

Urban Gardening

Presented by Julie Pulgini

<https://connect.msu.edu/p53z1j98d6b/>

Madonna University: It was story about Detroit and such a positive story when mostly we just hear all these negative things about Detroit. And it was just like here are real people down in the neighborhood talking about hope, inspiration, and community and building things. I hope the world can hear this because it gives such a really, really beautiful picture of Detroit and I am just glad Madonna had an opportunity to be a part of this.

So that's all I have to say. Jen is there anything else you would like [video cuts out briefly].

Julie Pulgini: I am going to start with a power point. And I would like to start by saying we chose the hottest summer in the history of Michigan to be filming outdoors. It was like a hundred degrees most days we were filming and so it was a lot of hard work, we were out there filming a lot. We filmed from May; we even shot some footage in December. So we ended up with about 25 hours of footage and Aaron is going to talk about that on the PowerPoint if it uploads. Is it because...?

Aaron Guay: It will convert it; it will pull it up very quickly. Let me just introduce myself, I am Aaron Guay. I am very honored to be a part of this project and to be asked to be in it. I thank everyone for being here today to see what we did. Like we said, we've worked very hard on this, we've talked to many people and it's a pleasure to share it with you. So thank you.

Julie Pulgini: And the study was on, it was a socioeconomic study on the impact and opportunities urban gardening provides in at-risk communities and the affects it has on the quality of life. We started off with one person giving us four leads and we ended up with over 50 interviews. And this particular one; and these are some of the different areas that we, different gardeners and people that we interviewed on this list here that you see.

Aaron Guay: And as you can see there are multiple, this is brushing the surface of what Detroit offers in terms of urban gardening. There's a lot, lot more and we have so many, you know we have hours and hours; this is what we did all summer. So these are just a few that are all pretty big gardens that are centered around this idea of community gardens. I don't know if you want to...

Julie Pulgini: Well the film is actually only going to focus on Brightmoor Farmways but we filmed at all of these places that you see here that we're still editing so that's still to come. I don't know what the next slide is.

Aaron Guay: Okay so today's focus is, as we said, Brightmoor which is in Detroit, Michigan. As you can see over here it is in the northwest neighborhood, this is Brightmoor. It is in this area called cluster 8. And this PowerPoint will be available on the REI website if you would like to

go back and check it out and look at any of the links that we have or any of the sources. But as you can see it's the northwest neighborhood over here.

I'm going to share some statistics with you really quick and then we are going to play you a clip of the video and then just discuss some of our overall findings afterward. So there's about 23,845 residents in Brightmoor. I am not going to go super into detail.

Julie Pulgini: Yeah that's Brightmoor; Brightmoor Farmways is a small pocket of Brightmoor the city.

Aaron Guay: So and here's just some statistics for the city of Brightmoor. We're focusing on this because it's a good example of what urban gardening can do to a community that is typical of what Detroit faces or an at-risk community faces. There's decreased population, less people, less families, they are leaving the town. There are vacant homes. As you can see there's a little higher percentage than the city of Detroit as a whole. It's in poverty, about 46% of people ages 20-26 are unemployed. So it's an at-risk community facing a lot of struggles economically and in population.

This is a density map showing vacant lots in Detroit. So as you can see Detroit is full of vacant lots.

Julie Pulgini: Let's show them Brightmoor.

Aaron Guay: Right here is where Brightmoor is. So as you can see yellow, red, this is where Brightmoor Farmways is and that's where we're going to be talking about. This one is a more in depth look at the Brightmoor area. These are vacant lots all throughout Brightmoor, the city of Brightmoor. Again the Farmway is over in this area here. In Brightmoor 32.6% of residential lots are vacant land compared to 26.9 is the overall Detroit average.

Just as an example too, I thought this was a very; it's a little blurry I apologize. But this is a bunch of foreclosures. The red are foreclosures located throughout Brightmoor, foreclosed houses. The orange is subject to foreclosure, just struggling people unable to pay for their houses, about to lose their houses and can't pay their taxes.

But unlike Detroit, there is definitely something special growing in Brightmoor. There's all these different community organizers coming together, a community that is coming together and love each other and working together to help each other. These are just some of the communities. Julie went out to some of the community meetings. I don't know if you have anything to say about the community meetings?

Julie Pulgini: That's really how I got into the community is I started going to the neighborhood and Brightmoor community meetings that they have, I think it was once a month. And it was like Dr. [inaudible name] explained: a snowball effect. I talked to one person who led to 5 people

who led to 10 people who led to 15 people. So I really got to know these people pretty good through the summer and so did Aaron working with them.

And one thing I will say that I think I mentioned to Chuck too is that they get a lot of press coverage in this area because it's sort of a budding community, people are watching it. And they said they liked us filming because we weren't noticed, we weren't in their face all the time. We were just kind of in the back ground and pulling them aside and not being in their way [video cuts out].

The Seed, Video Clip [music playing]

Slide 1: "The Seed: Urban Gardening and Its Socioeconomic Impact on Inter-City Communities."

Slide 2: "Detroit city is home to more than 1,200 urban farms and community gardens."

Slide 3: "Approximately 250 are community gardens and nearly 40 are production/profit focused market gardens."

Slide 4: "There are no major chain supermarkets located within the city limits."

Chris Buchanan El: Detroit city, a city known for its dilapidated buildings, burned out houses and vacant lands. To many it's a city in ruin, beyond repair, plagued with no chance of hope. But many Detroiters know this city has much to offer and one of these things is urban gardening. Over the span of 8 months two researchers set out to find if urban gardening provides socioeconomic opportunities to at risk intercity communities and does it enhance quality of life?

Community members and gardeners from around the city of Detroit were interviewed. Amongst the city's brightest and most vibrant examples is Detroit's northwestern city of Brightmoor where there's a small community known as Brightmoor Farmways. Talking to Brightmoor Farmways gardeners and residents, this is how they describe their community.

Riet Schumack: Our community, we call it informally the Brightmoor Farmways, is a 15 to 21 block target area where we as neighbors have taken it upon ourselves to help each other to make our lives and the neighborhood a better place for ourselves and our children to live in. We have capitalized on all the green space in this neighborhood and established about 45 pocket parks and gardens.

Mark Schumack: Brightmoor, it's impoverished. It seems to be popular dumping ground for contractors or whoever who want to get rid of stuff. It's a mixture of different

kinds of people, people who just want to be left alone. It's mainly renters. And then there are other people who want to be out and talking with people. So, lots of kids.

Leah Wiste: More than any other place I've lived it's a place where neighbors know one another and depend on one another in a positive way. This new genre of suburban dystopia, right, where everyone has their own atomized existence that things happen behind their picket fences and they're estranged from one another. Right, you're familiar with that kind of vision and this really feels like the antithesis of that.

Gwendolyn Shivers: This is a very diversity community now. We all work together, we are black, white, Asian, you name it; it's up in here now. Everybody's working together around here for the betterment of the community. As you go through here you'll notice we have a lot of community gardens and we all work together to make those gardens beautiful around here.

Leah Wiste: I was talking to a neighbor of mine; she runs a daycare so she's had a business in the neighborhood for 30 years. She has made what she calls an Edible Playscape for kids so they get to know plants and they get to gnaw on some strawberries and they get to have fun. And I asked her, "Gwen, what would this neighborhood do without you? You bring so much to it." And she said, "What would I do without this neighborhood?"

Darnell Simms: It's a nice community that's coming together. More people are starting to come and get oriented and get involved with one another. Now we are trying to keep it clean and people are more concerned with one another.

Akeyla Reid: It's cheery and loving and caring. A whole bunch of people supporting it to make it better. It looks pretty and colorful and has a lot of plants growing. It makes me feel good because I know that when people come here to visit they will see a boarded up house with pictures on it and be like, "Oh that's cool that somebody did that for the community."

Katharina Walsh: I believe it has a diversity of different types of people, different skills and resources, family structures. I find it's very welcoming; people are very generous with their time. We do a lot of exchanges of time and resources so we help each other by sharing our skills and the things that we own or the things that we share together.

Symone White: There's good role models and people who you can talk to and people who help better the community which motivates us to better the community.

Chris Buchanan El: Throughout Brightmoor Farmways there are over 40 different gardens which started to pop up around the community five years ago. We asked the gardeners to tell us about their gardens and this is what they had to say.

Cleo Anderson: I started gardening about two years ago. I started it because I was bored and didn't have anything to do and I started seeing a lot of other people in the community doing it. Now I do it because I really enjoy doing it and I know it's a healthy way for people in my community to be able to eat. I like to do it and make sure there's good food around.

Gwendolyn Shivers: My garden as you can see is called the Edible Playscape. It's designed for kids to learn and to play. We teach them about nutrition, we teach them about health, physical activities. As you notice we have a hay jumper over here, and we have the sandbox over here for the kids to play in, we have a tunnel for them to run in. And then we have a Teepee for quiet time.

Leah Wiste: I started this garden next to my house. My neighbor was kind of helping me out with it. We had a couple of volunteer work days to dig up the sod and to get things started. But I am a new gardener and now I've got this big fertile plot that I am pretty proud of.

Chris Buchanan El: With the abundance of gardens in the community, Brightmoor gardeners explain what that value of having these gardens provides for their community.

Riet Schumack: Well fresh vegetables for sure. I think the other resource is human capital because you are activating people to do something about their lives and about their environment. It increases their self-esteem; it increases their sense of empowerment. They're much more likely to do something about where they live and how their lives are being run. So I think human capital is probably the biggest resource that comes out of gardening.

Some of the farmers have started to sell their vegetables at the markets so it has been a financial resource. I foresee in the future, too, kind of like an eco-tourism type economy because people love to come here, we're conducting tours regularly. And we're kind of making plans to maybe start charging for tours and to combine it with catered meals or art displays or people being able to sell value out of products out of these tours.

Gwendolyn Skivers: When they come out here in the morning and there's nothing but broccoli growing, they want the broccoli. They literally name the garden's vegetables that they want to eat themselves here. Like now we have tomatoes growing. And the families are appreciating it too because now I notice they are using more vegetables in their cooking with their kids.

During the summer, they want to be out here. I mean they get here at 7 o'clock. I can guarantee you by 8 o'clock we are either in this garden, at the Playscape or at this stage here and we work our way around here every day. This is called the Early Learning Center. And that's what we do, we work it every day.

Chris Buchanan El: Gardeners and community members were asked how they have seen this area improve or not improve in the last five years.

Riet Schumack: When I moved here in 2006 there was no green space just looting, vacant lots, lots of garbage, lots of crime, lots of prostitution, drug abuse. I would say it has at least 50% diminished. As a matter of fact I think most looting has gone, there's still some drug abuse, some crime. Prostitution has virtually disappeared from our 15 blocks and there's no more dumping. So I would say it improved greatly.

Cleo Anderson: Oh it's dramatically improved, really seriously. About 2.5 almost 3 years ago my wife and I we were really considering moving. We had actually put our home up for sale and we started realizing that there were other people in the community that had the same ideas and wishes that we had for the community: to see the community get back to where we knew it could. And we realized there are a lot of wonderful people in this community that want to see this community thrive.

So we really have changed our mind about leaving, I don't think we're going anywhere any time soon. I feel safe in my community now. We have one of the nicest blocks in the whole entire community now. I can walk up and down the street any time day or night and don't have to worry about a lot of negativity that's going on in other parts of the community.

Mark Schumack: This street has improved. There used to be a lot of drug activity and prostitution on the street when we moved in and that's—particularly the prostitution—has disappeared. The drug dealers and the prostitutes and the people who hire the prostitutes just feel uncomfortable doing their thing in a place where there's kids working and where there's gardens and flowers. I think they are more comfortable with junk and messy surroundings; it kind of fits in with what they're doing. And if things look like they're being cleaned up; and I think they also now that neighbors are active and are watching and calling the police or whoever if things are going on.

Gwendolyn Skivers: It's improved tremendously. If you had been here five years ago and saw the drugs that were over here, the gangs that were hanging out over here. We had a lot of abandoned houses. Now if you look around as you go through this neighborhood you will see boards that have been painted on the houses, we have managed to close all of the houses up. Most of the houses we have people living in them now. They're not as run down as they used to be so the gardens community has really made a difference. You see more people walking now. Before, five years ago, you wouldn't dare take a walk through here and now everybody is walking or riding a bike. You know it's an exciting time around here now.

Leah Wiste: I go to the meetings, the Neighbors Building Brightmoor meetings and every time I see new faces and so I think that's also a symbol of kind of the growing human capital [phone rings] and relationship building.

There are always projects going on like we see today where there's a big effort to do a facelift of a certain street or really clean up this couple of houses.

Unnamed Community Member: I have seen just nothing but improvement. Boarding up the houses and stuff. Everybody is communicating with each other and stuff.

Symone White: I believe that the community is getting better. Everything here has helped the quality of life in the neighborhood and I believe it has livened it up. The fields they just used to be there and it was just an empty field and now there's gardens. And the houses that just used to be burnt up and just there, it has painting and murals on it of like gardens or pictures that kids made up.

Darnell Simms: This place has improved a great deal because when I first moved over here you used to have hookers on just about every corner I think and now that's been cleared up. There were a lot of young guys selling drugs and whatever up and down the street; that has cleared up a lot. So the people have come together now, the people living in the neighborhood now don't want that. People now are knowing that they have to correct for the people living in the neighborhood and knowing that we have to live there. So yes it has improved a whole lot from getting to know each other and having a community Block Club and the Block Clubs coming together and getting things done.

Coming down the street going to work early in the morning I didn't know anybody until one day three years ago I was walking down the street and Gwen she was sitting on her front porch and we got to talking and laughing. And then she invited me to the Block Club meetings and that was a whole lot to look forward to and it helped because it brings everyone together to help one another.

Akeyla Reid: Five years ago there were a lot of burned down houses and vacant houses and a lot of crime going on with the young kids in the neighborhood. Now it's better because we have something to keep us occupied over the summer time when we're not in school. So a lot of those burned down houses got fixed and painted and boarded up. So it's not as much crime going on now as there was five years ago.

Kavontay Banks: My community is very nice, clean now that we have cleaned up the neighborhood. Five years ago it was way worse because we didn't have everybody getting together to pick up trash in the neighborhood.

Katharina Walsh: In this small target neighborhood of about 21 blocks I've seen a huge improvement in the last two years of people becoming really interested in what's going on. Not just interested on a visceral level but then also becoming involved in many different ways.

Chris Buchanan El: Brightmoor Farmways gardeners have also seen the same positive change come out of their gardening efforts. Gardeners were asked to talk about how their gardens made their community look better.

Leah Wiste: I guess before I put the garden here it was just kind of an empty, grassy plot. I wouldn't say that this was an eye sore but it wasn't enticing or inviting or appealing in any way. So it is just another spot where you see a neighbor kind of just making something out of nothing I guess.

Riet Schumack: Because of the gardens there's a lot more people visible. People are outdoors all the time, they work at street level so there's a lot more presence of positive things which counteracts the negative elements in the neighborhood and makes the negative elements in the neighborhood feel very uncomfortable. This neighborhood has become a walkable, bikable friendly, people friendly, neighbor friendly neighborhood and I think it's in big part because of the gardens.

Cleo Anderson: My garden makes the neighborhood look better because I would rather see some beautiful vegetables growing than fields that's overgrown with trash and weeds and scrap car parts or whatever that somebody can dump in there. Now we have people that come through the neighborhood and they actually take their time to look and see what's going on in the neighborhood because of the gardens. They are very, very interested in, "Wow who did that? How did you come up with the design for this?", "What was your inspiration?", "Who helped you?" You know things like that. And to have the neighbors and kids come out and get involved, that's a real big deal. Especially to have the kids want to come out and pick up a shovel or rake some leaves or put down a plant; that's a very big impact.

Mark Schumack: People kind of being energized by this development resulted in the Kaboom Playground. That's a new one; it's swings and slides and barbeque grills and that's a great addition. Now, especially in the evening on nice evenings, you can hear kids playing over there and we never heard that before so that's kind of a nice sound. And you can see kids walking by with their older brothers and sisters and parents and stuff walking up to the playground. It's nice kind of seeing the streets being filled with people who should be there as opposed to people who shouldn't be there.

Chris Buchanan El : While gardening and urban agriculture were the main focus of our investigation, we discovered that there is a lot more springing out of Brightmoor garden beds and community efforts. There is an adult mentor program. We talked to Cleo, a small engine repair mentor, and other program leaders and here's what they told us.

Cleo Anderson: We have what's called a cluster; they call it a cluster 8. The city is broke down into individual sections and we are cluster 8. And I oversee all the repairs to all the lawnmowers, chainsaws, weed whips, any kind of tools that we might use in our whole

cluster. I have the experience and the expertise to where we can actually tear them all down and put them back together without any problems. And it gives the kids a very good opportunity to learn something that otherwise they probably wouldn't have got a chance to learn.

I have been an auto mechanic for about 25 years of my life. I got involved with working with the kids in the community because I started out working on cars around their age and it provided a living for me. And anything that I can do to help the kids in the community learn something, you know I am one of the forerunners and I am ready to knock down your door to help the kids in the community.

Mark Schumack: Well it gives the kids skills. It teaches them how to use tools, power tools and hand tools. If they ever have a house or even if they're a renter they have the skills and the confidence to work on their own house if something breaks or if maintenance needs to be performed. Experience with tools helps those kids who might not otherwise have that so they can better take care of themselves when they are an adult.

There's also—we do this often—there's math involved with woodworking, right? So it kind of reinforces their geometry and their division and multiplication skills. Like today, Kavontay; so we had boards, 8 foot long boards which are 96 inches. And we had to cut boards that were 32 inches and so I asked them what is 96 divided by 3? And Kavontay right away he goes, "I don't do math." And eventually I kept at him as I was working with the other kids and I think he caught on that it does have relevance. I told him, "It's not math, it's life." I think it helps them in that it really reinforces what they are learning in school and they see some relevance.

So in Gwen's, all the wooden structures you saw there in her Edible Playscape were built by the kids. The hay jump, she's got a little bridge with a sandbox under it, the arbor and the picnic table. There's a chicken tractor, it's like a portable chicken coop. It's a combination coop and chicken run that you can put between 2 and 4 chickens in. It doesn't stay in one spot, it's light so that you can pick it up or drag it around the yard. And the chickens will eat bugs and what not in the yard so you save on feed and they also fertilize your yard.

Gwendolyn Skivers: Most import, I am trying to teach them how to be entrepreneurs themselves. To let them know you can take this little bit of land and develop it into something. And they see me sell the fruits and vegetables too and they see me do fish dinners. So I try to teach my kids that they can do things without having to go out here and have a job; make their own job. I mean they literally cut grass too, so you know they're little but I am teaching them how to mow this grass.

Each child comes out here and has his responsibility be it watering this bed or watering the tomatoes or watering the corn. And you should see them rush to do their jobs. We're

preparing them and instilling something at this age that hopefully will live a lifetime. And then too, to let them know that they're special and they all have gifts that they have to give to this world. And this is one of those gifts that they're given at this age. And I can see them looking back for years to come and saying, "Ms. Gwen taught me that" or "Grandma taught me that!" And another thing they tell their parents – which I thought was so cute last summer – "We can't wait to go to Grandma's house because we've got to go work in her garden!"

I consider that all early learning because all of them are developing either their physical or social skills. I had one this year, every day for two weeks, he had to get up and do his performance onstage. When he went to do that performance, he was not afraid and this was a room full of people when he was age five; he stood up, read his poem, and said "When I'm through with preschool, I'll be on my way to kindergarten!" [laughter] But he got up, had no fear, and said [his poem]. It was all because I got him ready by practicing here onstage. Me and the kids sat out there and watched him. We gave him a big round of applause each time he said [his poem]. Each day, the kids go over there and perform. They call it 'Brian's Move' or 'Alexander's Move,' whatever they want to do. But the idea is to get them out there in front of people, get that fear out of them in terms of being in front of people so that when they get up there, it's their show time!

Riet Schumack: There is a shortage. It's very easy to get people to come for a one day volunteer event. It's extremely difficult for people to commit on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis to come and really work with the children and develop relationships. Our children need relationships. They need role models. They need people that are reliable that will stick with them, that will expose them to things they normally wouldn't be exposed to. Those are long-term relationships. We have not been very successful at getting people from outside the neighborhood to come in and build relationships with children. They need it desperately.

Katharina Walsh: My name is Katharina Walsh and I'm a member of Neighbors Building Brightmoor. This year I'm also serving as an Americorps member with Neighbors Building Brightmoor. I've been working a lot with young children doing artwork. We have an art club called Kids Corner. It's free and open to all the kids in the neighborhood and adults; parents come as well. I also work with youth in the summer Youth Development Program we have here. I work a lot with volunteer groups that come into the neighborhood.

Chris Buchanan El: Brightmoor Farmway's most beautiful flower is the Brightmoor Youth Development Collaboration, the BYDC. This is what the BYDC had to say about what they do: [31:34]

?1: I don't know how much you know about the youth garden.

?2: I do know a little bit.

?1: There are a lot of kids involved in that. It's like profit sharing. They grow vegetables and sell them at Northwest Market. What they don't give there, they give to Grown in Detroit to sell at Eastern Market on Saturdays. They get to split the money, so it's definitely helped them. They get t-shirts and feel proud to be wearing them. They feel like they're a part of something.

?3: BYDC stands for Brightmoor Youth Development Collaboration. [Within BYDC] there are different groups; the woodworking crew builds signs for parks and the different farms locations. The open space crew paint houses, board the windows, and create murals on the houses after they're boarded up. The landscaping crew mows the lawns, clean up the lots, and trims up areas that need to be trimmed. The farming group basically farm, they plant and grow different things to be sold at the market downtown. The Children program gives free painting lessons to the children around the neighborhood so they can have something to do. I do this because I want to do something that can help better my community. I believe that my community shouldn't look as bad as it does, so I help any way I can.

?4: It's really the kids that did all of the work, I kind of just made the designs, told them where I want the seeds to be planted, and the kids just started digging the holes while putting the plants into the ground. This was all developed by the kids.

?5: We (The Open Space Crew) can paint some things and they (The Farming Group) can plant some things. If we paint a certain fruit or vegetable, they can plant what we've painted and it can be the whole theme. Then the woodworkers can make a flowerbed, so they can plant the flowers. It all comes together as one, there's not really one separate group we are working together. The way that we can come together to make something better is not just people in one community saying that the condition of the neighborhood is the city's problem, but by all of us coming together to do it ourselves to make our city look better. With the art crew, we board up houses and paint over them to make the community look better. We do that to keep people out of the abandoned houses and to make the neighborhood something the people can own. In the woodworking crew we build things to be put in other places. For example, we built a bridge a month ago to be to put in the garden that Ms. Gwen has. It's called a sandbox-bridge and we also made a chicken-tractor. I am proud of the parts that we've come together to do, and not so much on the projects we stop doing. The projects we have finished is like we've come together as one big community and happy family.

?6: I like to plant trees because I did the tree dome down the street from my house. We planted trees, cut grass, and picked up trash. In our community we have a Facebook page that Ms. Shoemaker put together. She let's everyone know what's going on through the

Facebook page. We paint, board up abandoned houses, pick up trash, cut grass, and other things. [The abandoned houses] They're special to me because I put my own creativity and work into them. They make me feel like I've done something special for my community. Some little kids help too, everybody helps out

?7: I actually started being a part of this Brightmoor thing last year or last summer. My parents told me about it and that was the first I've heard of this program. I've seen gardens getting started and my parents started one too. I began helping them out and I seen that they [the gardens] had volunteers for them, and then I signed up for the program. I've been doing this ever since last summer. We mow lawns, fix lawnmowers, and do gardening, woodworking, bike repairs, and make the community look better.

?8: I believe that this program gives them [the children] something positive to do, rather than to sit around the house and do nothing. This program gives those kids something positive to do. I believe that you can always take something and make it from nothing.

?5: People are going to see that I really care for this community. This experience can give me more opportunities in life, like I can put this experience down on a college application and to know that I've done something to make my community better.

Chris Buchanan-El: Parts of Brightmoor are typical of what many people may expect of a Detroit neighborhood. Streets are littered with trash and graffiti, abandoned schools, burned down homes, problems with drugs, crime, and prostitution. But between the cracks grows what appears to be a promise for hope. Vacant fields are being transformed into green-spaces, outer bounds are now what used to be abandoned houses, and gardens flourish from the neighborhood and city streets, all stemming from a community coming together and doing what it takes to make a change, make a community whole, to bring it back to life. From what we discovered, it truly took a garden to bring the city back to life.

(Singing) "Wake up, wake up the city!"

My name is Chris Buchanan-El, "Detroit Love" y'all.

Julie Pulgini: I guess that's the end of the video. Ah! Chris is here, he wrote the song and was the narrator of the documentary. I was truly honored when Chris told me that our conversation inspired him to write the song. Chris did you want to add anything on?

Chris Buchanan-El: Actually when Julie brought this idea to me, I was already avid in my community for the last five years. I was so excited, I was like "what, me? Are you kidding?" But three to four days later I shared how I felt because I see the kids who live in the community. They have super adoration for what I do because they see me in the community and on the stage, they [the kids] be like, "Hey wasn't you the guy wheeling

boxes and stuff?” It’s [the project] really interesting because I hear stories about the city saying we’re this or saying that we’re failing, but people aren’t realizing that this is happening everywhere. It’s not just happening here [Detroit], you have people in Chicago going through the same thing, Indiana, Philadelphia, everywhere in the country. It is very important that younger people should see this because we’re going through this and there is something you can do. You can be a part of making the change of something that makes an impact around you. You can still be “cool” or whatever they call it these days to help people around you. The song came from when I and girlfriend were talking. I say to her “I can’t figure out anything for this song.” She then replies to me “Well aren’t you a writer?” I say back to her “Yes I’m a writer.” She then says “Well wake up!” And then I go, “That’s it, that’s the song! Wake up the city!” that’s how I came up with the concept of the song. I grew up in Detroit; I went to school here, so every time I

Julie Pulgini: The Forbes thing. I think everyone picked up on the Forbes article response.

Chris Buchanan-El: I think a friend of mine told me a couple weeks ago about the article. I remember him saying “Hey man, did you read the article Forbes put out?” I said “No I don’t know” He then says “Hey Forbes said that Detroit is the most miserable place to live in and it’s horrible.” So I knew right there I had to say something. That’s why in the beginning of the song I said “People say all these negative things about my city, that’s okay, keep hating.” Forbes you need to wake up. Detroit is not a miserable place to live in. There are a lot of positive things going on in Detroit. The North end and Southwest have cleanup projects. Also many little pocket communities are starting community gardens and are helping with the greening of the city. The people are also sharing seeds, compost, wood, and many other things to help their community. It was amazing to be a part of this and I want to do more. Thank you everyone. This is really Julie’s idea, but I took what she had put my spin on it and came up with a song for it.

Julie Pulgini: I think the most interesting thing that we found, me and Aaron is that in the past 3 years it really hard to find anything about this community. But in the last 3 to 5 years, the people of the community said that things have really changed. The census was in 2010. We want to go back and find out the crime rate. We want to say that things are looking up.

Chris Buchanan-El: Yeah pretty much, I would have to say that the people didn’t have that many resources there before. Also I believe it’s the parents who and people who heard about what was going on to help this project because in this area there are only two organizations “The Fairmount Association” and “The Schoolcraft Association” that only work with the police because of how close the stations are in that community. So people complained about the abandoned cars and houses, and that started the neighborhood watches, Angel’s night instead of Devil’s night, so the children could do something

positive instead of being negative on that day. To be honest some of these parents are the real police. They have the blinking lights on their cars and that started a whole big campaign on crime in the city.

Julie Pulgini: We've done a huge project on "Artist Village" with "Blight Busters" for the city of Detroit. I believe Chris was a part of that as well. That project is to come later.

Chris Buchanan-El: I'm very proud to be a part of this project because I am so used to hearing so many negative things about the city. But I believe that this project can give people inspiration to change what is happening. I think that everything shouldn't be built off of money, prestige, and all that stuff. You should just want to see something different. I thought it would be good for me to be involved because the children could see for themselves, someone who is familiar and is from their neighborhood do something to help out. I'm excited.

Julie Pulgini: We also have pictures of the market.

Chris Buchanan-El: Whew, let me tell y'all they done got me a market. I had no help and it hot.

Julie Pulgini: Well it was so hot. In the daytime while we were filming I was never afraid in the different locations we were at. I believe that people outside of Detroit have a fear of the city. I really wasn't afraid at all.

Chris Buchanan-El: I don't why people have this fear. I believe that most of that fear stems from the media.

Julie Pulgini: Or that there is nothing to do. In the Brightmoor and Farm way area, it is so friendly there. There's a really great thing going on down there.

Chris Buchanan-El: Most of the neighbors that live there in that community have been there during the transitioning. So, many of them couldn't afford to move.

Julie Pulgini: Jeff is there anything you want to add?

(Inaudible)

Jen was there anything you wanted to say?

(Inaudible)

Aaron Guay: We went through some of these, but this is our overall wrapping up findings within the project.

Julie Pulgini: If you want these, they can be found on the internet for you to look back on for later.

Jennifer Bruen: Sorry about earlier, but I am here. We are having a little bit of technical difficulties with the microphone.

Julie Pulgini: Dr. Charbeneau did you want to say any closing statements?

Dr. Charbeneau: I wanted to thank Chris; you are the perfect person for this project and everyone that showed up to this event. I'd like to thank Julie and Aaron who are field researchers that put in all of the labor to put this whole piece together. I also would like to acknowledge the collaboration of Madonna with the department of broadcasting and cinema arts with Prof. Larry, Sociology with Dr. Proctor, and social work with Prof. Myles. This is kind of how we are at Madonna, like the neighborhood we all come together. I thank the other technology people that came in to make this webinar happen. I would like to say it was a pleasure meeting you and have a great day.

Chris Buchanan-El: It was a pleasure meeting you as well.

Julie Pulgini: Thank you everyone!

(Applause)

(End)