



# green impact zone<sup>®</sup> of MISSOURI

## Lessons Learned from Outreach and Engagement Practices from the Green Impact Zone Initiative



*How relationship building  
based on culturally  
relevant outreach and  
engagement facilitates  
transformation*

May 2013



## Introduction

This report takes a comprehensive look at the Green Impact Zone's strong outreach and engagement program across its eight major strategies.

The neighborhood leaders who drafted the vision, mission and strategies of the Green Impact Zone realized from the start that you can't enter an impoverished and disinvested area with a single strategy or goal. A home cannot be weatherized effectively if it has a hole in the roof or a crumbling foundation. The outreach and engagement strategies the Green Impact Zone staff use foster relationship building to help transform the area and require a more complete understanding of the area to gain awareness, trust and support from the residents.



This report emphasizes the need for a strong neighborhood outreach program that uses a wide array of tactics to inform, educate and move residents and local businesses to action. Examples of methods used to connect with residents and businesses include “boots on the ground,” and helping residents and businesses learn about and make effective use of available resources. Moreover, this report includes examples of the zone’s strategic focus on eight key areas, including energy efficiency, that comprise the zone’s holistic approach to outreach and engagement.

## **Lessons Learned**

The key findings from the Green Impact Zone’s innovative use of outreach and engagement programming are as follows:

### **Dedicated human resources move community initiatives forward**

A full-time staff with a wide experience base is essential for a place-based initiative to have the depth and acceptance in the community required for success. While residents helped craft the vision for the zone and are building their capacity to take on leadership roles, they can’t do it all by themselves as volunteers. A full-time staff armed with the experience, education and passion to transform communities is integral in tracking, managing and moving neighborhood initiatives forward. Staff has the ability to manage cross-sector partnerships, mitigate community challenges and provide technical assistance to community partners.

### **Support from a larger, recognized institution grounds a community initiative**

The Green Impact Zone’s placement within the Mid-America Regional Council provided the proper transparent, reputable, apolitical support and structure needed to springboard the initiative. MARC also provides administrative support such as payroll, grant administration and human resources. MARC, as the zone’s parent organization, also provides connections to a cadre of partners who have been invaluable in constructing a program focused on community transformation.

### **Cultural relevance creates trust**

It is important for outreach and engagement strategies to be culturally relevant. Neglected neighborhoods don’t get that way overnight and issues aren’t fixed overnight. The Green Impact Zone tapped local knowledge to better understand the unique personalities of each neighborhood. Staff quickly realized they would need to work with each community differently. A cookie-cutter approach would be the wrong strategy. Without a clear understanding of the area’s history, gaps can widen into gulfs, even for those with the best intentions.

Zone staff believes fundamentally in the intelligence, wisdom and insights of zone residents. While community leaders and their advocates are eager to implement “green” ideas of energy efficiency and environmental solutions, neighborhood leaders have encouraged zone staff to begin with improvements to residents’ overall quality of life and then gradually introduce “green” ideas, which are new to many zone residents.

Understanding a community’s history is a common-sense approach when attempting grassroots-level community reform. Therefore, outreach and engagement strategies must be sensitive to community

dynamics that are multi-layered, historical, complex and interactive. Cultural competency strengthens outreach and engagement, enabling an organization to focus on conveying the right messages with the appropriate attitude, knowledge, awareness and skill.

### **Understanding the differences between placed-based outreach and engagement programs improves communication in underserved communities**

The Green Impact Zone's outreach is community focused and supported by neighborhood leadership. The zone invested in resources such as a Robo-call and a texting/email system to inform residents of programs. It also used "edutainment" activities to bolster support for issues.

In addition to these marketing methods, the zone also uses two-way communication to inform, educate, build trust and develop consensus through door-to-door engagement where members of the door-to-door team actually meet and interact with residents to explain programs and assist with applications. This approach helps build trust among residents, and also mirrors and replicates, on one or more levels, the approach implemented by many community development corporations in Kansas City area since 1970.

### **Have fun with it!**

Being committed to helping others improve their lives can be stressful. Finding ways to de-stress as a staff is essential as staff faces community challenges every day. Celebrating and sharing even the smallest victories is important.

## Green Impact Zone Overview

In 2009, Kansas City, Mo., as well as the rest of the nation, was contending with scores of issues that helped set the stage for an innovative initiative called The Green Impact Zone of Missouri. Foreclosures were at an all-time high. Employment was at an all-time low. The auto industry was on the brink of collapse. Risky investments in sub-prime lending led to the demise of iconic financial powerhouses such as Lehman Brothers. In the midst of two wars and national industry bailouts, the country was wrestling with the fact that our resources were finite. In response, the U.S. government began implementing policies to shift the nation’s thinking to becoming better stewards of the environment by allocating resources to programs and initiatives focused on environmental and energy conservation through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The urban core of Kansas City, Mo., like many large cities across the nation, has areas that have seen decades of disinvestment. As a result, urban neighborhoods endure high rates of poverty, unemployment and crime, as well as high concentrations of vacant and abandoned properties. In Kansas City, neighborhoods east of Troost Avenue (historically, a cultural and economic dividing line) were hit particularly hard by the decline. A variety of interventions had been used to address these social and economic issues without success. As the global economy tanked in 2009, there was growing pressure to find short-term and long-term solutions to concurrently build individual and community capacity.

In September 2009, Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II announced the creation of the Green Impact Zone with support from the city of Kansas City. The zone was framed as a national model for targeted investments, seeking to demonstrate how 150 square blocks of the urban core might be transformed through sustainable reinvestment. The zone is bounded by Troost on the west, 39th Street on the north, Prospect/Swope Parkway on the east and 51st Street on the south.

Table 1 below reflects the significant challenges, and even greater potential of the zone.

Challenges	Potential
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 37.3 percent poverty rate.</li> <li>▶ 50 percent unemployment in some neighborhoods.</li> <li>▶ 55 percent of population has high school education or less.</li> <li>▶ 41 percent of the housing stock built before 1940.</li> <li>▶ \$22,712 median income.</li> <li>▶ 53 percent renters.</li> <li>▶ One grocery store; limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables.</li> <li>▶ More than 1,000 vacant lots and many abandoned homes and commercial buildings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Five strong neighborhood associations.</li> <li>▶ Five Community Development Corporations (CDCs).</li> <li>▶ In the area between the Zone and the Country Club Plaza homes range in value between \$500,000 –\$1 million dollars.</li> <li>▶ Active civic leaders and organizations.</li> </ul>

Table 1

Congressman Cleaver saw this as an opportunity to concentrate and coordinate financial and community resources in this area. He called on the city of Kansas City, Mo., to fund the core operation of a staff whose primary focus would be to work side by side with the neighborhoods in a manner that contributes to community transformation, while also building the capacity of neighborhoods. Since 2009, the city council has provided \$3.8 million to support the core operation, including neighborhood capacity building grants.

The Congressman then turned to the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), the region's metropolitan planning organization and a trusted, neutral public agent, to administer the city funding and anticipated grants, and to provide oversight for the initiative.



MARC conducted a series of focus groups with the five neighborhoods that make up the Green Impact Zone. The focus groups allowed neighborhood residents to determine the overall goal of the Green Impact Zone initiative, and the strategies that would lead to achievement of the goal. These strategies would lay the foundation for the Green Impact Zone work plan. Neighborhood residents determined in the focus groups that strategies in eight areas were critical to transformation: housing, employment and training, energy efficiency and water conservation, weatherization, urban agriculture, youth, public safety and community services, and infrastructure. The focus groups felt that these strategies would accomplish the zone's mission and vision: To develop a community that is socially, economically and environmentally better tomorrow than it is today; a place where people want to live, work and play.

Strong neighborhood outreach and engagement programs underlie all of the work of the Green Impact Zone. Outreach efforts sought to not only engage every resident and business in the activities of the zone, but help every resident understand and access the wide range of available resources.

In the 3.5 years since its inception, the Green Impact Zone has been the catalyst for the awarding of more than \$178 million in federal grants and private funds, some of which reach outside the zone boundaries to the broader Kansas City region. Grant funds are supporting infrastructure improvements, an energy-efficient Smart Grid program, energy-efficiency improvements, employment and training, housing improvements and more.

## Communication Strategies

The Green Impact Zone defines and implements outreach and engagement as two separate elements.

- ▶ Outreach is a mechanism for delivering value-added material to neighborhood residents. Outreach paves the way for engagement.
- ▶ Engagement is the means to collaboratively address community concerns using focused, ongoing, two-way conversations to develop understanding. Engagement encourages open dialogue and an exchange of information.

Appreciating the difference between the two approaches helps determine the extent to which an organization can expend its resources and the cultural relevance of its messaging. Outreach and engagement are universal values built into the Green Impact Zone’s programs, culture, strategies and practices. Table 2 illustrates the distinct differences between the two concepts.


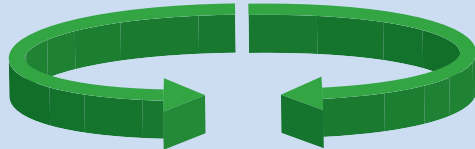
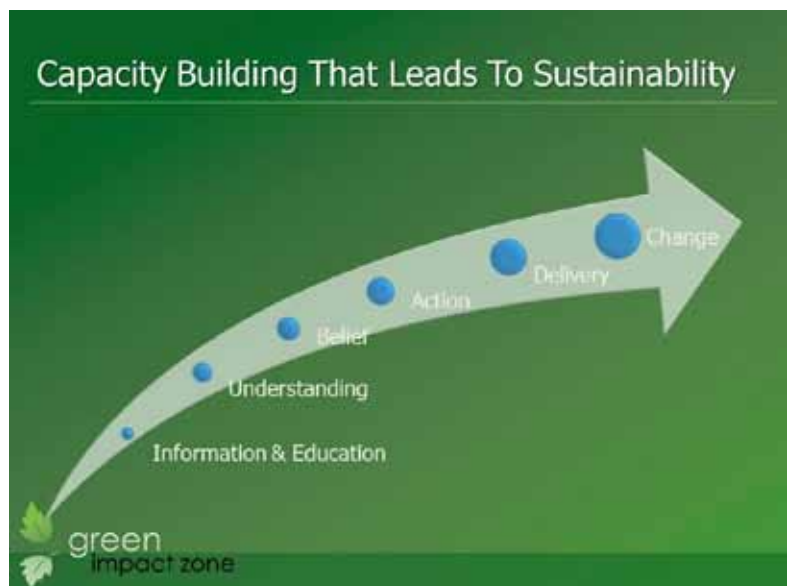
Outreach: One-way communication	Engagement: Two-way dialogue
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Delivers one-way communication.</li> <li>▶ Increases awareness and informs residents.</li> <li>▶ Involves community residents and stakeholders.</li> <li>▶ Meets people where they are.</li> <li>▶ Provides the foundation for engagement.</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Includes ongoing relationship building.</li> <li>▶ Increases awareness and educates residents.</li> <li>▶ Works with the community to mutually identify solutions.</li> <li>▶ Assesses success of strategies.</li> <li>▶ Encourages feedback and open communication with residents.</li> <li>▶ Involves listening to people and building trust.</li> </ul>

Table 2

Outreach is necessary to help organizations and businesses promote their values, accomplish their mission and develop increased resources and responses to address a range of compelling community concerns. The Green Impact Zone’s capacity-building strategy is rooted in outreach and engagement that begins with the process of information sharing and education of residents and community leaders. This diagram at right, created by the Green Impact Zone, displays a six-step change process that results in



capacity building leading to sustainability. Though outreach and engagement strengthens each stage, information, education and understanding are necessary to change or modify a person's behavior.

“Edutainment,” (education + entertainment) a marketing technique used throughout business circles, has been an effective outreach tool to inform and engage Green Impact Zone residents. People at all income levels like to be entertained. Consequently, the zone uses “edutainment” events in combination with WIIFM (what's in it for me) strategies such as giveaways to attract people to an event and increase their receptivity to the educational message.

The Green Impact Zone's outreach and engagement is not limited to residents, but extends to policy makers, government officials, civic leaders and philanthropists to help them understand the range of challenges lower-income people face in their daily lives. One of the tools the zone uses to enlighten these groups about people in poverty is the Missouri Association for Community Action's Poverty Simulation. The simulation is a role-playing kit that enables participants to view poverty from different angles to broaden social, cultural and economic competency. It is imperative for community-based organizations like the Green Impact Zone to find meaningful ways, like the poverty simulation, to bridge the gap between policy ideas and neighborhood challenges.

## **Green Impact Zone grassroots outreach and engagement methods**

The Green Impact Zone uses the following outreach and engagement methods in whole or in part. They can be used by other community-based organizations provided they are tailored to a particular organization's style or a community's needs. They are not inclusive of every outreach and engagement method employed by the zone. However, they are the most replicable.

### **Educational and informational outreach** (outreach)

Educational and informational outreach is an entry-level interaction where informational material is communicated to neighborhood residents or the public at large. Some examples of these types of meetings are EnergyWorks KC (EWKC) program updates for neighborhood associations, weatherization meetings for local neighborhood associations, landlord meetings to discuss weatherization, radio promotion and event tabling. As an outreach tool, meetings allow residents to ask questions, make comments and share concerns. Such meetings may enable two-way communication depending on time, subject matter and other factors. Engagement typically occurs after meetings when residents ask in-depth questions.



This strategy also includes typical communication methods to disseminate information, such as Robo-calls (an automated phone call that uses a computerized auto-dialer and a computer-delivered, pre-recorded message), newsletters, reports, email blasts, radio promotions and event tabling.

**“Edutainment” events** (outreach and engagement)

“Edutainment” outreach and engagement events are large events with 100 or more attendees that combine education and entertainment in a manner designed to promote social change. For example, the Brush Creek Community Partners (BCCP), in partnership with the Green Impact Zone, hosted a “Meet Me at the Bridge” event that blended Kansas City history with a reference to the historic racial divide the community is trying to bridge. The purpose of this event was outreach that promoted each of the eight strategies and provided opportunities for partners to cross market. Information was provided in an entertaining fashion with the goal of building interest and creating opportunities for future engagement.



The “Energize Your Home, Impact the Zone” community event is another example of an “edutainment” event where several participating organizations provided information about weatherization, home ownership, energy efficiency, jobs and job training, youth programs, conservation, health and nutrition, public safety and much more. The event included 54 information booths, including neighborhood associations, nonprofit agencies, city departments, social service agencies, youth programs and environmental awareness groups. Entertainment was provided by local performers and Tom Joyner, host of the nationally syndicated Tom Joyner Morning Show. The event drew more than 500 participants, including 76 volunteers.



**Door-to-door teams** (outreach and engagement)

Teams were periodically formed to include the Green Impact Zone’s community ombudsmen along with a hired street team comprised of five to six people with strong communication and people skills. These teams distributed information on no more than three of the Zone’s eight strategies by leaving information at the door or talking with the resident about potential actions on the strategies being promoted. For example, door-to-door outreach focused on the weatherization program and generated 3,098 Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program (LIWAP) applications.



Door-to-door outreach can be as simple as leaving fliers, applications or information at the doors in a particular area. It can become an engagement strategy in areas where the team actually meets and interacts with the residents to explain the programs and assist with applications.

**Social media** (outreach and engagement)

Social media tools can be used for outreach and engagement. Tools such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube can be used to update followers with event information, share tips, pose questions, share program benefits such as EWKC’s





no-cost energy assessments for zone residents and, in the case of Twitter, provide real-time updates on the progress of events or happenings at the zone offices, in other zone venues and elsewhere.

### **Organizational and individual relationship management** (engagement)

Leveraging trusted, existing relationships among individuals and/or organizations to facilitate action is a proven and successful strategy for the Green Impact Zone's outreach. Field ombudsmen are Green Impact Zone staff assigned to neighborhoods, organizations and focus areas for the sole purpose of developing relationships that will result in capacity building for the zone, and transformation for the individual and/or community. Block captains, block leaders or other community collaborations find synergies across programs, address needs or cross-market events, projects and programs.



Human capital is the greatest resource for a community or organization. The ability to work with people, facilitate meetings, build consensus, negotiate group dynamics and hold one-on-one discussions are all critical to successfully implementing this strategy.

### **Learning communities and workgroup management** (engagement)

Learning communities in the Green Impact Zone evolved into the Zone Institute of Preparation and Prosperity (ZIPP) as a solution for residents who are seeking to improve their lives through skills development, job acquisition and retention, with an emphasis on green jobs and environmental literacy.

ZIPP uses comprehensive Social, Economic and Environmental (S.E.E.) training modules that include self-management, career readiness, civic engagement, community involvement and environmental literacy. The S.E.E. training principles reflect the vision of the Green Impact Zone, which articulates the goal for distressed urban communities to become socially, environmentally and economically stronger. Each training module encapsulates one or more of the Green Impact Zone's S.E.E. training principles, such as:

1. Increased work readiness (self-management, workplace communication, etc.) for unemployed and underemployed residents of the Green Impact Zone and other area neighborhoods.
2. Development of local talent who have strong workplace readiness skills, baseline knowledge of environmental concepts and who can immediately contribute to the company's bottom line.

### **Partner workgroups** (engagement)

Partner workgroups are meetings attended by specific Green Impact Zone staff and other community, civic and for-profit leaders to address specific subject areas. These workgroups cover a variety of topics including social equity, workforce development, health and wellness, housing or other pertinent issues impacting communities. These workgroups explore ways to improve or change procedures, processes or ways of thinking to help communities realize positive and sustainable change.

## Outreach goal

Outreach and engagement activities are opportunities to reach specific, measurable goals and results. Goals can be defined as the number of people who attend an event, sign-up for a program or volunteer their time in a given period. An outreach goal can quantify how people value what you offer.

An organization develops a wide range of relationships with participants, funders, volunteers, referral sources, government entities, small businesses and neighborhood associations. The list is endless. Outreach and engagement are important efforts that community-based organizations use to promote their values, accomplish their mission, and develop increased resources.

Goals are as unique as an organization. A goal can be determined by the capacity to do the work or ability to leverage resources to support an effort. An organization's goals should strike a balance between an ideal of what could be accomplished and what is possible. It is key to remember that goals are important, but not more important than an organization's mission.

## Outreach and engagement materials

Promotional materials can be as modest as a flier or a notice in a church bulletin, or as flashy as a billboard, a flash-mob or a television commercial. Regardless of an organization's size, the goal is to have people respond. Therefore, fliers, email blasts or Robo-calls should be oriented to a specific target audience and cause them to equate the organization with adding value to their lives. The development of impactful promotional materials can, literally and figuratively, open residents' doors. The materials an organization distributes reinforces who they are to the community. In developing outreach material, techniques can be mixed and matched to find the ones that are the most useful. This is a fertile stage for generating new ideas without sacrificing message.

Living in an era where people and organizations have access — at least online access — to an organization every minute of every day, it is tempting to use limited resources to increase your social media footprint. While all community-based organizations should have a Facebook and Twitter presence, it's important to remember that there is nothing as meaningful as personal contact. Even in our instantaneous society, people still serve people and do the work that makes the difference.

**Could you use some free hyper-efficient new appliances?**

**Homeowners in the Green Impact Zone:**  
You may qualify to win a free refrigerator, washer and dryer, or heat pump water heater

KCP&L will give away a limited number of appliances as part of a research project to measure how energy-efficient these appliances really are. Find out if you are eligible to win free appliances. Contact your Green Impact Zone community ombudsman today:

**IVANHOE**  
Call Arletha Manlove, 816-936-8808

**BLUE HILLS**  
Call Cokethea Hill, 816-936-8807

**49/63, TROOSTWOOD OR TOWN FORK CREEK**  
Call Pauline Mbogo, 816-936-8806

**MANHEIM PARK**  
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Green Impact Zone of Missouri  
4600 Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64110  
Phone 816-936-8803  
www.greenimpactzone.org

## Case Studies

The following case studies illustrate the Green Impact Zone’s best practices for outreach and engagement strategies. These approaches can be used by themselves or in combination. Each case study depicts a different scenario and one of the zone’s eight strategic focus areas.

### CASE STUDY 1: Weatherization — The “Little Thunder” Story

The Green Impact Zone was responsible for facilitating outreach to residents regarding the benefits of the Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program (LIWAP). Outreach included educating residents about the program and its benefits, distributing applications and assisting homeowners in working through miscommunication with weatherization contractors. In some instances, outreach helped redirect homeowners to other community resources such as EnergyWorks KC or Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) if they did not meet income or eligibility guidelines.

Four months after the grant was announced, the first weatherization client was approved, work was scheduled to begin, and a news crew was dispatched to film the commencement of the work. The homeowner and weatherization contractor miscommunicated regarding the scope of work and the preparation the homeowner needed to complete before the contractor would begin. In frustration, the homeowner put a halt to the work and refused to move forward with the weatherization process.

The zone staff was asked to get the weatherization work back on track by assisting the weatherization contractor and homeowner in resolving their miscommunication within 24 hours. The ombudsman assigned to the neighborhood where the homeowner lived had a year-long history of interacting with the neighborhood association’s block captains, volunteers and paid staff. The ombudsman knew the personalities and organizational roles of those involved, and therefore knew who to call on to get things done. The ombudsman was able to use his relationship with the homeowner and association staff person to get the situation resolved quickly. In less than 10 minutes after receiving the request for assistance, the staff person called to the homeowner and explained what needed to happen and what was at risk if she chose not to move forward in the weatherization process. The homeowner turned to the Green Impact Zone staff and asked that the zone ombudsman assigned to her neighborhood be a part of the face-to-face meeting with the contractor.

The homeowner, zone ombudsman and contractor met at the home and reviewed the paperwork, resolved the miscommunication and in less than 24 hours the work was back on track. The weatherization process yielded her a new furnace that she calls “Little Thunder.” The homeowner was so pleased with her warm home that when she recounts her experience (which can be seen in a testimonial at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=HI5jNAnN0mc&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HI5jNAnN0mc&feature=relmfu)), she does not even reference the frustration she experienced. The Green Impact Zone’s use of organizational and individual relationship management led to the desired results in this case study.

#### ***Energy impacts:***

- ▶ The homeowner is saving energy, receiving lower heating bills and enjoying a more comfortable home.

## CASE STUDY 2: Housing

Housing development within the Green Impact Zone focuses on green design and sustainability practices that will create, as stated in its mission, “safe, attractive and sustainable neighborhoods.” These practices should be embedded in every aspect of housing initiatives from the planning and predevelopment phases to construction.

Enacting an overarching sustainability plan throughout the Green Impact Zone is critical in guaranteeing that these efforts are followed and the desired outcomes are achieved and sustained. With this outcome in mind, the team developed a matrix comparing two of the nation’s prestigious building standards for green development — LEED for Neighborhood Development and Enterprise Green Communities standards — and presented the matrix to community leaders to determine which plan suited their community needs and best aligned with the city’s regulatory practices.

It was established that the Enterprise Green Communities program was the best fit for outlining a design and regulatory framework for future development within the zone’s housing initiative areas. The standards focus on affordable, green design alternatives that include:

- ▶ Construction materials and management.
- ▶ Land-use planning and smart site location that uses passive solar heating and cooling.
- ▶ Surface stormwater management.
- ▶ Energy-efficiency guidelines and recommendations.

### ***Outreach strategies implemented:***

Educational and informational outreach approach

- ▶ Robo-calls — via recorded telephone messages, zone residents were:
  - Invited to attend meetings and provide input on the proposed green standards.
  - Informed that a door-to-door team would be conducting an information drop.
- ▶ Neighborhood Meeting Updates — neighborhood leaders and zone ombudsman communicated outcomes from the green standards meetings and next steps in the process.
- ▶ Information drop door-to-door — information was hand delivered to neighborhoods.

### ***Engagement strategies implemented:***

Organization and/or Individual Relationship Management Approach

- ▶ Housing meetings were facilitated to allow residents an opportunity to discuss and evaluate the construction materials/management, water conservation and energy-efficiency options being considered for neighborhood housing development projects

### ***Energy Impacts:***

- ▶ Unified housing development strategies focused on energy conservation measures including insulation, heating and cooling efficiency, efficient appliances and smart land-use applications.

### CASE STUDY 3: Urban Agriculture

In order to engage residents around urban agriculture, staff created an informational meeting on the topic of container gardening. Through research and previous partnerships, zone staff located a local resource, Kansas City Community Gardens. These engagements were especially important for those who were new to the concept of growing food, weren't ready for a large-scale garden, didn't have space for a garden or were uninformed about the benefits of urban agriculture. As is often the case with outreach, multiple tools were used. While the informational session was the first tool used to engage residents around the idea of community gardening, the following outreach and engagement strategies were implemented:

#### ***Outreach strategies implemented:***

##### Educational and Informational Outreach Approach

- ▶ Robo-calls — via recorded telephone messages, zone residents were:
  - Invited to participate in urban gardening activities in area community gardens.
- ▶ Email blasts:
  - Invited community partners to participate and spread the word about the container gardening class.
- ▶ Newsletter
- ▶ Neighborhood meeting updates.
  - Informed residents about the upcoming container gardening class, handed out fliers and provided addresses and contacts to area community gardens.
- ▶ Information dropped door-to-door.

#### ***Engagement strategies implemented:***

##### Organization and or Individual Relationship Management Approach

- ▶ Leveraging partnerships to facilitate training.
- ▶ Field ombudsmen made personal requests to urban gardeners asking for assistance to identify residents interested in gardening and urban farming.
- ▶ Personal phone calls to confirm and remind attendees of training.

Urban agriculture creates multiple benefits and positive community impacts.

#### ***Energy impacts:***

- ▶ Conservation of fossil fuels — The reduction in transportation-related pollution correlates with the reduction of fossil fuel usage.
- ▶ Stormwater management — Many urban agriculture practitioners use water catchment systems. These include rain barrels and other methods of diverting rain water into storage. This reduces the amount of rain water entering the storm sewer system, but it also reduces the reliance on the municipal water supply during periods of light or no rain. This conserves water that would have been used to irrigate the gardens.

***Environmental impacts:***

- ▶ Urban agriculture provides many benefits to communities where it is encouraged and supported. The primary benefit comes from the food that is produced, which is often organic, or at the least minimally treated with pesticides, thereby reducing the toxic load of the community's natural environment.
- ▶ Reclamation of vacant lots and brownfields — Many neighborhoods are able to repurpose blighted and vacant lots in their communities using urban agriculture. This gives these lots new utility for the community and removes dangerous or unattractive space. Also, for lots that had been polluted by prior use (car-repair facilities, dry cleaners, etc.) organizations such as the EPA have funding available for brownfield remediation, a process that removes the toxins from the soil and makes the ground usable for urban agriculture. This process cleans away dangerous chemicals and helps repurpose the land.
- ▶ Reduction in pollution — Since urban agriculture produces food close to where the end-consumer lives, there is a reduction in pollution related to transporting food as well as the transporting of consumer to grocery stores, which in Kansas City tends to be miles from many urban core communities.

***Other benefits of urban agriculture:***

- ▶ Public safety — One of the most overlooked defenses communities have against crime is natural surveillance, a term referring to people who are outside for recreation, relaxation, exercise, etc., and as a result are observing their communities. Urban agriculture serves this purpose by placing people outside in a purposeful and positive way. Their presence will deter criminals who would prefer their activity not be seen by members of the community, especially those members who are actively involved in the transformation or improvement of their communities.
- ▶ Food grown in urban communities also provides great health benefits, as it is produced locally, addresses issues associated with food deserts, and provides nutritious foods to often disadvantaged communities or those with limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Many diseases and physical ailments can be addressed simply by eating better, and urban agriculture increases the options people have to acquire fresh fruits and vegetables.

**CASE STUDY 4: Energy-Efficient Appliance Research**

In 2010, KCP&L placed new, hyper-efficient appliances — including refrigerators, washers and dryers — in a limited number of homes in the Green Impact Zone as part of a project with the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) to measure how manufacturers' claims compared to actual electricity usage.

Day-to-day operation of these appliances will help the EPRI measure how much energy the appliances can save the average homeowner. With help from the Green Impact Zone's community ombudsmen, homeowners were recruited to participate in the project, based on their active involvement in neighborhood and community events.

***Outreach strategies implemented:***

Educational and informational outreach approach

- ▶ Robo-calls — via recorded telephone messages, zone residents were:
  - Invited to attend informational session to learn about the appliance give-away program and how to qualify for the program.
  - Informed that a door-to-door team would be conducting an information drop.
- ▶ Neighborhood and community partner meeting updates.
- ▶ Information drop door-to-door.

***Engagement strategies implemented:***

Organization and/or individual relationship management approach

- ▶ Leveraging partnerships to facilitate training.
- ▶ Training and employment of minority plumbers and electricians.
- ▶ Zone ombudsmen managed each appliance installation to ensure residents understood the program requirements and served as a bridge between zone residents and KCP&L.

***Energy impacts:***

- ▶ Energy conservation through the use of efficient home appliances.

***Neighborhood Capacity Building Impact:***

- ▶ Selection of program participants was based on the level of involvement in their neighborhood association, thereby encouraging and rewarding their continued participation in the neighborhood association.

## **CASE STUDY 5: SmartGrid Demonstration Project**

KCP&L deployed “smart grid” displays to more than 1000 residents in the Green Impact Zone and surrounding smart grid demonstration area starting in 2010. The displays interact with their new meter to allow consumers to see how much electricity they are using at any given time, allowing them to make better decisions about their energy use.

***Outreach strategies implemented:***

Educational and informational outreach approach

- ▶ Neighborhood and community partner meeting updates.
- ▶ Information drop door-to-door.

**Engagement strategies implemented:**

Organization and/or individual relationship management approach

- ▶ Leveraging partnerships to facilitate outreach.

**Energy impacts:**

- ▶ Of the 1,000+ SmartGrid displays placed in homes, nearly 700 of them are still in use. (Others displays have been lost, and some residents could not be reached for comment or have moved away.)
- ▶ Of the 700 displays, 50 percent of them are being used by residents who say they value the information they receive from them.
- ▶ Seventy of these residents also enrolled in KCPL's Time of Use rate pilot program, which offers customers a higher-than-standard rate during "peak" hours and a lower-than-standard rate during "off peak" times, thereby encouraging them to manage their costs by reducing their usage during peak hours. This program is only offered during the summer months, May 16 through Sept. 15. The results from those 70 homes:
  - 40 households saved energy and money for the entire summer.
  - The average savings for those customers was \$31.56, a 9.5 percent reduction from the traditional rate structure.
  - 13 customers reduced their bill by more than 20 percent.

**CASE STUDY 6: Deconstruction / EnergyWorks KC**

In 2010, Wells Fargo donated 23 foreclosed properties to the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council on behalf of the Green Impact Zone, along with \$172,500 to help pay for rehabilitation or demolition, if that was the necessary outcome. Rather than just bulldoze the houses, the city of Kansas City's EnergyWorks KC staff proposed deconstructing them. Deconstruction involves carefully dismantling building components for reuse and recycling.

MARC and the Green Impact Zone worked with EnergyWorks KC, the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council, Habitat Restore and The ReUse People to develop a deconstruction training-project plan.

After reviewing 100 applications and interviewing 25 candidates, 14 participants were selected for the program. After the group completed the two-day, OSHA-10 training at the start of the program, one of the trainees, Rane Newman, was offered a job and accepted. The remaining participants finished the training, which included hands-on deconstruction of the house at 4429 Garfield.

**Outreach strategies implemented:**

Educational and informational outreach approach

- ▶ Robo-calls.
- ▶ Newsletter.



- ▶ Neighborhood meeting updates.
- ▶ Information drop door-to-door.

***Engagement strategies implemented:***

Organization and or individual relationship management approach

- ▶ Interviewed residents.
- ▶ Training and employment of zone residents.
- ▶ Worked in partnership with EnergyWorks KC partners coalition to train residents in deconstruction.

***Energy impacts:***

- ▶ Building deconstruction allows building materials to be reused, thereby reducing the energy required to produce virgin materials.

***Employment and Training Impact:***

- ▶ Residents who received deconstruction training now have an additional skill set that makes them more marketable to area contractors.

## **Conclusion**

The Green Impact Zone was created to be a national model for place-based investments that replace old paradigms with innovative, strategic approaches leading to community transformation. It also demonstrates the importance of effective outreach and engagement and the role strategic private-public partnerships play in tackling entrenched community challenges. This paper summarizes strategies employed by Green Impact Zone staff to increase awareness, and inform and educate residents about challenges and opportunities converging in their community. Another goal of this paper is to reinforce the argument that place-based initiatives are effective approaches to build community capacity in ways that support quality lifestyles and foster equitable distributions of resources.

The first step in neighborhood transformation is acknowledging the wide range of social, economic and environmental issues in an urban community. Private and public investments in long-term community goals jump-start the transformation of a community in a way that is safe and attractive, paving the way to quality housing and a higher quality of life. Residents need information and tools to enhance their individual and the broader community's problem-solving capacity. Effective outreach and engagement has the ability to raise awareness and broaden understanding that can lead to community transformation. Building resilient communities goes beyond the scope of public policies and practices. In the end, developing community resiliency at the household or neighborhood level will demonstrate a community's ability to attract and maintain resources, creating stronger neighborhoods over time.

There is a spirit to outreach that says "positive change is possible." It inspires hope to continue to pursue opportunities to improve the lives of residents in the community.

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