RECONNECTING COMMUNITIES BY GROWING FOOD
RETROITS TO SUBURBIA

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Abstract

America adopted the suburban model after WWII to accommodate returning soldiers. At the time it seemed to be the ideal solution, our American dream. Unfortunately the developments resulted in unforeseen consequences. In the second half of the 1900’s we begin to see the impact of the suburbia on modern America. Impacts include the separation of neighbors from one another and the decline of community interaction and support. The suburban model altered our agricultural model; we had to adapt the system to feed larger populations who lived further away from the farms. Local farms centralized communities and created a place for interaction. I suggest trying to recreate this local farm feel by implementing a community produce exchange where neighbors work together and grow their own food and share with one another.
Chapter 1:
Introduction

The American dream was once considered to own a single family in the suburbs with a white picket fence and a backyard away from city life and crime. As great as that sounds the consequence of this lifestyle turned into more of a nightmare then a dream. By nightmare I am speaking of how Americans are suffering physically and emotionally the suburban model has created, as well as the disconnected communities we have created. I will analyze why America adopted suburban sprawl as well as the consequences of the design and how we can one day reconnect community within suburbs.

Societies in the United States is greatly criticized for unhealthy behaviors such as leading inactive, sedentary lifestyles and the enormous consumption of non-nutritious, fattening foods which influence the onset of obesity, heart disease, and other related health problems. In recent years, there is an increasing public awareness towards large-scale food systems and the serious degradation they cause to the land, water, and well-being of communities that surround production sites. Sustainability advocates have noted food systems and eating habits as a central issue to be challenged in order to solve some of our most problematic social and environmental pandemics, as well as to foster better economic systems for producers, workers, and consumers.

Since we are dealing with these problems we should analyze why we are faced with these challenges? What decisions have we made in the past that lead us to this lifestyle, and what can we do about it? This paper will explore the motives and implications of
suburban sprawl as well as the various ways in which the modernized food system is detrimental to our health as well as our planet. The problem in which we face today is how we can incorporate smaller-scale, localized food systems as an alternative to conventional agriculture to create healthier sustainable communities. An example of a localized food system where people have the opportunity to interact is community gardens. I believe if neighborhoods are encouraged to garden bonds between neighbors will strengthen and we will see increased involvement within the community.
Chapter 2: 
Emergence of Suburbs

Prior to WWII suburban areas in America were designed after a successful popular Garden City model, created by Ebenezer Howard in England. The philosophy of these designs were to integrate the small town feel with the functions of everyday life such as; school, work, stores, banks, public transportation, libraries, restaurants etc. all within walking distance (Morris, 5). The well-designed structure allowed easy public transportation access to the city’s core while each family had their own house and garden in a quiet community. Neighbors worked together to complete tasks, and residents knew where their food came from, how it was grown, and the working farmers.

These Garden City models were not meant to serve any particular social class, but instead integrate all of them (Morris, 5). Many of the buildings started off as public housing funded by the government, the sole concept of these Garden Cities as an effort to achieve supportive communities. Today the surviving Garden City developments are regarded as high quality and community-oriented places to live. They are regarded as an example of what communities should include and designed from the connectivity of the streets to community participation. Examples of these communities can be found in Forest Hills outside of New York City and Chestnut Hill in Philadelphia.

The Garden City style developments were the standard building practices of new suburbs until the end of WWII (Morris, 5). After WWII the types of communities that were being built changed after America started to create housing expansions to accommodate the influx of soldiers returning from WWII. America went through an
extreme transformation that effected communities, the environment and social interactions. Every American began striving to move to a single family house in the suburb to live the American Dream.

To accommodate the returning soldiers the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Veterans Administration (VA) loan programs provided mortgages for over eleven million single-family homes to be built (Duany, 2000). In tandem with the construction of the new homes, federal and local subsidies were also allotted for new roads to be assembled. This is the economic growth that America has dreamt about. The mindset around 1943 was that our ever-expanding economy will surpass our expectations and will ensure Americans freedom and security (Mckibben 2007).

Instead of building the Garden City style suburbs that worked well, America saw investment opportunities. Unfortunately suburbs were constructed on the premise that oil was considered a cheap resource and at the time thought of as a limitless supply. After WWII, suburban sprawl became the new norm for building and zoning in America, which is often referred to as suburbia (Duany, “Suburban Nation”). We recognize now that the problems arose around the FHA and VA discouraged the idea of renovating existing structures, as well as deject construction of mixed-use buildings while neglecting to include mass transit. This is now considered smart growth and the core of what made the Garden Cities so successful.

Suburban sprawl created neighborhoods with inadequate public transportation, automobile dependence, lack of multi-use development patterns, loss of pedestrians and most devastating of all, the loss of community and local economies (Morris, 2005). The
transformation into suburbia was successful and American’s slowly lost and forgot what communities once were. Community interaction and togetherness was replaced with isolation and privacy.

**Addressing the Consequences of Suburbia**

Now that people were moving out of cities into suburbs agriculture had to transform. As the population was rapidly increasing and people were moving to suburbs America was faced with the issue of reducing manpower and growing as much crops as possible in a small time frame. The solution was to replace small scale farms with large scale farms and use machines instead of exclusively manpower. Using machines allowed us to feed our communities effectively and the use of machinery was innovative. As times change so do our approaches and understanding. As important as this stage is in history, we now know there are better techniques then our current agricultural system. Today we recognize that our agricultural system is extremely inefficient and relies heavily on external inputs. We appreciate farmers working hard to supply what we asked of them in the past, but it is time to think about upgrading our agricultural system just as we constantly upgrade technology.

The advancements I suggest include supplementing large agriculture with smaller scale community oriented agriculture. When we adopted the suburban model we lost community spirit and civic involvement. The concept of connecting communities by the use of agriculture will be beneficial in terms of emotional and physical connection of
Americans in a community setting as well as the benefits of eating local produce free of pesticides and other unnatural additives.

Re-introducing small scale agriculture can be accomplished through urban or community gardens. An urban garden is applied in a setting where room is not available to garden, or if there is a lack of land all together. Vegetables can be grown in pots, windowsills or garbage cans etc. and be placed anywhere outside. Community gardens on the other hand are great if there is a sizable piece of land that can be used to cultivate fresh produce. The main difference is urban gardens are usually worked by and consumed by a single person or family while community gardens are dependent on community participation and organization.

I propose we combine the urban gardens with community gardens. Residents who live in close proximity unite and all grow an urban garden, or a regular vegetable garden dependent on the size of land available, then come together with one another and trade vegetables. For instance is house 1 is growing peppers and house 2 is growing tomatoes, while house 3 has squash, all 3 houses meet once a week and trade so they have a variety of produce instead of one crop. This is my idea in simplest form because there are many variables in the equation such as size of land, active participants, and amount of produce grown.

This paper will explore how to develop the expansion of urban/community gardens to generate a transition to sustainable communities and lead to a local food movement. It is my goal to reconnect residents with their community while growing food. Community involvement and food security are both very important factors that are
being addressed in this model. They were connected in the past which created an
idealistic community setting. I see no better way to put an end to the isolation the
suburban model has caused and bring residents together again with the common goal of
producing fresh vegetables for their families. I will begin by discussing the crisis of
modern agricultural systems and the result of suburban sprawl on communities.
Chapter 3: Limits of Modern Agriculture

Conventional agriculture uses a large amount of synthetic fertilizer, which is made from fossil fuels. Increases in yields were starting to be seen at the second half of the 20th century. After WWII the US went from using 9 million tons in 1940 to 47 million tons in 1980 (Gliessman, 2007). The use of synthetic fertilizer is essentially a quick fix because it allows farmers to ignore the long-term soil fertility issue. Most of the applied fertilizer gets washed away as runoff into nearby lakes and streams, which causes eutrophication (Gliessman, 2007). Fertilizer can also be leached into ground water used for drinking which may cause health issues. High yields are achieved by increasing agricultural inputs such as; irrigation, fertilizer, pesticides, processed feed and antibiotics (Gliessman, 2007). Inputs also include all the energy used to manufacture these substances; run machinery, irrigation pumps, climate control animal factories.

It is due to the practices of conventional agricultural that have put many local farms out of business. From 1920 to the present the number of farms in the US has dropped from 6.5 million to just over 2 million. The percentage of population of people that live and work on farms dropped below 2%. Smaller scale farms have little power against the advancement of industrial agriculture. These farms cannot afford the cost of upgrading farm equipment and technologies in order to compete with large farm operations. Since WWII America has lost a small scale farm about every half hour mostly because farming practices are becoming more efficient. Large scale farms could produce
more food at a cheaper price, putting the small farm out of business. On a typical Iowa farm the profit margin dropped from thirty-five percent in 1950 to nine percent today (Mckibben, 2007). To generate the same income as in 1950 a farm needs to be four times as large. By 1980 the amount of farms decreased so much in America the Census Bureau no longer listed farmer as an occupation. The farmers that did survive now work for large companies, and has no independent control and must obey the company’s rules and impromptu inspections (Mckibben, 2007).

As farms declined so did the communities around them. Specialization and consolidation are so intense many parts of America are labeled as ‘food deserts’, where people are dependent on stores without access to fresh produce (Mckibben, 2007). There are farms in the area but are all devoted to growing corn. From the aspect of inputs into outputs our society would benefit more from small-scale farmers, in respect to tons, calories and dollars, as well would our communities (Mckibben, 2007). The reason this transition is not occurring is the presence of cheap oil, since WWII it is more cost effective to use oil based technology then to hire people (Mckibben, 2007).

After an in-depth analysis of the conventional agriculture model Gliessman suggests people need to re-establish their connection with nature, culture, communities, and neighbors through Alternative Food Networks (AFN). AFN goals are to bring back the missing elements of sustainability into agriculture through a decentralized approach to the ecology and economy of food. This will create a new culture of sustainability (Gliessman, 2007). These alternatives are sustainable localized options which will provide communities with the opportunity to become familiar with the farmer, where the
food comes from, and how it is grown. AFN include community supported agriculture, farmers’ markets, and in general any local system with a short supply chain which will bring communities together (Gliessman, 2007). The U.S. food system waste so much energy and fossil fuels. We need a culture change and reduce our dependence on oil in every aspect of our lives particularly transportation and food systems. We are living beyond our means in terms of resources and using them up too quickly and too foolishly. It will not be an easy transition for many but it will become necessary. Community gardens will help bring people back into nature while strengthening community bonds. It will be a great tool to help our society become aware of how unsustainable our present systems are hopefully becomes a transition into retrofitting suburbia into a more sustainable place.

Globalization

As a globalized society we rely on imports and exports from around the world. The import and export of food and goods consumes a great deal of fuel and creates increased carbon emissions. Importing food from other countries also places negative effects on our local economies. Often it is cheaper to buy a product that was imported then to buy it locally unfortunately, there are many hidden costs. Pollution emitted and fuels used during the shipping process are not added in the price of the food and are often ignored. Imported food must travel long distances to get to our homes and is not always fresh due to the long journey it endures. The market calls for large healthy products, which leads to the genetic engineering (GE) of food. On top of the sacrificed taste and
nutritive content of GE food when a product is shipped they have added preservatives such as salt, sugar, and fats that are linked to increased health problems (Gliessman, 2007).

Globalization has not only destroyed local economies and communities it has also created a disconnect between our food and the consumers. When food becomes cheaper to import then to buy locally, local economies decline and their social fabric begins to unravel (Gliessman, 2007). Conventional agriculture has lost its humanity, values, and social relationships. In the past when our society was made of hunter and gatherers and even after the development of agriculture, food directly reflected the local environment. As trade in food grew and profits were being made, cultures diets were changing rapidly. Quantities and quality of food changed, as well as the introduction of new foodstuffs (Gliessman, 2007). Culturally, food was becoming less important to communities further leading to the disconnection from the community and nature. Gliessman attributed culture being removed from agriculture due to economic growth (2007).

Importing food has led to the separation of farmers and consumers. In the past, communities knew where their food was grown and were familiar with the farmers or employees. In today’s system foodstuffs come from all over the world and consumers do not know how the food is grown, what external inputs were used and the employees working conditions. Corporate investors receive up to 92% of the consumer dollar to regulate the flow of information such as food origins, nutritive content, how the food is processed and the economic circumstances under which the product is produced (Gliessman, 2007).
Chapter 4:  
Consequences of Suburbia

A transition into local food will be impossible without community. Community has different meaning to different individuals. Does being involved mean attending town hall meetings or volunteering at a school? Taking care of neighbor’s children or creating fundraisers for the town? There are different levels of community interaction and every individual has different desires of level of involvement. Community strengths and expectations are not only ambiguous to the individual, but dependent on the size and population of a place. In a small town it is easy to know everyone’s name and family, whereas in a large city it takes effort to find a sense of place and community interaction, if one does not seek out community support will they find it? Communities a century ago vary from our communities today, the difference mainly relying on skill specialization. Specialized trades separated residents from one another and lost the precious ability of a community unifying able to help one another. It is rare nowadays to call on a neighbor to help with a task.

Understanding community ties is not as concrete and measurable as science; although it is safe to say today’s communities are different than they used to be in the past. Most neighbors do not rely on one another; instead they give a quick superficial greeting, in fact a large percentage of Americans do not know their neighbors well. Ninety-three percent of American adults recognize the importance for neighbors to look out for each other’s safety, although only forty-one percent of Americans know their neighbors first
names (“White pages, “2011). Communities used to be a sense of place, a support group, a place where you were friends with your neighbors. If individuals within a community decided to reclaim a piece of nature and grow their own food, it would give neighbors a commonality and a chance to get to know one another. They will be able to share their ideas, knowledge, and techniques with one another while becoming friends.

Today we face an environmental predicament and the necessity for a shift for a sustainable lifestyle. As we strive to live in more sustainable communities we need to analyze our impacts on the environment and make necessary changes. I propose the commonality of neighbors be community participation, a way to become familiar with one another and work together to grow local food. Residents unite for an important task of providing for their family as well as reducing the community’s carbon footprint and minimizing the amount of chemicals used on the land. I will analyze how communities have change over time, what was the cause of change and what stressors people are experiencing over isolation and a lack of a sense of place.

**How the Suburban Model Was Formed**

In the *Geography of Nowhere* James Howard Kunstler attempts to discover how and why Americans adopted suburban design. He begins with France and the development of an idea in a metropolis that was middle class and respectful of the arts. However in America where our culture and values differ our replications of the concept did not end the same. At that time America had an abundance of cheap land, simple property laws and a yearning to escape industrialism. A man named Llewellyn S. Haskell, a
pharmaceutical merchant, created the first suburban prototype. Since Haskell worked so closely with doctors he was aware of the health hazards of living in a city. Around 1853 Haskell obtained a property about the same size of New York’s Central Park. It was a gated community and lacked everything a real community needs to be organically whole; productive work, diversity, cultural institutions and markets (Kunstler, 1993). The houses were so far away from one another residents would lose awareness of their neighbors. The idea was to have an exclusive home, rural scenery and ideal there were no class differences, that each guy was as good as the next. Although Haskell’s intentions were sincerely looking for a better type of community life, it turned out to work against us and suburban sprawl was creeping its way across America.

The explosion of suburbia did not proceed at the same pace or same results in every city. As bridges opened more space started to urbanize. When the railroads linked up with other transportation in the twentieth century, the pattern of Llewellyn Park and the urban culture was repeated in a mass scale across the country (Kunstler, 1993). Kunstler blames modernism as creating the most damage by; separating buildings from the historical ideal and promoting urbanism that destroys old age social arrangements. Additionally modernism created a physical setting that led man to loose respect for limits of scale, growth, consumption of natural resources and loss of respect for other living things. He says because of modernism cities are ruined by large corporations, public buildings and spaces have no sentimental value, sprawling suburbs lack a sense of community, dependence on automobiles and the destruction of the environment (Kunstler, 1993).
Kunstler believes modernism became popular due to Chicago’s world’s fair in 1893. This fair was to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Columbus’s landing, but was also used to showcase a new type of home. The fair had on display all the historical styles of homes through the nineteenth century, his new addition being what is now known as the ‘Beaux Arts style’ after the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris (Kunstler, 1993). Many American practitioners have studied in Paris, the French academic tradition promoted the ideals of antiquity, emphasizing order and continuity, which in their tradition was the continuation of Renaissance tradition. In America there was little academic tradition, and artistic continuity was driven only by fads, the teachings did not transfer over well (Kunstler, 1993).

This Beaux Arts style house became a dominant theme in building practices and people began talking of an ‘American Renaissance’ (Kunstler, 1993). What was lacking was the historical representation of the homes. Lois Sullivan was a strong voice against this kind of development he prophesized the damage the fair has done to American development will last a century if not longer (Kunstler, 1993).

Sullivan was correct, disconnection between cultures; community, history and the physical isolation of neighbors are the consequences we are dealing with today in suburbia. Americans are so used to our lives centered on cars it is hard for people to remember what used to make a landscape or townscape rewarding. Creating a sense of place by farming or agriculture is an acquired skill and used to be passed down from generation to generation. That is not happening today because farming and the farming culture are being phased out (Kunstler, 1993). Families usually teach their young to work
the farm so they can take over one day, but when it becomes too expensive to run a farm, or if a farmer is unable to sell their produce the farm fails and there is no skill or specialization to pass on to their young.

The suburban design correlates with the theme discussed by Jared Diamond in Collapse. He describes how societies lived unsustainably and eventually led to destruction. It seems at this point America is on the verge of becoming one of those societies; the only difference between ancient societies and ours is the fact we are aware of our problem and hopefully act before we reach a tipping point. After Diamond’s students began to understand how societies failed, they began to observe how we deal with our problems today. Diamond’s students inquired the following questions as he reflected:

How often did people wreak ecological damage intentionally, or at least while aware of the likely consequences? How often did people instead do it without meaning to, or out of ignorance? My students wondered whether- if there are still people left alive a hundred years from now- those people of the next century will be astonished about our blindness today as we are about the blindness of the Easter Islanders (420-21).

Diamond attempts to explain how societies can be so blind in dealing with our urgent problems we face today. He refers to ‘creeping normalcy’ referring to slow trends that do not get recognized right away. If anything deteriorates slowly it is difficult to notice any change compared to the year before, “It may take a few decades of a long sequence of such slight year-to-year changes before people realize, with a jolt, that conditions used to
be much better several decades ago, and that what is accepted as normalcy has crept downwards” (Diamond, 2005). This concept can be applied to the prices of gasoline. People compared current gas prices to last year and say prices have not risen that much. Well compared to last year it is only a minor change, but in 1979 the year average for gas was $.80 a gallon, today the average is $3.60 (Random, 2012).

Diamond also introduces a related term he uses to describe how people forget what the landscape looked like 50 years ago as “Landscape amnesia” (Diamond, 2005). We have studied past civilizations and know the majority of them collapsed due to the lack of knowledge concerning carrying capacity and disregard the importance for nature. Not until the last tree is cut down people realize there are no more left. Many people cannot remember where farms were located, or even what they looked like for that matter, this is an example of the extreme disconnect people have from nature.

Are Americans experiencing ‘creeping normalcy’ coupled with ‘landscape amnesia’? Does no one remember or want to remember how communities used to look like and function? Suburban sprawl began only 70 years ago, but it did not take the people long to accept the isolation, loss of community, destruction of landscape, consumerism and disconnect from nature as a part of the new norm. June of 1999 the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) labeled “Main Street” as a priority on its most endangered sites list (Morris, 2005). There was a time where people could live, work, and shop with little or no driving at all, that is rarely found in communities today.

With all of our knowledge and data concerning our impacts and learning from past civilizations, can we really be that blind and make the same mistake? We have data
and research that proves our impact on the Earth is detrimental. America has no regards for carrying capacity or limits; we have the mindset that we can fix any problem through science and money. Communities and sense of place cannot be bought and are an invaluable part of life.

**Impacts on Communities**

Suburbia changed the way communities interact; people are spending more time in their car than walking around town. There is less need to walk around town because suburbs consist mostly of homes, and most destinations need transportation. Since people are no longer seeing each other around town, friendships begin to diminish with the sense of community pride. This happened because the post WWII notion was that people should not live where they work. Working in the area where you live is what made communities successful and how local businesses survive. When residents are familiar with one another residents support each other by being a consumer at their business. If there is no connection to the business owner, a consumer will purchase wherever is most affordable and convenient. The separation of work from communities coupled with the national economy growing larger and larger is what ultimately devastated local economies and communities (Kunstler, 1993). America was rushing for bigger and better constantly until there was nothing left to hold on to. The loss of sense of place and community were not recognized right away. It was not until town was becoming neglected, Kunstler explains, the decay of property is the expression of everything the town has lost while the economy grew (Kunstler, 1993). Kunstler continues, community
is not something you can have or buy, it is a living organism based on a web of interdependencies. It is connectedness, communities must look out for the town, and they need to identify their own interest with the interest of their neighbors (Kunstler, 1993).

Douglas Morris, author of *It's a Sprawl World after All: the Human Cost of Unplanned Growth-- and Visions of a Better Future* closely analyzes suburban sprawl and the effect on communities, the environment and the individual. Morris explains how an individual in today’s society is isolated from one another and the community. People cannot just take a walk and find themselves in a gathering place where they can feel a sense of belonging and a true sense of place. A sense of place is extremely underappreciated; it dictates a physical location, sense of trust, common purpose, and mutual respect. We are mostly surrounded by strangers and in order to connect with others we have to create formalized gatherings which he refers to as ‘niche communities’ (Morris, 2005). Trying to fill the deep psychological need for social interaction many Americans participate in several of these communities. They play a meaningful part in our lives but do not take the place of genuine communities (Morris, 2005). Morris explains, “Genuine communities are filled with intangible social assets that are intuitively understood and appreciated, such as mutual recognition, easy participation, and an identity rooted in a sense of place” (2005).

Environmental psychologists have found that people who are integrated into a community network have less psychological disturbances than those who are isolated. In a study conducted it was reported a quarter of U.S. adults have reported feeling extremely lonely in the past two weeks. It is especially important for the elderly to have a healthy
sense of belonging. Studies repeatedly show emotional well-being is key to living a long healthy life (Morris, 2005). Morris believes a sense of community is no longer a reality for most Americans, and believes we try to fill the void of connectedness with television. Many Americans value their television shows higher than community interaction (Morris, 2005). Communities are a positive attribute to psychological health of its inhabitants; the networks help people find meaning in their lives, and prohibit one from ever feeling isolated and create a sense of place for residents. An attempt to substitute the desire to be a part of a community America has become infatuated and addicted to TV programs;

As a result of the alienation of sprawl, American ‘communities’ now come prepackaged, ready to enjoy beamed at us from our television sets. Many Americans now value their television viewing more than interpersonal activity, or at least with the same significance (Morris 32).

It is clear why America has such a high rate of depression; people are lacking true meaningful community life. Over 36,000 people in the United States commit suicide every year; sixty percent of those people who die suffer from major depression. When depressed alcoholics are added to the statistic the percentage rises to over seventy-five percent. Social isolation is the leading cause of suicide in older populations ("AFSP," 2009).

**Economic Impact**

In agreement with most authors, our suburban design has created many issues for America. “When media commentators cast about struggling to explain what has happened in our country economically, they uniformly overlook the colossal mis-
investment that suburbia represents- a prodigious, unparalled misallocation of resources” (Kunstler, 2005). Bill Mckibben writes from an economist’s perspective in Deep Economy. Mckibben starts his discussion after WWII, when America became fixated on growing the economy (Mckibben, 2007). Per capita gross national product grew 24 percent from 1947 and 1960, and between 1961 and 1965 GNP grew more than 5 percent a year. The percentage of people living in poverty also was cut in half. Unfortunately, while America was trying so hard to help the economy grow there was not much thought about the future planning in 1947. Like Kunstler in The Geography of Nowhere Mckibben also places liability on modernity. Mickibben states, every action in today’s modern life is connected to and burns fossil fuel.

Americans obsession with economic growth has altered individual’s priorities. Americans have replaced communities with consumerism; our society convinced us that we could buy happiness through products. Individuals in a community should have the option to support local economy. Unfortunately there has not been a choice, our constant need for economic growth, and the mindset Americans can have bigger and better things have driven us to drive out our local businesses and replace them with corporations commonly referred to as big box stores. Americans essentially threw away their communities to save a little amount of money. In saving a few dollars we have never stopped to reflect on the externalities associated with the low prices and the communities that are being destroyed (Kunstler, 2005).

Local farmers were put out of business because it was cheaper for others to purchase from a large store such as Wal-Mart. When a large corporation moves into town
the independent business owners cannot compete with the low prices because they are not buying in such large bulks. The independent stores go out of business and the community no longer has that connection with the shop owner. There is hardly anything personable about shopping in a big box store compared to a local business.

Local businesses add individuality to small towns and maintain connections between the worker, the customer, and the employees. The owners have history with the consumers, the location, and genuinely cares about the products that are being sold are high quality, mom and pop stores cannot compete with the volume of sales (Kunstler, 1993). Big box stores are all about turning profits and sees consumers as dollar signs instead of people. The introduction of larger corporations destroys more than local businesses and relationships it also takes a toll in the aesthetic value of the community. Corporations usually have to follow building and zoning codes so they all are similar; essentially they are plain buildings with no relation to the local architecture. In the Geography of Nowhere Kunstler explains, “What they contribute to the village visually is ugliness and discord. The people who design them and build them do not have to live with the consequences of their shabby and disruptive work” (Kunstler, 1994).

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance conducted a study in Maine concerning local economies and the local multiplier effect. The total economic impact was measured by studying:

1) Direct Impact- spending done by a business in the economy, as well as inventory, utilities, payroll, and equipment.
2) Indirect impact- the multiplier effect that happens as one business spends at another local business and the dollar re-circulates.

3) Induced impact- when business owner’s, employees, and others spend their income in the local economy. Based on the three components of direct impact, indirect impact and induced impact it was found 45 cents of every dollar stays local on average compared to 14 cents for a big-box chain store (AMIBA, 2011).

There are only four companies that slaughter 81 percent of American beef, and one company controls 45 percent of the globe’s grain trade while another competitor controls another 30 percent (Mckibben, 2007). The same forces that created these giant farms also worked together on the retail end of the business, making Wal-Mart the largest seller of food in the country and planet. This occurrence is not only in America; in Britain the four largest supermarket chains control 80 percent of the food (Mckibben, 2007).

Alan Durning explains a study in 1991 that reported the domestic product per capita has tripled since 1950, but the Average American family owned twice as many cars, drove two and a half times farther, and consumed twenty-one times as much plastic. Economic growth was supposed to make people happier yet the study showed none of this stuff has made anyone happier. In fact in 1946 the United States was the happiest country among four advanced economies (McKibben, 2007). Through research and analysis McKibben believes an individual with less material objects and wealth is happier than a wealthy individual. To compensate through a life of struggles, the poorer individual are more likely to have a close and connected family while living in a village with a clear sense of place (McKibben, 2007). He supports this with the another report
which states money buys happiness up to $10,000 per capita income and after that point the correlation between happiness and money disappears (Mckibben, 2007).

Before we used coal economic production was dependent on energy inputs, which mainly all depended on biomass; food for humans and animals, wood for heating and productions. This ensured we could only use what we had; however nowadays with fossil energy it is dependent on how much had been grown eons before (Mckibben, 2007). What lead us to the economic growth we desired, also lead us to an energy crisis. We are beginning to understand peak oil and McKibben expects a bumpy ride in for the next decade and an inexorable decline in fuel supply (McKibben, 2007). America is starting to comprehend that our oil supply is finite and we will soon have to change the lifestyle we have become accustomed to (Kunstler, 2005).

The cheap oil we once had coaxed us to build sprawling suburbs so there is no easy fix. We live in an auto-dependent based society where it is nearly impossible to live without one. Additionally, nearly three hundred years of rapid economic growth left us with is a stressed natural world. Human interactions are depleting the planets natural capital and putting such a strain on the environment, we can no longer take for granted the ability of the planet to sustain future generations (McKibben, 2007). From 1943 onward America was obsessed with growth and would not let anything stand in its way, not environmental degradation, morals, or ethics. Economic growth promised Americans a lot prospects, but turned out to hurt America more than expected in the long run. We are considered a wealthy country, but have massive debt and our rapid and continual
growth has brought us to a point of insecurity in terms of sustainability and food
(McKibben, 2007).
Chapter 5: Alternatives to Modern Agriculture

In the book *Fair Food* (2011) Oran Hesterman analyzes the current agricultural food system. He explains how the conventional system is flawed through declining food quality, animal welfare concerns, soil erosion, water pollution, high energy inputs etc (Hesterman, 2011). Oran explains one of the main causes of dying farms is due to an aging farmer population. The cost of establishing a farming operation has risen dramatically so in today’s world it is almost impossible for young people to get into the business (Hesterman, 2011). Since it is difficult for young people to get into the farming business unless it was passed on to them by a loved one, Oran explains all the creative ideas of how people can get involved such as organizations as “Get Fresh” created by Michigan students. They deliver fresh mixed vegetables to corner stores where they might not be normally available. Creative ideas coupled with the motivation of communities to create CSA’s, community gardens and farmers market are great ways to get the benefits of having a farm without the high costs (Hesterman, 2011).

In order to maintain a Fair Food system, equity needs to be the main principle of a redesigned food system. He suggests to ensure communities and farmers that were historically excluded must be able to draw from the same resources that are available to everyone else. These resources include credit through the USDA, access to quality education, subsidies, and other government programs (Hesterman, 2011). One of the best way to change the current system is by engaging students and working toward an institutional modification.
The unfortunate reality we face today is the awareness that the suburban design cannot work without liberal supplies of cheap oil. Kunstler states, the only way to fix our future and the problem of suburbia are to downscale America. For this to occur normal everyday activities will be altered. Ensuring that more food will be grown locally will lower our energy usage, amount of pollutants in our atmosphere, and carbon footprint. It may also be the new focus of America’s economy, and help rebuild communities.

McKibben suggests America needs to shift to economies that are more localized food systems because buying local lowers your carbon footprint while supporting a local farmer. A small change in your economic life (where you shop) creates a major change in your social life. The choice moves you from a mere consumer to an active participant in your community (McKibben, 2007). McKibben acknowledges the largest problem local food efforts face is we have been accustomed to paying so little for food. We pay so little because of the externalized factors such as, the cheap price of oil versus human labor, environmental degradation and the damage done to communities/local economies (McKibben, 2007). Suburbs have been known to cause alienation, depression and anxiety. They are unsustainable but it is not too late to turn our behaviors around into a sustainable design, which will work out to our benefit socially, economically, and environmentally (Kunstler, 2005).

There has been a movement among people forming, realizing how many miles food has traveled to get on our plates. Localized food has become a common term as people are becoming aware of these distances. These people are labeled as “locavores”. For “locavores” the relevant currency for evaluating food systems is caloric general
equivalent, which means they measure food in terms of how much caloric energy they deliver over how much energy it took through transport. McKibben notes how frozen peas burn an absurd number of ‘fossil fuel calories’ in order to deliver any ‘food calories’. Organic lettuce exchange rate is 57 fossil fuel calories for each food calorie (Lavin, 2010). The choice is left up to the consumer, as Wendell Berry declared, ‘eating is an agricultural act (Lavin, 2010)’. Everyone has a choice of where to buy food whether it is at a grocery store, farmers market, a nearby farm, or grow their own food. If this issue is important to the individual they will buy more locally.

One way to create availability of local food in suburban areas is the implementation of community gardens. Community gardens are a great way for the community to come together and learn together how to grow and harvest produce.
Community gardens have a long history as a response to urban disinvestment and decay because they proved to be beneficial at bringing communities together while increasing community pride and participation. Community gardens have been implemented and studied all over the world for different reasons. The outcomes all agree that community gardens enhance health of the individuals, physically as well as psychologically, and increase social connections and a sense of community. Community gardens also enable residents to become empowered to be more active in other aspects of community life (Blake, 2009).

A study conducted by intellectuals in Port Melbourne, Australia began investigating the ways in which facility contributes to the enhancement of health and wellbeing as a response to the fast past way of life of Western culture and globalization. Conducted by J. Kingsley, M Townsend, and C Henderson-Wilson 2009, members of a community garden were interviewed using a qualitative questionnaire in attempt to understand health and wellbeing associated with membership (Kingsley, et al., 2009). Members felt the garden was a sanctuary where people could escape daily pressures, a safe place for community interaction and gave members a sense of worth and involvement. Members also felt they were being benefitted spiritually, physical fitness and nutritionally. This research was conducted to study community gardens as a preventative strategy, a way of dealing with physical and mental health as well as a way to adapt to the changes occurring in western society such as globalization (Kingsley, et
al., 2009). Gardening ranks in the top five most leisurely activities in Australia. People have shown significant health benefits to people who garden as little as 30 minutes daily (Kingsley, et al., 2009). Kingsley, et al., (2009) discusses vegetation reduces fear and has positive effects such as increased affection and elation. It can be a joyful and therapeutic experience. The members expressed the garden to be a sanctuary where like-minded people could get together and partake in an activity in which they had a shared passion for. Some members joined the garden because they were new to the community and wanted to make connections, some felt isolated in their own homes and some people were longing for the opportunity to make new friends (Kingsley, et al., 2009).

Community gardens have many benefits, the study in Port Melbourne, Australia studied health and well-being while others focus on other attributes. For example this study focused on creating community ties. Leon H.H. Tan and Harvey Neo studied the first community gardens in Mayfair Park Estate in Singapore, created under the National Parks program was designed to forge community ties in local neighborhoods, as well as an example of a gardening culture in Singapore that would contribute to the city-state. The research conducted was to prove community gardens acts as a catalyst that provides a symbolic focus. Symbolic focus was important to the researchers in hopes of allowing residents to look at issues collectively which would encourage neighborhood bonding (Tan, et al., 2009). Tan et al states that gardens can bridge diverse groups through positive inter-ethnic interaction. People who would not normally interact due to race, social status, or people of different neighborhoods have the chance to put all of that aside and work together. The gardens gave residents a sense of community pride, and the users
of the garden are proud and treat the garden as if it were their own. The authors conclude
the garden should be seen as a node for information sharing within the community
network. The garden was successful at bringing people together and creating a
community and sense of place. Since this model was so successful after three years after
the first community garden began there are now more than 240 gardening communities
and groups in Singapore (Tan, et al., 2009).

Gardens can also improve property value which is seen in a research article by
Andrew Flachs (2010). He explores the cultural and social effects of urban gardening in
the greater Cleveland area. He looks at farming through an anthropological lens and
focuses on motivations, intents, and the effect of gardening on food politics. He also
focuses on the use of gardens as social spaces, and the perception of the garden by the
community it serves. He found gardens can offer the same economic benefits as parks as
they transform a vacant space into a community space. Flachs reports a study presented
gardens had a significant positive impact on resident property within 1000 feet of the
garden, the highest impact was found in the lowest income neighborhoods studied
(Flachs, 2010). Gardens are economically advantageous and fill a necessary gap in fresh,
healthy affordable food. More affluent gardeners who are not so interested in the
economic impact are interested in the social impact being gardens implement the same
functions as parks. Being a community space people see it as a place to interact and
parents see them as a safe place for children (Flachs, 2010).

Since gardening appeals to people across demographic lines gardens become a place
where people normally wouldn’t meet or socialize a chance to interact. Flachs observed
at Cleveland’s oldest urban garden, the Kentucky Garden provided a space for socialization and nurtures personal development. He found more experienced gardeners maintained their status in the community due to their knowledge who will aid the newer members. The skill and the chance created a bond between the members of the Kentucky Garden (Flachs, 2010).

Flachs explained the desire for functional output and environmentalism are not mutually exclusive. The more affluent gardeners use the space to show support for the permaculture movement, he found the desire for saving money and producing healthy food prevailed across demographics. Additionally, Flachs found low-income gardeners acknowledged the social and political significances of their actions. Not only do gardens provide fresh food, it also helps shape personal identity (Flachs, 2010). The Kentucky garden members take pride in communal identity as a sustainable living group. Working in an organic garden makes participants aware of their food choices. Flachs concludes with a positive note on gardens in general, but while explaining the CSA CityFresh he researched in the greater Cleveland area he shows a disconnect between the workers and shareholders. The economic benefit is present, he found the produce is much cheaper at the CSA then in the food store, but the social aspect does not seem to be present. The workers were mostly women of color different ethnicities, religion, and income levels while the shareholders tended to be middle class women. He observed many shareholders treated the CSA as a food store (Flachs, 2010).

Community gardens can be altered to fit in our suburban area. For example the reuse, or the re-inhabitation, of existing structures for community serving purposes has
proved to be a useful tool. The Cleveland Galleria mall in Ohio is converting the atrium into an urban greenhouse for organic produce, a grocery store in Savannah Georgia was re-inhabited by a women’s medical center. There have been numerous other successful cases of re-inhabitation of large unoccupied spaces. As for the residential district some municipalities in Seattle, Washington, and Oregon have allowed property owners to add new dwellings to existing subdivisions (Dunham-Jones et al., 2011). This is a great method of adding the benefits of community gardens into our already built up world.

**Sustainable Communities**

We are in a unique situation, we now understand the suburban model did not benefit our lives the way we originally assumed, nor did the agricultural system we transformed to fit the suburban lifestyle. We know we need to change our lifestyles and our communities because they are not working correctly, and we no longer have the resources to feed into the agricultural system and the suburban design. We need to think more sustainably about the resources we have and how we use them.

The emergence of sustainability represents a transformation towards a new paradigm. A paradigm shift was originally expressed the transition between phases of development in science and society. Change naturally occurs when continued analysis of a current configuration produces a large quantity of anomalies. New paradigms require the reconstruction of past ideals and reevaluate prior facts (Kuhn, 1996). This is strongly resisted by the established community. Kuhn states that a paradigm shift should be called a scientific revolution, and defines it as, “a noncumulative developmental episode in which
an older paradigm is replaced in whole or in part by an incompatible new one” (Kuhn, 1996). When a system is non-functional and there are escalating anomalies to the paradigm, it is natural for a paradigm shift to take place. We have entered a stage where we have begun to distinguish anomalies that challenge our current paradigm against our current agricultural system and a globalized society. The discovery of these anomalies has helped us recognize the problems that exist in our current model. The observed discrepancies between theory and fact are what Kuhn describes as the ‘core of the crises.’ The recognition and acknowledgement of anomalies result in crisis, which is a necessary precondition for a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1996). It is hard to transition from the current course because Americans believe we are entitled to consumptive polluting lifestyles. Change agents are necessary to this transition. It is the duty of change agents to ensure the paradigm shift becomes apparent at all levels of the social process; individual, group, organizational, community and societal (Edelstein, 2010). An agent of change has the chance to become a leader and help form of this new emerging paradigm. I feel we are only at the beginning stage of the sustainable transition. As of now only a minority of the population understands the need for the transition and the remaining populace believes it is unnecessary and we can continue business as usual. The change for this transition is beginning as a grassroots movement starting with the individuals and quickly forming into community action groups.

Introducing community gardens and empowering residents to reconnect with one another and nature is the change we need. Now it is becoming obvious to Americans that the suburban model is not effective, the first statement posed is usually, “Is it too late”? It
is never too late to try to restore communities, sustainable lifestyles, and the freedom from foreign oil dependence. If these are the things we are striving for we need to act now and understand how we got into this mess, and what a viable option is. Community gardens address these issues; they bring people together, lower the carbon footprint on produce and do not need all the synthetic inputs as a large farm.
Chapter 7: Methodology

Can communities be reconnected by growing food? My plan is to implement a local food movement in North Jersey, specifically Waldwick NJ and surrounding neighborhoods. I will work with people in different communities and help them create their own gardens, whether community gardens or urban gardens. I hope to have similar positive effects as stated in the case studies above. I would like to begin with the introduction of urban gardens, and perhaps move forward to community gardens. I believe urban gardens are a suitable first step when becoming familiar with gardening. Starting with something simple will give individuals the confidence and time to experiment while becoming comfortable with the idea. People have the notion gardens are difficult but I believe when they experience how easy it can be and experience how wonderful it is to eat fresh vegetables they will be more enthusiastic regarding the concept of community gardens.

I chose to work around Waldwick for many factors, one being Waldwick and the surrounding areas have homes with medium to large yard areas suitable for gardens. Waldwick cherishes their historical buildings and has the potential to become a thriving sustainable area. The streets are walk-able, there is an extensive public transportation system, independent businesses, and there is a distinct center of town. These factors are important aspects of community that are missing in many other neighborhoods. Also I chose this area because these neighborhoods have greater financial stability which will give the residents the freedom to work with me and participate in my research.
Multiple methods will be used to gather information about growing community gardens and community interactions in suburbs including; case studies, surveys, interviews, document study and secondary materials. There are many case studies about community gardens in other areas and the positive effect it had on individual and community life. I hope to find the same benefits will be present in smaller scale gardening to fit in the suburban design. I believe creating small networks of people in communities is a great place to begin.

Interviews will include people who have experienced gardening which lead to increased community interaction and other benefits. As a participant observer I have been on a pursuit to become acquainted with the residents of Waldwick. Since I recently moved to the area I began introducing myself to my neighbors. My field observations include typical community interaction as I ride my bike and visit the center of town frequently as well as the library. I also visited local farmers markets, and town meetings to understand the depth of community interaction. These observations will help me understand how residents value their surroundings and spend time in the community. This will be corroborated with readings about Waldwick as a town, zoning laws in the town and town news.

To further my data collection on community life I have surveys from participants in different neighborhoods. The survey questionnaire will focus on rating the importance of local food and community involvement. I want to know if people think local/organic food is important and why? Is it important due to health reasons, the environment, or not at all? If people do think community is important what have they done to become
involved? Do they feel isolated? Do they wish things were different? The surveys will also inform me about people interested in having their own urban or community garden. I am willing to help any resident in the start of their own gardens and supply a simple beginner’s guide. If people are interested in the cause but not wanting a garden of their own I will lead them to Waldwick High School to work with the school and their CSA.

Furthermore, the research will build on this community engagement to partner with civic society networks interested in community gardens in Waldwick. For this purpose I will partner with local schools, libraries, and other resident bodies to collaborate. I met with Mr. Theodore Opderbeck an economics teacher at Waldwick High School who inspired a CSA on the High Schools property. The CSA idea started as an economics theoretical class project and students decided to make it a reality. They created an organic large raised bed CSA. He said he was letting the students take control with little oversight to show them what it is really like to manage a CSA. Mr. Opderbeck and the students escorted me to the garden and explained they used as much recycled materials as possible, and as organic as possible. He asked how I can help with the project and how I want to be involved. I mentioned I can send volunteers through the experiential learning program from Ramapo, help with hands on activities, asking for material donations from companies, and suggesting different arrangements for crops. We discussed improvements that can be made in the garden and will stay in touch. I met Mr. Rolling later in the day and he thinks community support is missing, I believe I can direct people in the community to the CSA if they do not want to create their own garden or if they would like to become involved in a community activity.
As a way to introduce myself to the community I created fliers and dropped them in mailboxes to everyone on my street introducing myself and what my goal is for the community. As I suspected I did not receive much feedback. Only one of my neighbors e-mailed me asking what exactly I plan on doing, when I responded I haven’t heard back from him. I also posted these fliers in the post office and Stop and Shop in town.

Additionally, I have created informative brochures on gardening for beginners and explain why local food is important. It explains how to begin your first garden and the benefits it provides your family with. All of this information is published in books and articles; there is plenty of information, which can be overwhelming. This brochure will simplify the process in a simple easy-to-read brochure for people to follow and not be overloaded with information.

A Facebook page has been created to have a space where participants can interact and get questions answered and set up meeting times. This is also great ways to introduce people to one another who are participating in nearby areas. I would like to introduce everyone but especially people who live on the same or surrounding blocks. Facebook will allow me to easily space and time for people to come together and trade fresh produce and recipes. This will also allow me access to other Waldwick residents and a place for people to complete my survey.
Chapter 8: Findings

Out of 32 survey participants 14 were male consisting of ages 18-65+, 18 were female consisting of ages 18-64. The most prevalent male respondents to the survey were from the age bracket of 18-25, while the most prevalent female respondents were from the age bracket of 35-54. The survey showed males and females have a different definition of what community means to them. 79% of males gave definitions concerning relationships of place.

However 83% of females think community as an extended family or a team.
When asked to rank statements from 1-5 least important to most important males ranked how their food is grown and eating locally grown food as most important, whereas females ranked sense of belonging and friendly relationships with neighbors as most important. It is apparent females have a different meaning of community and social need from their communities, while males put less importance on interaction within their community.

In another open ended question I asked “What would you change in your community?” Here 64% of males and 39% of females asked for more opportunities for community participation either for themselves or their children. It is interesting a greater percentage of males asked for community participation when in previous answers they did not place much importance on interaction in the community.

The majority of men who participated in the study were in the age bracket of 18-25 and the majority of females surveyed were in the age bracket 35-54. The younger generations of males are more open to the idea of community gardens and local food. The males in the study are also more active in communities then females and also wish to be
more involved in the community. The female’s priorities are in sense of belonging and where there food comes from. The participants in the study were not currently active in their community but wish they were as well.

It seems males and females responded similarly and they want the same things from a community. They both are looking for a cleaner, safer, more connected place for themselves and their families. For so many people wanting to become involved it seems there is a lack of community activities to become involved in or a lack of drive of an individual to become involved.
Chapter 9: Research

I hope to prove the act of growing food will be a way for people to meet one another in a society where people have a high regard to their privacy. To test this I walked around communities and tried to engage residents who had gardens. Some people were outside which was easy to begin a conversation. I walked past two houses in Waldwick, 1 with about 30 tomato plants covering his backyard, and the other have vegetables covering her front yard. I rang both doorbells introduced my study and what I was trying to do and they were very happy to talk to me and show me what they have been doing. I could have never done that if we did not have something in common. When I left the fliers in my neighbor’s mailboxes I was ignored. Most people do not go out of their way to meet their neighbors and most consider it unnecessary. I saw one of my neighbors outside as I was working in the garden and decided to mention the flier I left and explained my work. He explained he is interested and would like me to help him and his neighbor grow tomatoes.

I introduced myself to neighbors before but without a common purpose the conversation never went far. I created connections in neighborhoods through the commonality of growing food, and I believe this will work on larger scales in other communities. In Waldwick I have three houses in a network for trading vegetables, five houses in Ringwood, and three houses between Oradell and River Edge. I made these connections by meeting people who were outside as I was walking around the community. All of the participants in my networks are women and were interested in new
people. As I made connections I introduced all the people in the network and they traded contact information. Some people had large gardens and some are using urban gardens. I helped the three people in River Edge and Oradell the most because they had the space but no garden. I created Beverly Carlson’s garden in River Edge three years ago when I rented a room from her and convinced her to grow her own food. She was resistant at first but now she prides herself on her vegetables. Beverly has wonderful neighbors, she has been surrounded by most of them for the most of the 30 years she has lived in River Edge. During an interview Beverly stated she uses her garden as therapy, when I asked her to give me an example of another activity that gives her the same feeling of gardening she said the only other thing that gets her that calm is throwing herself into a good book. Since Beverly began gardening I asked her if she finds it easier to talk to strangers about their gardens, she responded, “Yes, definitely! I find myself talking about herbs and talking to people in ShopRite, trading tips with family and friends. Gardening definitely connects you with neighbors. Rinotti (Beverly’s neighbor) takes it to the extreme every morning with her clippers like clockwork. I believe you plant it then check on it, babying it to a limit but let it grow itself. We have a neighbor who’s first time gardening so everyone has been helping her out with tips on placement and watering. I am trying to learn to can and freeze my tomatoes, I have been searching the internet for green tomatoes it really opens your mind to possibilities on food”. Even living next to her neighbors for 30 years, she bonded with two of them since we created her vegetable garden. Beverly said they always waved but never knew each other and now they are great friends and both of them cannot believe they have missed out on such a good
friendship for so long. They began talking when Beverly noticed how large Rinotti’s tomatoes plants were and asked her to look at hers and give her advice. I introduced Beverly to Margaret Michelson in Oradell so they can trade vegetables. It is Margaret’s first garden and Beverly is willing to help Margaret garden. It turned out to be a perfect match and today they consider each other best friends and talk every day.

I hope these networks encourage people to take action into their own hands and create a community amongst themselves. I hope this gives neighbors something to talk about and become acquainted with their surrounding neighbors as it did in Beverly’s case. I believe this is the step before a community garden begins because there needs to be a strong community in place before a community garden or CSA occurs. It needs to be something the town owns and not what has been put in place for them, it is crucial to have support from neighbors. I would like to think this may empower the community to act on other sustainable ventures, or even take the local food idea to a larger concept such as a co-op or a CSA.
Chapter 10: Recommendations

The Great Recession produced an opportunity to contemplate the retrofitting of suburbia into a more sustainable place. The lull in building and permitting activity has consented local planning departments to rethink prior development and consider sustainable modifications (Dunham-Jones et al., 2011). At the federal level, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Transportation (DOT) are coordinating in forming the Partnership for Sustainable Communities. Policy makers at the state levels are also assisting retrofits, for example the California Senate Bill 375 (Dunham-Jones et al., 2011). The goal of this bill is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the encouragement of sustainable planning through the use of; integrated land use, housing and transportation planning (CEPA 2011). Government initiatives such as these challenge existing communities to work in partnership on integrating sustainable designs. Outside the government sector, the public health sector, climatologists, economists and environmentalists link sprawl respectively to; chronic diseases such as obesity, asthma, depression, global warming, dependence to foreign oil, and the decline in water and air quality (Duany, 2010).

Smart Growth and Zoning

It is widely understood that growth is inevitable; therefore development must be planned with the most intelligent and sustainable practices. Smart growth includes the urging of municipalities to reform zoning codes and embraces the formation of mixed-use
neighborhoods organized around logical movement between suburbs and cities (Duany, 2010). Smart growth is zoned illegal just about everywhere per zoning codes. Most codes outlaw the construction of compact, diverse, connected communities that are easily walk able (Duany, 2010). Smart growth techniques must be urged for and adopted by municipalities and states to retrofit our current situation.

Historically settlement patterns were created around transportation systems. Ideally people settled down based on a five-minute walk from the necessities of town. The introduction of the vehicle allowed people to move farther from town centers and eventually became inconvenient to use public transport in the suburbs (Duany, 2010). Oil and gas prices were cheap and it was so easy and almost expected for people to own personal cars. Transit systems such as those found in New York and Chicago were comprehensively planned for region-wide service; it is much more difficult to add services like these to an existing community. It is not easy but it is vital, Miami has been installing one line at a time plan for public transportation (Duany, 2010).

Public transportation is not only important when focusing on reducing carbon emissions, traffic, noise pollution, and other negative impacts created by 280 million Americans on the road, it will also help local economies flourish, “When communities satisfy their needs for goods and services nearby, self-sufficient local economies develop, retaining wealth and saving energy to a degree that can dwarf other sustainability efforts” (Duany, 2010).
Sustainable Food Systems

Our current agricultural system has separated farmers from consumers, which altered the communication and information exchange. “An alternative food system that empowers the eating public and the people who actually grow food- a *food democracy*- requires a free flow of undistorted, unfiltered information and channels of communication…” (Gliessman, 334). Alternative food network systems include; community supported agriculture (CSA), local grown food, farmers markets, these systems must be adopted in a smart growth design plan when discussing sustainable communities. Our current agricultural system is dependent on extensive energy inputs while growing and shipping products.

I believe suburbia can become more sustainable by introducing local food networks and working to reconnect residents within communities. This will also help the local economies and lower carbon footprints. If municipalities adopt the Smart Growth plan, I do believe Suburban areas can be retrofitted into more sustainable living areas over a period of time. This will benefit community life, greenhouse gas emissions, and the overall quality of life. It will not be quick or easy but I hope communities start urging for change before our oil supply decreases and we face a panicked driven crisis. Will localizing economies lead to sustainable communities? I believe it is actually the other way around. Once we have adopted a system for smart growth and embrace the desire to reconnect to communities we will be on the road to creating sustainable neighborhoods. When municipalities embrace public transportation and install transit stops it seems natural that local businesses will flourish around the area, creating Main Street type areas.
As communities unite they can demand for changes in zoning codes and push for community gardens in public places or opt to keep their small urban vegetable networks.


## Appendix A:
Open ended question responses, “What does community mean to you?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a group of caring people</td>
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<tr>
<td>an extended family, a team</td>
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<tr>
<td>A place where the opportunities to interact with other people is great, where local services are plentiful</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a second family, friends to rely on</td>
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<tr>
<td>A shared bond between a group of people helping each other to coexist.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authentic caring relationships with people (sometimes) in shared values or shared locations concerned with quality of life for all</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to share meals and leisure time with the people around you while developing close, long lasting relationships at the same time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>being brothers and sisters wherever, whenever</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comfort through familiarity</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community is made up of the people within your local boundaries and access. The relationship established within the community is a support system as well as group of people that may have the same concerns.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community means a collective conscious where everyone contained are working for the same end result and moving in an environmentally conscious direction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community means a happy group of people in a local area helping each other out without any incentive for a reward. The goal is to promote happiness while practicing stewardship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community means a sense of belonging to a group of people with a similar way of life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing and utilizing social capital and sharing resources to live fuller, more rewarding lives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting to know and working with your neighbors for everyone’s benefit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I lived in a better community it would mean a lot more</td>
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<tr>
<td>It means a place where decisions are made because people share something in common - like a desire to have good schools, library, culture, and healthy environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It provides of sense of belonging and responsibility.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It takes a village</td>
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<tr>
<td>I work a lot and spend little time at home, don’t really participate in any community activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>meeting your own needs while caring for the needs of those around you.</td>
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<tr>
<td>neighbors and family helping each other out to create a better living environment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Value</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix B:**

Open ended question responses, “If you could change anything about your community what would it be?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I wish to be more involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would want that the use of illegal drugs be less common and widespread.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cut down on the amount of cars on the road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less active street so it is safer for the kids to play outdoors, more people my own age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hydrology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More integration and a genuine interest in getting to know each other and less backwards hats.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I wish there was less emphasis on the acquisition of name brand goods, namely clothes and devices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do I begin.........the suburbs are very anti-community. People drive to and from work or school, never engaging with one another. The idea of car pooling is unheard of in the schools. Walking or riding biles, too risky. The only thing that brings groups of families together is sports or some other extra curricular activity, and that's an industry, not community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The level of education and awareness of public health and environmental issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>To ban the used of pesticides and herbicides on all lands and air. To accept all process numbers of recycleables and to closely monitor the amount of recycleables in the trash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make it more tight knit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more trees</td>
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<tr>
<td>To create a community where people rely more on their neighbors than gigantic international corporations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination- not just related to race/creed/color/beliefs but treatment:fairness in schools, politics etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would love it if there were more social activities for the teenagers in my community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More interaction between neighbors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good places for young people to hang out, be safe and free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less isolation, more openness and connectedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nothing, i like mine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the farmers market would set up more often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sense of place is lacking where i live, relationships are few and far inbetween</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase walkability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less hyper independence. More and broader community involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More green space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More neighborhood interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better policing, noise level enforcement, less parking tickets. Separately I would like them to recycle cardboard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people would be more aware</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These are basic steps to your first vegetable garden. If you need more help there are many online resources such as http://www.thegardenhelper.com/

Or

E-mail me at Sustainlocalfood@gmail.com
Gardening

Go ahead and try your first vegetable garden! It is a great outdoor activity for your whole family. Enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables from the convenience of your back yard.

-Kids will love playing in the dirt and watching the plants grow

-Parents will love having the kids being productive outside

-Get your neighbors involved too, share your knowledge and produce

Vegetable Garden Tips

1st step
Choose site location which meets criteria:
- Full sunlight - 6 + hours of full sunlight a day
- Avoid windy areas
- Close to a water supply
- Proper drainage
- An area that can be easily fenced off

2nd step
Prepare the soil
- Fertile, well-drained soil is essential. Reasonably free of stones, well supplied with organic matter (compost), and retains moisture

3rd step
-Mix soil and organic material and turn over (mix) the soil

Planting your garden
- It is helpful to draw a diagram of your garden first. Map out each row according to height, plant requirements, and walking pathways
- Set in stakes or trellises for climbing plants
- Be mindful of plant depth and spacing; place a tag or marker on each row to know what to expect
- Water regularly
- Pick when ripe
- Enjoy!!!!!