Dr. DeLind Presents: The Lansing Urban Farm Project (a MI non-profit corporation)
2010

Worked on many different projects, looking at understanding the earth and bringing this to the urban population. Finding a spot on the fringe of an urban setting. Not high production in the urban setting. Garden house to educate people about the benefits of buying locally, eating home grown food, etc. Located in Lansing.

LUFP’s Mission:
Est. Farms in urban Lansing neighborhoods that:
Make produce available to residents
Develop programs that integrate food and farming into larger community building efforts

Major difference in a mere six months. Urbandale farm. Next to 127 and 496.

Why Urbandale?
Food desert
  - a measure of food insecurity
  - 45% w/ incomes less than 185% of poverty line
  - 20% without cars
Vacant Land
  - 25% of homes S. Hayford) empty or red tagged (filled with stagnating places)
100 year flood plain
  - FEMA purchasing homes for demolition (can not really improve homes, can not purchase with intent to fix up)
  - Land Bank demolishing foreclosed homes

Calorie dense but unhealthy. No real shopping centers that offer good unprocessed food. Flood in ’44 and ‘75. Urbandale is waiting to be flooded, essentially.

Why Urban Ag?
  Food access and self reliance
  Economic/ community development
  Civic engagement (Empowerment)
    Shared Responsibility
    Peace making (asset building)
      Eyes on the street
      Walkable/ bikable neighborhood
      Reconnect with nature and natural processes
    Stories
    Aesthetics

Partners
  Ingham County Land Bank
  Lansing Office of Planning and Neighborhood Development
  Allen Neighborhood Center
  Student Organic Farm
Greater Lansing Food Bank and Gardening Project
MSU’s Residential College for the Arts and Humanities
Urbandale Residents
To acquire the help of the residents, went door to door and asked if they would supports the farm. No one said anything about not wanting it there though some did say they would not assist.

Different Pricing for food sold at local markets: one for general public, a little less for volunteers or residents of Urbandale, and the lowest prices were reserved for residents who volunteered at the farm. More and more people showed up to purchase the food as time went on. The community got increasingly behind the project.

What’s Next?
Landbank gave house to the project which will be remodeled and have a farmer live there for increased community interaction as well as being able to tend to the garden more regularly.
Made a difference in the community. People noted that more were out and about, friendly in interactions.
Received Farmer’s Market Promotion Program Grants which provides the project with money to finance hiring people, etc.

Research to be done:
Collect base-line data (demographic, economic, social)
Re-story Urbandale (history, memory, and ethnography)
Documenting food ways and neighborhood
Exploring the relationship of placemaking to civil engagement (empowerment)

Dr. DeLind started researching agricultural issues trying to see what made the farmers vulnerable to the real estate bubble burst. Concluded that the land grant system was the root cause of the failure, not the farmers failure. The values that underwrote small scale vs. large scale farms interested Dr. DeLind. Sought alternatives to large scale, got local farmers to grow certain crops and sold them out of the backs of cars. Was looking for different routes to get food out there. She has been connecting urban populations with farming years now.

As the season changes, what happens to the farm? No year around structure yet, in the works. Enlisting the MSU organic farm to help.

Any outreach for nutrition awareness? Common misconception is that they don’t know about nutrition but really, they don’t have access or choice. This makes healthier foods unavailable.