

The Story of

RecoveryPark

Collaborative Community Development for Detroit

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Anyone who has been following the story of Detroit over the past several decades, or who stands at the corner of any number of intersections within the City, might be filled with images of despair. Abandoned buildings and empty lots are everywhere. Businesses have been fleeing the city for decades. The city has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the nation, with 14.0 infants (per 1,000 live births) dying before their first birthday compared with 7.9 deaths for all Michigan babies (2007).¹ Only 58% of Detroit Public School students and 78% of public charter school students graduate from high school in four years.² Roughly 50% of adults age 25 or older are thought to be functionally illiterate.³ The city was recently declared a food desert, an area that has low-to-no access to healthy, fresh, affordable food, an area of "relative exclusion where people experience physical and economic barriers to accessing healthy food."⁴ The unemployment rate is over twice that of the state.

Over the past 24 months, however, a determined group of neighborhood residents, community groups, social services agencies, church leaders, academics, and government officials have been working collaboratively together to create a new vision for one of Detroit's poorest areas. This vision is RecoveryPark - a projected 10-year, multi-million dollar planned community re-development project on the east side of Detroit. The use of the term "recovery" in the name is intentional, as the focus of RecoveryPark is to re-envision the city along multiple components - education, agriculture/urban farming, community development, food production, commercial and housing development, to name a few - in order to help residents who are recovering from addiction, those are returning to the community from prison, and others through personal and economic empowerment.

The project was initiated by a SHAR (Substance Abuse Addiction Rehabilitation), a Detroit-based substance abuse treatment program that was established in 1969. Its mission is to transform individuals with addiction and co-occurring disorders into people who are recovering, people who are capable of living full and productive lives. Their treatment approach and philosophy is based on the principles of the Therapeutic Community model.

It might seem out of place for a substance abuse treatment program to be the leader in a planned development. But RecoveryPark is actually a natural outgrowth of SHAR's underlying philosophy of a holistic community. After decades of fighting an uphill battle for its clients, SHAR made the bold decision. It was no longer enough to provide recovery only within the walls of SHAR. The challenges faced by recovering clients, their families, loved ones, friends, and neighbors called for something bigger, broader, more comprehensive. It was no longer enough to be a change agent for individuals. SHAR needed to broaden its vision and become a change agent for the community.

Under the leadership of the Detroit Collaborative Design Center, housed at the University of Detroit-Mercy, this group has engaged in an extensive community development process that has:

- Led to the identification and selection of a 2,000 acre site.
- Created a broad leadership task force of over 50 resident groups, organizations, institutions, and community and government leaders.
- Assessed the assets within the selected location.
- Engaged the community through community meetings, one-on-one conversations, and a door-to-door campaign.

- Incorporated as a 501(c)(3) in order to provide the necessary organizational structure and format to continue community collaboration and fund development.
- Hosted several youth-focused events to obtain their views on what a healthy, vibrant, and thriving community could look like.

The University of Michigan-Dearborn's iLabs, which is the university's Center for Innovation Research, led members of the Leadership Task Force and others through a process to create business plans in seven key areas for the first three years (Phase I) of the project. The business plan, which covers areas of community development, property development, agriculture, food processing and packaging, education, arts and culture, and an equestrian facility follows the five-part framework of RecoveryPark:

- The first part of the framework is the idea of **space**. Whatever SHAR did, it had to address the needs of the city - i.e. the issues of what to do with large tracts of open spaces, diminishing population, declining tax base, and alternate methods to utilize land - through a more self sustaining and eco-friendly approach.
- The second part of the framework is **money**, in specific the potential impact on city finances if tracts of non-productive land were to be taken off the City's grid, redeveloped, and brought back on to the tax rolls with recovery-oriented, private, self sustaining services that address the needs of all those who live and work in the community.
- The third part of the framework is that of **human capital**, i.e. providing the long term support and training that recovering clients and other residents in the community needed, and tying that support system into designing, building, and sustaining something akin to a large urban village.
- The fourth part of the framework is the idea of a **green initiative**, using existing green initiatives plus "outside-the-box" thinking to add value to the lives of the residents in the community, while using green strategies to develop a unique redesigned concept of urban life in Detroit that would be attractive to others outside the city.
- The last part of the framework is that of **sustainability**, making this project completely self sustaining past the ideation and planning phases so that once the shovel hits the dirt the project not only pays for itself but also grows without assistance.

The heart of the project is agriculture. It is where the vision began, and is its starting point. During Phase I, RecoveryPark will create clusters of small farming pods of two-to-three acres each within a 26-acre parcel. These pods will be structured around the natural environment and existing infrastructures. Soil testing and remediation will be done to ensure that there are no harmful chemicals in the land. Hoop houses, greenhouses, hydroponics, vertical farming, and other alternative methods will be used to extend the growing season. Organic, sustainable farming methods will be used. Most of the products will be slated for RecoveryPark's food packaging business, with nearly all of the prepared produce slated for delivery to area schools, markets, and restaurants.

The current Grandy Community Services Center will be renovated as a recreation center including gyms, rooms for crafts and games, and a pool. The former Chene-Ferry Market will be transformed into an equestrian facility and indoor stadium and will house Detroit's mounted police. A community center will be created at the new RecoveryPark headquarters in the former Campbell Elementary School. The school's library will be expanded to include computers and a job development center.

Other highlights of the plan include:

- An artist-student collaborative to develop, create, and install 26 large-scale sculptures for the pathways and sidewalks located in the RecoveryPark area.
- Educational strategies such as classes and guest speakers that establish RecoveryPark as a campus where lifelong learning and personal development never cease.
- A workforce development program to train the labor force that RecoveryPark and its partners need to implement the various components of the project, as well as providing a general career services center to help prepare residents for the job market.

The narrative that follows traces the story of RecoveryPark since its initial idea of a large urban farm. It documents the work of SHAR, the Leadership Task Force, and community residents in continuing to research, study, reflect, and consider possibilities and options. It outlines many of the questions that were guiding the process and its leaders. Most importantly, however, it is a story, the story of an idea, a commitment, a set of values, and an irrepressible belief that with the right people around the table, an open process, a willingness to consider all options and a tremendous amount of hope, transformation is possible.

Anyone who has been following the story of Detroit over the past several decades, or who stands at the corner of any number of intersections within the City, might be filled with images of despair:

- Abandoned buildings and empty lots are everywhere. Recent estimates are that there are 33,529 vacant single or multiple family housing units⁵ and that 91,488 (26%) of the city's 343,849 residentially zoned lots have no buildings on them.⁶
- Businesses have been fleeing the city for decades. Between 1992 and 2002, Detroit lost 39% of its manufacturing establishments alone.⁷
- Detroit has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the nation, with 14.0 infants (per 1,000 live births) dying before their first birthday compared with 7.9 deaths for all Michigan babies (2007).⁸
- Only 58% of Detroit Public School students and 78% of public charter school students graduate from high school in four years.⁹
- Roughly 50% of adults age 25 or older are thought to be functionally illiterate.¹⁰
- While it is difficult to know how many people in Detroit have a substance abuse problem, the Michigan Department of Community Health estimates that fewer than one in 44 persons with a substance abuse problem receive treatment services for which they are clinically eligible.
- The city was recently declared a food desert, an area that has low-to-no access to healthy, fresh, affordable food, an area of "relative exclusion where people experience physical and economic barriers to accessing healthy food."¹¹
- The recession has hit the city hard. The unemployment rate is over twice that of the state. It more than doubled between 2000 and 2008, and nearly doubled again between 2008 and August 2009.¹² Nearly 1/3 of residents and more than half of Detroit families with children live at or below poverty.¹³

But hidden within these images is another story, one that has been unfolding over the past 24 months. The story is still evolving. Nothing has been built, or changed, or deconstructed. Yet. But despite its lack of visibility, it is a story that is equally if not more compelling.

Because this story is a story of hope.

It is the story of a social service agency that, with its long history of helping addicts, had the courage to step outside its work on individual recovery and help create a vision and a process by which entire sections of the City of Detroit might recover. It is the story of a 2,000 acre footprint within the city that has seen some of the most significant population losses in the past few decades, whose last public school was just closed, with inadequate parks, few jobs, and little economic viability, but that is ready for transformation.

It is the story of the belief that neighborhoods in need of recovery could ask the same questions as individuals in recovery, questions about having a vision, and goals, and what is needed to succeed, and then embark on a journey to attain these things. And it is the story of a team of residents, community groups, agencies, church leaders, academics, and government officials who understood, as Albert Einstein so eloquently said decades earlier, that "we cannot solve today's problems with the same strategies that were used to create them."

In *The Scottish Himalaya Expedition* (1951), W. H. Murray wrote about the challenge of making the decision to climb Mt. Everest. He noted that the act of putting down their money and booking a passage to Bombay might seem simplistic but, in actuality, was of great consequence. He explained it this way:

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way. I learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets: Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it!

**Commitment, dreams,
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**MAKING THE BOLD DECISION
OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2008**

RecoveryPark is a projected 10-year, multi-million dollar planned community re-development project on the east side of Detroit. The use of the term “recovery” in the name is intentional, as the focus of RecoveryPark is to re-envision the city along multiple components - education, agriculture/urban farming, community development, food production, commercial and housing development, to name a few – in order to help residents who are recovering from addiction, those returning to the community from prison, and others through personal and economic empowerment. A Leadership Task Force of over 50 collaborative partners, both non-profit and for-profit as well as government entities has been formed and is committed to making this project a success.

The idea of land use re-purposing offers tremendous possibility for long-term economic support. Re-purposing the land holds promise for bringing empty properties back on to the city’s tax rolls. The use of green initiatives and ‘out of the box’ thinking will help improve the quality of life for residents, plus develop a unique, redesigned concept of urban life in Detroit that will be attractive to others both within and outside the city. Further, the project will be self-sustaining, paying for itself as it grows.

The real story of RecoveryPark, however, doesn’t start with RecoveryPark. It actually starts just over 40 years ago with the founding of Self-Help Addiction Rehabilitation (SHAR), a Detroit-based substance abuse treatment program that was established in 1969. SHAR is what is called the back story of RecoveryPark, the story that provides the framework and philosophy that generated the initial idea of RecoveryPark and has played a major role in its development.

SHAR’s mission is to transform individuals with addiction and co-occurring disorders into people who are recovering, people who are capable of living full and productive lives. Their treatment approach and philosophy is based on the principles of the Therapeutic Community model.

Therapeutic Community is a self help approach to addiction treatment. It is a drug-free environment in which people are able to live together in an organized and structured way. The aim is to promote change and make possible a drug-free life in the community when they move on.¹⁴ Therapeutic Community believes that people can change, and creates an environment that helps to facilitate change. It allows a person to grow by fostering an environment where people are valued and accepted.¹⁵ Through its Therapeutic Community and other recovery support services delivered from three Detroit-based locations, SHAR serves approximately 2,500 individuals annually. No one is turned away because they cannot pay.

The City of Detroit, in which SHAR works, is plagued with substance abuse problems. Most individuals in treatment in Detroit in 2006 were male (63% male and 37% female), between the ages of 36-54 years old (64%); African American (91%); poor (86% had incomes below \$10,000); and unemployed (70%). The highest percentage of admissions was for heroin addiction (37%), followed by cocaine/crack addiction (25%) and alcohol addiction (21%).

The Michigan Department of Community Health estimates that fewer than 1 in 44 persons with a substance abuse problem receive treatment services for which they are clinically

eligible. Those fortunate enough to receive treatment often lack the necessary continuum of support services they require in order to fully recover long term, and end up returning to active addiction.

Those able to sustain recovery are hampered by unemployment in Detroit, which currently exceeds 30%. New job creation is at a standstill. This, combined with segregation, suburbanization, and disinvestment, plus the ravages of a drug culture and the high incidence of crime in Detroit, have dramatically shrunk Detroit's population in the last 60 years. As a result, the city has been left with approximately 40 square miles of unproductive, vacant land and an estimated 33,529 abandoned single and multiple-family houses that have become havens for crime and drugs.

In addition, Detroit is home to many individuals who are returning to the community from prison. Over 20% of the 15,000 individuals released from Michigan prisons each year return to the city. Despite re-entry efforts, "most of them are not getting sufficient help finding jobs, housing and support services -- or even securing a state ID. Most Michigan inmates read at no higher than an eighth-grade level. They leave prison with criminal records and diminished employment skills. In too many cases, they are set up to fail; nearly half return to prison."¹⁶

Given all of this, it might seem out of place for a substance abuse treatment program to be the leader in a planned development. The more likely initiators would be real estate developers or someone in the construction industry. But RecoveryPark is a natural outgrowth of SHAR's underlying philosophy of a

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holistic community. That is, in order to truly treat addicted individuals and all the social ills that are associated with it, addiction must be viewed as a lifelong, chronic condition requiring comprehensive and differing levels of care and support over time.

The problem is that the community in which most persons return after treatment is filled with challenges that pull them back into addiction. The lack of jobs, even minimum-wage jobs, the lack of affordable housing in safe neighborhoods, crime, lack of public transportation, and other obstacles create an atmosphere in which addiction seems to be the easier path. Those who try to sustain recovery are often ill-equipped for employment. Most are in their 40's or older and have a criminal record. Few read beyond an 8th grade level.

As a result, after decades of fighting an uphill battle for its clients, in October 2008 SHAR made a bold decision: It was no longer enough to provide a Recovery Orientated System of Care within the walls of SHAR. The challenges faced by recovering clients, their families, loved ones, friends, and neighbors called for something bigger, broader, more comprehensive. It called for a *COMPLETE* Recovery Oriented System of Care; in essence, an entire *community* without walls. It was no longer enough to be a change agent for individuals. SHAR needed to broaden its vision and become a change agent for the community.

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What exactly would it look like? No one knew. The initial idea was a large, 500 acre farm that would put SHAR clients to work. But that was just one of several ideas. Wherever or whatever it would be, SHAR believed that it must:

- Take a holistic approach, altering both the landscape and the lives of clients as well as that of the residents of Detroit.
- Be a model that is developed “from the ground up,” not imposed onto the neighborhood from government or other authorities.
- Be asset-based, building upon the history, expertise, knowledge, experience, and assets already contained within the City of Detroit.
- Be socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable – what those involved in RecoveryPark refer to as the “triple bottom line.”

SHAR believed that the time was right for this approach. It was time to seek bold new concepts to strengthen Detroit and rebuild its neighborhoods, one person and one brick at a time. It was time to challenge the despair and gloom that is so evident to anyone who walks or drives through parts of the city. It was time to provide the services that SHAR clients and the City of Detroit need to start the rebirth of their lives and the city as a whole.

In 2009, PBS ran a show titled *Blueprint America: Beyond the Motor City*. It examined how Detroit, a symbol of America’s diminishing status in the world, may come to represent the future of transportation and progress in America. One Detroit interviewee offered a comment that captures the spirit of SHAR’s intention:

*“We need a counter vision to what is in front of our eyes.
If we are going to have a future, we need to be able to imagine what it could become.”*

How exactly to imagine this future, and to make it happen, was to become the road to RecoveryPark.

**JUMPSTARTING THE IMAGINATION
NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2008**

When people think of transformational moments, very few envision a map. Yet it was precisely a small map published in the Detroit Free Press in December 2008 that took SHAR's dream from its initial idea of a large urban farm and launched it on a road of visioning, community building, and collaboration that led to what is now the 2,000 acre, comprehensive urban re-development project called RecoveryPark.

SHAR's initial thinking had been something like this: The city has a lot of vacant land. There are a lot of people who are unemployed. SHAR is committed to helping people in recovery create sustainable lives for themselves. So, let's compile several hundred acres of vacant land, create a very large farm, and put SHAR clients and other Detroiters to work.

That thinking changed, however, with John Gallagher's article *Acres of barren blocks offer chance to reinvent Detroit* (December 15, 2008). The focus of the article was on Detroit's thinning population, and how the abundance of vacant land has people talking about new uses and new opportunities. The article included a map that shows the how the land masses of Manhattan (23 square miles), San Francisco (47 square miles), and Boston (48 square miles) – and their combined populations of nearly 3 million people – can be tucked into Detroit's 139 square miles with room to spare.

The map, and the accompanying article, introduced SHAR to the realization that others in Detroit were thinking about the amount of vacant land in the city too, and that it was not as simple as it might seem. For one, not everyone shared the vision that large-scale farming was the right direction for Detroit's recovery. With only nine square miles of park land, some were suggesting that perhaps the 40 square miles of vacant land would be better used for large-scale recreation or re-forestation. After all, in its hey-day in the mid-20th century, Detroit used to be known as the City of Elms. Words like "downsizing," "shrinking," and "right-sizing" were being bandied about, but without any clear vision or policy direction, nor with any true sense of excitement or a hope for possibilities.¹⁷

If SHAR was truly going to broaden its vision and become a change agent not just for people but for the community, clearly more thought was needed.

**CREATING A PROCESS
JANUARY 2009**

The map published in December 2008 took SHAR to its creator, the Detroit Collaborative Design Center (Design Center) within the School of Architecture at the University of Detroit-Mercy. The Design Center is a non-profit organization which fosters university and community collaborations and partnerships to create inspired and sustainable neighborhoods and spaces for all people. Operating as part of the School of Architecture, it focuses on the social, cultural, and political aspects of urban community design and architecture. It works exclusively with non-profit community development organizations. For more than ten years, they have collaborated with nearly 80 non-profit organizations in almost every area of Detroit. At the Design Center, SHAR found a group with a passion for community development, service, and social justice that was similar to their own.

As the founder of the Design Center wrote: "Buildings, streets, landscapes and neighborhoods all shape how we perceive the world, how we interact with our neighbors, and how we re-affirm our personal and communal self-worth. The making of places is about power, self-definition, and identity. Because of this, those who determine how these places are made exercise tremendous influence over those who live in or use them. As a priest, architect, teacher, and craftsperson, I have come to believe that what you must focus on is not so much what is designed but how the design responds to the needs, aspirations, and life of those who will use it. The power of architecture [is] to connect people with a place and provide spatial experiences that uplift each person."¹⁸

Design Center staff explained that while many people think that Detroit is the only city losing population and thus creating significant amounts of vacant land, studies show that Detroit is 32nd in a long list of 374 cities worldwide that have sustained a shrinking population over a 50-year period. There are 59 cities in the United States alone.¹⁹

Instead of being liabilities, pathological conditions that require reversal,²⁰ Detroit's vacant land and abandoned buildings actually offer a sense of possibility for the city. They provide what the executive director of the Design Center calls the "territory for urban revitalization and change, potential strategies for development." Urban density does not have to be defined only by buildings. An appropriate urban density can have large gaps and open spaces as well, places where there is activity but not necessarily structures.

Instead of being pathological conditions that require reversal, Detroit's vacant land and abandoned buildings actually offer a sense of possibility for the city.

SHAR left the meeting at the Design Center with the first of what would eventually become over fifty collaborative partners. They also left the meeting with new language: open space, not vacant land; abandoned buildings as assets; gaps as spaces of opportunity.

Under the guidance of the Design Center, SHAR was encouraged to do several things. The first was to undertake a more collaborative process, to engage the broader community in its thinking and visioning. The second was to go beyond thinking of the area immediately surrounding SHAR's main office in Southwest Detroit and consider several possible locations within the city. And the third was to let the people that they would engage through this collaborative process, including residents, make the decision as to the location of the project, its scope, and its programs. SHAR would offer its initial vision to the community. The rest would evolve.

In essence, the Design Center was suggesting that SHAR adopt a process that was, on a deep philosophical level, akin to the therapeutic process they use with individuals. Many of the same questions that are asked of persons in recovery - What is it that you need? How are you empowered? - would be asked of a community. The integrity of the process would determine the outcomes.

As SHAR grappled with this, some of the central parts of their vision became clearer. They expanded and re-worked the original four components of what a complete recovery-oriented system of care would look like, and eventually identified five parts to the overall framework for RecoveryPark.

- The first part of the framework needed to focus on the idea of **space**. Whatever SHAR did, it had to address the needs of the city - i.e. the issues of what to do with large tracts of open spaces (vacant land), diminishing population, declining tax base,

and alternate methods to utilize land - through a more self sustaining and eco-friendly approach.

- The second part of the framework needed to focus on **money**, in specific the potential impact on city finances if tracts of non-productive land were to be taken off the City's grid, redeveloped, and brought back on to the tax rolls with recovery-oriented, private, self sustaining services that address the needs of all those who live and work in the community.
- The third part of the framework needed to focus on **human capital**, i.e. providing the long term support and training that recovering clients and other residents in the community needed, and tying that support system into designing, building, and sustaining something akin to a large urban village.
- The fourth part of the framework needed to focus on the idea of a **green initiative**, using existing green initiatives plus "outside-the-box" thinking to add value to the lives of the residents in the community, while using green strategies to develop a unique redesigned concept of urban life in Detroit that would be attractive to others outside the city.
- The last part of the framework needed to focus on **sustainability**, making this project completely self sustaining past the ideation and planning phases so that once the shovel hits the dirt the project not only pays for itself but also grows without assistance.

With this overarching framework, and the steps outlined by the Design Center, SHAR had a sense of "how" to begin. "Where" within the City to begin was the next challenge

POSSIBLE SITES FEBRUARY – SEPTEMBER 2009

In early 2009, SHAR started to do their homework about potential sites in Detroit. In response to the recommendation from the Design Center, they expanded their search beyond southwest Detroit, where SHAR's main office is located, and looked for other possible locations. These sites had to have three things: available land, a tradition of how this available land is utilized that was related to the goals of RecoveryPark, and an active, representative community group that was engaged in the neighborhood and had its finger on the pulse.

Their search for land happened to coincide with a major effort by a new organization, Data Driven Detroit, to compile data about the city. Over the years, there had been many initiatives to try to collect and democratize data about Detroit and its neighborhoods. More often than not, these initiatives failed for lack of funding and/or the support of the agencies that were unwilling to share information with the public. As Detroit grappled with a deepening recession in the mid-2000s, however, several foundations needed current accurate data in order to invest their resources in Detroit wisely. They also wanted to measure the impact of their investments.

As a result, in 2008, The Skillman Foundation and The Kresge Foundation awarded City Connect Detroit a \$1.85 M planning and implementation grant to incubate Data Driven Detroit (D3). The charge for the newly-formed agency was to become a nonprofit, independent data center that would promote positive community change by:

1. Tracking neighborhood-level social, economic and environmental indicators for the local initiatives of key foundations.
2. Creating greater community access to and utilization of community data and information.
3. Building a community data warehouse of comprehensive, reliable, relevant information relating to social, economic and environmental indicators.

One of the first large-scale projects D3 undertook was the Detroit Residential Parcel Survey, a major survey of Detroit housing and vacant land conducted in collaboration with the Detroit Office of Foreclosure Prevention and Response, and Community Legal Resources. Surveyors went out in the field in August and September of 2009 to survey every residential property with one-to-four housing units in Detroit. This included approximately 350,000 single-family houses, duplexes, and multi-family structures up to four units. It did not include large apartment buildings or commercial structures.

In the process, they collected information on building type, condition, vacancy, fire damage, and open and dangerous conditions in order to create an unprecedented baseline for neighborhood organizations, foundations, and city departments to use in planning. Vacant lots were also identified and classified.

What they found was surprising. While 86% of the city's single-family homes appear to be in good condition and another 9% generally only need minor repairs, 26% of the city's parcels that are zoned for residential use were now open spaces, with no buildings on them.

Four Possibilities

The data on open space (vacant land), combined with an identification of active community groups, provided SHAR with three other possible communities to consider in addition to their home community of Southwest Detroit: the Near East side of Detroit, the Far East side of Detroit, and an area on the west side of the City known as Brightmoor.

Data, however, does not form the fabric of a community – people do. SHAR needed to not just read the statistics but to also “touch the geography,” as SHAR’s Chief Development Officer likes to say. Armed with their overall framework, the assistance of the Design Center, and four potential sites, SHAR was ready to start touching the geography.

There was no way to know what would happen. If their initial vision of large-scale farming wasn’t the right vision, they would soon know. As SHAR’s leadership would say over and over, “Let’s trust the process. That’s what will give us the answers.”

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Community Conversations

SHAR’s next step was to start talking with the residents in each of the four neighborhoods. They met with neighbors, attended Community Development Corporation meetings, talked with pastors and ministers, and sat in on block club meetings. They met with everyone they could, talking with anyone they could find who wanted to talk about the project. Over an eight-month period, they talked with dozens of individuals.

Despite SHAR’s sense of urgency to “get moving”, Design Center staff insisted that at this point they have no plans, no drawings, no concrete ideas. Instead, the focus was on understanding each neighborhood’s concerns and dreams, and to inquire whether the concept of RecoveryPark would fit within the neighborhood’s vision for itself.

While SHAR has a long history and passionate commitment to empowerment, the Design Center helped infuse SHAR's community conversations with additional concepts that were key to participatory community design, the process that would be used once a community had been selected. These included ideas such as:

- Everyone is an expert. This includes community residents, youth, and service providers as well as government planners and funders.
- Engagement does not "give" people a voice. Everyone already has a voice. The process of community engagement is to amplify those voices that have historically been diminished.
- It takes time to build trust. Many people do not believe that their voices will really be heard. Many people distrust community engagement. SHAR needs to make a commitment for the long haul, to talk with individuals and groups, and to listen over and over, until trust is created.
- Whatever process is used, it must be transparent.

The Design Center also helped SHAR understand that it is important to not put their ideas ON to the process. Rather, it is the process that will create the design. These were also the key concepts that occupied the First Leadership Task Force workshop in October 2009.

CREATING A LEADERSHIP TASK FORCE OCTOBER 2009

One of the roles of the Design Center was to implement a process that would result in a collaborative, representative Leadership Task Force for RecoveryPark. The role of this task force would change over time, but in essence it would be to guide the overall development of the project – starting with site selection and community engagement to organizational structure, work plans, marketing, and fund development.

The Design Center identified the kind of criteria they would use in creating the Leadership Task Force.

- First, the Leadership Task Force cannot be a closed entity. Rather, it must be open to anyone who can bring something to the process – a knowledge base, an expertise, a set of skills that would help the project move forward. Inclusiveness is essential.
- Second, individuals who represent stakeholder groups will need to "check their individuality" at the door and participate on the Leadership Task Force as a representative of their stakeholder group.
- Third, voting or decision-making would not always be done with raised hands or ballots. Rather, every effort will be made to engage decisions through more creative activities. One example was when the Design Center gave members of the Leadership Task Force a pot of money and asked them to "vote" by putting monetary value on the aspects of RecoveryPark that meant the most to them.
- Finally, it must operate as a collaborative. In the Design Center's view and in their experience, there is a significant difference between committee work and collaboration. In committee work, if someone has a minority opinion it is included in the report at the end, in something generally titled Minority Opinion. In collaboration, everyone's points of view are included, sometimes at 100%, sometimes at 70%, sometimes at just 50%. But the essential difference is that everyone's voice is included. As the director of the Design Center put it, "Excellence CAN come out of that."

In search of that excellence, on the morning of October 14, 2009, 24 community residents, representatives from human service agencies, city government officials, and others gathered at the Detroit Eastern Market for the **First Leadership Task Force Workshop**. The purpose of this first workshop was to learn about the project, consider its viability, and articulate the heart of what might be possible.

These gatherings were called workshops, not meetings, intentionally. They were not set up to be a series of reports and presentations, with members sitting at the table simply listening. Rather, they were structured as active learning times, specifically designed to gather ideas, brainstorm possibilities, and identify options.

At this first workshop, Leadership Task Force members did this primarily through responding to the following question: **"If RecoveryPark does nothing else, it should....."**

These workshops were structured as active learning times, specifically designed to gather ideas, brainstorm possibilities, and identify options. "Excellence CAN come out of that."

Among the ideas were shared were these: that RecoveryPark should ...

"Be a place that values diversity."

"Instill hope and do things differently."

"Offer sanctuary, a place where people can go for support and build themselves up while staying connected with the community, a place where everyone contributes their skills and trades."

"Be a community, a neighbor-to-neighbor model."

"Take urban eco-village approach (new integrated approach)."

"Leverage our existing assets, people, systems and ideas and make them part of a greater whole."

"Be a physical environment that creates hope."

"Be a therapeutic community without walls."

"Engage the community to utilize the stagnant assets of Detroit to create transformational opportunities for individuals in need."

"Be a self-sustaining project from the moment the shovel is put in the ground, a self-sustaining project that joins with the City and citizens so it does not fade."

"Be a hub for small scale development, and create larger development."

"Get around some of the systemic, cultural & political interferences that get in the way of bright, innovative ideas; transcend the interferences; we need thinkers & fighters!"

From among these ideas, five emerged as the highest priority. Everyone agreed that RecoveryPark should:

1. Be a **model** of how metropolitan agriculture can achieve the triple bottom line in Detroit that is profit provides access to good food in an environmentally sustainable way that benefits the local & global community hires local people.
2. Provide **opportunities for everyone** to learn new skills at all levels as they grow in the program and generate a workforce for other businesses.
3. Be a place where anyone would **want to live**.

4. Address the **whole human being** (physical, emotional and spiritual) and relate to the physical environment.
5. Encourage **entrepreneurship**.

The atmosphere in the room was many things: excited, intrigued, somewhat skeptical, but primarily incredibly optimistic. One thing was clear: People wanted to be involved in a thoughtful, organic way. Like the farms that RecoveryPark hoped to plant, those present made it clear that the process needed to be “from the ground up.”

SITE CRITERIA, SELECTION, AND PROGRAM POTENTIAL NOVEMBER 2009 – JANUARY 2010

At this point, SHAR was engaged in conversation with several experts who had offered their best thinking about the potential for metropolitan agriculture and food production as economic engines within a community. They were talking with city officials who had shared data about zoning laws, and city plans to utilize vacant property. SHAR staff had also researched programs in other parts of the country and around the world to learn more about what was needed for a complete recovery community.

Model Programs

Three models were particularly intriguing and inspiring: the Mondragon Corporation in the Basque region of Spain, the Evergreen Cooperatives in Cleveland, OH, and the Manchester Bidwell Corporation in Pittsburg, PA.

The **Mondragon Corporation** is actually a federation of worker cooperatives. Founded in the town of Mondragon in 1956, it has grown to be the seventh largest Spanish company and the leading business group in the Basque region. At the end of 2009, it was providing employment for 85,066 people working in 256 companies in four areas: finance, industry, retail, and knowledge.

Mondragon operates along the lines of a humanist concept of business, inter-related by a philosophy of participation and solidarity and a shared business culture rooted in a number of basic principles, a shared mission and the acceptance of a set of corporate values and general policies.

Their entire framework of business culture is structured on the basis of a common culture derived from the ten Basic Co-operative Principles: open admission, democratic organization, the sovereignty of labor, instrumental and subordinate nature of capital, participatory management, payment solidarity, inter-cooperation, social transformation, universality and education. This inspirational philosophy is complemented by the establishment of four corporate values: (1) co-operation, acting as owners and protagonists; (2) participation, which takes shape as a commitment to management; (3) social responsibility, by means of the distribution of wealth based on solidarity; and (4) innovation, focusing on constant renewal in all areas.

This approach has been successful beyond the Basque region. By the end of 2008, Mondragon had set up 73 production plants in other countries. In October 2009, the United Steelworkers announced an agreement with Mondragon to create worker cooperatives in the United States.

The **Evergreen Cooperatives** of Cleveland, OH is a partnership between the residents of six Cleveland neighborhoods and some of Cleveland's most important anchor institutions, including the Cleveland Foundation, the City of Cleveland, Case Western Reserve University, and the Cleveland Clinic. Its goal is to build community wealth in order to transform Cleveland and change lives.

The Cooperative is pioneering innovative models of job creation, wealth building, and sustainability. Their businesses are employee-owned, for-profit companies that are based locally, hire locally, pay a living wage, and help keep financial resources within the community. As owners of the businesses, workers build equity in their firms.

One of their projects underway, closely aligned with the vision of RecoveryPark, is that of the Green City Growers Cooperative. This will be a 100% worker-owned, hydroponics, food production greenhouse located in the heart of Cleveland, creating sustainable jobs and local food for residents of Cleveland.

The **Manchester Bidwell** organizations are diverse entities that combine to create a model for arts, education, training, and hope to reshape the business of social change.

Bill Strickland established the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild in 1968 to help combat the effects of economic and social devastation experienced by the youth of his inner-city Pittsburgh neighborhood. Just as the introduction to art had helped to change the course of his life, Strickland hoped art would inspire similar change in his community. The Manchester Craftsmen's Guild initially offered informal ceramics classes and a small exhibition space. The program soon expanded to address the interests of community members and began to gain the notice of Pittsburgh's civic leaders. Because of his successful track record with Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, Strickland was asked to assume the leadership of Bidwell Training Center, a vocational education program serving mostly displaced steel workers from the same community.

Since 1972, Bidwell has attracted national recognition for its innovative and career-oriented training that changes the lives of people in transition in southwestern Pennsylvania. Bidwell provides literacy and remedial education and partners with leading corporations to design high-caliber, market-relevant career training programs that lead to entry-level employment. Several of these programs require internships with area companies. This enables students to combine skills learned in the classroom with on-the-job experience and provides an opportunity to begin the transition from school to employment.

The Manchester Craftsmen's Guild is a unique haven - a multi-disciplinary arts and learning center that fosters a sense of belonging, interconnections, and hope within the urban community. Its state-of-the-art facility houses visual arts, design, ceramics and photography classrooms, a dining hall, auditorium/concert hall, and gallery all designed to showcase the roles of creativity and craftsmanship in learning. Handmade objects, furniture, photographs, and paintings that adorn public and private spaces create a model environment for education, exhibitions, performances, and social and professional gatherings.

As exciting as Mondragon, the Evergreen Cooperative, Manchester Bidwell, and all of the other ideas that people had shared with them to date were, they were still just ideas. If RecoveryPark was to be more than just a dream, it needed a home. But not just any home. It needed to be in an

RecoveryPark needed to be in an area where its vision matched the vision that the residents, community agencies, and business owners held for their community.

area where the vision of RecoveryPark matched the vision that the residents, community agencies, and business owners held for their community.

When SHAR started meeting with residents, they had no idea that three of the four potential neighborhoods would express significant interest in being part of RecoveryPark. They had been thinking they would have to beg a community to participate. Instead, they were possibly faced with the challenge of saying “no”. How to decide, and then how to say no, were the burning questions for the Second Leadership Task Force workshop.

QUALITY EXPECTATIONS NOVEMBER 2009

Under the guidance of the Design Center, the task force that had met in October gathered together again on November 19, 2009 at the Second Ebenezer Church for the **Second Leadership Task Force Workshop** to talk about the factors that need to be considered in identifying a location for RecoveryPark. The task force had now expanded to 25 organizations.

They identified eleven qualities – the ***physical aspects*** of quality and accessibility of land, visibility, and environmental sustainability; the ***social aspects*** of social equity, education, celebration of cultures, and security/safety, and the ***economic aspects*** of fiscal sustainability, job creation, and potential to achieve innovation - and set about defining what these actually mean. (Each of these is defined in more detail in the chart on the following pages).

QUALITY	DEFINITION	RANKING OF IMPORTANCE FOR RECOVERY PARK
PHYSICAL ASPECTS		
Quality of Land	The quality and usability of the site in terms of its ability to support agriculture and the effectiveness of its infrastructure.	4th (tie)
Accessibility of Land	Degree to which the site, and the modes of transportation to the site, are accessible by the residents and integrated into the community.	6th (tie)
Image + Visibility	Degree of visual impact of the site and how it attracts attention to itself and its stakeholders. Degree to which the site becomes a hub for opportunity by utilizing existing assets to create transformational opportunities. Degree to which the site offers hope through a place of sanctuary.	8 th
Environmental Sustainability	Degree to which the site is sensitive to environmental concerns and serves as a model of sustainability.	6 th (tie)
SOCIAL ASPECTS		
Social Equity	Degree to which the site is sensitive to social justice concerns and promotes social equity.	3 rd
Human Capital + Education	Degree to which the site utilizes existing human capital and resources to create new opportunities for education.	5 th
Celebration of Cultures	Degree to which the site responds to the diverse cultures of the community in terms of income, education, ethnicity, and age. Degree to which the site takes into consideration retention of current residents and businesses.	7 th
Security/Safety	Degree to which the site ensures health, safety, and welfare of the community.	9 th
ECONOMIC ASPECTS		
Fiscal Sustainability	Degree to which the site affords long-term financial stability and is self-sustaining in its operations. Degree to which the site ensures long term affordability for its residents and stakeholders.	2 nd
Job Creation	Degree to which the site offers jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities.	1 st

QUALITY	DEFINITION	RANKING OF IMPORTANCE FOR RECOVERY PARK
Demonstration Hub	Degree to which the site could become a demonstration hub of metropolitan agriculture and sustainability. Degree to which the site could transcend obstacles to achieve innovation at all levels.	4 th (tie)

After this was completed, they ranked them in importance. As shown in the chart on the previous pages, the top five were: (Note that two qualities tied for 4th place).

1. Job creation
2. Fiscal sustainability
3. Social equity
4. Quality of land
4. Demonstration hub
5. Human capital + education

Additional Criteria

The Leadership Task Force then brainstormed additional criteria for neighborhood selection, and what would make this project a success within a community. They defined four: feasibility, potential for transformation, level of community support and integration, and affordability.

1. Feasibility
Some of the ways the task force expressed this were:
"All criteria can be implemented within each site"
"How difficult it would be to take this into a community"
2. Potential for Transformation
Some of the ways the task force expressed this were:
"The quality of the existing conditions versus their prospective opportunity"
"Brownfields and an opportunity for land improvement"
3. Level of community support, and how well the idea of RecoveryPark is integrated into the mission and vision of the community.
Some of the ways the task force expressed this were:
"The ease of partnerships within the community"
"The right fit for the right community"
4. Affordability
Some of the ways the task force expressed this were:
"Need to consider how much each acre of land would cost at different sites"

With this knowledge and these criteria, SHAR and the Design Center could go back to the four potential communities, analyze their assets, and make a recommendation on where RecoveryPark would be located.

ASSESSMENT OF ASSETS DECEMBER 2009 – FEBRUARY 2010

Over the next three months, the Design Center completed assessments of the four potential sites according to the eleven qualities identified. They looked at the amount of open space that was owned by public entities such as the City of Detroit and the Detroit Public Schools. They identified foundation, non-profit, and other initiatives that were currently underway in each of these communities and that could be potential partners with the project. They considered potential community partners such as community development corporations, local businesses, and schools that could be engaged in the project.

As noted earlier, four areas had been identified: Brightmoor, Near East Side, Southwest, and Far East Side. Initially, these four were first identified because they had the greatest amount of open land owned by either the City of Detroit or the Detroit Public Schools.

But each of these areas had other strengths as well. For example, **Brightmoor** had six commercial regions located in the area, and is being invested in by the Skillman Foundation through its Good Neighborhood program. There were no current plans in the **Southwest** side that addressed job creation, enabling RecoveryPark to take a lead role in that endeavor. On the **Far East** side, many of the environmental studies that would need to be done on the land have already been completed and scattered sites of land have already been assembled, making this area closer to 'readiness' than some of the other neighborhoods being considered.

The next step was to think about what could actually happen at each site. Leadership Task Force members met on January 21, 2010 at the SHAR Main office for the **Third Leadership Task Force Workshop** and considered three areas: metropolitan agriculture, job creation, and education. These are the areas that the Leadership Task Force had determined would be the initial focal point for RecoveryPark.

For each area, they asked two questions:

- How do each of these categories relate to RecoveryPark? That is, what is our intention with this category? What do we hope to gain by including it in RecoveryPark?
- What are the programmatic considerations of this category? What activities and uses are related to this category? What are the special considerations and system requirements necessary for these activities?

Their responses can be found in the Attachment at the end of this document.

REACHING A SITE DECISION MARCH 2010

On March 3, 2010 Design Center staff brought their findings back to the Leadership Task Force for its **Fourth Leadership Task Force Workshop** at Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church. By this time, the Task force had grown to 100 individuals representing over 50 organizations. As the conversation grew, Leadership Task Force members realized the impossibility of choosing one neighborhood over another. By this time, Southwest Detroit had decided it did not want to participate in RecoveryPark as it already had significant planning and development processes already underway. But the other three neighborhoods were overwhelmingly positive about the idea of RecoveryPark. All had strengths that would help make RecoveryPark a success.

Eventually, the idea surfaced that perhaps RecoveryPark could be piloted in one neighborhood and then, if successful, expanded into the other two. This idea was warmly received; after considerable analysis and reflection, the Near East side was selected as the pilot site.

Background on the Near East Side

The Near East part of Detroit occupies a portion of what Detroit city planners refer to as Cluster 4, also known as Middle East Central. Cluster 4 is one of ten planning clusters within the City, each one being comprised of approximately 100,000 residents.

Detroit's Master Plan notes some of the challenges of this area. During the past decade, Middle East Central lost almost thirty percent of its population, far exceeding the citywide average. As of the 2000 Census, the Near East side had a population of just under 9,000. Residents are predominantly African American (88%), with 9% Caucasian and the rest (3%) a mix of Asian, Native American, Hispanic, and others. Over half of the population is age 25 or older; 52% have graduated from high school. Sixty-eight percent of households have annual incomes of less than \$25,000; 37% have annual incomes of less than \$10,000. By the time the 2010 Census is completed, some expect the area to have even fewer residents, perhaps as low as 4,000.

The amount of vacant housing units and open spaces are at levels above the citywide average.

The amount of vacant housing units and open spaces are at levels above the citywide average. Almost seventy percent of the housing units are renter occupied. There are few well maintained green spaces or recreational areas for neighborhood residents.

Despite the population losses, high poverty rates, and high vacancy rates, this area was selected as the pilot because:

- SHAR has presence in the Near East Side and, of the four areas being considered, this community has the highest percentage of addiction and therefore the highest need.
- Of all of the proposed locations, this area is the most easily accessible to public transportation due to its proximity to Gratiot, one of the city's major bus routes. This is critical, as approximately 35% or more of residents in this area do not have a car (2000 Census).

- This site is closest to other organizations where SHAR clients receive additional services.
- The Detroit Public Schools, the City of Detroit, Wayne County, and the State of Michigan collectively own 65% of the land, and both the City and DPS are looking for ways to reduce their inventory of vacant properties. Working with these entities eliminates the difficulty of tracking down owners to negotiate sales, and increases the likelihood of bringing properties back onto the tax roles quickly.
- Of all four areas considered, it has the fewest number of buildings to deconstruct in order to put tracts of land together for urban farming initiatives.
- Because of the proximity to the Eastern Market and the capacity to utilize abandoned factories for food production, this area seems to offer the most potential to quickly develop jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities.

The area is also rich in potential partners, many of whom are already involved in the project. These include:

Eastern Market Corporation	Southeastern Village
Gleaners Community Food Bank	McDougall Hunt CDC
The Heidelberg Project	Pittman Memorial Non Profit Housing
Detroit Public Schools	Villages CDC
Kabaz Cultural Center	Gratiot McDougall United CDC
Lafayette Elmwood Association	JC Human Services

Finally, an added advantage is that the goals of Detroit’s Master Plan for this area, listed below, align with the criteria being developed for RecoveryPark.

- Increase the vitality of neighborhood commercial areas.
- Reinforce the Eastern Market as a regional attraction for retail and wholesale meats and produce.
- Increase the viability of industrial areas and reduce conflicts between industrial and residential areas.
- Increase open space and recreational opportunities, and increase access to these spaces.
- Improve environmental quality.

**COMMUNITY MEETINGS
MARCH 2010 – ONGOING**

Now that the pilot site had been selected, it was time to engage the community in a more thorough, deep, strategic, and comprehensive way.

The issue of community engagement is one that burns hot for many Detroiters. Starting back in the 1960's with the first urban renewal projects – which often became dubbed urban "removal" – Detroit residents have stood up and offered their insights at countless community and neighborhood meetings that were designed to get community input into proposed re-development projects, only to have their ideas disregarded and the decisions made by a leadership group of CEOs and others in power. As a result, many Detroiters are deeply skeptical of promises made by agency bureaucrats, however sincere they may seem.

This is precisely the dilemma that SHAR faced. As the agency has had a presence in the Near East Side area – at St. Elizabeth's parish – for 22 years, since 1988, they knew people in the community and, more importantly, people in the community knew them. Many saw SHAR as a stabilizing force in their neighborhood. They saw SHAR residents and staff as active participants in community projects. While this presence gave SHAR a unique perspective that many other development projects lacked, their longevity could position SHAR leaders to be exactly what Detroit residents were skeptical of, i.e. "agency bureaucrats."

SHAR believed that a wide range of people who lived and worked in the community must be involved in setting the priorities and crafting the solutions. They knew that full engagement of the community would not happen in a day. After all, it didn't take a day to create the sense of alienation that many residents felt, so it wouldn't take a day to effectively bring residents into the RecoveryPark process.

But what is "real" community engagement? Like all good questions, this one raised many others:

- Who exactly is "the community"?
- How will the voices of people who will be moving into the RecoveryPark area for jobs, i.e. SHAR clients or persons returning from prison, be incorporated into community engagement?
- Do the existing neighborhood and community development organizations represent the entire community, or only their members?
- Does any one voice count more than another?
- Are stated leaders, such as ministers, PTO presidents, or block club chairpersons more knowledgeable about the needs of the residents than the person who lives down the street?
- Are "natural" leaders more in touch with the needs of the community than are the "stated" leaders?
- In the case of conflicting needs, whose needs take precedent?

Knowing that there are no simple answers to any of these questions, and also that these questions need to keep “living” in the project in order for RecoveryPark to be a learning, community-based change agent that reaches deep into the fibers of the community, SHAR set about doing what it knows how to do best: engage face-to-face, with the intention that the responses they receive would be a guiding force in the design of RecoveryPark.

Under the guidance of the Design Center, SHAR held multiple meetings with community residents, block clubs, neighborhood associations, pastors, local business groups, and anyone else they could find who lived in the proposed footprint or who worked in or adjacent to it. All together, SHAR estimates that they met with over 300 individuals.

“It’s hard for people to believe that there weren’t any preconceived ideas. But it’s true. We were after a *process* that would eventually create the design.”

A simple map of the footprint, some pens and markers, and books of sticky notes were the only tools at the table. Nothing was on the walls – because nothing had been drafted. These community engagements were fact finding and bridge building in nature, not proscriptive. As the Director of the Design Center noted, “It’s hard for people to believe that there weren’t any drawings done, that there was no preconceived ideas. But it’s true. We were after a *process*, one that would eventually create the design of RecoveryPark.”

THE “65 DAY” CAMPAIGN MAY – JUNE 2010

Full community engagement needs to go beyond meetings. So SHAR and the Design Center next took the information shared by residents and created RecoveryPark’s “65 Day” door-to-door campaign. The idea was to walk the entire footprint and talk with as many people as they could. Even though the area is one of the less-populated areas of the city, with just under 9,000 residents (2000 Census), the list of these potential stakeholders was considerable. There was the “visible” community of business owners, churches, schools, block clubs, and social service agencies. And there was the less visible community – residents who stay in their homes all day, the elderly who are unable to participate in community activities, youth who are not in school and who hang out on the streets.

To engage these diverse individuals, SHAR developed a survey, tested it out with residents, modified the questions, hired eight Detroit residents – six of whom were from the footprint - and set out to canvass all 2,000 acres door-to-door to talk about RecoveryPark and to learn what the residents want for their community. Great care was given to make sure that all the responses were derived from open-ended questions rather than “do you want” or “yes/no” questions. The Design Center drilled home repeatedly the need to have pure input without SHAR driving the residents’ responses. The results of the campaign were presented at the **Fifth Leadership Task Force Workshop** on June 2, 2010, held at St. Elizabeth’s Community Center.

Through such intense community engagement, RecoveryPark was engaging residents in an opportunity to not just re-shape the physical structure of their neighborhood, but to think about how they, as residents, want to be shaped by it and to use their vision, hopes, and dreams to influence the design and structure.

But was it enough?

Even with this kind of outreach - community meetings and door-to-door survey strategies that have generated over 300 participants and over 1,100 survey responses to date - it is difficult to get rid of suspicions in a place with Detroit's history. Many Detroiters still remember the construction of the General Motors Detroit/Hamtramck Assembly plant in 1981 that was supposed to create thousands of jobs. Instead, using the State's supreme court ruling about eminent domain, the city demolished an entire neighborhood known as Poletown, displacing 4,200 residents, 1,300 homes, 140 businesses, six churches, and one hospital. Only 1,000 jobs remain at the plant today. One resident, reflecting back on Poletown, asked, "Is there some hidden plan that we don't know about? Is this another big steamroller comin', and hittin' us hard?"

As a result, project leaders continued to question whether they were digging deeply enough into the community. At every Leadership Task Force meeting, they asked:

- What are we missing?
- Who are we missing and how do we get to them?
- How do we engage people who are disinterested, scared or tired?
- How do we continue to have an open door policy as we proceed to the design table?
- Given reasonable time constraints, what more could we do to further this collaborative process?

There may be specific answers to one or more of these questions each time they are asked, but project leaders know that these questions need to be asked not just in the planning stages but for the long haul. Long after the first crops are harvested, new greenways are in use, and micro-businesses are underway, these questions need to live within all decisions of the project if RecoveryPark is to fulfill its mission of truly being a change agent in the community. The answers might, at times, be uncomfortable. But asking the questions, and really hearing the answers, is essential.

**INCORPORATION
June 2010**

Before RecoveryPark could take action, it needed to move from concept to realization, i.e. to form an entity. As with everything else about RecoveryPark, there were no pre-conceived ideas about the legal form. Instead, input was sought from various members of the Leadership Task Force on what type of legal structure would allow RecoveryPark to most effectively achieve its goals of job creation, community development, and sustainability.

After much deliberation and analysis, on June 23, 2010 RecoveryPark was officially incorporated as a Michigan not-for-profit corporation. It will be managed by a board of directors, with five members on its initial board. They will be approving by-laws and also filing a request with the Internal Revenue Services to be treated as a public charity under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

With this structure now in place, RecoveryPark took a significant step towards becoming a reality. Poised to continue its collaboration with the Leadership Task Force and the community, it now can receive grants from private foundations and other funding sources that will help it launch land re-purposing and other development activities in the footprint.

**YOUTH DAY
July 2010**

One group whose voice was missing from the community meetings and door-to-door surveys was youth, and so the Design Center and SHAR set out a plan to engage teens in helping shape the design of RecoveryPark. On July 27, 2010, approximately 40 youth ages 13-15 gathered in the gymnasium of a charter school that sits on the edge of the RecoveryPark footprint to offer their ideas of what they thought a healthy, vibrant, thriving community could look like. And, true to the process used by the Design Center, no plans or drawings were anywhere to be found.

True to the process used by the Design Center, no plans or drawings were anywhere to be found.

Instead, the youth broke up into five teams of 6-8 members in each and headed out the door to walk a section of the RecoveryPark footprint. Along the way, the facilitator of each team asked the youth to select three out of 23 proposed questions to consider (or they could make up their own question.)

Some of the questions were:

- How does the physical space make you feel?
- Can you pick out pathways that people walk on? If so, how?
- How does this neighborhood differ from or is the same as where you live?
- What if anything were you surprised to see on your field visit?
- What does this neighborhood make you think of?
- What was your favorite thing that you saw or found? What was your least favorite?
- Would you ever consider living in this neighborhood? Why or why not?

When they returned to the gym, each team was given a 4'x6' board with a map of the footprint they had just walked, a bag of wooden blocks of different shapes and heights, colored paper, felt, magic markers, pipe cleaners, glue, and other supplies. Their task was to imagine that they had been tasked to create a new plan for a neighborhood much like the one they had just visited. They were to use the knowledge they had gained from their walking tour, from living in their own neighborhood, and from places they like, and create a model.

They were asked to consider the following:

- Considering what already exists, what would make you want to live in this neighborhood? What services and shops would you need for everyday life? What would you want to work? How would you want to get around?
- Looking at the neighborhood and all of the open space and empty buildings, what would you want to fill them with?
- If you could live anywhere real or imaginary, where would you want to live? How could this neighborhood be more like that place? Keep in mind what would be lost if you completely change this neighborhood, and those who are already live in this area, would they want what you want?

- What would this neighborhood look like if it was a model of a new way to use energy?

Each team then presented their model design. Their ideas were endless: swimming pools and parks; the Honeybee Hotel, shaped like a beehive, to attract tourists to the area; solar panels on town houses; football fields, bowling alleys, a recreation center, roller skating rink, and a skate park; Sunkissed Alley, an alley with hand-painted murals on the buildings, designed as a place to engage people and bring them in, not a place to take out the trash; an orchard; a farm; and an aquarium tunnel for children to walk through on their way to school.

Their ideas were presented to Detroit area funders who met with RecoveryPark leadership the next day, and will be on display at future Leadership Task Force meetings.

Their ideas were endless: swimming pools and parks; the Honeybee Hotel, shaped like a beehive to attract tourists to the area; Sunkissed Alley, an alley with hand-painted murals on the buildings, designed as a place to engage people and bring them in, not a place to take out the trash.

CREATING BUSINESS PLANS July – August 2010

At the June Leadership Task Force meeting, members broke into small groups to talk about programming within four strategic areas: education, community development, agriculture/urban farming, and food production. Starting in July, small teams comprised of representatives from the RecoveryPark Leadership Task Force, local resource experts, and community residents worked for two months under the guidance of the University of Michigan Dearborn's iLabs to create the business plans for RecoveryPark.

iLabs, housed in the College of Business, is the University's Center for Innovation Research. It was established in 2006 to advance the understanding of corporate, entrepreneurial, and institutional innovation and its impact on economic development. In addition to its faculty and student researchers and key business and community partners, iLabs is engaged in two ongoing research studies that made it an ideal partner to lead RecoveryPark's business planning:

- The University of Michigan-Dearborn Innovation Index, which tracks changes in economic innovation in Michigan by examining six components of innovation activity: Trademark Applications, Innovation Workers, Small Business Administration Loans, Venture Capital, Incorporations, and Gross Job Creation.
- eCities (Entrepreneurial Cities Index), which examines community-level factors that influence entrepreneurship, economic development, and job growth. The focus of the project is to learn and share the best practices to attract entrepreneurial development and create business growth.

The framework for these plans was what Design Center staff continuously referred to as a patchwork quilt approach to design. The other image staff used frequently was that of an amoeba. Instead of thinking of planning in spaces that are rectangles or squares, typical of the way city lots are laid out, business team members were challenged to think of irregular shapes within those rectangles, akin to amoebas. It is important that the spaces surrounding those shapes both influence and be influenced by the development that takes place within the space. As the Design Center director explains, "Any good urban design is a patchwork of 'stuff.' It's about development that establishes connections."

Many of the assets already within the RecoveryPark footprint that the business teams needed to consider and incorporate had already been identified via the mapping, visual assessment, door-to-door surveying, and community engagement activities. To best incorporate these, and to identify additional assets, the business plan teams needed to consider questions such as:

- How can existing informal community assets, such as open spaces where Sunday blues jam sessions and drumming takes place during the summer months, be intentionally incorporated within RecoveryPark?
- How can things that many think of as signs of urban decay, i.e. vacant land and abandoned buildings, be re-considered and transformed into assets for the

How can things that many think of as signs of urban decay, i.e. vacant land and abandoned buildings, be re-considered and transformed into assets for the community?

community? How could they be re-purposed for another use that enhances the neighborhood?

- How can environmental assets such as the canopy of trees become an integral part of the design?
- How can the existing uses of the neighborhood, i.e. the community-created infrastructures such as walking paths residents use that meander through the open spaces, be retained and become part of the design?

Finally, the business teams were charged with exploring how the historical uses of land in Detroit – primarily production – could become a focus for the current design. One of Detroit’s earliest forays into production was actually with the manufacturing of stoves, in the 1830’s. At that time, most stoves were made either in Albany or Troy, New York. Because it took so long to get a replacement part from the East, the Hydraulic Iron Works in Detroit began making parts for the local market. During the 1870’s and 1880’s, other companies began operations and, as a result, for more than fifty years, the manufacturing of stoves and kitchen ranges was Detroit’s leading industry.²¹

During this same time period, Hazen Pingree, one of Detroit’s former mayors, launched a different kind of production. Pingree’s Potato Patch plan was created to alleviate hunger among the city’s poorest residents. Over the next few years, 430 vacant lots were farmed by residents and, within two years, were producing thousands of dollars worth of fresh fruits and vegetables.²² This was also the time (March 6, 1896) when the first automobile appeared on the streets of Detroit, moving up St. Antoine towards Jefferson. Apparently, the trip stirred only casual public interest. A brief account appeared the next day in the *Free Press*: “The first horseless carriage seen in this city was out on the streets last night. The apparatus seems to work all right, and it went at the rate of five or six miles an hour at an even rate of speed.”²³

Detroit’s reputation in the arts has been mostly for its music (Motown and techno), and the RecoveryPark footprint currently has music imbedded into its infrastructure with its informal summer Sunday night blues jams. But the city has a long history with the visual arts as well. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Detroit was home to several prominent painters, including James O. Lewis, John Mix Stanley, Thomas M. Burnham, and Robert Duncanson. In 1883, the first major art exhibit was held in Detroit, with 134,925 people attending. This was at a time when the city’s population was only 116,340.²⁴

So, with these questions, Detroit’s rich history, the assets within the footprint, the guidance from the Design Center, and consultation from each of the business planning teams, iLabs used their research, creativity, and expertise to create business plans in the four strategic areas. These plans focus on realistic, achievable outcomes for RecoveryPark’s Phase I, the first three years.

PHASE I SCOPE

The initial phase focuses on approximately 40 acres consisting of the property located between Chene Street on the west, Grandy Street on the east, Theodore Street on the north and Mack Avenue on the south. Also included are the former Chene-Ferry Market, Campbell Elementary School, and the former Northeastern High School site.

Within this space, the focus for the first three years will be in the following seven areas: community development, property development, agriculture, food processing and packaging, education, arts and culture, and equestrian facilities. Each of these areas is

summarized below. More detailed information on these and other aspects of Phase I can be found in the RecoveryPark Business Proposal: Years 1-3.

Community Development

Community revitalization and involvement is a central premise of RecoveryPark. Phase I community development strategies will focus on neighborhood engagement, recreation, and business development.

Neighborhood residents and partners will continue to be engaged through personal interaction, flyers, and other strategies that share news and events and obtain community input. The current Grandy Community Services Center will be renovated as a recreation center to include gyms, rooms for crafts and games, and a pool. The former Chene-Ferry Market will be transformed into an equestrian facility and indoor stadium (described below). A community center will be created at the new RecoveryPark headquarters in the former Campbell Elementary School. RecoveryPark will also foster new investments and help incubate new small businesses, particularly those tied to the metropolitan agriculture and food processing framework.

Property Development

The long-term goal is a neighborhood of 2,000 acres, with Phase I focusing on approximately forty acres. Phase I property development strategies will focus on: leases and land acquisition; soil testing and remediation; and repair, construction, and deconstruction.

RecoveryPark has drafted innovative agreements with the City of Detroit and the Detroit Public Schools to maximize underutilized tracts, vacant buildings and open land, including Perrien Park and the Northeastern High School property. Soil testing will be done on the initial parcels that comprise Phase I's 40 acres, and remediation will be done as needed and financially feasible. Grasses and low cover crops will be used as a natural remediation technique for properties that will not be used immediately.

As noted above, Campbell Elementary will be converted into offices for RecoveryPark and its partners. The library will be expanded to include computers and a job development center. The classrooms, gym, and cafeteria will support the building as a community center. The Chene-Ferry Market will be converted into an equestrian facility. The Grandy Recreation Center will be repurposed as a multi-use recreation center. Where applicable, buildings and homes will be effectively deconstructed.

Agriculture

Agriculture is the heart of RecoveryPark. It is where the vision began and is its starting point. During Phase I, RecoveryPark will create clusters of small farming pods of two-to-three acre parcels within a 26-acre parcel, with the first crops being planted in spring 2011. These pods will be structured around the natural environment and existing infrastructures. Hoop houses, greenhouses, hydroponics, vertical farming, and other alternative methods will be used to extend the growing season. Organic, sustainable farming methods will be used.

Agriculture is the heart of RecoveryPark. It is where the vision began and is its starting point.

Most of the products will be slated for RecoveryPark's food packaging business, with nearly all of the prepared produce slated for delivery to area schools, markets, and restaurants. In Year 2 or 3, RecoveryPark will consider the feasibility of opening a retail produce market in its headquarters.

Food Processing and Packaging

There is an immediate need for pre-portioned fruits and vegetables in the Detroit community, and so the first business focus will be on food production. From this venture alone, RecoveryPark expects to employ over 100 people before the end of 2010. These jobs will include food handlers, machine operators, drives, plus supervisory and support staff.

Education

The vision for education is a pre-kindergarten through senior citizen model, where RecoveryPark is a campus where lifelong learning and personal development never cease. This will be accomplished through partnerships with Michigan's university system and in conjunction with the Detroit Public Schools.

In the first three years, RecoveryPark will focus on classes on environmental issues, nutrition, organic food, and equestrian/animal care, as well as bringing in speakers on diverse topics of interest to the neighborhood. An Environmental Interpretative Center will be created which combines classroom learning with hands-on field experience. An Educational Boot Camp program will also be explored during Phase I.

A workforce development program will be launched immediately to train the labor force that RecoveryPark and its partners need to implement the various components of the project, as well as providing a general career services center to help prepare residents for the job market. As noted earlier, the library at the RecoveryPark headquarters will be expanded into a full-time career development center. Three recruits will be sent to the Ag-Tech program at Michigan State University to learn the skills required to oversee RecoveryPark's farming operations.

Arts and Culture

Arts and cultural programs not only add to the aesthetic appeal of the neighborhood; they are important to its therapeutic mission. The long-term vision for RecoveryPark is to include a variety of visual and performing arts in different venues and locations throughout the footprint. The focus in Phase I will be on sculpture. Led by a nationally acclaimed sculptor, students will develop, create, and install 26 large-scale sculptures for the pathways and sidewalks located in the RecoveryPark area.

Equestrian Facilities

In response to demand uncovered during its research, RecoveryPark will build an equestrian facility at the former Chene-Ferry Market. In addition to a place for Detroiters to board their horses, the Detroit Police Department has expressed its interest in growing its mounted police force with the help of RecoveryPark, and will extend additional patrols to the RecoveryPark neighborhood. An experienced, full-time manager will be hired to oversee the program which will incorporate boarding, lessons, and grooming.

Several tasks are on RecoveryPark's plate as it moves into its next phase – the first three years of implementing its business plan. These include:

- Completing the hiring of the management team.
- Establishing quarterly meetings of the Board of Directors.
- Creating an Advisory Board to augment the formal Board of Directors.
- Securing funding for the initial environmental testing, remediation, and construction necessary to start the agricultural programs.
- Launching the various strategies outlined in the three-year business plan.

Several of the questions that guided RecoveryPark up to this point - how to have a transparent process, how to effectively engage the community, how to bring to the table the resources needed to create the groundwork and plan – have been at least partially answered.

Other questions that lived within the process of creating RecoveryPark continue to be critical. How can RecoveryPark continue to imagine the future and make it happen? How can an asset-driven approach be sustained in a city that is being crushed by poverty, unemployment, declining infrastructure, and an eroding tax base? How can the community continue to be engaged in meaningful ways in all aspects of the project? How can the Leadership Task Force and others involved in the project stay engaged and make sure that they do not put themselves ON the process, but instead continue to let the process guide the outcomes?

As with any project, there are considerable obstacles yet to overcome. RecoveryPark needs to be able to attract and retain talented, creative, executive-level staff to lead the project and guide the implementation. Funding is needed to launch many of the activities of the business plans. While the model is designed to be self-sustaining within three years, unforeseen issues could push that back to four or even five years.

In the novel *Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn, the main character offers this wisdom about the power of imagination: "*People need more than to be scolded, more than to be made to feel stupid and guilty. They need more than a vision of doom. They need a vision of the world and of themselves that inspires them.*" For 2,000 acres in Detroit, for the residents who live there, and perhaps for the entire city, RecoveryPark is that vision.

ATTACHMENT: INTENTIONS AND PROGRAM POSSIBILITIES FOR RECOVERY PARK SITE

METROPOLITAN AGRICULTURE: INTENTIONS

Job creation

Feeding the people of Detroit

Local food

Recovery

Financial sustainability

Using land as exists (productive property use, remove blight)

Community organization

Celebrations around food (harvesting, preparation, eating)

Making space more beautiful

Creation of farm markets

Remediation of soil, addressing contamination

Cost effective remediation

Healthy sustainability

Healthy foods (better access) addressing diabetes and obesity

Community revitalization

Bridge to other skill-sets and education

Less costly infrastructure for city; it's expensive to remediate and remove existing structures but infrastructure costs less for metropolitan agriculture

Streets and allies can naturally return to nature

Make this a destination place for researchers and tourists

METROPOLITAN AGRICULTURE: PROGRAMMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

Land assemblage
 Specialty crops
 Crop mix
 Food production facilities
 Machinery storage
 Livestock
 Water access/water collection
 Storing food
 Distributing food
 Recapturing waste and turning into fertilizer
 Need for ordinance amendments which are underway – include new zoning clarification
 Land banking legislation
 Local availability of food tied to local restaurants
 Capacity for metropolitan agriculture – does it apply to livestock, bees, and animals?
 Fresh food for Detroit Public Schools and other city/public programs
 Property tax issues and infrastructure issues – how can this project benefit the city?
 Project must stand on its own in the long-term, cannot die when government funding goes away
 Find models where these projects can be financially sustainable
 Take carbon footprint out
 Build a business model that changes as needs and demands change
 Business plan for each crop or product
 Negatives to living next to urban farming?
 Need to consider where residential areas are located
 Agricultural processing e.g. manufacturing of seeds
 Transferable skills
 Mobile vendors
 Other green technologies related to metropolitan agriculture – need for people to serve these technologies, who could sponsor different technologies
 Legal issues

Focus HOPE model
 Why philosophy of respect that goes with working the land is important for recovering people
 No better answer right now to make land productive
 Makes both the land and the people productive
 Should be organic – do not want to spray chemical fertilizers in urban area where residential areas are adjacent
 Metropolitan agriculture is about transforming community and how can that be done on a larger scale (MSU recommends 10 acre areas)
 Need to determine what the ideal scale is
 Larger than 2 acres but less than 100 acres if doing job creation; education needs larger scale – this will be a blended model
 Production and storage facilities – underground facilities to store food
 People to maintain facilities and equipment
 Physical activities
 Co-op houses
 Greenhouses, winter crops
 Hydroponics
 Will Allen in Milwaukee – existing building to grow specialized crops
 Basements filled with soil – raised bed at ground level
 Existing basements for cool/cold storage, cap at 3 feet of soil above for raised beds with access to basement
 Entrepreneur opportunity for people that have gone through training
 Bioremediation as a product (example mushrooms, sunflowers)
 Recycling and composting
 Growing exotic foods
 Community supported agriculture
 Alternative distribution methods
 Policy and land-use issues
 Balance between residential gardening and commercial agriculture
 Environmentally sustainable methods
 Water sources (water well and aqueducts)
 Geothermal as heat sources for green house
 Community participation and activities

JOB CREATION/BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: INTENTIONS

The project will include onsite training and development on site

The project will include business development throughout

The key site to get involved with is one with marketing opportunities

There is a need for job stability as well as a new paradigm for job stability

The project can generate new skills for people who are very skillful but are unaware of it

The project can create stability in an industrial area, which has never been done before

Sustainability is the key idea that we hope to gain

Low wage jobs give people the opportunity to work who do not have a skilled trade and soon can work their way up to a higher position

Everyone should take part of these low end jobs not just the minorities

Produce practical products that are local and or exportable that will create money and infrastructure for the products

The city is buying products from other cities and states instead of Detroit. An example is The Evergreen Project in Cleveland which was a clinic that bought local products such as a laundry business

We must create a market which the city can utilize

We go right to other cities for products instead of looking local first

Partner with colleges and institutions that have the knowledge to train people for jobs

It will help both high tech and low tech (farming) industries

Misconception in farming; it is seen as an undesirable job. How do we get people to understand what farming really is and the variety of jobs that are available in the farming industry?

Farming has both the high and low end of occupations based on skill level and has a difference in levels of job permanency

Layered jobs – transitional, permanent, and part-time; which can all be part of a system for job creation

Who are the people actually teaching farming?

City of Detroit could step in with grants for green jobs and start a training and partnership with Detroit

Bring in jobs in the process of creating

Create a work force

Can partner up with someone who has that expertise

JOB CREATION/BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: PROGRAMMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

Food related distribution and production

Methods of job training

How do you market knowledge – knowledge economy?

Virtual services - teach how to do market research, not only local jobs but global in terms of marketing

Market research – they can market their services around the world

Food research center – new hybrid plants developed

Important to bring employed people to the city not just employ the people who are already here

Opportunity to bring people to volunteer – pull the community together

Training clients for phase 1 and 2 for land

Community participation organizations

Landscaping and forestry

Agriculture

Need entry level opportunities and opportunities for continuing education

Fostering entrepreneurial opportunities

Partnering with other companies with similar interests

Emphasis at each site? Specialty? Is this another Tech Town?

Layers of skills and jobs that will allow people to continue to move up the ladder in the SHAR structure

Green jobs training program

Create a product to sell

Community services that we create sold by stores and markets

We must provide a service to create a norm for a society that functions

We must provide services where there is a dense population otherwise the service will not last

Affordable housing does not work in Detroit's favor and instead makes Detroit's homes worth little to nothing

Transportation access to connect cities and commercial districts

SHAR could teach the clients and send them out into the job world

The clients of SHAR could help with the solutions (asking people who do not typically give us solutions). Clients could become aware of their natural talents and continue to build on them

We should not focus on the boundaries or a specific plot of land; instead we should look at an area of land

Pilot project site is isolated. Needs to have multiple elements - housing, jobs, farming; cultivate a relationship among these components

We need vital neighborhoods that are integrated with services and diverse retail, which will make these areas attractive places to live

Use farming as a catalyst and jump-start what else could be possible

Position farm based on distribution – where is a service close by that can distribute the products?

Could create an identity for the area based on what products are being produced

Improve retail along Gratiot

EDUCATION: PROGRAMMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

What are the members' needs? To learn and draw on experiences that benefits both the member and community

SHAR members should move through recovery, step by step, each time gaining more knowledge and experience

Education is key. It is something one never loses; individual yet contributive and transportable

The learning process should merge both traditional and experiential learning that fosters the various needs of each recovering individual

The park should evoke feelings of curiosity, safety, and peace in hopes of giving recovering individuals a better foundation for self-driven education in agriculture, nature, and life

Encourage integration into the community, but provide a safe haven, a home, for those who cannot

The goal is to give SHAR members the tools to support themselves and eventually help others

Promote continuous personal and educational growth

RecoveryPark should work closely with Detroit Public Schools to develop a program that benefits both children and adults to acquire skills

A traditional education will provide the platform for a nontraditional education

Agriculture education includes more than just farming; it includes food/nutrition literacy and technology

RecoveryPark should serve as an educational model, a place not *for* learning but *of* learning. An example of this is the Catherine Ferguson Academy

RecoveryPark can act as or house a university extension that provides classes and conducts research that promote a relationship between RecoveryPark and the community through biodiesel, hydroponics, or other ecological studies

Provide mentoring as it ties into SHAR's method of recovery

As alternative high schools are not known to be beneficial, RecoveryPark can house one that accommodates the learning needs of displaced teens and also teach urban farming like Catherine Ferguson Academy

Job training, or "context-based learning," is equally as important as education. More important than both is creating and maintaining a relationship with employers who will provide work for the recovering individuals. It is a more "holistic" approach to an employment program

Connect with local colleges and universities to provide energy alternatives, distance learning, and new degree programs; an opportunity for the SHAR members to attend college

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