HeartLands Conservancy: Growing Community with Lots of Love

Sarah Drury-Dothager

July 29, 2022

Acknowledgements

This capstone project is the culmination of three years of hard work and exploration.

But more than that, it is a community achievement – much like placemaking! For, without my community, I never would have found myself here – about to complete my journey to Dr. Sarah Drury-Dothager.

First and foremost, I need to thank my family: my husband, Jason, and our four amazing daughters: Rowan, Maia, Lily, and Vivienne. To say I could not have completed this degree without your support and love is not enough. Thank you for all the days you had to shut off the internet so I could get zoom to work, all the nights you scheduled pizza in the half hour I had between classes so we could eat together, all the conversations that allowed me to figure out how to explain what I was thinking so I could ask better questions, and all the times you challenged me to think about whether I needed to dig deeper or take a break so I could return refreshed. You keep me sane. You make me laugh. You inspire me.

Thank you to my mom who has always supported me and made sure to expose me to afterschool specials, books, and ideas that challenge me to be the best in how I lead, parent, love, and learn.

Thank you to Cohort 7 – you are all the best!! Thank you for it all.

Thank you to my advisor, Dr. Matt Campbell, for your zen, your encouragement, and your excellent advice.

Thank you to my employer, my coworkers, and my supervisors for the support you have given me throughout this last three years.

Thank you to HeartLands Conservancy for partnership in this project.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Through this Capstone Project, I worked with HeartLands Conservancy (HeartLands), a nonprofit conservation organization that has been serving southwestern Illinois since 1989, to explore how to scale and scope its Lots of Love (LoL) program. The LoL program is an ongoing project that helps local volunteers transform abandoned lots into parks, pollinator gardens, or other new places. HeartLands' goals for this program are to see the property values stabilize, for the neighborhood residents to develop a greater sense of community, and to see the growth of a larger web of community partners working together to do this type of work. Community involvement is an essential factor in these LoL transformations, with organized groups of community members working with HeartLands' staff to envision how their community will work together to revitalize a space.

HeartLands has not seen the scale and scope of the LoL program grow and thrive in the way the organization hoped it would. Some of the program projects have evolved into inspiring, collaboratively maintained places for the communities in which they reside. However, the resource and staffing requirements to grow the program successfully in its current configuration may be beyond the capacity of the current staff.

In this process improvement project, I explore what aspects of HeartLands Conservancy's current LOL program are most influential in program success and, thus, may be key to designing methods for expanding the scope and scale of the program in a way that is sustainable for the organization to manage. To that end, this project focused on two questions:

1. What factors most influenced the development of the projects undertaken through the Lots of Love program since its inception in 2016?
2. What characteristics of the current LoL volunteers might be indicators of growth in collective community identity?

This project is rooted in the conceptual framework of the Virtuous Cycle of Placemaking, introduced by Silberberg et al (2013). The authors argue that while previous models explored placemaking in a way that is linear, placemaking is much more iterative and flexible. These researchers approached placemaking with a new emphasis – focusing on the process rather than the finished place. As they stated, "the most successful placemaking initiatives transcend the "place" to forefront the "making"" (Silberberg et al, 2013, p. 3). Through their Virtuous Cycle of Placemaking, these researchers attempt to explain the placemaking process

as an interconnected web of human actions taking place in a community with one another. This model puts the shared community action, which is the aspect of the work that builds individual and community identity in the nexus of the placemaking model.

In my process improvement project, I used a sequential mixed methods design consisting of field visits and a survey and have completed both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data.

A. Key Findings

Finding 1: The LoL program is working as designed.

1. What factors most influenced the development of the projects undertaken through the Lots of Love program since its inception in 2016?

Finding 2: HeartLands' leadership and programming emerge as key enablers for the LoL projects.

Finding 3: Lack of knowledge or awareness emerged as a barrier

2. What characteristics of the current LoL volunteers might be indicators of growth in collective community identity?

Finding 4: Most volunteers working on LoL projects do not identify as a member of an organized volunteer group.

Finding 5: Sites with Volunteers Who Live Closer Also Have Volunteers Who Volunteer More Often

B. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Develop a structured multi-step application process for LoL projects.

Recommendation 2: Reduce or pause the number of services that HeartLands offers to LoL volunteer groups.

Recommendation 3: Provide a regular schedule for volunteer events that is well-advertised ahead of time through social media and direct communication with volunteers.

Introduction

HeartLands Conservancy (HeartLands) is a nonprofit conservation organization that has been serving southwestern Illinois since 1989. HeartLands' website describes its mission as "to conserve, connect, and restore the diverse natural and cultural resources that sustain the people and the communities of southwestern Illinois" (2021, para. 2). The organization focuses that work on building capacity for conservation balanced with economic sustainability and connecting people with the natural world (HeartLands Conservancy, 2021) The organization has been the force behind conserving nearly 100,00 acres of farmland, woods, animal habitat, and areas dedicated to cultural heritage. HeartLands is currently working on such diverse projects as advocating for the Cahokia Mounds State Park to be declared a National Park, wetlands and floodplain restoration, construction of bike trails, and community education initiatives.

In 2014, HeartLands' current President and CEO Mary Vandevord joined the organization. At the same time, community groups across Southwestern Illinois were discussing how to build stronger communities by reducing the number of abandoned lots in the region. Abandoned lots tend to be dumping grounds for trash and have an overgrowth of vegetation. The presence of neglected properties has a detrimental effect on the home values in the communities in which they are located – most specifically on the abandoned lots' neighborhoods (HUD, 2014). When communities are on the edge of decline, one of the ways that community planners try to slow or halt that decline is to address the visible signs of decline – decreasing vacancy rates, removing or fixing up abandoned properties, or rebuilding infrastructure (HUD, 2014). Communities often target the cleanup of abandoned lots as one aspect of the work to decrease the visible signs of decline as abandoned lots tend to be dumping grounds for trash and have an overgrowth of vegetation.

Vandevord recognized that HeartLands could bring its unique expertise into these communities to create change. Her solution was to design HeartLands' Lots of Love (LoL) program – an ongoing project that would turn abandoned lots into green spaces like pocket parks, outdoor classrooms, or pollinator gardens. Community involvement is an essential factor in these LoL transformations, with organized groups of community members working with HeartLands' staff to envision how their community will work together to revitalize a space. HeartLands provides community volunteers with a suite of support options, ranging from planning and insurance to access to a tool library (see Appendix A for the

complete list). Once HeartLands and the volunteer coalition members establish a plan, the volunteers then take on the building and upkeep of the new green space, frequently with the HeartLands staff working alongside them.

The current program operates under a Theory of Change that outlines how HeartLands helping local volunteers transform abandoned lots into parks, pollinator gardens, or other new spaces reduces the visible signs of decline in these communities while building community connections (see Figure 1). HeartLands' expected outcomes of the program are to see the property values stabilize, for the neighborhood residents to develop a greater sense of community, and to see the growth of a larger web of community partners working together to do this type of work.

Figure 1

Logic Model of Current LoL Program
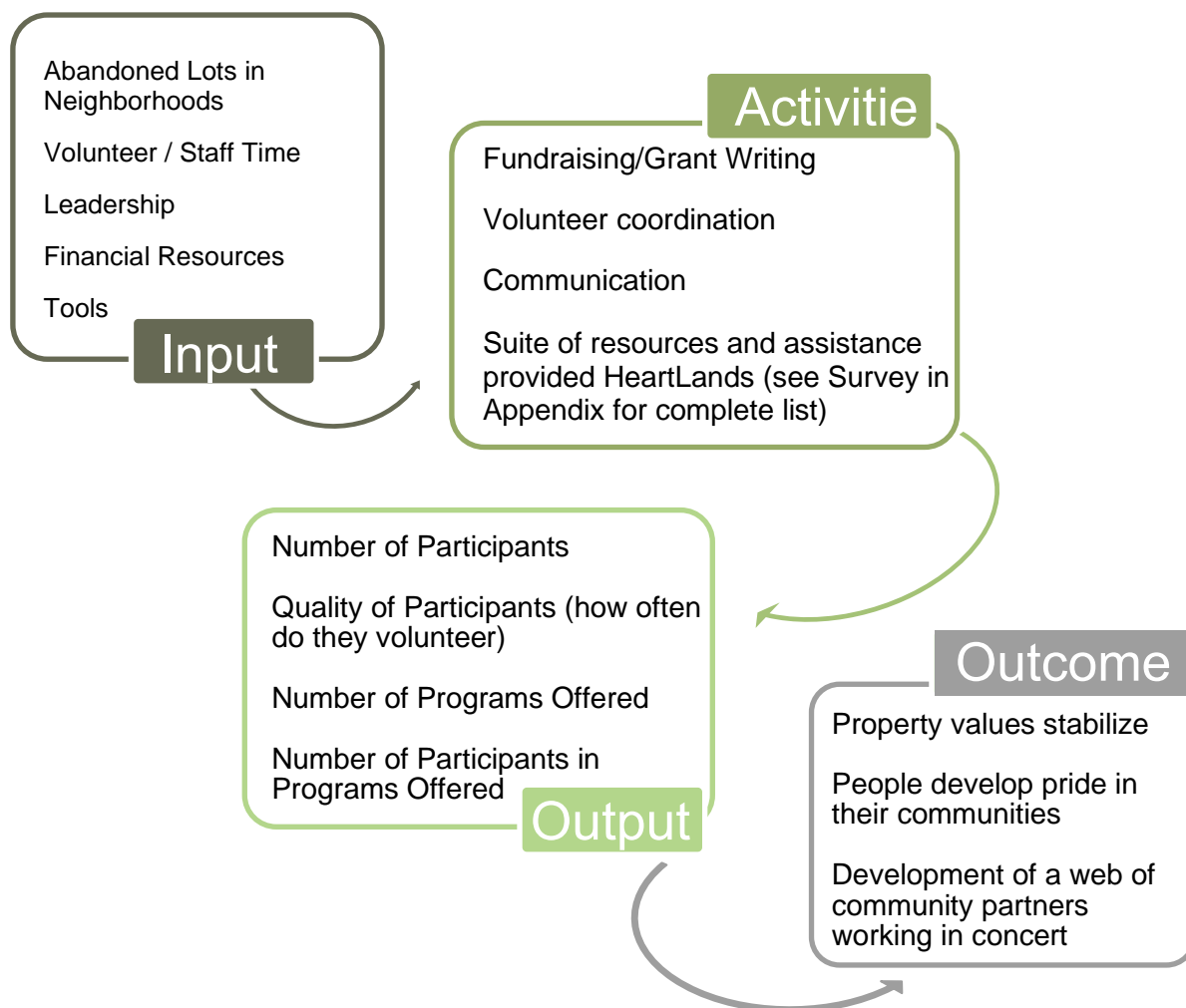
Problem of Practice

HeartLands has not seen the scale and scope of its LoL program grow and thrive in the way the organization hoped it would. Some of the program projects have evolved into inspiring, collaboratively maintained places for the communities in which they reside. However, the resource and staffing requirements to grow the program successfully in its current configuration may be beyond the capacity of the current staff. According to Vandevord, the current model requires a lot of staff time and significant efforts to find grant money to pay for these projects. Furthermore, the LoL projects do not have consistent support from the various volunteer groups (Vandevord, 2021). Even when HeartLands has been able to develop a dedicated volunteer base, the staff sees these volunteers move on over time so the projects may languish, says Laura Lyon, HeartLands' vice president of program strategy and impact (2021). In addition, the current program does not have a firm structure. Currently, when HeartLands decides to undertake a LoL project, it is because one of the staff members resonates with the volunteer group's proposed vision (Vandevord, 2021). No official application process is in place, and no standardized development process exists. Finally, there is no mechanism for a project to graduate from the program.

As the HeartLands' team looks to improve this program, they acknowledge that while volunteer involvement changes over time, the organization wants to gain insight into how to choose which projects and partners to accept into the LoL program so that they can create an interdependent web of community partners engaged in placemaking work to improve communities. It is my hope that the learnings from this process improvement project can inform HeartLands' management and growth of this program.

Literature Review

Communities, large and small, are facing challenges of revitalization and the need for greater economic development. In her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961)*, Jane Jacobs advocated for community planning led by local community members rather than outside experts to reflect better how neighborhoods and communities function. This was a radical departure from how most community planning and urban design was taught and practiced at the time. Her work, along with that of William Whyte and other researchers, grew into the practice of what is now called placemaking.

Placemaking projects happen on every scale – from awe-inspiring riverwalks to small, pocket parks in rural communities. The Project for Public Spaces has defined placemaking in the following manner.

> As both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighborhood, city, or region, placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution (Project for Public Spaces, 2007, para. 1).

Placemaking is a process that brings community members together with city planning professionals (who typically work for governmental organizations or not-for-profits) to re-envision and rebuild some physical place in a community to make it work better for the community as a whole.

This process, while complex, is often depicted as a linear progression of community building and resource gathering. For community planners, successful implementation of a placemaking plan is considered complete when the community works together to make the plan a reality – a new park is built, a downtown is revitalized, an abandoned lot is cleaned up and becomes something new.

Benefits of Placemaking

Placemaking research points to significant benefits from this approach to transforming communities. When abandoned lots become something new – a

park, a community garden, etc. – violent crime drops (Garvin et al., 2012), mental health gets better (South et al., 2018), property values increase (HUD, 2021), and people develop a greater sense of community engagement and community identity (Ellery and Ellery, 2019; Silberberg, 2013; Wesener et al, 2020).

It is perhaps that last point – about how people develop a greater sense of community engagement and community identity through placemaking work – that is vital to the transformative power of these types of projects. People who take part in placemaking projects work collaboratively to change their communities. They become empowered to address how public spaces are reimagined and used (Silberberg et al, 2013). And through this work, people begin to become more engaged with their communities and see themselves as part of something larger.

The development of both individual and community identity is a key factor in the development of meaning behind placemaking work (Ellery & Ellery, 2019; Silberman et al., 2013; Wesener et al., 2020). To create space for identity building to occur is complex, but placemaking provides a rich environment to grow the elements a person might need to develop and curate an identity as part of a group.

To explore how identity develops over time within placemaking, we can draw insight from socio-cultural theory. Hand & Gresalfi's (2015) define identity as "one's participation in and across activities and the sense one makes of oneself in relation to these activities" (p. 191). The authors explore "identity as a joint accomplishment between individuals and their interactions with norms, practices, cultural tools, relationships and institutional and cultural contexts" (Hand & Gresalfi, 2015, p. 190). This implies that a person's self-perceptions are changed because of their participation in a community. When people have opportunities to participate in community activities repeatedly, they begin to develop a greater sense of belonging to that community. They develop an identity as a member of that community. And when others see them doing this, they also begin to reflect that belief back – which further strengthens the collective community identity. Brenneis (as cited in Holland & Leander, 2004) explored the metaphor of lamination to describe how multiple instances of positioning "thicken" an identity (p. 131). Through this metaphor, Brenneis lays out that all of the interactions build an identity like the thin layers of wood that make up a sheet of plywood – individually, they are not much, but together it builds something strong. Holland and Lave (2001, as cited in Wortham, 2004, p. 166) further explore the concept of thickening identity and claim this comes about as a result of multiple

experience defining oneself as a certain type of person and having others reflect back to you that identity over time.

Exploration of Outcomes and Goals in Placemaking

Moreover, growth in community or individual identity does not have to be explored within the realm of placemaking as a long-term outcome related to achievement of build goals. Some of the changes within the community can begin to happen early in the process. For example, Dr. Carolyn Loh, an associate professor in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at Wayne State University, partnered with the Michigan Municipal League (League) to evaluate the impact of their PlacePlans program, one aspect of Michigan's larger Miplace initiative. From 2013-2015, the PlacePlans program provided funds and technical assistance (such as facilitation, conceptual plans and design costs) to 22 Michigan cities. The cities then developed placemaking plans for downtown revitalization and economic development. Loh's impact evaluation explores if and how communities participating in the PlacePlans program were subsequently implementing the plans and which interventions help increase the chances of plan implementation success. The League's hoped for overall short-term outcome was to increase implementation of the placemaking plans in these selected cities (see Figure 2). However, the League's stated goals for their PlacePlans initiative were to "accelerat[e] adoption of these [placemaking] principles in those communities and creat[e] case studies from which other communities could learn" (Loh, 2019).

Figure 2

Placemaking Logic Model for the Michigan Municipal League's PlacePlans program
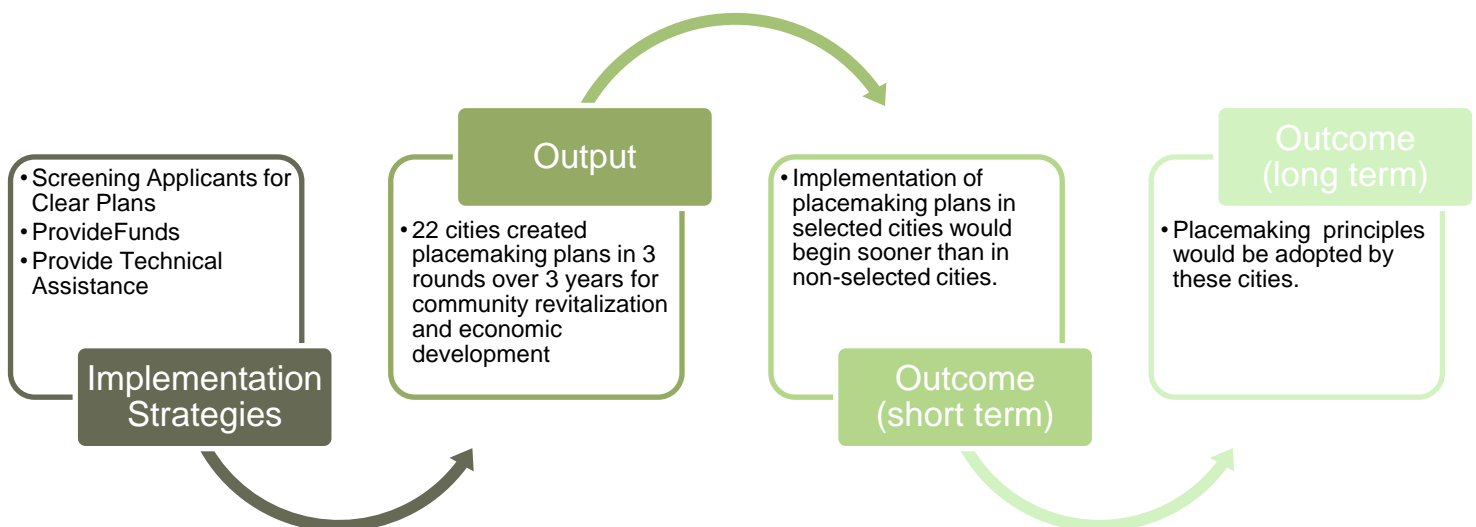
While Loh found no significant increase in community implementation of placemaking plans between the cities who participated in the PlacePlans program and those who were simply provided with information on the placemaking process, she did find some changes in the communities that completed the PlacePlans program. Loh found that her study participants from PlacePlans cities reported that even when they had not yet implemented their plans, there were increases in community engagement and discussion – aspects of larger placemaking principles. To this day, the League touts these impacts uncovered through this study on their website (Michigan Municipal League, 2021). This study shows that while the program did not meet its expected short-term outcome, it did begin to make significant changes toward its long-term goals of increasing adoption of placemaking principles (such as community engagement and discussion) in the targeted communities – an incredibly useful finding for the League.

Silberberg et al (2013) also discuss the powerful community connections that occur throughout placemaking participants' experiences in their exploration of 13 different cases from across the United States. From rapidly developed and temporary placemaking experiences to long-term, large-scale planned and build spaces, the authors show evidence of increased community engagement from the people who participate in all aspects of the work.

All these placemaking programs may be achieving some of the overall goals while not completing every step that the organizers expect to be logically necessary. Therefore, as in the case of the PlacePlans program, the LoL program's overall goal of creating a web of community actors working together to improve where they live and work may be taking place even when individual placemaking projects may be struggling.

Limitations in the Research

The mechanisms by which placemaking's benefits arise are a bit murky. While concepts of place and placemaking have been studied by geographers, political scientists, educators, and public health practitioners since the 1970s, the studies are spread out over the disciplines and do not have the body of work to draw clear conclusions. For instance, in a study of the literature on placemaking over the 25 years from 1991 to 2016, Dupree found less than 150 published research articles on placemaking and urban development (2017). Yet, she also found that the published research is growing over time, with the number of published articles per year increasing in the later years of her study (Dupree, 2017).

A further limitation of the research is that many of these models treat all inputs into the placemaking system similarly. The availability of gardening tools or a vegetable blight are treated as barriers that are weighted similarly to lack of clear volunteer leadership or an inability for a consensus around a design. For example, the model that Wesener et al. (2020) put forward details their theoretical framework for placemaking as focused on the construction of meaning, social exchange, collective and collaborative action, and civil empowerment. However, the dimensions they use as ways to express enablers and barriers in the project range from biophysical and technical (pests, droughts, tool access) to socio-cultural concerns. While these can all be barriers to individual projects, the steps needed to overcome a pest problem have very little to do with placemaking.

Planners and organizers have defined the steps involved in placemaking similarly for decades. Placemaking Chicago (2008) provides a clear example of these steps laid out in four phases (see Figure 3). Perhaps the greatest limitation to the step-by-step approach to placemaking is that most of these approaches have historically assumed the process will be linear, proceed in the same manner each time and end when the project build is complete.

Figure 3

Linear Steps in the Placemaking Process. Derived from Placemaking Chicago (2008).

Stage 01: Getting Ready	Step 1: Assess Public space Challenges Step 2: Select a site Step 3: Identify key stakeholders
Stage 02: Evaluating Your Neighborhood	Step 4 Collect Your Data
Stage 03: Making A Place Plan	Step 5: Conduct place evaluation workshop Step 6: Translate the idea into action with a working group Step 7: Develop a visual concept plan
Stage 04: Implementing Your Place Plan	Step 9: Implement short-term actions Step 10: Develop long-term design and management plans Step 11: Assess results and replicate

The type of community work described in much of the research and practitioner guides is complex, involving large numbers of volunteers, local government bodies, and grant work – not to mention the clearing the land, planting the gardens, and building the physical elements of the projects. Expecting this type of complex community work to proceed in a linear progression is rather simplistic as the implementation stage alone can be a multi-stage and years-long process.

A Modern Conceptual Framework for Placemaking

In 2013, Silberberg et al introduced a new theoretical model of placemaking that sought to explain better how placemaking works. They argued that while previous models explored placemaking in a way that is linear, placemaking is much more iterative and flexible. These researchers approached placemaking with a new emphasis – focusing on the process rather than the finished place. As they stated, "the most successful placemaking initiatives transcend the "place" to forefront the "making"" (Silberberg et al, 2013, p. 3). Through their "Virtuous Cycle of Placemaking" (see Figure 4), these researchers attempted to explain the placemaking process as an interconnected web of human actions taking place in a community with one another. This model puts the shared community action, which is the aspect of the work that builds that individual and community identity, as was discussed earlier, in the nexus of the placemaking model.

Figure 4

The Virtuous Cycle of Placemaking. Source: Silberberg et al, 2013.
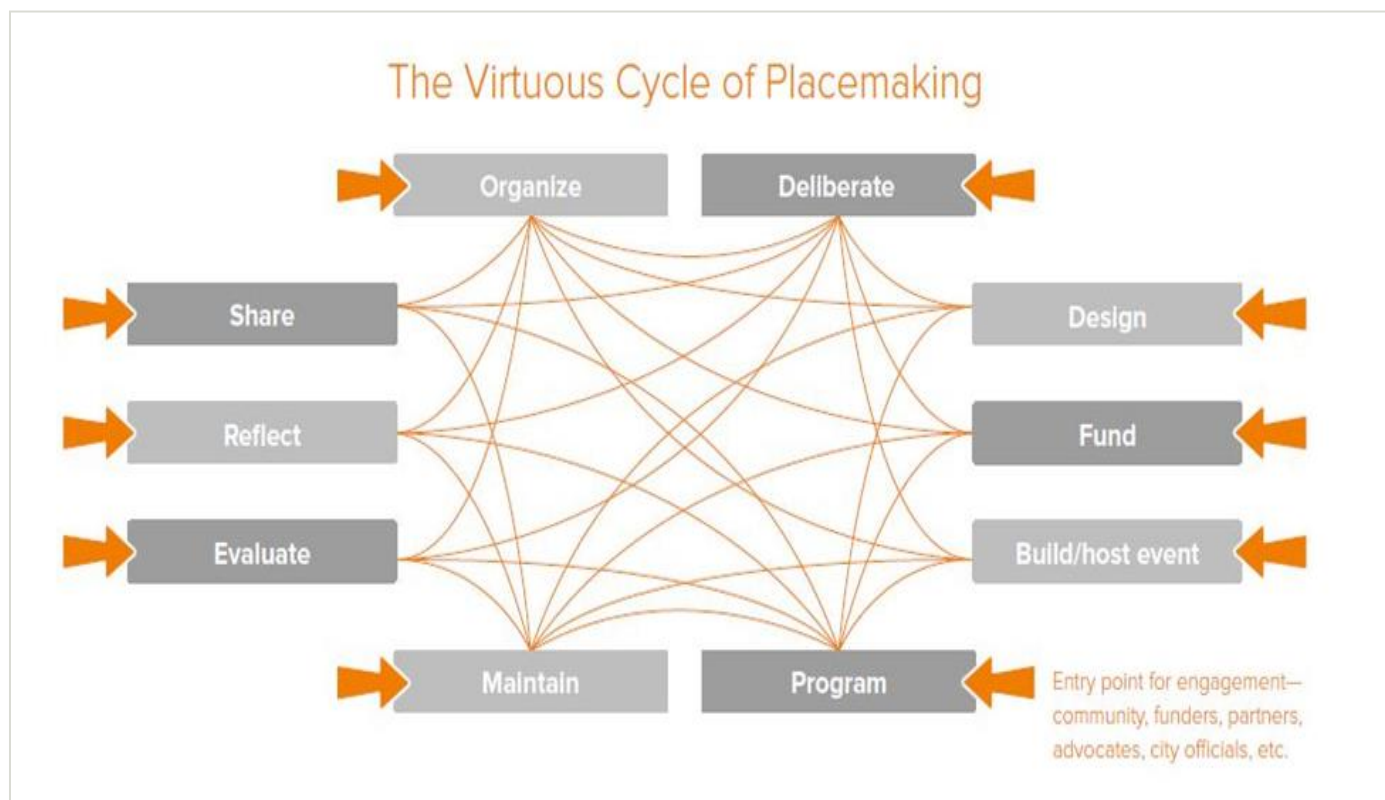
A park can be planned, designed, funded, and built, but when use or programming occurs, new community members get involved, or even the original group begins to reflect on the placemaking, that placemaking process may shift into a previous phase to explore how to make the place fit the new need or want or intent. In addition, this model acknowledges that people and resources can enter into the placemaking process at every point in the system and that the steps in the process do not happen in any order. Another benefit of this model is that the goals of maintenance and programming sit side by side. As I discussed earlier in the literature review, previous research typically assumed that placemaking was a linear process that ended when a project's build was complete. However, the lifecycle of a place needs to consider how a place will be maintained so it does not fall back into disrepair and how the place will be used. In particular, how will programming for the community occur in the space? Groups working toward placemaking initiatives need to plan for programming, and research into placemaking needs to acknowledge the iterative nature of this process. According to Silberberg, et al, "This is, of course, a placemaking model

for the twenty-first century. In an era marked by instant communication, crowd-sourced production, and rapid prototyping, it's no surprise that the processes shaping our public realm have evolved to fit the times" (2013, p. 12). These authors claim that in a modern era where iteration is typical and "nothing is ever finished" (Silberberg et al, 2013, p. 12), the creation of public spaces should also be explored through that lens. Therefore, this process improvement project will be rooted in the conceptual framework of the Virtuous Cycle of Placemaking.

Project Questions

HeartLands wants to gain insight into how to choose which projects and partners to accept into the LoL program. Their long-term goal is to create an interdependent web of community partners engaged in placemaking work to improve communities – in a process that aligns well with the Virtuous Cycle of Placemaking (Silberman et all, 2013). In this process improvement project, I explore what aspects of HeartLands Conservancy's current LOL program are most influential in program success and, thus, may be key to designing methods for expanding the scope and scale of the program in a way that is sustainable for their organization to manage. To that end, this project focused on two questions:

1. What factors most influenced the development of the projects undertaken through the Lots of Love program since its inception in 2016?
2. What characteristics of the current LoL volunteers might be indicators of growth in collective community identity?

Research Design

Design and Collection

In my process improvement project, I used a sequential mixed methods design consisting of field visits and a survey. In September/October 2021, I beta tested a survey, comprised of open-ended and close-ended questions influenced by the literature with the staff of HeartLands Conservancy. In November 2021, I visited each of the 4 LoL sites and developed structured field notes from the site observations (see Appendix A: Field Notes). At each site, I wanted to identify elements of the built and planted environment which I could use to triangulate with findings from my survey. The sites are:

- The Signal Hill Outdoor Classroom, Belleville, IL (a current LoL site).
- The Belleville Heart Garden, Belleville, IL (a current LoL site).
- The Exploration Garden at Clinton Hills Conservation Park, Swansea, IL (a current LoL site)
- The Leu Civic Center Community Garden, Mascoutah, IL (no longer an LoL site)

After I received feedback from HeartLands regarding the survey beta test and I reviewed my field notes, I finalized my survey design.

The final design was comprised of 25 close-ended and open-ended questions, built and distributed through Qualtrics. The HeartLands staff recruited respondents for the survey through their monthly volunteer and member e-newsletter in February 2022, which is sent to approximately 2,300 email addresses, as well as through their social media platforms by posting a link to my Qualtrics survey.

In order to answer project question 1, I collected survey information on which factors may contribute to the success or failure of the individual LOL projects. HeartLands provided information on the suite of support options that they provide. I surveyed the volunteer participants to identify factors that were barriers or enablers of the individual projects, including those factors that might have been provided by HeartLands, those that occurred in the environment, and those that that the volunteers provided.

For the purposes of this quality improvement project, I drew inspiration from Wesener et al (2020) as I developed the following definitions of enablers and barriers:

- Enablers are explored as factors that help improve or facilitate the development of a LoL project, as defined by the volunteer participants.
- On the other hand, barriers are explored as factors that impede or obstruct the development of specific LoL projects.

I do recognize that neither the enablers nor the barriers to be identified through this project are purely objective measures but reflect the perceptions of the survey participants.

In order to answer project question 2, I needed to determine how to design sections of the survey to measure growth of collective community identity. Within my project, this growth in collective community identity is serving as an indicator that the growth in the web of community partners that HeartLands is trying to achieve may be occurring. To do this, I drew question design from the World Bank's Social Capital Integrated Questionnaire (SC-IQ) – a validated survey instrument (Grootaert et al, 2004). This document provides an attempt to empirically measure social capital – which will stand in as a proxy for growth in collective community identity in this project -- across several factors. The questions particularly relevant to this project were drawn from the SC-IQ's Groups and Networks section that attempts to provide means to measure social capital through the "nature and extent of a household member's participation in various type of social organizations and informal networks, and the range of contributions that one gives and receives from them. It also considers … how [the group's] leadership is selected" (Grootaert et al, 2004, p. 5). The SC-IQ uses measures to try to understand the extent of collective action – which Silberberg et al (2013) suggests may be able to reveal the impact of placemaking on social capital (p. 62). I also included questions to qualitatively explore the volunteers' perception of community support for these LoL projects.

The survey questions explore the level of commitment (a potential indicator for growth of community identity) through:

- Number of times a household volunteers/year (Quantitative)

Other questions explore the level of community support (another potential indicator for growth of community identity) through:

- Exploration of volunteers' perception of community support before, during and after (quantitative)
- How close do most of the volunteers live to the site (Quantitative)
- Asking about the volunteers' most meaningful experience while working on this project (qualitative)

I also included a section in the survey to explore leadership and decision-making in the volunteer groups who initiated each LoL project. The questions in this section were only available if the respondent answered yes to a question about whether they worked with an organized group in volunteering for the LoL project and were also derived from the SC-IQ's Groups and Networks section (Grootaert et al, 2004).

Data Analysis

I closed the survey in March 2022. I reviewed the survey data for completeness and cleaned it as appropriate.106 potential respondents answered the mandatory survey consent question, and 26 respondents went on to complete at least one other question in the survey. I removed the blank responses with no questions answered beyond the consent question and one additional response that indicated that the respondent only completed the survey to learn more about the LoL projects and had never heard of them previously. I analyzed the survey data using Qualtrics and Excel to generate descriptive statistics and examine frequencies for both the overall responses and also to examine the frequencies of the answers by each LoL site. While only 26 respondents completed the survey, these responses were roughly evenly split amongst three of the LoL project sites. One respondent indicated that they were a staff member at HeartLands, and all the rest of the respondents indicated that they were volunteers.

Limitations in Data Analysis

No respondents indicated that they had worked on the Leu Civic Center project so I was not able to conduct any evidence-based analysis of that project. The project is no longer part of the LoL program and has no physical indications of any LoL development left at the site.

Furthermore, only one respondent indicated that they had been a part of an organized group so that person was the only one to trigger the survey logic to make the section on group composition and leadership available. Therefore, I abandoned the analysis of this data based on the lack of information; however, this did lead to a study finding (see Results and Findings section).

I reviewed the open-ended survey questions in Qualtrics' TextIQ feature, coding the answers first through an inductive review process wherein I read through the answers multiple times to determine themes. I knew that I had become quite familiar with both placemaking programs in general and the LoL program in specific. However, I chose to approach my initial coding through an inductive process to try to allow the program narrative to emerge from my survey data with as little bias as possible as I wanted to uncover factors that influenced these specific programs versus factors that were identified in the literature.

Then I applied a deductive process and looked for commonalities between my codes and the themes suggested by the literature. The open-ended questions largely dealt with the factors that either supported or impeded the LoL projects so I looked at these issues separately. However, both criticism and praise for HeartLands' leadership did emerge as key themes (see Tables 1, 2, and 3 for code and theme examples).

Table 1

Themes and Codes: Factors That Were Enablers for Respondent's LoL Project

Themes	Codes
HeartLands' Leadership	Organization, Communication, Network, Management
Programming	Children
	Improving Physical Space
	Interacting with Nature/Environment
Sense of Community	Community

Table 2

Themes and Codes: Factors That Were Barriers for Respondent's LoL Project

Themes	Codes
HeartLands' Leadership	Communication
	Volunteer Management

Table 3

Themes and Codes: What Was Most Meaningful for Respondent

Themes	Codes
Sense of Community	Communication
	Volunteer Management
	Love
	Connection
	Families
Interactions with Nature	Native Plants
	Invasive Species
	Planting Trees
	Gardening
Improving the Physical Space	Cleaning up the space
	Restoration

Results and Findings

Finding 1: The LoL Program seems to be working as designed.

The LoL program seems to be both following its logic model (see Figure 1) and achieving at least one the program's goals: to build a sense of community.

From speaking with the HeartLands staff, visiting the LoL sites, and analyzing the survey data, I can see that the LoL program is likely working as designed. The inputs and activities identified by the staff are occurring relatively similarly with one observable variation – the LoL Project site size and location of varies greatly (see sidebar for more information). This does not necessarily indicate that there is an issue with this program with regards to the fidelity of implementation. However, the variance in the program size of the project sites may indicate a need for further definition in the program model. Otherwise, the program is being implemented as planned and may already be achieving some of HeartLands' programmatic goals.

The respondents indicate that at least one of the expressed goals of the program is present– the development of a sense of community. As I analyzed the survey data regarding what aspect of the LoL projects were most meaningful for the respondents (see Figure 5), I could see that respondents repeatedly mentioned how the LoL projects created opportunities to connect with others in the community and provided opportunities for community engagement. One respondent noted that the most meaningful aspect of the LoL program was "Meeting, working with and growing to truly care about other like-minded members of my community." Another mentioned the "outpouring of love for the project from the community." I coded these instances in the

Variation in LoL Project Sites

As I visited each of the LoL project sites, I was surprised by how different the sites were from one another regarding size and location.

The Belleville Heart Garden is in a residential neighborhood and is the size of a residential lot. The project has recently expanded by adding an orchard on an adjacent residential lot.

The Signal Hill Outdoor Classroom is a 5-acre park and outdoor classroom for two local elementary schools tucked into a residential neighborhood along a bike trail.

The Exploration Garden at Clinton Hills Conservation Park is a 6 -acre site on a former golf course outside of town.

qualitative analysis as falling under a sense of community (see Table 1). Much as in Loh's work with PlacePlans that was explored earlier in the literature review, even though all of these LoL projects are not fully completed as envisioned, the growth in in sense of community for these volunteers is clear.

Figure 5

Themes for Survey Respondents' Most Meaningful Experiences with LoL
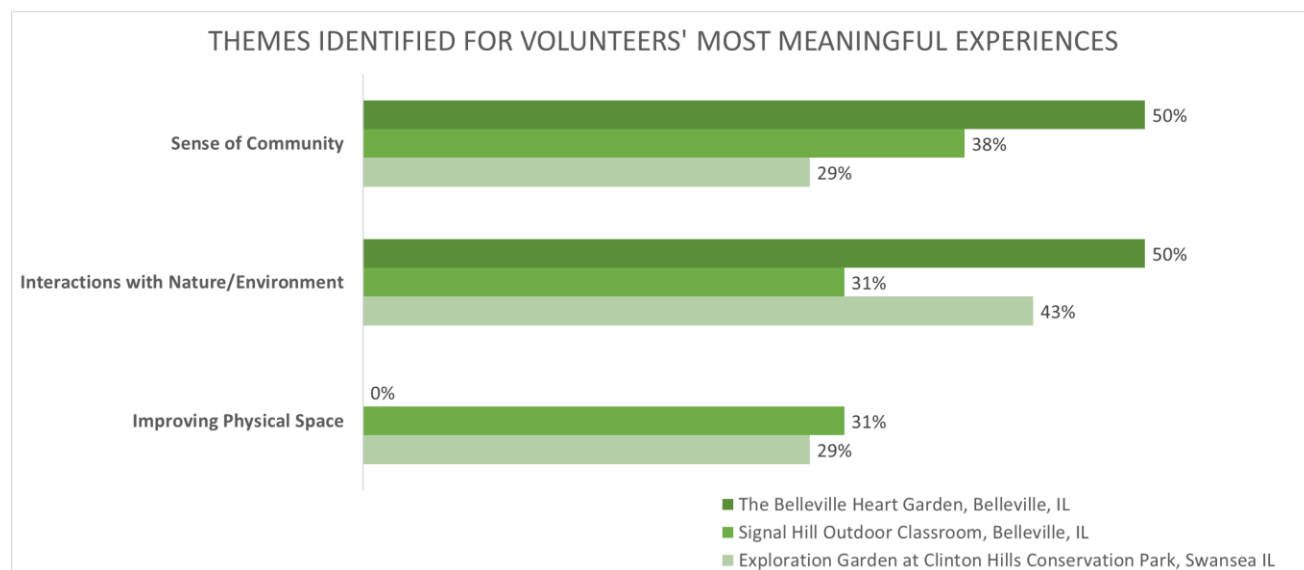
Project Question 1: What factors most influenced the development of the projects undertaken through the Lots of Love program since its inception in 2016?

Finding 2: HeartLands' leadership and programming emerged as enablers for the LoL projects.

The factors that the respondents identified as most supporting these projects include HeartLands' Leadership and Programming (working with children and interacting with nature both fell into this category).

Leadership

Respondents were quite clear throughout the survey that they appreciated and valued HeartLands' leadership in the LoL projects. One respondent laid out that HeartLands was the primary factor that supported the success of their LoL work saying, "HeartLands was integral to our development. Expertise, plants, social media outreach, validation of us as a group. Our relationship with [HeartLands]

supported fundraising and getting support and resources from other agencies."
As another pointed out "HeartLands spearheading the project and managing it"
was the key to their success. Perhaps the response that most sums up the
volunteers' attitude toward HeartLands' leadership is this:

> I am most gratified by seeing firsthand how organizations in the region, like
> HeartLands, are promoting stewardship and land conservation through
> strong partnerships in ways that benefit community engagement and
> appreciation of our natural resources. Planning for, building, and restoring
> more green space into our surroundings has positive effects for our area
> and residents.

As I looked to see more specifically which aspect of HeartLands' leadership were
most helpful to the volunteers, variations emerged from the data based on which
LoL site a volunteer was associated with (see Figure 6). The Belleville Heart
Garden respondents listed HeartLands' work promoting their site as the most
helpful. The volunteers who work with the Exploration Garden at Clinton Hills
Conservation Park listed "Leasing or Acquiring the Land" as the most helpful
assistance provided by HeartLands. Whereas the Signal Hill Outdoor Classroom
volunteers found the work "Developing Plans" for the site to be the most useful.

Figure 6

Volunteers' Ratings of Most Helpful Services Provided by HeartLands
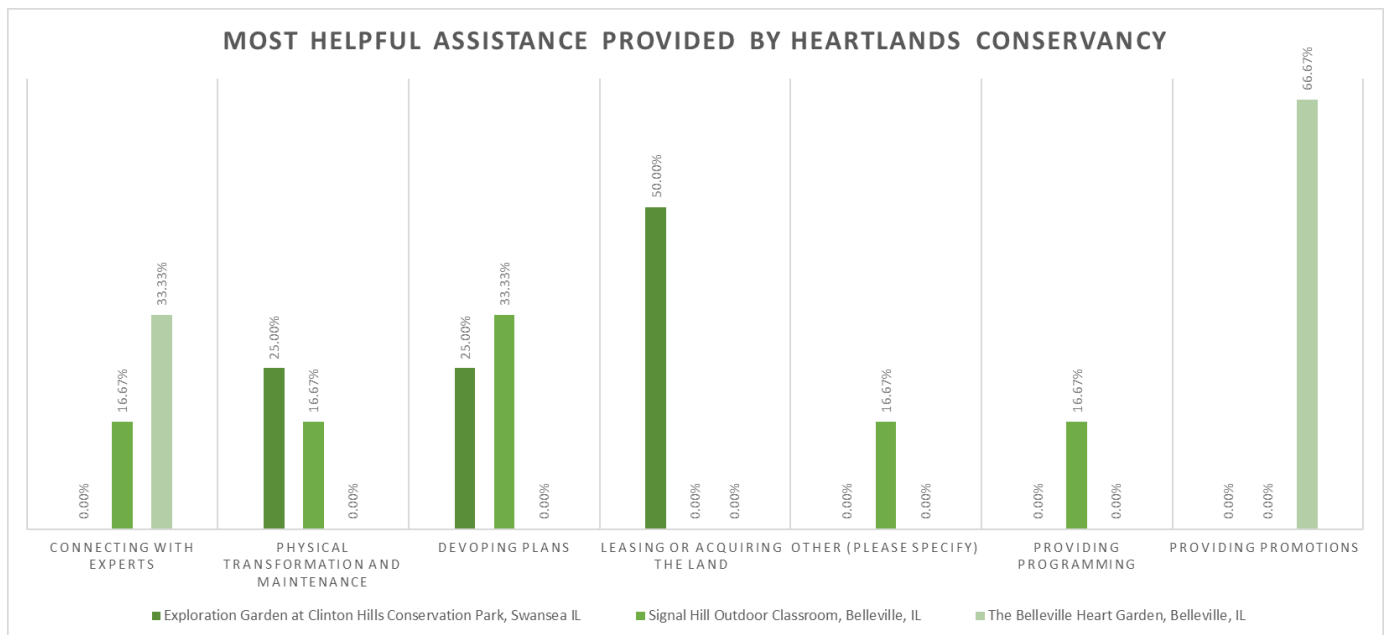
I did ask the respondents which services are the least helpful. I have included
those findings here (see Table 4). "Providing liability insurance" was identified as

the least helpful service by the most volunteers. Liability insurance may be the least helpful service, or it may be that the volunteers are unaware how this service may be needed in this type of work. This is an area for further study.

Table 4

Volunteers' Ratings of Least Helpful Services Provided by HeartLands

Providing liability insurance	25.0%
Other (please specify)	16.7%
Leasing or acquiring the land long-term for use by the community.	8.3%
Tool Library.	8.3%
Providing fiscal sponsorship of an organized group that needs to use HeartLands' nonprofit status to accept donations and grants for capital improvements.	8.3%
Connecting my Lots of Love group with technical experts in vegetable gardening, horticulture, biodiversity, conservation, and other topics.	8.3%
Scholarships for Lots of Love lead stewards to participate in the University of Illinois Master Gardener program.	8.3%
Helped with physical lot transformation and maintenance.	8.3%
Providing promotions for programs held in the Lots of Love space.	8.3%
Helping develop plans for the property in partnership with surrounding neighbors and organization(s).	0.0%
Managing paperwork associated with these properties.	0.0%
Providing programming (events, educational activities, etc.) in the Lots of Love space.	0.0%

Programming

Programming emerged from the both the quantitative and qualitative analysis as a key enabler that supported the success of the LoL projects. In particular, the opportunity to participate in educational opportunities for children and with your children appeared multiple times – this is likely because the Signal Hill Outdoor Classroom was created to serve two different elementary schools in the area, and the students and parents often volunteer together (Lyon, 2021). However, many of the volunteers cited programming opportunities as key enablers for the projects that did not involve children – highlighting opportunities for community recreation and education. As Silberberg et al (2013) discussed in their exploration of the Virtuous Cycle of Placemaking, programming can be a key feature to encourage use and ongoing iterations of improvement in placemaking. The authors point out that through programming a broader community can be involved with a place; mutual stewardship can develop as people enter the placemaking project for new reasons (Silberberg et al, 2013). HeartLands'

placemaking work is following the conceptual framework outlined by Silberberg et al (2103) by developing and executing plans on how the sites will be used through programming. One respondent did note that while the Signal Hill Outdoor classroom was being used for student programming, a meeting with teachers or parent groups and HeartLands to help them reengage with the programming options available might help increase volunteer engagement at the site. This relates quite closely to my next Finding.

Finding 3: Lack of knowledge or awareness emerged as a barrier.

The factor that emerged as the biggest barrier for the LoL projects was the HeartLands volunteers' lack knowledge or awareness about many aspects of the LoL program. From the suite of support options that HeartLands provides to information about when work days will occur, nearly every respondent identified a piece of the LoL program that they were not aware of. At least one respondent replied "Did Not Know This Was Offered" to every single support option that HeartLands offers (see Table 5).

Table 5

Percentage of Respondents Who Did Not Know a Service Was Offered

HeartLands' Suite of Services	Did Not Know This Was Offered
Scholarships for Lots of Love lead stewards	64%
Tool Library	50%
Providing fiscal sponsorship of an organized group	50%
Providing programming (events, educational activities, etc.)	40%
Connecting my group with technical experts	31%
Providing promotions for programs held in the Lots of Love space.	29%
Leasing or acquiring the land long-term for use by the community.	25%
Providing liability insurance	23%
Managing paperwork associated with these properties.	21%
Helping develop plans for the property	15%
Helped with physical lot transformation and maintenance.	14%

Furthermore, many noted that the issues that impeded their projects included a lack of understanding or communication about volunteer events. For instance, many did not know when volunteer days were going to happen. "[I] wasn't aware of most of these services and I am a member of HeartLands since 2019," reported one respondent. I triangulated this finding by looking through

HeartLands' social media announcement of events. I noted that Facebook announcements about many of the LoL volunteer work days were released only a day or two prior to the event.

One respondent noted that HeartLands recently hired a new volunteer coordinator, and a new HeartLands communication director began in February 2022. The turnover in these key staffing positions may have contributed to the issue uncovered in this finding. However, this could also indicate a need for increased, targeted communication with the LoL volunteers.

Project Question 2: What characteristics of the current LoL volunteers might be indicators of growth in collective community identity?

Finding 4: Most volunteers working on LoL projects do not identify as a member of an organized volunteer group.

HeartLands' description of how this program works includes an emphasis on organized groups of volunteers bringing these projects to the organization to kick off the efforts, do the physical work of the project and sustain the sites. However, as I noted earlier in the data analysis limitations, only one respondent answered positively to the survey question about if you belong to an organized group of volunteers.

This is a key finding, because it shows that the volunteers do not yet see themselves as a member of an organized group of volunteers – as a member of a community. While many of the factors are present to allow these volunteers to develop a collective community identity, they do not yet see themselves this way.

This finding contradicts growth in community identity in the LoL program and may indicate that barriers to developing a collective community identity are present. However, identification of this issue might indicate that in future evaluations of this program, growth in the positive responses to this question could serve as an indicator that collective community identity is growing – along with the interdependent web of community partners doing placemaking work that is one of HeartLands' goals.

Finding 5: Sites with Volunteers Who Live Closer Also Have Volunteers Who Volunteer More Often:

Figure 7

LoL sites with volunteers that live closer also see greater repeat volunteer participation.
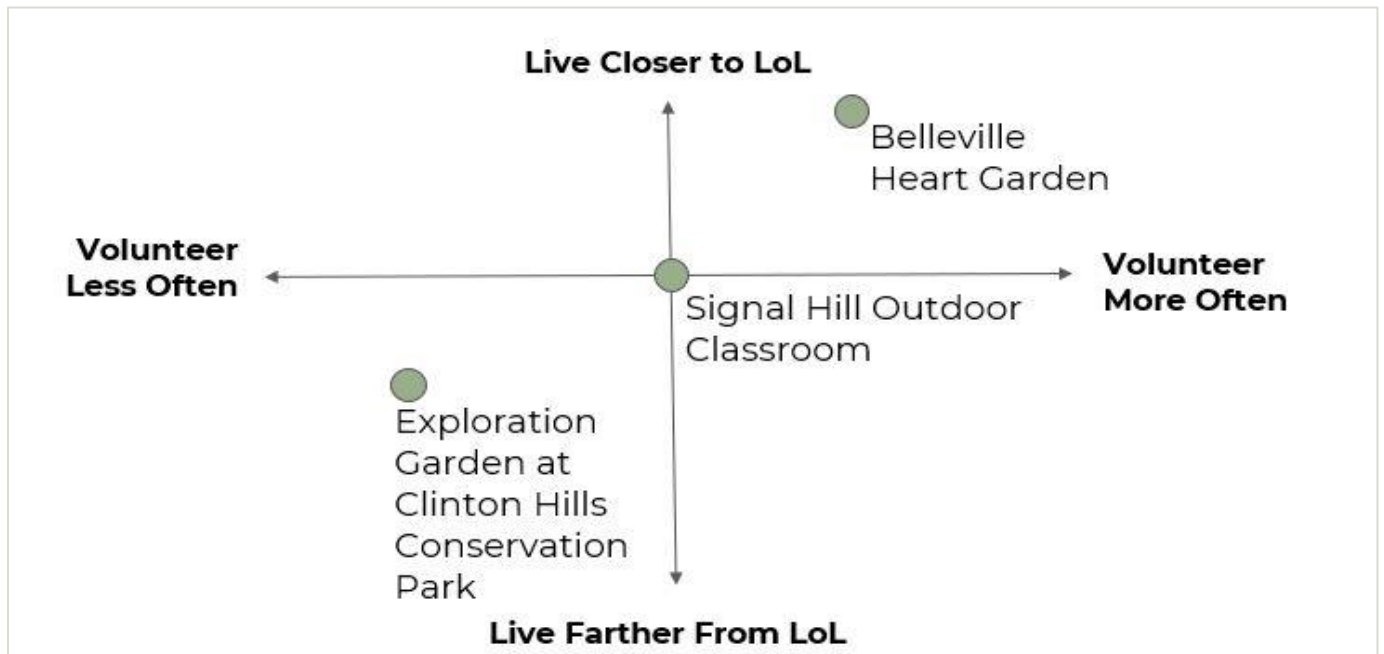
In general, the data shows that sites with volunteers who live closer also have volunteers who help out more often.

From the work done by the World Bank to develop the SC-IQ survey, it has been suggested that the number of times someone volunteers is a good indicator of growth of connection to the project. This aligns with Brenneis' metaphor of lamination (as cited in Holland & Leander, 2004) that was discussed earlier in this paper's literature review. He argued that repeated experiences build identity over time. Therefore, as volunteers repeatedly assist at one of these LoL projects, they are likely building both connection to the site and their own identities as a member of the respective communities.

The Belleville Heart Garden has the highest rating of repeat volunteers in the survey and also the volunteers who live closest. Seventy-five percent of the Belleville Heart Garden respondents said that they volunteer more than 10 times per year and 100 percent of Belleville Heart Garden respondents live within 10 miles. Seventy-five percent live within one mile.

The Belleville Heart Garden also most closely follows the LoL program's logic model. The space was an abandoned residential lot in a marginal neighborhood that was transformed by the local community. From my observations during my field visits, I could see evidence of the differences in the communities' engagements with each place. At the Belleville Heart Garden, I could see that the garden is now a thriving space filled with community art and hand painted signs. I could see physical evidence of the time and investment from numerous volunteers. Multiple community organizations – the Nature Conservancy, Seed St. Louis and others in addition to HeartLands -- have partnered with the volunteers in this placemaking initiative.

In contrast,100 percent of the Signal Hill Outdoor Classroom and Exploration Garden respondents volunteer less than two times per year. Fifty percent of the Signal Hill respondents live more than 10 miles away. Only 17 percent of Exploration Garden Respondents live within 1 mile; 83 percent live more than 10 miles away.

This finding aligns with my literature research in that the people who live closest to an abandoned lot that undergoes a placemaking process see the greatest benefit. Therefore, the closer the volunteers live to one of these sites, the greater their investment may be in seeing its success.

Recommendations

HeartLands' goal in partnering with me for this process improvement project was to gain insight into how to choose which projects and partners to accept into the LoL program. The organization's hope is to understand how to better scale and scope its program so that it can continue to grow the program within the existing staff capacity. HeartLands has a description of how the staff believes the program works (see my visualization of that program model in Figure 1), and my analysis indicates that model does reflect how the program is working (see Finding 1). If HeartLands applies the knowledge gained through my findings to refine the inputs into the existing logic model, the organization could develop a more targeted application process.

This will help the organization choose projects and partners that will help advance the program's goal of creating an interdependent web of community partners doing placemaking work while potentially reducing the effort that HeartLands must undertake for each individual project.

Recommendation 1: Develop a structured multi-step application process for LoL projects.

1 – To begin the process of ensuring that volunteers understand what services HeartLands offers, the organization could first develop an online prescreening questionnaire for potential community partners. A simple prescreening tool could teach potential volunteers if their idea falls within the parameters of the LoL program (see sidebar this page for more details).

Prescreening Recommendation

If HeartLands anticipates that the application process may attract many unqualified proposals, consider developing an automated prescreening self-evaluation for potential community partners to see if their idea meets the criteria of the LoL program. This could direct applicants to alternative resources if their idea doesn't meet the criteria. For example, if the proposed project is a community or school garden in Madison or St. Claire counties, the site could suggest that they contact Seed St. Louis who does work with those kids of projects when LoL does not.

2 – Next, HeartLands could develop an orientation to the LoL program to be offered via webinar. This could be offered on a periodic basis for potential community partners to understand what options HeartLands offers. The LoL application could require members of a group applying for assistance with their placemaking project to attend before applying.

This is a typical requirement of many well-established and comparable placemaking programs, including the local Seed St. Louis organization (2022). Implementing this portion of the recommendation would help to alleviate the issues described in Finding 3.

3 – Next, the findings from this project could be used to better define the inputs into the program's logic model and use these definitions to structure the requirements for application to the LoL program for the individual projects. Consider:

a. Requiring the project be spearheaded by an organized group of volunteers from the neighborhood in question. As is discussed in Finding 5, the LoL projects with volunteers who live closer to the sites also tend to have participants who volunteer more often. By requiring new projects to be led by neighborhood volunteers, we could test this finding to see if participants would volunteer more often. If the findings uncovered in this project hold true, HeartLands should see a measurable change in the program's output—an increased number of repeat volunteers – which can be used as a leading indicator that this process improvement may be succeeding. Success might also be measured by continuing to ask the volunteers if they are members of an organized group of volunteers. An increase in positive responses to this question might show growth in collective community identity.

b. Asking the applicants to identify at least two other organizations from the community (governmental organizations, churches, other nonprofits, etc.) who will participate in the LoL project. This aspect of the recommendation is derived from the National Endowment for the Arts' Our Town application (2022). Developing opportunities to involve greater numbers of local community organizations through recruiting existing groups to help might also grow community engagement and the collective community identity.

c. Refining the size and location requirements for the potential LoL project sites. When I visited each of the LoL project sites, I also observed that the sites are vastly different in size (see sidebar, Finding 1). If the intent of this program is still to transform abandoned lots, consider only accepting smaller vacant lots in residential areas into this program. This will allow

more engagement with the surrounding neighborhood and a greater opportunity for the project volunteers to establish work on the project as part of the community identity.

Recommendation 2: Reduce or pause the number of services that HeartLands offers to LoL volunteer groups.

As I laid out earlier in my discussion of the Problem of Practice, one of the reasons why HeartLands wanted to undertake this project was because the resource and staffing requirements to grow the LoL program successfully in its current configuration may be beyond the capacity of the current staff. As I stated earlier, the current model requires a lot of staff time and significant efforts to find grant money to pay for these projects.

If HeartLands wants to explore ways to reduce cost and effort associated with this program, my data analysis has revealed that many of the suite of services offered to groups are either unknown to (see Finding 3) or not highly valued by the volunteers as helpful (see Table 4).

While HeartLands looks to implement Recommendation 1 and 3, the organization could pause or reduce the number of services offered to save cost and effort. The findings of this process improvement project could be used to target those lesser valued or unknown (and therefore unutilized) options. In addition, maintaining a more targeted suite of support services would make this program simpler to scale. In the future, if staff capacity increases or more funds become available, these services can be reinstated.

Recommendation 3: Provide a regular schedule for volunteer events that is well-advertised ahead of time through social media and direct communication with volunteers.

As previously discussed, my analysis of the survey data reveals that many of the volunteers did not know when volunteer events were being held (see Finding 3). This negates HeartLands' work to retain engaged volunteers who participate regularly with the LoL projects and serves as a barrier to project success. The volunteers need to know when volunteer opportunities are occurring to participate. By providing a regular scheduled for volunteer events that is well-advertised ahead of time through social media and direct email communication (perhaps through HeartLands newsletter), volunteers have time to plan to attend and participate in volunteer opportunities.

However, this issue may already have been resolved when HeartLands filled two vacant positions: the volunteer coordinator and the communications manager positions. Both positions were filled very close to the time my survey was launched or shortly before. Therefore, the problems that the respondents reported may no longer. Further follow up is necessary to see if this issue has truly been resolved.

References

Akbar, P.N.G., & Edelenbos, J. (2021). Positioning place-making as a social process: A systematic literature review. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 7: 1905920.

Garvin, E. C., Cannuscio, C. C., & Branas, C. C. (2012). Greening vacant lots to reduce violent crime: A randomised controlled trial. *Injury Prevention*, 19(3), 198–203.

Ellery, P. J., & Ellery, J. (2019). Strengthening community sense of place through placemaking. *Urban Planning,* 4(2), 237–248.

Grootaert, C., Narayan, D., Jones, V.N., & Woolcock, M. (2004). *Measuring social capital: an integrated questionnaire (English). World Bank working paper no. 18*. Washington, D.C: World Bank Group. https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/515261468740392133/Measuring-social-capital-an-integrated-questionnaire#

Hand, V., & Gresalfi, M. (2015). The Joint Accomplishment of Identity. *Educational Psychologist,* 50(3), 190-203.

HUD: Office of Policy Development and Research. (2014). Vacant and Abandoned Properties: Turning Liabilities Into Assets: HUD USER. https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/winter14/highlight1.html.

HeartLands Conservancy. (2021, June). *About HeartLands Conservancy*. Retrieved from http://HeartLandsconservancy.org/about-us/

Jacobs, J. (1961). *The death and life of Great American cities*. Jonathan Cape.

Leander, K. M., Phillips, N. C., & Taylor, K. H. (2010). The changing social spaces of learning: Mapping new mobilities. *Review of research in education*, 34(1), 329-394.

Loh, Carolyn G., Placemaking and implementation: Revisiting the performance principle, *Land Use Policy*, Volume 81, 2019, Pages 68-75, ISSN 0264-8377, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264837717307044

Lyon, Laura (2021, June 9). Vice President of Program Strategy and Impact, HeartLands Conservancy. (S. Drury-Dothager, Interviewer)

National Endowment for the Arts. (2022).Our town FY23 how to apply
        instructions - arts.gov. https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Our-Town-
        FY23-Instructions.pdf

Placemaking Chicago. (2008). *Step-by-step guide.* Placemaking Chicago - A
        neighborhood guide to placemaking in Chicago.
        http://placemakingchicago.com/guide/.

Project for Public Spaces. (2007). *What is Placemaking?*
        https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking

Seed St. Louis. How to start, join, or expand a garden or Orchard. (2022,
        February 2). https://seedstl.org/how-to-start-join-or-expand-a-garden-or-
        orchard/

Silberberg, S., Lorah, K., Disbrow, R., & Muessig, A. (2013). *Places in the
        making: How placemaking builds places and communities.* Boston, MA:
        MIT.

South, E. C., Hohl, B. C., Kondo, M. C., MacDonald, J. M., & Branas, C. C.
        (2018). Effect of greening vacant land on mental health of community-
        dwelling adults. *JAMA Network Open*, 1(3).

Wesener, A., Fox-Kämper, R., Sondermann, M., & Münderlein, D. (2020).
        Placemaking in Action: Factors That Support or Obstruct the Development
        of Urban Community Gardens. *Sustainability*, 12(2), 657.
        https://doi.org/10.3390/su12020657

Wortham, S. (2004). From good student to outcast: The emergence of a
        classroom identity. *Ethos*, 32(2), 164-187.

Vandevord, M. (2021, June 9). President and CEO HeartLands Conservancy. (S.
        Drury-Dothager, Interviewer)

Appendix A: Lots of Love Mission Description from HeartLands Conservancy Web Site

(HeartLands Conservancy, 2021)

HeartLands Conservancy provides support for gardens and vacant lot transformations with environmental benefits in the following ways:

- We partner with people in the community and work with the city, village, or public agency to lease or acquire the land long-term for use by the community.
- We can develop plans for the property in partnership with surrounding neighbors and organization(s).
- We provide liability insurance and manage paperwork associated with these properties.
- We have a tool library for LoL participants to borrow and share with other LoL participants.
- We sometimes fiscally sponsor an organized group that needs to use our nonprofit status to accept donations and grants for capital improvements.
- We can connect LoL groups with technical experts in vegetable gardening, horticulture, biodiversity, conservation, and other topics.
- We also provide scholarships for LoL lead stewards to participate in the University of Illinois Master Gardener program.
- On rare occasions, HeartLands Conservancy will undertake lot transformation and maintenance by our staff.

HeartLands Conservancy can also accept donated land for enrollment in the Lots of Love program. Before we agree to acquire, accept, or lease land, we make sure that:

- It provides a public benefit;
- It meets the terms of our insurance and risk policies;
- It will be maintained long-term by the site steward or organized group; and
- The surrounding neighbors have been consulted on the use of and plans for the property.

Appendix B: LoL Project Field Notes Design

Location of Observation: _____

Date of Observation: _____ Time of Observation: _____

Description of Site	Observed Elements of the Built Environment	Observed Elements of the Planted Environment	Activities Possible	Activities Observed

Appendix C: Survey Design

HeartLands Conservancy Lots of Love Project - 2022

✱

Q25 **Welcome! You have been invited to complete this survey as part of a research project exploring how to grow HeartLands Conservancy's Lots of Love program!!**

This online survey should take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary, and responses will be kept anonymous to the degree permitted by the technology being used. You have the option to not respond to any questions that you choose. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with HeartLands Conservancy. Submission of the survey will be interpreted as your informed consent to participate and that you affirm that you are at least 18 years of age.
If you have any questions about the research, please contact the Principal Investigator, Sarah Drury-Dothager, via email at sarah.e.drury-dothager@vanderbilt.edu OR the faculty advisor, Dr. Matt Campbell at matthew.m.campbell@vanderbilt.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Vanderbilt (IRB) at (615) 322-2918. Please print or save a copy of this page for your records.

○ I have read the above information and agree to participate in this research project. (1)

Page Break

Q1 Which Lots of Love project did you or do you contribute to? If you worked on more than one project, please answer the rest of the questions in relation to the Lots of Love project you select for this question.

○ Signal Hill Outdoor Classroom, Belleville, IL (1)

○ Exploration Garden at Clinton Hills Conservation Park, Swansea IL (2)

○ The Belleville Heart Garden, Belleville, IL (3)

○ Leu Civic Center Community Garden, Mascoutah, IL (4)

Q2 How close to the Lots of Love project area do you live?

○ Within 1 block (1)

○ Within 1 mile (2)

○ Within 10 miles (3)

○ In a neighboring community (4)

○ Other (please specify) (5) _____

Q4 How many days of work did your household contribute to this Lots of Love project in the past 12 months?[1]

○ less than 2 (1)

○ 2-5 (2)

○ 5-10 (3)

○ more than 10 (4)

_____

[1] Questions 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 all came from the World Bank's Social Capital Integrated Questionnaire

Q5 How strong do you think community support was for this project before HeartLands Conservancy became involved?

○ Very Strong (1)

○ Strong (2)

○ Neither Strong nor Weak (3)

○ Weak (4)

○ Very Weak (5)

Q26 How strong do you think community support was for this project during implementation?

○ Very Strong (1)

○ Strong (2)

○ Neither Strong nor Weak (3)

○ Weak (4)

○ Very Weak (5)

Q6 How strong is community support for this Lots of Love project today?

○ Very Strong (1)

○ Strong (2)

○ Neither Strong nor Weak (3)

○ Weak (4)

○ Very Weak (5)

Q7 In your opinion, what factors most supported the development of this Lots of Love project?[2]

_____

_____

_____

Q8 In your opinion, what factors most impeded the development of this Lots of Love project?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

----

[2] This question and the following one were informed by Wesener, A., Fox-Kämper, R., Sondermann, M., & Münderlein, D. (2020). Placemaking in Action: Factors That Support or Obstruct the Development of Urban Community Gardens. *Sustainability*, 12(2), 657. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12020657

Q9 Have you noticed any other positive effects of the Lots of Love project in your city? Please select all that apply.

☐   Staff capacity building   (1)

☐   Community capacity building   (2)

☐   Volunteer group took on additional projects   (3)

☐   Improved connections to local volunteers   (4)

☐   Increase in community pride   (5)

☐   Increase in economic activity   (6)

☐   No other positive effects   (7)

☐   Other (please specify)   (8) _____

Q3 What is/was your primary role in this Lots of Love project?

○ HeartLands Conservancy Staff   (1)

○ Volunteer Project Leader   (2)

○ Volunteer Participant   (3)

○ City/County Government Representative   (4)

○ Other (please specify)   (5) _____

End of Block: Intro Block

Start of Block: Organized Group Question

Q26 Many LoL volunteers belong to an organized group of volunteers who have collaborated with HeartLands in developing a LoL project. Are you part of an organized group or do you volunteer independently?

○ I belong to an organized group. (1)

○ I volunteer independantly. (2)

End of Block: Organized Group Question

Start of Block: LoL Volunteer Group Questions

Q16 **The next few questions are specifically about the group of volunteers that you worked with on this LoL project.**
Did this group exist before the LoL project began?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Display This Question:
    If The next few questions are specifically about the group of volunteers that you worked with on th... = Yes

Q17 What was the purpose of your group before the LoL project began?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Display This Question:
    If The next few questions are specifically about the group of volunteers that you worked with on th... = Yes

Q18 Did your group attempt to work with any other organizations on this project before you began work with HeartLands?

◯ Yes (1)

◯ No (2)

Q20 When there is a decision to be made in the group, how does this usually come about?

◯ Decision is imposed from outside (1)

◯ The leader decides and informs the other group members (2)

◯ The leader asks group members what they think and then decides (3)

◯ The group members hold a discussion and decide together (4)

◯ Other (please specify) (5) _____

Q21 How are leaders in this group selected?

◯ By an outside person or entity (1)

◯ Each leader chooses his/her successor (2)

◯ By a small group of members (3)

◯ By decision/vote of all members (4)

◯ Other (please specify) (5) _____

Q22 Overall, how effective is the group's leadership?

○ Not effective at all (1)

○ Slightly effective (2)

○ Moderately effective (3)

○ Very effective (4)

○ Extremely effective (5)

Q23 What is the most important source of expertise or advice which this group receives?

○ From within the membership (1)

○ From other sources within the community (2)

○ From sources outside the community (3)

Q24 Who originally founded the group?

○ State government (1)

○ Local government (2)

○ Local leader (3)

○ Community members (4)

End of Block: LoL Volunteer Group Questions

Start of Block: HeartLands Conservancy Support Questions

Q10 Next, we're going to ask some questions about the services that HeartLands Conservancy offers to Lots of Love volunteer groups and participants.

Of the following services that HeartLands Conservancy offers to Lots of Love projects and participants, how helpful did you find each of the following types of assistance?

	Extremely Helpful (1)	Helpful (2)	Somewhat Helpful (3)	Not So Helpful (4)	Not at All Helpful (5)	Not Applicable (6)	Did Not Know This Was Offered (7)
Leasing or acquiring the land long-term for use by the community. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Helping develop plans for the property in partnership with surrounding neighbors and organization(s). (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Providing liability insurance (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Managing paperwork associated with these properties. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Tool Library. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Providing fiscal sponsorship of an organized group that needs to use HeartLands' nonprofit status to accept donations and grants for capital improvements. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Connecting my group with technical experts in vegetable gardening, horticulture, biodiversity, conservation, and other topics. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Scholarships for Lots of Love lead stewards to participate in the University of Illinois Master Gardener program. (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Helped with physical lot transformation and maintenance. (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Providing programming (events, educational activities, etc.) in the Lots of Love space. (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Providing promotions for programs held in the Lots of Love space. (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q11 Which of the services provided by HeartLands Conservancy was the MOST helpful?

○ Leasing or acquiring the land long-term for use by the community. (1)

○ Helping develop plans for the property in partnership with surrounding neighbors and organization(s). (2)

○ Providing liability insurance (3)

○ Managing paperwork associated with these properties. (4)

○ Tool Library. (5)

○ Providing fiscal sponsorship of an organized group that needs to use HeartLands' nonprofit status to accept donations and grants for capital improvements. (6)

○ Connecting my Lots of Love group with technical experts in vegetable gardening, horticulture, biodiversity, conservation, and other topics. (7)

○ Scholarships for Lots of Love lead stewards to participate in the University of Illinois Master Gardener program. (8)

○ Helped with physical lot transformation and maintenance. (9)

○ Providing programming (events, educational activities, etc.) in the Lots of Love space. (10)

○ Providing promotions for programs held in the Lots of Love space. (11)

○ Other (please specify) (12) _____

Q14 Which of the services provided by HeartLands Conservancy was the LEAST helpful?

○ Leasing or acquiring the land long-term for use by the community. (1)

○ Helping develop plans for the property in partnership with surrounding neighbors and organization(s). (2)

○ Providing liability insurance (3)

○ Managing paperwork associated with these properties. (4)

○ Tool Library. (5)

○ Providing fiscal sponsorship of an organized group that needs to use HeartLands' nonprofit status to accept donations and grants for capital improvements. (6)

○ Connecting my Lots of Love group with technical experts in vegetable gardening, horticulture, biodiversity, conservation, and other topics. (7)

○ Scholarships for Lots of Love lead stewards to participate in the University of Illinois Master Gardener program. (8)

○ Helped with physical lot transformation and maintenance. (9)

○ Providing programming (events, educational activities, etc.) in the Lots of Love space. (10)

○ Providing promotions for programs held in the Lots of Love space. (11)

○ Other (please specify) (12) _____

Q12 Are there any other services that HeartLands Conservancy did not provide that you would have found helpful?

_____

_____

_____

Q13 What has been the most meaningful experience for you while working on this project?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q15 Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience with HeartLands Conservancy or the implementation of your Lots of Love project?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

End of Block: HeartLands Conservancy Support Questions