

Brightmoor Garden Project: Status August 3, 2007

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We planted 2 sites for the Brightmoor garden project in May. One site is on Trinity Street near Pilgrim (approximately 5000 sq. ft.) which demonstrates a community garden approach. This location is a city lot in which the house has been razed and was an abandoned lot. Across the street exists three homeowners who maintain property value and to the south the Northwest Detroit Neighborhood Development (NDND) has constructed some new homes. The theme of the Trinity site is community gardens. We have established raised beds and tilled the land so that various vegetables and ornamentals could be planted. With the help of volunteers the beds were constructed (from boards recovered from old homes) and transplants from the Greening of Detroit Project were planted. In addition, MSU planted potatoes, sweet corn, sunflowers, sweet potatoes and some more ornamentals. Wood chip mulch was brought in to frame the gardening area and grass mulch is being used directly in the beds to suppress weeds. Volunteers have helped remove old brush on the site and adjacent sites to the garden. A site for a park bench has been identified and NDND will construct the bench. Currently, the homeowners across the street are supplying water to the garden and Byron Long's landscape business (Just Add Water) is managing the grass on the lot and supplying the grass mulch. Volunteers are working with NDND to refurbish the burned out house on the adjacent lot as a tool shed. In addition, they are cleaning up some adjacent lots for possible 'garden projects'. The food harvested from this site will be shared among the neighbors on Trinity St. and nearby streets. The garden site has potential to expand to the adjacent lots if the interest grows in the neighborhood.

The second site in 2007 is located in the Eliza Howell Park adjacent to the Murphy Middle School. This site is slightly over an acre in size with $\frac{3}{4}$'s planted to a series of potato lines. This section is our demonstration of an urban farming operation. We have planted a selection of potato lines and varieties to evaluate which ones may perform better under the management and soil and environmental conditions of Detroit. Secondly, the potatoes also vary in their utilization: fresh consumption vs. chip-processing. We have established a relationship with Jenkins Foods, Inc., the makers of Uncle Ray's Chips in Detroit. They are willing to buy the potatoes from this site to build some community connections. Also, a local fish and chips restaurant (Scotty's) would like to purchase potatoes. Additional potatoes can be sold at farm markets and also distributed within the community through food kitchens and food banks to create neighborhood awareness of the Brightmoor Garden Project.

Adjacent to the potato plot at Eliza Howell is the children's community garden. Mr. Kurt Petersen's science class visited the site and MSU helped the students establish individual garden plots. They planted vegetable transplants and seeds provided by the Greening of Detroit. MSU then planted some additional vegetable transplants and sweet potato

transplants and sunflowers. We planted broccoli, cauliflower, spinach and collards as transplants in early August for a fall crop. Byron Long has been providing water to this site. We envision the middle school children checking on their gardens during the summer and harvesting the produce and then we will have them helping with potato harvest in the fall. We will also visit the classroom to give a series of educational lectures on potatoes and other vegetables. We have made contact with the Brightmoor 4-H group and will strive to get them involved with this site in the future.

Our next goal is to have a “Neighborhood garden day” (coordinated with NDND) where we can display the garden, educate the community on the community garden or backyard gardening concepts with the vegetables and ornamentals we have planted at the Trinity and Eliza Howell Park sites. We also will provide information on the Master Gardener and Urban Roots Programs. This date will coordinate with the first harvest of the potatoes at the Eliza Howell site (sometime in late August). We will also discuss farm markets, using the produce and simple recipes. With the option to develop additional lots, urban farming options (potatoes, high value fruit and vegetables, biofuel crops) will be discussed.

On August 1 we, along with John O’Brien and Rep. Gabe Leland, represented the Brightmoor garden project on the Gardens of Detroit bus tour (300 attendees). We developed an informational flyer that was distributed to interested participants at this event. This event was very helpful in connecting the Brightmoor Garden Project to the greater Detroit garden network.

In July we added 2 additional sites with the purpose of producing a fall harvest of vegetables. One is on the corner of Lasher and Pilgrim while the other is at the O’Shea Recreation Center off of Greenfield Rd. The Lasher site was planted to potatoes and beans. State Rep. Gabe Leland helped coordinate the planning of the O’Shea Recreation Center site. There we are working with Jackie Sledge, the program director, to organize this urban farming plot as a youth educational program to develop horticulture, management and entrepreneurial skills. Our goal is for the youth to learn about plants, gardening, producing fresh food for their homes and selling produce. We are also connecting this site to the local high school (Cody) through biology teacher Regina Cowan. This site was planted with the assistance of the youth and they will help maintain the site. Vegetable transplants were added to the site on August 1.

Additional garden sites are targeted for 2008. Our plan is to till these sites before fall to help break up the sod for good soil tilth. In 2008, we will use these sites for additional community garden and urban farming demonstrations and trials.