Project Description

As a part of it's Resilient Communities Program, the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) is coordinating a three-phase project, “Accelerating Sustainable Initiatives in Chicago’s 77 Community Areas,” (more widely known as “accelerate77.”) The goal of this project is to accelerate existing local programs and initiatives and increase the strength of their impacts on Chicago communities. The underlying strategy is to first IDENTIFY sustainable initiatives currently active in all of Chicago’s 77 community areas; CONNECT them with one another to form a network of new ideas, practices and motivation; and ENGAGE them in systematic learning, planning, and cooperative action. It is anticipated that the project will thereby ACCELERATE sustainability and community well-being through a grassroots approach driven by practical action, expanded imagination, and greater organizational capacities among local groups.

Phase I: IDENTIFY

“Listen and Learn” January 2011 - September 2012

Starting in the Fall of 2011, over 200 students from 5 Chicago-based Universities began to uncover the organizations, initiatives and individuals working at the community level toward creating a more sustainable Chicago. Professors from Chicago State, DePaul, Northeastern Illinois, Loyola and Roosevelt integrated the project into their curricula as a civic engagement component to their courses. During the summer of 2012, over 40 interns from around the US continued to uncover what was taking place at the community level within Chicago. All the students were asked to use an asset-based lens when in the communities.

Phase II: CONNECT

“Sharing Approaches That Work” - September 15, 2012

The culmination of 18 months of exploring and uncovering was a Share Fair event that aimed to both showcase and connect initiatives, organizations, and individuals from each of the 77 communities. In this day-long event at Truman College, participants were able to network, learn about local and city-wide resources available to them, and learn about the city’s plan to promote sustainability. Over 400 people attended the event with over 150 local organizations and initiatives showcasing their work.

Phase III: ENGAGE’


In the three years following the Share Fair, the accelerate77 team will collaborate with individuals and organizations we met in Phase I and II and facilitate networking, training workshops, local share fairs, and the building of new collaboration between neighborhood groups. The organizing sponsor (ICA) has a long history and years of experience in facilitation, consensus building, and community development. This phase will be defined through the innovations which come to light during the continued engagement of the local participants. The anticipated result will be the expansion of effective and creative community initiatives that will significantly contribute to a more sustainable Chicago.
Phase I: IDENTIFY

Goals
There were two majors goals for the accelerate77 team during Phase I. The first of which was to uncover individuals, organizations and initiatives working towards a more sustainable Chicago. Sustainability can mean a lot of different things, but our team decided to refer to it as something that gave life to the community, and strengthened the community socially, culturally or environmentally. The second goal was to engage with college and post college students and introduce them to basic community organizing methods, asset-based approach to community development, and practical ways of understanding social and environmental justice concerns. We also wanted to get them engaged with the city around them, and involved and excited about community areas in Chicago.

Participants & Partnerships
The Institute of Cultural Affairs was the organizing sponsor, but Phase I would not have been possible without University participation, of both undergraduate and graduate students, and volunteers, our partners, supporters and advisory board. See Appendix A for a full list of participants & partners.

Process & Methodology
The initial canvassing took place with students from Oklahoma City University as part of a pilot project. We wanted to ascertain if students took a ‘deep dive’ into learning about an unfamiliar community and started uncovering what systems were at play, it would both get them more engaged in the area, and surface insightful information on who was organizing and working within the area. The students were given an introduction to community organizing theory and tools, safety guidelines, as well as a background in asset mapping. After an evaluation of the pilot, we determined it was successful in achieving both of our goals. We continued to partner with several different university professors and students throughout the city. The project was integrated into course curricula - generally as a civic engagement component. Over 200 students participated in the process, and 8 different classes, covering many different fields of study. To see full list of universities, professors, classes and fields, see Appendix B.

* quotes are taken from evaluations of the summer internship program – done anonymously.
During the summer of 2012 we had over 40 interns from around the US continue the work, and started inviting organizations to come to the share fair, or Phase II. Ten of the forty students provided leadership throughout the summer staying on for 10 weeks or longer, while most other student interns stayed on for 7 or 3 weeks. The students worked in groups, taking responsibility for certain areas of the city, and began to have an in-depth understanding of the communities they were working in. Student groups also partnered with retired ICA colleagues from around the US that brought with them years of community development experience. Although Phase I was mainly a student led initiative, the students were encouraged to combine the skills of older colleagues with the creativity and ingenuity of their own ideas.

Statistics
Participants included 182 students from over 5 Chicago based universities. During the school year the accelerate77 team partnered with 8 professors that then integrated the project into their classroom curricula. To see a full list of universities, professors, and classes see Appendix B. Before the summer of 2012, over 55 communities had been partially canvassed.

Of the 40 summer interns, 71% of them were females, 63% were upperclassmen and grad students, and over 20% of the students were from out of state. We also had 5 volunteers working on the accelerate77 website, and 13 retired ICA colleagues. Over 900 initiatives throughout Chicago were uncovered.

By the time all was said and done over 300 volunteers, students, colleagues, and staff worked on ensuring that Phase I was complete, and contributed to the planning of phase II. It was truly an impressive endeavor that could not have been accomplished without an excellent and diverse group who were passionate about accelerating sustainable initiatives in Chicago.

Lessons Learned
There were many lessons our accelerate77 team learned throughout this two year process:

- There is an amazing amount of energy at the university level, even though it tends to be an untapped resource for community areas.
- Individuals are willing to do an incredible amount of work and invest their time and energy into something they really believe in.
- Sustainability is a hard term to define perfectly. We were able to make a lot more progress as a team when we created our own working definition of the word.
- Students want to be engaged!
Phase II: CONNECT

Goals
The September 15th ‘Sharing Approaches that Work’ Share Fair aimed to showcase and mobilize the sustainability work of organizations, initiatives, and individuals from each of the 77 communities. The event provided participants an opportunity to share knowledge, highlight best practices on emerging trends relating to urban sustainability, and learn about resources available to them. The experiences, connections and conversations that took place at the Share Fair are giving shape to Phase III of accelerate77.

Participants & Partnerships
The participants for the Phase II of accelerate77 included volunteers, interns, and ICA associates and staff along with city officials, community initiatives & organizations, citywide organizations, media outlets, and the general public. While these participants differed in regards to their scope and contributions to Phase II, their efforts and presence were integral in making the ‘Sharing Approaches that Work’ Fair a success. See Appendix A for a comprehensive list of partnerships and participants.

Process & Methodology:
Organizations and individuals who attended the Share Fair were identified from the working database produced from Phase I of accelerate77. The community outreach and engagement conducted during Phase I served as the foundation for the invitation process for the Share Fair. The accelerate77 team wanted a diverse array of organizations that embodied community leadership, employed innovative strategies, and were passionate about accelerating sustainability to be represented at the Share Fair. Due to a space limitation, we could have, in most cases, three organizations from each community area to a table.

The ‘Sharing Approaches That Work’ Conference took place from 10am to 4pm on September 15th, 2012 at Truman College. Introductions from NBC5’s Lisa Parker set the stage for speeches by Alderman Graham, Alderman Cappelman, and Terry Bergdall, the CEO of the Institute of Cultural Affairs. A great keynote address from Karen Weigert, Chief Sustainability Office for the City of Chicago, officially commenced the Share Fair.

From 11am to 4pm, community level initiatives were then given the opportunity to share their work with attendees and conduct candid conversations with other member of Chicago’s sustainability community. The event was organized to emphasize and highlight the sustainable work happening at the community level. In addition to the main floor showcasing community level initiatives, a total of twenty-one ‘connection seminars’ presented in break out rooms throughout the day. The citywide organizations presented on resources available within eight different categories: Food/Space, Transportation, Energy, Building Efficiency, Community Organizing, Green Economy, Community Resources and Chicago Innovators.
Lessons Learned
Our team learned a lot throughout the planning process and the day of the event:

- There are some things you just cannot plan for! Although we had written or verbal confirmation from nearly all of the community areas of Chicago, Chicago Public School students and/or teachers could not participate due to the teacher’s strike. In a lot of the community areas schools are doing an amazing amount of work toward sustainability, but, due to unfortunate timing, many of these schools were not represented.

- Don’t overschedule! The first set of connection seminars during the day took place concurrently with the official launch of the event. Since organizations were so excited to talk with one another, it was hard to get people to leave the main room and listen to presenters! If we had to do it over again we would give folks at least an hour or so to chat before starting the seminars.

- People were excited to stay longer and connect! It was great to see how excited people were to share and learn about each others projects.

Statistics
The accelerate77 team was very pleased with the turnout at the Share Fair. Through valuable feedback, we determined that most of the participants found that the information from the tabling organizations exhibiting their work was the most beneficial piece of the event. For others, connection seminars and general networking were the most gratifying aspects of the day. Several evaluations also highlighted the alderman’s address and keynote speaker as an integral part of the event and a great way to start the day.

- Over 100 community organizations tabled and shared information and ‘approaches that work’.
- Over 400 attended the Share Fair itself and over 150 people attended connection seminars.
- Over 10 city wide initiatives tabled.
- 21 presenters shared resources at the connection seminars.
- 62 of Chicago’s 77 community areas were represented at the Share Fair.

“I was inspired by the level of sharing and participation at accelerate77. We learned of the City of Chicago’s plans for the future and our Edgewater Environmental Sustainability Plan was shared with many other Chicago Communities. We connected with a great variety of organizations striving for sustainability and as a result, just last week we introduced Getaround Car Sharing at our monthly committee meeting. The Share Fair is truly helping to ‘accelerate’ sustainability initiatives in the City of Chicago!”

Helen Cameron
Uncommon Ground
Phase III: ENGAGE

What’s Next?

We plan to harness the energy and enthusiasm cultivated in Phases I and II as we move on to the next several years. We are excited to promote and facilitate rich exchanges across the city—both by geography and by interest area. We are in the process of coordinating with organizations across the city to determine the structure of these programs so that they best meet the needs and visions of the communities they will serve.

We are expanding our current team and including those around the city who are interested in becoming more involved in this initiative. Keep on the look out for us! We presented Phases I and II at the Great Lakes Bioneers Conference this year and will be continuing to support local initiatives throughout Chicago. As always, we will continue to bring student energy to all the work we do.

If you are interested in becoming part of our team and volunteering your time, or interested in learning more, please contact us at accelerate77@gmail.com.

“We create a system to imagine the future, fed by everyone’s perspective and everyone’s skills and potential. The future is ours to see. Step well and enjoy the view.”

- Lucy Neal
Transition Network

A Sincere Thanks to our Sponsors:

The Joyce Foundation
Improving the Quality of Life in the Great Lakes Region and Across the Country.

SPENCER FAMILY
CHARITABLE TRUST

BOEING

Our deepest gratitude to our volunteers and supporters, without whom none of this would be possible.
APPENDIX A

Participants & Partners

312 Aquaponics, LLC
A Just Harvest
A Knock At Midnight
Academy for Global Citizenship School
Alliance for a Greener South Loop
Aryan Bhavan Restaurant
Beard Elementary School
Benton House
Bethlehem Starr
Beverly Area Planning Association
Bike-a-Bee
Blacks in Green
Bowmanville Community Organization
Bronzeville Children’s Museum
Brother Tim's Vegetarian Fast Food
Budlong Woods Library
C.R.O.P. - Chicago Rarities Orchard Project
CCA Academy High School
Chatham Business Association
Chicago Green Restaurant Coalition
Chinese American Service League
Christy Webber Landscapes
Claretian Associates
CLESE — Global Garden
Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community
Columbia’s Papermaker Garden
Community Youth Dev. Institute
DePaul University: Urban Farming Org
Design Makes Change
Dunning Read Conservation Area
Easy Breezy Energy
Eco-Andersonville
Edison Park Elementary School
EEE- Green Lungs
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Fishin' Buddies
Fulton Street Flower and Vegetable Garden
Gage Park Kids Harvest Garden
Garfield Park Community Council
Garfield Park Urban Farmers
George – Sealey
Gingko Gardens
Glenwood Sunday Market
God’s Gang
Good Earth Catering Company
Great Lakes Bioneers—Chicago
Greater Southwest Dev. Corp
Green Lots Project
Green Sanctuary Group
Green Wheels
Howard Alan Architects
I-Go Car Sharing
Imagine Englewood If...
Indigo Spins
Inspiration Kitchens
Institute of Cultural Affairs
Iron Street Farm
Jane Adams Hull House Museum
LET’S GO Chicago
Logan Square Farmer’s Market
Loud Grade Produce
Mariano Azuela Elementary School
Mathers—More Than A Café
Morgan Street Garden
Neighbor Capital LLC
NeighborServe, Inc.
North Lawndale Greening Committee
Northside College Prep High School
Olive’s Neighborhood Garden for the Hungry
P.E.R.R.O.
Peace School
Peggy Notebaert Museum
Plastic Bag Solutions
Prosser High School
Rebuilding Exchange
Renewable Energy Alternatives
Savoy Square at Legends South
Sierra Club
South Chicago Chamber
South Shore Chamber Inc.
South Shore Sustainability Collaborative
Southeast Environmental Task Force
Sustainable Pilot Project
Tarkington School of Excellence
The Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center
The Renaissance Collaborative
The Urban Canopy
Transition Jeff Park
Transition Uptown
U-Farm IIT
United Business Association of Midway
Urban Art Retreat
Urban Worm Girl
UrbanPonics, LLC
Washington Park Consortium
Wilbur Wright College Service Learning
Wilbur Wright College: Building Energy Technology Program
Wood Street Farm
Active Transportation Alliance
Business Partners - Uptown Chamber
CEDA
Center for Neighborhood Technologies
Community Investment Corporation
Cook County Forest Preserve
Delta Institute
Edgewater Sustainability Council
Energy Impact Illinois
Faith in Place
Heartland Alliance
Illinois Environmental Council
LISC
Millennia Consulting
Openlands
Seven Generations Ahead
The Field Museum
Transition US
Uptown United
Bridgeport Coffee
National Car Wash
Native Foods Café
The Coffee Studio
Transition Chicago
Truman College
Tukaiz LLC
Whole Foods
Ald. Harry Ostermann
Ald. James Cappleman
Lisa Park
Karen Wiegert
State Senator Heather Steans
US Congressman Danny Davis
APPENDIX B

Student & University Involvement 2011-2012

Accelerate 77 partnered with over 225 faculty and students from over five Chicago-based Universities for Phase I & II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th># of Students</th>
<th>Year in School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicago State University</td>
<td>GEO: Neighborhood Development</td>
<td>Daniel Block</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Seniors/Graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DePaul University</td>
<td>Geographic Information Systems</td>
<td>Julie Hwang</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Soph/Juniors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intro to Journalism</td>
<td>Lou Rutigliano</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Freshmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Steans Center - Green Chicago Course</td>
<td>Student Initiated</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Freshmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental Ethics</td>
<td>Michael Edwards</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Juniors/ Seniors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freshman Immersion Program</td>
<td>Michael Edwards</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Freshmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content Management Systems</td>
<td>Danny Mittleman</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyola University</td>
<td>Environmental Sustainability</td>
<td>Reuben Keller</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Freshmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeastern Illinois</td>
<td>Conservation Psychology</td>
<td>Melinda Merrick</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Soph/Jr/Sr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt University</td>
<td>Sustainable Futures</td>
<td>Michael Bryson</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Schools</td>
<td>UIC, OCU, Oberlin College</td>
<td>Student Initiated</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Seniors/ Graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interns from Chicago/US</td>
<td>Multidisciplinary</td>
<td>Student Initiated</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students that participated in Phase I &amp; II of Accelerate 77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>225</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Student Interns - Summer 2012

Over 40 interns from around the US canvassed, documented and started inviting organizations to come to the Share Fair, or Phase II. Ten of the forty students provided leadership throughout the summer staying on for 10 weeks or longer, while most other student interns stayed on for 7 or 3 weeks.