we started cleaning we just said well let's just put these plants in, right. And that was way before understanding the value of the plants and trees, the flowers, the watershed... But what it started out was we tried to beat the crime and the violence... And then people started to see the neighborhood change and look good...amazing how its changed...I've been doing this stuff for 16 years. When I got here I'd never planted a tree in my life, I'd never planted a thing. I didn't know anything about it. And it just kept going. When you started seeing change, you want to keep doing it.

*Youth Development → Environmental Interest*

Similarly, “Henry”, who I included among the communitarians, described his surprise and delight at the aesthetic changes he saw in his neighborhood after tree-planting: “I always took care of that little tree and as it got growing I got attached to it, I did. And then folks and others got attached to it, so I said ‘whoa, this is the way to go.’ He also described how he’d been educated by Parks and People and by other community greeners as to the wider impacts of the project. Having described his primary motivation to build confidence and competence among the youth in his community, he went on to say:

It’s just the idea, the beauty that it gives a neighborhood, the beauty that the trees give the neighborhood. I never realized how it create a whole together different environment for a neighborhood. Yeah, so. I’m still learning... but it’s an inspiration to learn how important greening is, you know with the trees, and how much it protects the atmosphere, how it helps us with breathing, because it takes off a lot of the unnecessary impurities out the air.

These descriptions begin to suggest the ways initial support for neighborhood projects which have few environmental motivations (as conventionally understood) may open new interest and receptivity to more explicitly environmentally-focused initiatives. The words used in the examples above “I’m serious, I noticed it.” “I was really surprised,” “amazing how it’s changed.”, “I never realized,” and the energy and enthusiasm with which they were conveyed lend credence to the interpretation that these peripheral impacts were both unexpected and motivating. This is important information for government agencies and nonprofit institutions to



consider in their outreach efforts. Citizens may not initially recognize the relationship between the planting of street trees and driving out drug dealing, or their desire to bring the neighborhood together and the care of a neighborhood stream. However, the experience of community stewards in Baltimore suggests that such connections can, and in many cases already are, being made.

### *Desire for Visibility*

Another theme that emerged almost universally among interviewees regardless of category was the desire among group leaders for their projects to be visible and recognized, and the reinforcing impact of visitors and external recognition. My own reception as an outside researcher was perhaps the strongest evidence of this desire—nearly without exception stewards were delighted to talk about their projects with me and proudly displayed the results of their efforts, however modest. Most interviewees made special mention of who had visited their garden or neighborhood, what passers-by had said and any signs of recognition from outside. Some proudly displayed scrapbooks of meticulously collected photographs and newspaper clippings, others rattled off famous people who had been received at their garden, others spoke of the parades of school children, or other neighborhood admirers. The desire to be recognized for one's work is by no means a unique phenomenon, however, herein may lie another important lesson for organizations or government agencies that wish to encourage and support greening projects—recognition and visibility may go a long way in providing incentive!

### *Support Networks for Neighborhood Stewardship*

The examples in the previous section lead into my second major research question, which concerned the *how* of these projects: What resources, both material and social, do urban stewards depend upon to sustain these projects? Once these charismatic leaders decided to start something, or once a group came together, how were they able to make their vision a reality? What resources and people did they rely on to make it work? And what kept them and their project going?

### *Monetary Support*

The most obvious sources of support for these projects came in the form of cash grants from various nonprofit and community sources. Since my original sample consisted of groups that had received grant money from Parks and People, naturally nearly all of the project leaders with whom I spoke mentioned this organization as an important source of support and resources. However, the groups differed in the level of their reliance on Parks and People funding, with some groups nearly entirely dependent on this as their one source of income, and a few of the larger projects listing multiple other large funding organizations that had provided them with grants. The chart (Table 1) below lists all the organizations cited as sources of monetary support and the number of groups in each neighborhood that reported receiving support from them.

**Table 1: Supporting Organizations and Cash Grants Reported**

	Madison/East-End	Southwest Baltimore	Pigtown
<b>Regional/ City -Wide Funding Sources</b>			
Abell Foundation	1		
Baltimore Community Foundation	3		

CPHA	1		
Parks and People Foundation	12	6	3
TKF Foundation	1		
<b>Neighborhood Level Funding Sources</b>			
East Baltimore Development, Inc	3		
HEBCAC	2		
Banner Neighborhoods	1		

Regional and city-wide funding sources other than Parks and People included Citizens Planning and Housing Association (CPHA), The TKF Foundation, Abell Foundation and Baltimore Community Foundation (BCF).

In one case the small grant through Parks and People had helped lead to a much larger grant through the city government, for the rehabilitation of major infrastructure in a small city park located in the neighborhood. “Erin”, in one of Southwest’s wealthiest neighborhoods, described: “One of the things that helped us get that money was the fact that I had gotten the grant at the right time because that’s when the city person came to our meeting and asked what we were already doing in the park...and I’d already gotten the P&P grant and we’d already had some events and she was like ‘that’s really exciting to see that you guys are already doing something. I will now fight for your money to stay in the budget.’”

More locally specific funding sources were named most consistently by the groups in the Madison/East-End community. Although groups in the other two areas mentioned other kinds of support from community umbrella organizations, only groups in the Madison/East-End mentioned cash grants from locally specific sources. Among the local funders mentioned were Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition, Inc. (HEBCAC), an umbrella organization for the greater East Baltimore area, East Baltimore Development, Inc. (EBDI), a public-private partnership leading the redevelopment of an 88 acre area of East Baltimore overlapping the Madison-East End CSA (offering small grants to a 5 or 6 neighborhood area) and Banner Neighborhoods, a community-based non-profit organization (offering grants to a roughly 10 neighborhood area).

Although multiple funding sources seemed to be available, there was wide divergence in the extent and diversity of support even in Madison/East-End--some (larger more extensive projects) receiving multiple grants from larger funders, ongoing volunteer support/and close institutional affiliations, others (smaller, less extensive projects) receiving no ongoing support after initial funding, or for whom Parks and People was their only source of funding. In the former category, the group leaders involved noted the importance of sustained institutional support for funding and the extreme personal commitment required to make a large project successful. "Jack" said of his project:

I think the most difficult thing is resources. In a neighborhood [with basic struggles], even the money you get from parks and people, you still gotta do all the work. And that right there I think deters a lot of people. Of wanting to do the work. Like right now if I put in a grant to Parks and People, I know that I'm gonna have to take my truck, get dirt, get soil, go to Home Depot, to Lowe's, spend five dollars a gallon on gas. And then I gotta bring all the stuff back. And then from there I gotta do all the work. Busting my behind trying to encourage other people. And then the younger people looking at you...I'm just talking about *this* environment. The young people might like what you're

doing but they say: ‘you know what, I like what you’re doin’, the neighborhood looks better, but I don’t want to *work* that hard.’

“Jennifer,” a church pastor who coordinates a community greenspace and garden on the other side of the Madison/East-end area said:

What it takes is it takes a few visionaries and a few very tenacious people and then you have to be willing to find your own money to get it done...I think that there is something with an institution and it doesn’t have to be big. But it has to have a level of devotion. A willingness to develop resources. So. So like when this group says we want to come to the inner city and we wanna be with Amazing Grace, what can we do? So then I can direct and say, ‘well, let’s spend the day weeding.’... I do a lot of work around this, get that loud and clear. I have a lot of hours spent doing this. And I’m glad to do it, it just sometimes is very busy.

In the other two CSAs, Parks and People was largely the only source of grant support for greening projects.

Beyond cash grants, interviews also revealed a number of categories of non-monetary support and different flows of materials from outside, between and within neighborhoods.

#### *Non-monetary support from city-wide organizations and institutions*

Organizations and institutional staff also played a role in providing in-kind support, access to materials and equipment and in smoothing relationships between neighborhood groups and city agencies.

The Parks and People Foundation was mentioned in this role as well. “Jack” spoke of a former employee of Parks and People who helped secure a watersource for his pocket park in Madison/EastEnd: “She got a guy from the city [who] said ‘I know what this used to be, I been

watching’ and he put a waterline into the park and said ‘this is a gift from God, I don’t know how it got here.’

“Darlene” mentioned how, although she had not applied for a community greening grant, contacts at Parks and People had assisted her in tilling the lot on her block, and in identifying other sources for donations.

The Parks and People Foundation seemed to play a role in networking between neighborhood groups as well. Several individuals mentioned Parks and People’s grant meetings as sources of ideas, and connections with other groups around the city. “Cindy”, from Madison/East-End said: “I used to go to a lot of the meetings, when they had greenery meetings. Like Parks and People...Different people come in saying what they did to an empty lot. So I got some of my ideas from that...I just said, well, I’m gonna see if we can do something right there.” “Josh” had a similar comment about a recent Parks and People grant workshop in the Southwest: “When I went to the grant meeting it was like a whole new [experience]...it was amazing to see how many groups there were at the meeting...” “Lynn”, from another neighborhood in Madison/East-End, talked about how the Parks and People grant workshop introduced her to a community of greeners that had been involved in the work for a long time: “I met great people at the P&P meeting—so they’re gonna be my mentors about how to take care of the plants and things better.”

Not all community relationships with Parks and People were positive, however. One community member from Southwest Baltimore described a bad history with representatives from the

organization who, she felt, did not make community leaders feel ‘heard’. She said: “it was a lot of one-sided conversations. This is what we want to do, this is what we want to achieve. And our voices wasn’t heard. For me as a leader it was like, forget you. I’m already at the bottom, it don’t matter, take your crap and go on.” She acknowledged that the relationship between Parks and People and community members had improved in recent years, but it was clear that tension remained.

Beyond Parks and People, Civic Works, Inc., a non-profit urban service corps for the city of Baltimore, was another oft-mentioned source of institutional support. Rather than providing cash grants, Civic Works was often a source of equipment, limited materials and/or additional labor to supplement a project. “Jennifer”, in Madison/East-End said, “It helps to have a relationship with a group like Civic Works that has access to the heavy duty equipment. And they were really instrumental in helping us build this here. And they have real good relationships with the city.” “Dan”, in Southwest, told me that Civic Works had pulled blacktop off the lot he and other community members now garden in, and helped them lay down new topsoil.

Ed Miller, head of community greening for Civic Works’ described their involvement with projects as ‘constant dialogue.’ Civic Works only become involved with projects to which they were invited, he told me, and level of support varied with the nature of the project in question, the needs at the site, and the staffing situation of Civic Works at the time. “You know, in a site we can get a *lot* of in-kind stuff I mean a whole lot, but we can’t just sustain it with our labor and consultation and whatever and then bring all the resources either. We can’t always do that, and we don’t want to do that.”

### *Umbrella Community Associations*

Another important community resource for neighborhood stewardship seemed to be umbrella community associations. According to the BNIA, “‘umbrella’ organizations are community-based organizations that work with and support the organizations, associations, and initiatives in multiple neighborhoods. Each umbrella organization’s boundaries encapsulate at least five neighborhoods. Some Umbrella organizations boundaries include over 40 neighborhoods. There are at least 35 umbrella organizations in Baltimore City, as designated in the Baltimore city Community Directory and lists from the Citizens Planning and Housing Association (CPHA) in Baltimore City.”

HEBCAC, an umbrella organization for a number of neighborhoods in East Baltimore (including those in the Madison/East End community statistical area) was listed above as a funding source, but was also mentioned consistently by groups in this CSA for other kinds of support. In particular, Anita Stewart-Hammerer, the organization’s relatively recently hired community organizer, was frequently mentioned by name. Anita seemed to provide multiple roles, ranging from providing information about available grants and assisting groups in preparing applications to prompting individuals to envision new projects and connecting individuals and groups to each other. In a few cases stewards described being approached or recruited directly by Anita. “Ellie” told me, “one of the organizers [Anita] from HEBCAC contacted me, and she said, well, would you know, would you be interested in doing some artwork because she knew that [we were working on this garden] and that I had taught that class in the summertime.” “Pam” was also approached by Anita, and connected with other neighbors on her block to expand existing clean-



up efforts into a more organized streetscaping project: “[Miss Anita] was touring the neighborhood and she had come over and introduced us to one another. She was saying would y’all like to get into trying to find how to get grants to beautify the neighborhood...” Others described relying on her as a source of information,

“I usually contact Anita, and whatever grants she has available, I usually use... whenever I get funding with the grants, I use that to enhance my phases of how I’m gonna improve my community. Anita is a wonderful source. HEBCAC does fantastic work with grant programs...”

or as an aid in the administrative aspects of fund-raising for projects:

“My proposals, Miss Stewart she helped me with writing the grants. Me I’ve never have tried for the grants... all I am in charge of this area, keep it clean and keep it planted. So when she came in the picture it helped a whole lot.”

Anita herself described her role this way: “I’ve been sort of like encouraging people to apply for these grants that are available... sort of opening their eyes to say, okay, how do you envision seeing your neighborhood in like a year, five years or ten years? So a lot of the time it is guided through them, even though I may somewhat try to plant the seed...” She described a willingness and readiness among community residents to pursue greening projects, with a small amount of support at the right moments:

Even though [the grants are] real small, it doesn’t matter how small it is, most people who hear about it, you let them know, they’ll apply for it. And the other thing a lot of the residents will really, they’ll just go for it. You know as far as once I give em that, tell them that ‘okay, this is when its due, let’s get it in the mail, you know... they can tell me that they mailed it on such and such a day. So I will stay on them about that... and I remind them to keep all the receipts and everything like that.

In Pigtown, Washington Village/Pigtown Neighborhood Planning Council (WPNPC), seemed to play a similar role, though perhaps to a lesser degree. Despite a history of very strong involvement in community tree-planting efforts in the neighborhood, the organization seemed to be recently less involved. Out of eight initial contacts from Parks and Peoples’ grant recipient

database, six had left the neighborhood or were unreachable. One no longer lived in the neighborhood. Some of the community members who had once been involved as volunteers or staff with WPNPC were no longer involved in neighborhood stewardship in the area. The priority for these activities in the organization seemed to have lessened without direct funding support. Although the public safety director was mentioned by a couple of interviewees, he told me that the organization's tree planting work was largely in the past and his time for "environmental justice matters" was limited.

WPNPC *was* mentioned as providing support to a pocket park project technically outside of the Pigtown neighborhood, however it seemed there was a series of critical connections between the head of this project, "Darlene," a long-time neighborhood steward in Pigtown, "Lois", and WPNPC. "Lois" told me that the organization had helped find her a grant, committed to bringing a group of community service workers and helped obtain a truckload of donated plant materials to the new project:

I mean she had practically given up, she said nobody at the village center wanted to help her, there was no organization...she said they didn't have any community organizations in Southwest that she could depend on, and she said the village center, the things they were doing in Pigtown, they weren't coming up to Southwest where she is...and she almost gave up. And then all of a sudden a breakthrough came. Those flowers in her backyard, somebody gave those to her, the village center got a grant for her, for six hundred and some dollars for plants and trees and stuff...

However in other parts of the interview "Lois" lamented what she felt was a movement away from supporting community efforts. "When we moved here, [there] was Katherine Stark. WPNPC, then it was Urban Services, and she was the director. And she was a woman that *walked* the neighborhood. You didn't have to go up there. And if you went up there, she came out to see what it was. She'd be out early in the morning...Not since her, that's all I'll say...People just don't do that stuff anymore."

Southwest Baltimore's comparable umbrella organization is Operation Reach Out Southwest (OROSW). In contrast to the other two neighborhoods, this organization was not consistently mentioned by the interviewees in Southwest, although the Bon Secours of Maryland Foundation, which helped to found OROSW, was mentioned by several project leaders. Denise Johnson, a community organizer for Bon Secours was mentioned by name in several interviews, often as their connection to Parks and People grants and other sources of money for community projects. "Cheryl" said: "So I asked Denise at Bon Secours --and she said Parks and People won't give you money for a fence, they only do the greening. So she told me about Baltimore Community Foundation...might help. So I have to call them." "Josh" was also connected to Parks and People through Denise: "[I got the packet from the] Bon Secours community, there's a woman over there, her name is Denise Johnson. Apparently she's like the coordinator for this area. And she sent out the packet saying you MUST attend this event if you want a grant, or something like that."

In the case of a community garden initiated with help from Bon Secours staff, right outside the Bon Secours offices, the organization also provided storage space for tools and the opportunity for access to private customers for the sale of produce grown in the community garden.

Although this support was on a small scale, the project leader described tools such as hoses and carts that the group was able to purchase with the earnings.

### *Relationships with Other Institutions*

Another significant source of support mentioned by group leaders was affiliation with universities or support from college student interns. College interns working with community

groups were sources of new ideas, as well as access to larger networks and resources.

Involvement of students from Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) was mentioned by several separate groups. In “Doris”’s garden in Southwest, a student from MICA contributed artwork and design ideas to the community members involved. She also connected the group to the Parks and People grant program, and wrote the application that led to their community greening grant award. “Doris” teared up describing the impact of the student’s artwork in the garden:

she asked for your words, and you know if she asked for something, its gonna show up. Because I know mine, right by...its funny...when I looked up there one evening I said oh, my, she’s been here, she put everything that you are noted for, and she put that little sign up there and I was really proud of it [gets a little teary]. So, it works out.

“Ellie”, in Madison/East-End described how “MICA (Maryland Institute College of Art) students were working at the Men’s Center and then they started, they came over, some of them helped a little bit. Then they started another garden across from the Men’s Center, after they saw our garden they were looking at it and stuff.”

Some groups also mentioned church affiliations, which led to visitors and visibility for the community project. In other cases, relationships with churches allowed for large groups from outside the community for clean-ups or large work events.

### *Support Networking Between Groups*

Interviews also revealed supportive networks emerging between stewards working on different projects within the same or neighboring communities. These seemed to be particularly strong in the Madison/East End community, where a number of interviewees mentioned names of other stewards they’d sought advice from, or assisted in getting resources. Again, these connections

seemed to be facilitated by Parks and People grant meetings, and HEBCAC's outreach work. "Pam" described a chain of connections between a newcomer to the greening network and herself, "Mr. "Jerry", who lives here on the 800 block of Rose, he went to the meeting, the parks and people grant meeting, and that was the first time he was ever at a grant meeting and he said that Mr. "Jack" [ told him to come to see me and I could tell him where I got this from and how I got this and that, what store and everything and I said when he was ready I would take him to where I got my stuff, cause I have a truck and he can just start." "Martha" named a number of neighborhood organizations and their leaders with whom she had worked: "There's seven of us, seven organizations... And we all do something different to make this work. ... And that is how we work in this neighborhood." "Lynn," another steward in Madison/Eastend made a similar comment, after mentioning several community leaders by name: "I've worked with other groups all in this area, so I do know the community leaders, so if they need help. We usually help each other.

Supportive connections were also referenced in the Pigtown neighborhood, although the network seemed to be smaller. "Lois" described both individuals in the neighborhood upon whom she had relied for instance and those whom she had helped to start their own projects. During our interview she walked me over to a recently initiated lot reclamation project in a nearby neighborhood (within the Southwest CSA), and described how she had helped the woman in charge get the project off the ground: "That lot up there that ["Darlene"] is doing... I introduced her to Jaleel and I told her call and talk to him and see what he can do. I talked to my brother in law, he put the fence up...he's donating soil and different things...Now she's smiling. And she's saying, Miss "Lois", I had almost given up." "Nell", who worked closely with "Lois" and joined

us for the interview, referenced two other neighborhood stewards who had helped the two in obtaining Parks and People funding for their project:

Thanks to “Helen” and Gary, because I didn’t know anything about grants and grant writing or anything...and they said we could use their tax id number...And “Helen” was the one who helped me do that grant writing. Cause I didn’t know anything about it. I mean, I went to the grant workshop. But when I got home I still didn’t understand it.

In some cases passive observation of another project in the neighborhood or area was enough to spark action in another individual. “John”, now a dedicated volunteer, talked about his first encounter with a volunteer in the community garden in his neighborhood in Madison/East-End: “Angie came up with it. I seen her out here...I came over to see what was going on, and she told me. That’s how I got interested in it. Prior to that nobody was doing anything over here...”

Before starting his own greening project, “Henry” observed several other projects emerge in East Baltimore and described how the environments in those areas seemed to change. These projects seemed to be an important spark for his own tree-planting initiative:

There’s “Jack”...they started a garden around here, in the 800 block of Glover Street. And I watched them with their garden and we came up with the idea of flags and trees...we didn’t have land around to start a garden or something like that. Then I looked at the garden through at McElderry, and the other garden at this community up here and the garden in the 600 block of Rose Street, and the 600 block of Port Street, and I watched the gardens as they go along and I’m learning. And I’m still learning.

In the Southwest neighborhood, “Cheryl”, talked about how seeing other projects in other neighborhoods gave her hope that her own community could change for the better:

I went over to North Avenue and I looked at the garden over there. The one that’s right off of Greenmount where the light is, it’s right on the left hand side. They’ve got a stone or brick pathway. That’s what I want around there...And when I see that garden, I said now look at all the people around there. Some of them don’t really care about anything here either. But that garden looks nice. You don’t see no trash bags out there. That’s what I want to see around here.

“Doris” also referenced gardens in other parts of the city, as evidence and encouragement that she and her neighbors could do the same: “...its been all over the neighborhood... where they put the trees and all that. And we were trying to encourage people to...use the vacant lots for...planting the gardens and we found if you’ve seen the gardens around the city then you know it can be done!”

### *Resources within the neighborhood*

Interviewees also described outreach within their own neighborhoods, often on their own blocks, to draw new people into a network of stewards. In several cases this was described as a long process, acknowledging that not everyone was initially interested in involvement and that a project leader would need to be patient and supportive in order to draw out new participants.

“Jack” described his attempts to encourage the efforts among his neighbors toward clean-up or beautification, however small. During our interview he pointed out a neighbor at the end of the block who had recently put up a small fence around the tree pits in front of his house, he waved heartily to the neighbor and turned to me to explain: “so every time somebody do something in the neighborhood and we see ‘em, we be like ‘that look good’; we wave and we say, ‘I saw it, right?’ Something good that you can grab ahold of...” “Lois” described a similar attitude toward a neighbor on her block in Pigtown:

She’s been there for years. And every time she sees me, ‘Miss “Lois”, Miss “Nell”, y’all are just out here in the sun, y’all just out here workin’ but she never [helps]... but this morning she came out. And helped the *whole entire time*. She pulled weeds, swept up. Took up the trash. And that might not mean much to some people who say ‘she just did it one time’ but it means *a lot* to me—just that one time.

Networking also extended to individuals in the neighborhood not involved in stewardship or other community projects, but who offered specific technical expertise. This seemed most frequently the case with vegetable gardening projects, where advice was often sought from older community members who may have migrated from rural areas of the south, and often possessed long years of gardening or farming experience. “John”, in Madison/East-End said, “well, this one gentleman named Jake, he has his garden. So if I need to know something, he’s a good person to ask. He’s always willing to share some helpful information... I always say, if I know what I’m doing, and I get good information from people, that’s just like coming out here and giving me a hand. Because I can do the work. I just need to know that I’m doing it right...”

“Doris”, in Southwest, referenced a neighbor playing a similar role on her block: “The gentleman that joined us, Earl, who takes care of the watering and what have you. He really gives us a lot of advice. And you have to follow his advice because it’s like I say. I don’t know what’s you’re talking about.” She described how Earl, and other older neighborhood residents became sources of advice for timing of planting and pest-control, particularly for gardeners like herself with little previous expertise. “They give us good advice. And they’re not from Baltimore, they’re from the South. And they grew up in the garden.”

Several interviewees mentioned efforts to involve neighborhood youth in their projects, with varying degrees of success. Many complained that youth could not be persuaded to be involved, and for some, seemed to be the very source of the problem they sought to solve. “Cheryl” of Southwest said: “It’s a hard job because now a lot of the teenagers don’t care about anything.



They just throw trash in the street that kind of thing.” In a nearby neighborhood, also in Southwest Baltimore, “Ann” said:

We have some of the most darling kids that you ever seen in your life. All they know is destroying. I’m surprised that we’ve been able to keep it this good. Because these kids are really rough. Now you can get a few of the little ones to help, but the majority of ‘em they don’t want to do anything, unless you got money to give ‘em.

Others suggested that young people were an important source of labor, and that their involvement insured a new generation that values gardening and/or stewardship. “Sonia” said: “Starting the kids off young like that, you know, and then when they get older they know about gardening and stuff like that. Because we have kids that don’t even know where their food chain comes from. They’ve never seen food grow.” “Martha, also from Madison/Eastend said “and the younger people helps a lot, they don’t try to go over in the garden, they don’t put trash in the garden, very very rare you see a bottle or something and most trash that you do see the wind blows in. But people do not bother it at all.” “Mack” in Pigtown suggested his local reputation (and perhaps, level of parental authority) factored strongly in whether or not teenagers and children could be counted upon to participate:

I can get all the help I need when I’m ready to do something. Like I said, I ran around with their grandfathers, the knuckleheads. If nobody else, they’ll listen to me...So I don’t have a problem with them, I know where they’re coming from. And they know where I’m coming from.

In other places, interviewees admitted to relying on bribes to convince children to participate.

“Cheryl” said:

Even though its time to have the block party but let the kids know that they’re not just having the block party. they gotta keep the neighborhood clean. So you give them an incentive, to look forward to. Not just givin’ them the block party. But make them work for it. Make em clean up. That’s the way I see it.

Another steward from the Boyd-Booth neighborhood said:

And we trying to get the younger ones but its like they want to know what they get out of it, besides seeing the flowers. So its trying to bait them and ‘you don’t want your neighborhood lookin’ a mess’ eventually they come around and pick up a little bit of paper then they stop then they say ‘oh I don’t feel like doing this today’, ‘okay don’t do it...so when I go give out my gift cards don’t come lookin’ at me.’

*Reliance on Spontaneous Donations, Salvaged Materials and One-time help*

It is worth noting that a significant source of support for neighborhood level greening projects seems to come in the form of one-time donations of time or materials. “Lois” noted: “we used to water the garden with milk jugs...Until a lady donated that wheel hose. Somebody donated that that lives two or three blocks around the corner...and just last week, this woman donated that green hose. Another lady. So that’s how people come in and help us.” This was a common description of how the various necessary materials for neighborhood stewardship projects are scraped together from multiple and sometimes unlikely sources. “Jean” described salvaging materials discarded by other city departments or institutions:

And then I found out the city has a yard, right off of Cold Spring Lane, where they put all the bricks and gravel and anything you would want. But you have to bring a truck up in there to get it. I used to go over there and do that and haul a lot of stuff away in my station wagon. Also I used to go out to Druid Hill Park [Zoo] where they used to get rid of the elephant poop and stuff...and I would go out there, get it from animals that did not eat meat. Pick up the stuff, hold my nose, and drive home. And everything just turned out fine.

“Darlene” walked me through the park she had begun in Southwest and pointed out elements that had been donated from different individuals and organizations: “I work at Home Depot, so I try to... like this I got from Home Depot at a discounted price. Amanda Cunningham, she donated a lot of this. WPNPC donated the tree, Miss “Lois” contributed flowers from her backyard, and I contributed these flowers from my back yard.” “Ellie,” in Madison-Eastend also spoke of the importance of donations in realizing her group’s project:

I talked to one of my old professors who had retired and told him what we were doing, and he's working for this guy now who had these truckloads of topsoil, so he talked to him...and they basically wanted to get rid of it, so they came back and dumped it there, and they dumped some over here and we shoveled it all in. And then I went to Myer Seed company and they donated a lot of soil and other things, broken bags of things...they've probably given me about six truckloads of stuff, over the last few years or whatever.

In reference to another project she added "...all these people have been coming, just walking by and helping us. Like people walking down the street...this one woman came over and was helping paint...and the people from the carwash let us use their electric, so we ran an extension cord from the corner. People were just stopping by saying 'I can help!' It's been very sort of serendipitous and organic. People watching what we're doing and want to know."

### *The One-Man Show*

Despite the myriad ways project leaders sought support from within and outside their communities, several interviewees also expressed the idea that ultimately projects came down to one or two core people, without whom they would inevitably fall apart. "Sally" said: "I think that's probably what is involved in urban greening. I really think its one person who drives it...because when you lose the one person, a lot of times...and either somebody picks up that torch from that other person and moves it forward or it just fizzles away." In reference to his own work, "Jack" said: "Like when I be driving around the neighborhood and I see the kids, kids and the adults, on the corners, that know us. I say look, y'all know Mr. ["Jack"], use me while I'm still alive to help you, cause I don't know when another one is gonna come along. So use me now while I'm alive to help you with your life so you can help somebody else to do it. Cause once we gone, if there's no one else there to do it, to step up, it's gonna be hard. Its gonna really be hard."

“Mack”, in Pigtown, expressed frustration at his inability to engender participation from other individuals in the community: “I just got off about six boards, because I just got...I couldn’t get too much cooperation. The people around here say ““Mack””ll do it. “Mack””ll do it.” But I just got tired of doing it...But I still do a little something. Not that much. Keep the streets clean.”

Several interviewees described initiating projects on their own and working alone, sometimes for years, before being able to attract any outside support. “Lois” talked about her early efforts in Pigtown as totally unsupported: “I mean, Meg, this is the truth, before “Nell”, before “Nell”, *I was it...Before “Nell” I was out there many a days with a shovel and a wheelbarrow by...my...self*. Shoveling wood chips off the side walk because the city said they couldn’t dump it over the fence...” “May” in Madison/Eastend had a similar sentiment: I was working like that ever since I been around here...40 something years. I was working like that, cleaning up the alley. By myself.” “Jack” (present at the same interview), added: “And when she says by herself, she means by herself. No one else. By. Her. Self.”

Perhaps unsurprisingly, both of these examples came from stewards in the *Reclaimer* category. And the pride and sense of accomplishment attached to such solitary efforts was unmistakable in their recounting. This was particularly so in cases where there later grew a larger base of support for a particular project. “Jean” described her own growth as a project leader, and learning to let go of a project she had started on her own:

it was hard for me to ask people to come and join and help, but now I’ve gotten over that, because I’ve been reading leadership material and they say you’ve gotta ask someone to help, because you can’t do it all yourself, and then once people know, hey, I’m involved with this, and that looks nice, you know, they feel good.

She later talked about her first lot reclamation:

I used to live right across the street from it. Keep it mowed, keep it clean and all that...and the fellows in the neighborhood saw what I was doing, they took over all the cutting and the cleaning, now all I have to do is just look at it and enjoy it, I don't have anything to do with it anymore, because the seed has been planted for them to go ahead. But I did the lot by myself for a while. Yeah that was about 12 or 13 years ago.

The matrices (Tables 2-4) on the following pages summarize support in each of the above mentioned categories reported by each of the informants in each neighborhood.

Data in this section suggest that neighborhood stewards are relying on financial capitol in the form of grants, most particularly from Parks and People, human capitol in the form of their own and other volunteers' labor, and most notably, social capitol, in the form of relationships with supportive organizations and institutions, with other stewards within and between neighborhoods and with individuals outside of the stewardship network. Although this is not the primary focus of this research, interview data suggest that social capitol may also be *produced* by stewardship projects. This final form of capitol will be discussed in the following section.

**Table 2: Support Matrix for *Madison East-End***

		Cash Grants	Non-monetary Support (institutional)	Volunteers/ Interns from other Institutions	Support Networking with Other Stewardship Groups	Resources Within the Neighborhood	Donations/ One-Time Help
Green Thumbs	Sonia	Banner Neighborhoods; CPHA	Civic Works	MICA via Men's Center	Port Street Garden; Rose Street Garden	Help from southerners with gardening experience; kids	None mentioned
	John	none	Civic Works	None mentioned	Port Street Garden	Advice from southerner w/ gardening experience; little help	Tools
	Lynn	HEBCAC (or through HEBCAC)	HEBCAC	None mentioned	Garden of Eden; Martha's garden; Port Street garden	Gardeners on block; seniors; kids	None mentioned
Beautifiers	Pam	P&P; HEBCAC	HEBCAC	None mentioned	Garden of Eden; Duncan Street garden (outside interview area)	Neighbor Mary; kids	None mentioned
Reclaimers	Jack & May	P&P; BCF; HEBCAC; EBDI	P&P;	None mentioned	Duncan street garden; Martha's garden	Some labor from neighbors; largely one/two man show	fence
	Martha	P&P; HEBCAC; EBDI	None mentioned	None mentioned	Jack's garden; Cindy's garden; other neighborhood associations	Young people	None mentioned
Communitarians	Ellie	P&P	HEBCAC	MICA; Men's Center	Connected through Anita to other groups; also mentioned Sonia	Older residents on block maintain garden; Free water from neighbor	Passers-by; soil; seeds
	Jennifer	TKF Foundation; ELCA; P&P; Episcopal church of the Redeemer; BCF; Abel Foundation; private donors	Charm City Landtrust; Community Law Center; Civic Works	ELCA church volunteers from within city and outside	Rose Street Garden; Madeira Street Garden	Plants from wholesalers	None mentioned
	Henry	P&P	None mentioned	None mentioned	Observation: Garden of Eden; Port Street Garden; Rose Street Garden; garden at McElderry	None mentioned	None mentioned
	Cindy	P&P; BCF	P&P	None mentioned	"Jack"; "Martha"; "Henry"; Glenn Ross	Neighbors help maintain garden	None mentioned

**Table 3: Support Matrix for *Pigtown***

		Cash Grants	Non-monetary Support (institutional)	Volunteers/ Interns from other Institutions	Support Networking with Other Stewardship Groups	Resources Within the Neighborhood	Donations/ One-Time Help
Green Thumbs	Helen	P&P; Baltimore city Parks and Rec; office of Promotion and the Arts	WPNPC; Colonial Dames; Open Gates Health; University of Maryland School of Nursing;	Volunteers from Christian youth group	mentioned Citizens of Pigtown	volunteers	None mentioned
Reclaimers	Lois & Nell	P&P	WPNPC	None mentioned	Friends of Carrol Park	(few) volunteers	Hoses and other tools; one-time help from neighbor
Community arians	Mack	P&P	WPNPC; City of Baltimore	Fellow from Open Society Institute	None mentioned	Youth; horseshoe players (4 of 5 also employees for sanitation dept)	None mentioned

**Table 3: Support Matrix for *Southwest Baltimore***

		Cash Grants	Non-Monetary Support (Institutional)	Volunteers/Interns from other institutions	Support Networking with Other Stewardship Groups	Resources Within the Neighborhood	Donations/ One-Time Help
<b>Green Thumbs</b>	Doris	P&P	Bon Secours	Intern from MICA	None mentioned	Older southerners in neighborhood provide advice, some help	None mentioned
	Dan	None	Civic Works	None mentioned	None mentioned	Volunteers (garden members)	None mentioned
	Mary	P&P	Mentioned ORSWA and Bon Secours	None mentioned	None mentioned	None mentioned	None mentioned
	Jean	None	None mentioned	None mentioned	None mentioned	Neighbor volunteers	Relies almost entirely on donations; salvaged material, manure from zoo
<b>Beautifiers</b>	Ann	P&P	None mentioned	None mentioned	None mentioned	Neighbors; some kids	None mentioned
	Darlene	None	P&P; WPNPC; BBH	None mentioned	Lois (Pigtown)	No help; advice from other gardener	Plants; fence; one-time help
	Josh	P&P (Applied, not yet granted)	P&P; Bon Secours	None mentioned (project just started)	None mentioned (project just started)	None mentioned (project just started)	None mentioned (project just started)
	Cheryl	P&P	Bon Secours	None mentioned	None mentioned	One other volunteer	None mentioned
<b>Communitarians</b>	Erin	P&P; City of Baltimore	Local flower shop "In the garden"	None mentioned	Some exchange with Franklin Square, Hollins Market	volunteering from neighbors	None mentioned



### ***The Role of Social Capital in Neighborhood Level Stewardship Projects***

Using six of Forrest and Kearns's (2001) eight 'domains' of social capital, it is easy to identify the ways in which the motivations for stewardship activity and the resources relied upon to maintain it (revealed in the previous sections) revolve around the development and maintenance of social capital at the neighborhood level. The authors' policy recommendations for each of these domains are also useful for envisioning how neighborhood stewardship projects can best be supported to help the realization of their social goals, recognizing that these may be primary and may lead (in numerous and unexpected ways) to the conceptualization and realization of other more expressly *environmental* benefits.

*Empowerment: "That people feel they have a voice which is listened to; are involved in processes that affect them; can themselves take action to initiate changes"*

The responses of the beautifiers and reclaimers in particular suggest that neighborhood stewardship projects can be both signs and sources of empowerment among neighborhood residents. Forrest and Kearns suggest providing support to community groups, and giving local people voice.

*Participation: "people taking part in social and community activities" and the occurrence of local events."*

The communitarians seem to initiate stewardship projects with this domain of social capital among their primary motivations. As signified by quotations in the section on resources within the neighborhood, this aspect of social capital is an important (though perhaps often lacking) element in sustaining neighborhood level stewardship projects. Among Forrest and Kearns

suggestions is support and publicity for local events. This ties in to the question of visibility and recognition raised in the first section of the findings, and suggests that organizations may do well to support *events* of various kinds that take place on or involve community greenspaces or reclaimed lots (in addition to support for infrastructure and administrative needs).

*Associational activity and common purpose: “That people co-operate with one another through the formation of formal and informal groups to further their interests.”*

There is no doubt that stewardship activities in these neighborhoods (among other neighborhood initiatives) have increased the formation of small groups. As the data in the previous sections indicate, the desire to be a part of such groups can be a motivational factor in becoming involved in stewardship activities, as well as an important aspect of sustaining a project. For those stewards working alone, group formation may provide critical support without which the less determined might give up their efforts. Among Forrest and Kearns’ policy suggestions for this domain is the “creation and support of an ethos of cooperation,” something we see in Anita’s community organizing efforts, and encouraged by new infrastructure developments such as the East Baltimore community center. The authors also suggest “good neighbor” award schemes, which relate back to the question of visibility. In Madison-Eastend and Pigtown, stewards like “Jack” and “Lois” clearly recognize the importance of such rewards and are providing them in tiny, informal ways to encourage their neighbors. Any initiative to formalize routes for recognition of “good neighbors” may significantly bolster the efforts of these “reclaimers.”

*Supporting networks and reciprocity: “That individuals and organizations co-operate to support one another for either mutual or one-sided gain; an expectation that help would be given to or received from others when needed.”*

Interview data suggests that existing support networks and reciprocal relationships within and between neighborhoods are relied upon by neighborhood stewardship groups in their work and

contribute to the sustainability of projects and the initiation of new projects. However, it may be inferred that stewardship activity is also a source of new relationships and leads to the creation and strengthening of networks within and between neighborhoods. Organizations like the Parks and People Foundation are in a unique position to make connections between umbrella organizations in different neighborhoods working on similar issues.

*Safety: “That people feel safe in their neighborhood and are not restricted in their use of public space by fear.”*

As is revealed in the interviews with the *reclaimers* in the first section of the findings, the desire for safer and more secure neighborhoods is an important motivation in initiating urban stewardship projects. Conquering fear and reclaiming public space are recurring themes in interviews with these individuals.

*Belonging: “That people feel connected to their co-residents, their home area, have a sense of belonging to the place and its people.”*

The timeless human yearning for belonging in the places where we live is evident in the stories of Baltimore’s stewards. In several of the interviews, respondents credited the final success or failure of stewardship projects to the quality of relationships, whether it be within the groups themselves, within the community as a whole, or between the larger institutions and the citizenry.

Perhaps in an effort to offer advice, through me, to organizations like Parks and People, “Henry” told me:

You have to meet people where they feel comfortable doing and ...Just like you sitting here talking to me, I’m getting information, I’m getting a feel of what type of person you are, and um, you’re giving me knowledge, you are inspiring me, here’s a person sitting here talking about the project and there’s ways that we can get more projects, get more people involved. You know, you have to meet people... You have to be a people person,

you have to get inside a person, heart and mind, you can't keep things from people, especially people don't know...you got to share the knowledge...So. Reaching people, meeting people at their level, that's key."

Community leader/local politician, Glenn Ross, talked about how unsuccessful projects can be reduced to the transience of its residents. Referring to blocks within the Madison/Eastend area where short term leases (even three or six months) are the norm, he said: "A neighborhood becomes a community and the community is just a name...nobody knows each other." In those places, he suggested, one could never expect stewardship projects to emerge.

"Lois" gave the impression that community relationships that once existed in Pigtown are breaking down, at least partially due to gentrification. She referred to the neighborhood organization "Citizens of Pigtown":

Now when I go to the meeting, maybe there's a membership of 30 or 50, but I might be the only person that is from the old school, Mr. "Mack", Mr. "Howard", they never comes anymore...all of it is just new blood... It's not as much protection, not as much health, its not as much volunteerism, its not as much support as all of us... everybody wants a new thing, wants to go their own way and do their own thing, its not as much togetherness... it used to be that we all came together. We might have been in different areas, but we were all were watchdogs for each other, but its not that way anymore...

Toward the end of my conversation with "Jack", he reflected on projects that work and those that don't, research that helps and research that doesn't. I tried to relate back to him what I thought he was saying to me, and he cut me off mid-thought as if I was trying to make it all too complicated. He pointed behind my head to a vacant house across the street from where we sat. "Well, I'm gonna tell you, I'm gonna give you the answer to what you're saying right now. This is gonna be the biggest answer and the best answer you ever get. Okay, turn around and look at

that sign on that building back there.” I turned around and realized that a faded banner hung from the upper windows of the house. “Read what it says,” he said to me. Listening to the recording later, I could hear the crackle of surprise and comprehension in my own voice as I read the words on the sign, “It’s all about relationships,” I said into the voice recorder, “or it ain’t about nothing.”

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

In conclusion, neighborhood level stewardship projects among residents of lower-income neighborhoods in Baltimore seem to be motivated by a number of goals, among them both the personal and community-oriented. Although these motivations may be clear in one particular snapshot of time, they do seem to change, expand and contract, as a project is implemented and outcomes are experienced. Although many projects in the study area were initiated with social goals in mind, environmental benefits were experienced and noted, and re-appeared as motivations for the continuation of the stewardship activity.

In Baltimore there seems to be a tiered support system for neighborhood level stewardship projects. The Parks and People Foundation stands as both a central source of funding and central node for a city-wide network stewardship network, however connections between Parks and People and neighborhood groups/potential community stewards seem to be most often mediated through more localized community umbrella organizations. Stronger, more active and better connected community umbrella organizations seem to result in more vibrant and active

stewardship projects, and have the potential to positively impact communication and mutual support between those projects both within and across neighborhood boundaries.

Places where support networks are stronger may also result in a greater sense of visibility and recognition, reinforcing local efforts and providing additional incentive for projects to continue and expand. Groups which have benefited from other institutional affiliations seem to have been greatly strengthened by the interaction, allowing for influxes of new ideas, labor, materials and greater visibility and recognition.

Groups and individual stewards are filling in gaps with private donations of materials and labor, and their own ingenuity, however some still lament the lack of adequate resources to sustain their projects. Funding organizations and city agencies in a position to support umbrella organizations, particularly to allow for resource people/community organizers that can “walk the neighborhood” to use “Lois’s” words, “sort of open [the] eyes” of residents as Anita does, that can serve as network links between neighborhood stewards, may have critical impact on the initiation and sustainability of neighborhood stewardship projects. Stronger links between traditional stewardship organizations and institutions/organizations that traditionally address neighborhood safety and community development might allow for greater flexibility in funding for projects at the neighborhood level, and give the space for these critically linked goals to be realized together.

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# Appendices



## Interview Protocol

maybe you could just start by telling me something about the work you've done on \_\_\_\_\_ (name of project), how it got started, etc... (try to get at impetus for starting project, individual or event, etc)

when was that?

was it just you? were others involved? (try to get how many...anybody else I could talk to, still in touch with?)

did you start the group just for this project or was it around before?

how did you do the work? did certain people have certain tasks? did you work as a group? planned meetings?

did you live in the neighborhood before then? when did you move here?

how old are you? (if comfortable answering)

have you been involved in other neighborhood organizations/projects? how is this project different? why an *environmental* project (or *tree* project or *garden*) ?

you have now been working for  $x$  years, what keeps this project going? (is this different from what made you start?)

is there a particular organization, person or funding source that you depend on as part of your work? (try to get at sources of money, advice, tools, etc)

do you know about/have you worked with other groups in the neighborhood that are doing similar projects? what about in other neighborhoods?

is there anyone else here in \_\_\_\_\_ (neighborhood) you would recommend I speak with?

do you have any questions for me about this research?

finally, what advice might you give another group that was starting out a project like this?

## Matrix of Neighborhood Stewards

	<b>Pigtown</b>	<b>Southwest Baltimore</b>	<b>Madison East-End</b>
<b><i>Green Thumbs</i></b>	<p>“<b>Helen</b>”, white, female, early 60s?, lived in neighborhood 31 years, homeowner, city park stewardship/tree-planting</p>	<p>“<b>Doris</b>”, black, female, 61, lived in neighborhood 22 years, vegetable garden  “<b>Dan</b>”, white, male, 51, homeowner, lived in neighborhood 18-20 years, vegetable garden  “<b>Mary</b>”, black, female, middle-aged, homeowner, lived in neighborhood 10 years, park/greenspace  “<b>Jean</b>”, black, female, middle-aged, homeowner, lived in area over 20 years, reclaimed lots, greenspace</p>	<p>“<b>Sonia</b>”, black, female, 60s or 70s?, homeowner, lived in area 36 years, vegetable garden  “<b>John</b>”, black male, 50, lived in the area 10-15 years, vegetable garden  “<b>Lynn</b>”, black, female, 60, homeowner, lived in area 18 years, streetscaping</p>
<b><i>Beautifiers</i></b>		<p>“<b>Ann</b>”, black, female, 60s-70s?, homeowner, unknown duration in neighborhood, park/greenspace  “<b>Darlene</b>”, white, female, 40s, renter, lived in neighborhood 2 years, park/greenspace  “<b>Josh</b>”, white, male, 30, homeowner, lived in neighborhood 4 years, park/greenspace  “<b>Cheryl</b>”, black, female, 47, homeowner, lived in neighborhood 43 years, flower garden</p>	<p>“<b>Pam</b>”, black, female, 40s, homeowner, lived in area for 23 years, streetscaping</p>
<b><i>Reclaimers</i></b>	<p>“<b>Lois</b>”, black, female, 67, lived in neighborhood 20 years, homeowner, tree planting, playground plantings &amp; “<b>Nell</b>”, black, female, 67,</p>		<p>“<b>Jack</b>”, black, male, 54, homeowner, lived in area 20 yrs, park/greenspace &amp; “<b>May</b>,” mixed race, female, 60s, homeowner  “<b>Martha</b>”, black, female, 76, lived in area over 50 years, flower garden</p>
<b><i>Communitarians</i></b>	<p>“<b>Mack</b>”, black, male, 80, lived in neighborhood 80 years, homeowner, pocket parks</p>	<p>“<b>Erin</b>”, white, female, late 20s/early 30s, homeowner, lived in neighborhood 2 years,</p>	<p>“<b>Ellie</b>”, white, female, 40s/50s, homeowner, lived in area for 18 years, vegetable garden  “<b>Jennifer</b>”, white, female, 40s, worked (but not lived) in neighborhood 18 years, park/greenspace  “<b>Henry</b>”, black, male, 71, homeowner, lived in neighborhood 34 years  “<b>Cindy</b>”, black, female, 44, lived in area 20 years</p>

## Madison/East-End Human Ecosystem Framework

### Critical Resources

#### Natural

##### *Land*

- ratio residential to commercial properties approx 11 to 1
- 26% tree canopy coverage
- population density approx 13 households/acre

#### Socioeconomic

##### *Capital*

- low income, below Baltimore median
- unemployment rate well above Baltimore median (24.16%)
- stable/rising housing values (2.85% increase between 2000-2004; 56% increase between 2003-2008)

##### *Education*

- low percentage with college education (22.6% with some college)
- high school completion rate close to city average (83% in 2004-5)

#### Cultural

##### *Organizations*

- 1 umbrella organization (HEBCAC)
- 14 neighborhood associations
- 1 CDC

### Human Social Systems

#### Social Institutions

##### *Universities*

- close to Johns Hopkins medical campus/hospital
- several stewardship groups report collaborations with interns from Maryland Institute College of Art

#### Social Order

##### *Age*

- High percentage children/low percentage seniors, as compared with city average

##### *Class*

- Low income, low degree attainment

##### *Race*

- predominantly black (91%), low racial diversity

##### *Territory*

- Small/no yards, limited access to open space

#### Social Cycles

##### *Individual*

- largest percentage (by 8%) of population is in 0-17 age bracket

## Southwest Baltimore Human Ecosystem Framework

### Critical Resources

#### Natural

##### *Land*

- ratio residential to commercial properties approx 13 to 1
- 6% tree canopy cover
- population density approx 8.6 households/acre)

#### Socioeconomic

##### *Capital*

- low income, below Baltimore median
- unemployment rate well above Baltimore median (19.67%)
- falling/stable housing values (15.3% decrease between 2000 and 2004; 10% increase between 2003 and 2008)

#### Education

- low percentage with college education (23% with some college)
- high school completion rate close to city average (83.6% in 2004-5)

#### Cultural

##### *Organizations*

- 1 umbrella organization
- 18 neighborhood associations
- 1 CDC

### Human Social Systems

#### Social Institutions

##### *Universities*

- one steward reported relationship with college student from Maryland Institute College of Art

#### Social Order

##### *Age*

- Majority of population in 0-17 25-44 age brackets

##### *Class*

- Low income, low degree attainment

##### *Race*

##### *Territory*

- Predominantly black (71%)
- Small/no yards, limited access to open space

#### Social Cycles

##### *Individual*

- largest percentage of population in 0 to 17 age bracket

## Washington Village/Pigtown Human Ecosystem Framework

### Critical Resources

#### Natural

##### *Land*

- ratio residential to commercial properties approx 22 to 1
- 6.3% tree canopy cover
- population density approx 6 households/acre)

#### Socioeconomic

##### *Capital*

- low income, below Baltimore median
- Unemployment rate about equal to Baltimore median
- rising housing values (48.39% increase between 2000-2004; 75% increase between 2003-2008)

##### *Education*

- Just under half population with college education (45.10%)
- High school completion rate well above city average (82.20% in 2004-5)

#### Cultural

##### *Organizations*

- 1 umbrella organization (WPNPC)
- 12 neighborhood associations
- 2 CDCs

### Human Social Systems

#### Social Institutions

- no collaborations with students reported

#### Social Order

##### *Age*

- largest percentage of population in 25-44 age bracket

##### *Class*

- Low income, higher degree attainment, higher property values

##### *Race*

- higher racial diversity, 44% black, 48% white

##### *Territory*

- Small/no yards, large city park nearby

#### Social Cycles

##### *Individual*

- largest percentage of population in 25-44 age bracket