



Gardens for Growing Healthy Communities

Project Information Sheet

Project Overview

Gardens for Growing Healthy Communities (GGHC) was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as one of 21 mentored research awards under the CDC's Health Protection Research Initiative. This four-year grant will support training and research activities in the area of community design and health. In partnership with Denver-based community organizations including Denver Urban Gardens and Front Range Earth Force, this study will focus on three overarching questions:

- How does the built environment influence human behavior and health outcomes?
- What environmental correlates of health are amenable to intervention?
- What are cost-effective environmental interventions that will promote health for individuals and communities?

The project aims to address the aforementioned questions using community gardens as an advantageous model to examine specifically how small green spaces in urban communities can serve as community change agents and promote mental and physical health, improve diet, and increase physical activity among residents.

Role of Community in Project

The design and implementation of this project has been driven entirely by a partnership between UCHSC and local community organizations. The community organizations have been partners in every step of the project, since conceptualization. The Healthy Neighborhood Network (HNN) was developed in the fall of 2005 as a key feature of the GGHC project. The HNN consists of Denver community gardeners, backyard gardeners, other interested residents, and all GGHC project staff. Members of the HNN meet once a month to discuss important issues related to community gardening, neighborhoods, and health.

Why? A Description of the health problem

- The percent of overweight citizens in the US is higher today than it ever has been and Colorado's rate of obesity has doubled over the past decade.
- Hispanic residents (including children) and those from low-income households have higher expected rates of obesity.
- Active community environments can serve as an important pathway for increasing physical activity levels of urban residents

Benefits to the community in Denver, other urban areas in Colorado, and elsewhere

- As a result of this research, communities will enjoy a healthier school and/or neighborhood environment that promotes healthy eating and physical activity;
- Issues of food security and population mobility can be addressed in an achievable and sustainable manner;
- Team members and study participants will gain experience and knowledge in neighborhood design, participatory research and will work with residents to enhance community capacity and neighborhood assets

Timeline

- Spring 2007: Continue implementation of "Neighborhood Environments and Health Survey", a door-to-door survey of over 1,000 randomly selected Denver households; Respond to grant opportunities to develop interventions around the built environment and health via the HNN; Continue analysis of over 60 individual interviews of community gardeners that were conducted in fall 2005.
- Summer 2007: Complete the survey and begin survey data analysis; Develop intervention proposals based on learnings from the interviews, surveys, HNN findings, and best practices research.
- Fall 07-08: Begin neighborhood-based intervention to improve healthy eating and active living opportunities through the built environment.

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Intervention Core

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