

# Community-Based Gardening in Phoenix Central City South: Developing a University-Nonprofit Partnership

Tommy Bleasdale :: tbleasda@asu.edu :: Carolyn Crouch\* :: Carolyn.Crouch@asu.edu :: David Miles :: dmiles1@asu.edu :: Sharon Harlan :: Sharon.Harlan@asu.edu :: Phoenix Revitalization Corporation

School of Human Evolution and Social Change, Arizona State University, PO Box 872402, Tempe, AZ 85287-24023:  
 \*School of Sustainability, Arizona State University, PO Box 875502, Tempe, AZ 85287-5502:  
 Phoenix Revitalization Corporation, 1310 West Hadley St, Phoenix, AZ 85007-3612 :: www.phxrevitalization.org

## Introduction

This partnership is researching the real-world challenges of advancing community-based gardening programs and addressing the needs of community gardeners. We are working in partnership with the nonprofit Phoenix Revitalization Corporation (PRC) in Central City South (CCS) to improve nutrition and reduce summer temperatures through adding productive green spaces. The PRC organizes many activities in these eight neighborhoods including an established resident-driven community gardening program.

PRC Represented Neighborhoods:



## Community Context Continued

**Alley gardens** have been used by the CCS neighborhoods to reduce crime and urban blight.



Gardens like the one above in the Grant Park Neighborhood have been abandoned for lack of interest.

## Theory & Project Context

**Our research joins** community food security with environmental justice.<sup>3</sup> The academic literature illustrates that community gardens in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods serve as points of organization and empowerment which leads to other issues being addressed.<sup>4</sup> Partnering with the PRC allows us the unique opportunity to gain insight into an existing community gardening program and establishes ties between the CCS neighborhoods and the University. At the request of the PRC we are creating educational content and materials that facilitates the community gardening program.<sup>5</sup> Our surveys, focus groups and interviews will create valuable strategies for empowering the CCS community gardens and increase the academic knowledge of community gardens.

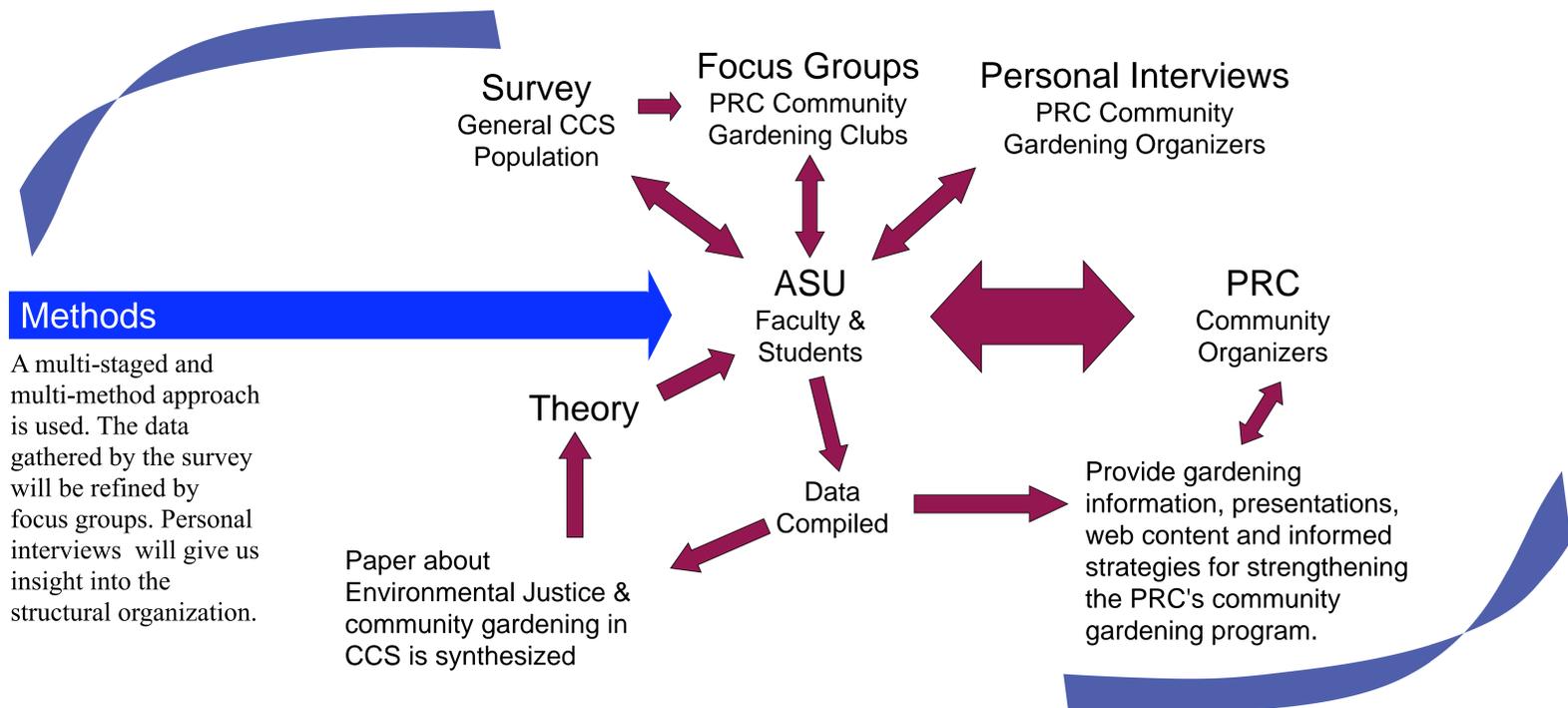


## Research Questions

- What issues of land tenure and water resources exist for CCS community gardeners?
- Which particular community garden designs are most likely to attract potential gardeners?
- What benefits or detriments do CCS residents associate with community gardening?
- What social differences exist between community gardeners and those who do not do community gardening?
- Could community gardens in the CCS neighborhoods proved viable greening and shading alternatives to trees and parks?

## Methods

A multi-staged and multi-method approach is used. The data gathered by the survey will be refined by focus groups. Personal interviews will give us insight into the structural organization.



## Community Context

**Census tract** data shows that a significant portion of PRC CCS neighborhood residents live below the poverty line. This is a predominantly Hispanic/African American/Asian community.

**Food desertification** has been observed nationwide in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods from a loss of supermarkets and the spread of calorie dense fast foods.<sup>1</sup> Food desertification has been anecdotally observed in the 8 CCS neighborhoods through both windshield surveys and personal communication with neighborhood activists. There is only one very small food-market that serves the 8 CCS neighborhoods, but there is a plethora of fast food and snack shops.



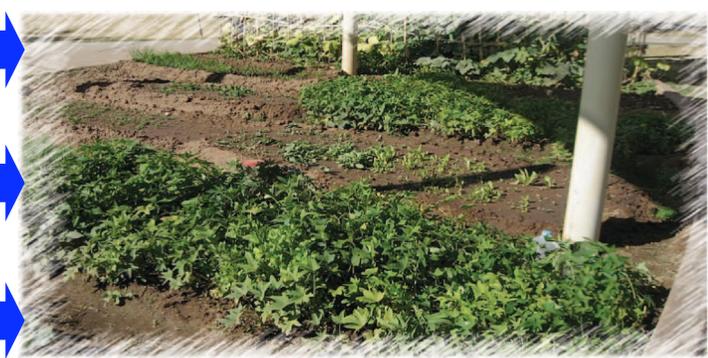
**Trees have been removed** at the request of both police and neighborhood residents to increase line of site. Because of a lack of green spaces and shade, the summer heat in such neighborhoods can climb 15 degrees higher than neighborhoods that have shade and green space.<sup>2</sup> Our windshield surveys found few rooftop-mounted air conditioners; many homes are cooled by evaporative coolers.



To help the PRC and CCS neighborhoods turn this:



Into successful CCS community gardens like this one



## References

- (1) Larson, N. I., Story, M. T., & Nelson, M. C., (2009) . Neighborhood environments disparities in access to healthy foods in the US. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 36, (1): 74-81
- (2) Harlan, S.L., A. Brazel, L. Prashad, W.L. Stefanov, and L. Larsen. (2006) . Neighborhood microclimates and vulnerability to heat stress. *Social Science & Medicine* 63: 2847-2863.
- (3) Gottlieb, R. & Fisher, A., (1996) . Community food security and environmental justice: Searching for a common discourse. *Agriculture and Human Values*. Vol(13) 3:23-32
- (4) Armstrong, D., (2000) . A survey of community gardens in upstate New York: implications for health and community development. *Health and Place*. 6: 319-327
- (5) Feenstra, G., (2002) . Creating space for sustainable food systems: lessons from the field. *Agriculture and Human Values*. 19: 99-106

## Acknowledgements

This project began in the ASU class: ESS 591 Environmental Justice in the City (Fall 2009). It is supported in part by NSF Grant No. GEO-0816168, Urban Vulnerability to Climate Change. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

