Community Building and Engagement

Community Housing of Wyandotte County
Background
CHWC/ Community Building & Engagement

- Community Housing of Wyandotte County (CHWC), a non-profit community development corporation
- Steve Curtis
  - Director of Community Building & Engagement at CHWC
- Art Squad:
  - Amber, Diosselyn, Humberto, and Marie
  - Community youth leaders
- All together, work to enhance, develop, unite, and make the community safer.
Community Gardens

- Objective: to unite the community and offer healthier and more economical ways to grow food.

- Experience: Our limitations were many at first. However, over the years it got easier as the neighbors began to participate.

- Now: In 2013, Bishop Ward took over responsibility for the garden and we were able to install a water source.
Art in the Park

Objective: to share the joy of art with community residents, especially kids, and inspire and teach basic art techniques and visual forms of expression.

Experience: We had a decent outcome the first year we started and throughout the years our numbers in participants have grown.

Now: These classes have been so beneficial that we are getting more people involved, more kids being able to express themselves and enjoy art. As well, we have been able to do it yearly with new ideas for art projects and more resources.
Community Alley Renovation (C.A.R) Project

- Objective: to renovate and enhance our alleys through creative means, which in this case we chose to do it through murals.

- Experience: We have learned how to engage with the community members and incorporate their ideas into the murals.

- Now: We always get good feedback on how people now feel safer walking through the alleys and are entertained by the murals.
EPIC Clay Studio

- Objective: Repurpose a vacant storefront owned by CHWC and turn it into a clay studio for the community and youth that find Art their only means of expression.

- Experience: With no budget, some personal investment and 1,250 hours of labor provided by volunteers EPIC ARTS became a reality. Our partnership with Accessible Arts has provided programming.

- Now: EPIC has been a great success. Accessible Arts is now paying some rent and utility cost but all other expenses associated with EPIC are grant dependent. Our hope is that we can repurpose the adjoining vacant storefront into another Art Studio and develop an adjacent vacant lot into a sculpture garden. All properties are owned by CHWC. Any further development will depend on grant funding or donations.
Statement of idea: we saw the urban farm as a potential tool to engage the Bethany Neighborhood that had completely changed over the last 10 years. The ethnic breakdown of the area had flipped and the once active neighborhood association had stopped meeting.

Not only would the farm provide fresh produce to share with residents but it would also have the potential to engage residents through work on the farm. Since the Farm sets within 100 feet of an elementary school where 97% of the students qualify for the Free Lunch Program and approximately 40% of household incomes are at the property line or below the farm could serve as a learning center and/or a 'field lab' for students to learn about being more self sufficient and also learn about plant science and the importance of bees and insects.

The farm also serves as a gathering place for residents to hang out, get to know each other and enjoy the natural environment. Next year we will hold our summer Art Classes at the Farm to further entice families to visit the farm.
Waterway Park

- Objective: to enhance and unite the community

- Experience: CHWC had already reclaimed the park and made it safe for area residents but it lacked benches, landscaping, and wheelchair accessibility to the playground and shelter. The park is without water, a restroom and security lights. About 20 people a day utilized the park.

- Now: This year we offered ART in Park with great success. We helped with a “Free Wheels for Kids” event, created the first annual ART STRAVEGANZA. Which included 15 artist working with kids, music and dance. We are forming a walking club and providing pedometers and walking guide. Future programming and enhancements are dependent on Grants and donations.
Waterway brings Wyandotte County one step closer to healthier living

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INTRODUCTION

The wealth that a certain community has can affect the well being of the residents that live around the area. As well, affect and impact the health outcomes of the community. For example, taking a look at two well known counties in Kansas we see major differences in regards to health and wealth.

Johnson County and Wyandotte County are two counties neighboring each other. However, the one variable that sets them apart is their health ranking. In Kansas, Johnson County is the healthiest county in all of Kansas, on the other hand Wyandotte County is ranked 99 out of 105.

As mentioned there are differences in health between these two counties. In Wyandotte County, 12% of the people suffer from Diabetes, 38% are obese, and 33% are physically inactive. In comparison with Johnson County, 7% of the population suffers from Diabetes, 24% are obese, and 17% are physically inactive.

The question is, why is there such an enormous difference with health in Johnson and Wyandotte county, and what is Wyandotte County doing to change these statistics?

OBJECTIVE

To find out to what extent waterway park renovations have positively influenced the community around it and how it is similar to Antioch park

METHODS & MEASURES
- Waterway and Antioch park were observed and used as part of focus objectives.
- A short and precise survey was done at both Waterway park and at Antioch park.
- Survey Data:
  - Fifteen to twenty people were surveyed 5 essential questions unique to each park.
  - Short interactive video using Google Maps to demonstrate the two parks.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

These are a few questions that were asked for the survey done at Waterway and Antioch Park
1. How many days of the week do you come to this park?
   - A) 7 days
   - B) 5-6 days
   - C) 3-4 days
   - D) 1-2 days

2. On a rank of 1-5, 1 being lowest and 5 being the highest, what would you rate the park resources?
   - A) 1
   - B) 2
   - C) 3
   - D) 4
   - E) 5

3. Would you consider this park the tidist/least crowded and most resourceful park in your area?
   - A) Yes
   - B) No

4. In general do you feel safe at this park?
   - A) Yes
   - B) No

5. Why do you choose to exercise in this park?
   - A) I don't care about what park I exercise in
   - B) I enjoy the parks' view area
   - C) I like the resources that are here at this park

SURVEY OUTCOMES

- Figure 1 shows that in Johnson county 95% of people go for a walk 5-6 days while the majority of people in Wyandotte county walk mostly 3-4 days.
- Figure 2 shows that 50% of people in Antioch Park rate the park resources 4 out of 5 while at Waterway park the majority of people rate the park a 3 out of 5.
- Figure 3 shows that 70% of people at Antioch Park go there to admire the park beauty and then 50% of people at Waterway park go the park because they care only about there health.

DISCUSSION

Improving resources such as better walking trails, attractive sites and rest areas are key for making Wyandotte County parks a better place. Waterway park is on the right path to becoming a healthy attraction for residents in the Wyandotte area, they have nice sidewalks for example and the park has small trees that some day will be relaxing shade for people to enjoy on sunny days. Hopefully in the future Wyandotte County and other counties as well may improve their public parks by making exercise feel more attractive and comforting.

REFERENCES

Alley Clean Ups

- **Objective:** Clean up alleyways to enhance their appearance, make them safer for neighborhood children and service as a outdoor galley for our murals.

- **Experience:** Neighborhood alleyways are often overgrown or littered with trash and appear scary to neighborhood children. We felt alleyways could provide a safe and unique environment to play and ride their bikes.

- **Now:** This summer 4 alleys were cleaned and 2 of them twice. Sixteen murals are either finished or in progress in 3 alleys. Children and parents are often seen walking the alleys.
Community Impact Measurement
Surveys

- Objective: Conduct surveys in a geographically focused area on perception, and quality of life. Conducted in partnership with NeighborWorks America.

- Objective: be able to obtain from the residents themselves their community experience and how they evaluate their neighborhood.

- Experience: not everyone was willing to participate, so we learned some communication skills. As well, we learn how the neighborhoods either collide or correlate with one another.

- Now: the surveys were sent back to NeighborWorks and will be evaluated.
Conferences

- **Objective:** Enhance our youth’s leadership skills and be encouraged to think outside the box for a new project.

- **Experience:** Exposed to many different leaders in a variety of communities around the nation. Were able to share and learn from one another.

- **Now:** We are waiting for our proposal to be granted.
Future Vision

- Grow Leaders in the community: get new youth and adults involved to be able to continue this “legacy”

- Follow the projects already set and be able to expand on them.

- Begin new projects for the community
  - This summer we are working on a new project that not only promotes all our sites, but as well health. We are involving new community gardens, biking, and stations that will direct others to our sites.

- Need more visions and Funding!!
Overall Experience/ Our Story

- Tell the story of the community efforts to become safer and more vibrant
- What makes our community unique
- Youth envisioning sessions to craft a vision for our neighborhoods.