

Planting Community | Harvesting Hope

My daughter, who I am so very proud of, wanted to help her dad and the work of Great Lakes Urban this summer. Under her mom's loving guidance, she used her artistic talent to design a colorful sticker that she gave to everyone that donated to my ride in the 9th annual ROC cycling event. She integrated the slogan "Planting Community | Harvesting Hope" into the sticker design, a phrase first coined by board member, Jay Van Groningen.

I think in so many ways this slogan captures the essence of what we are about here at Great Lakes Urban. Most groups focus their mission around a specific problem, whether the academic success of youth, homelessness, poverty, etc. There is good and important work happening in each of these areas. However, we draw inspiration from the words of Margaret Wheatley, author and founder of the Barkana Institute. She says, "Whatever the problem, community is the solution."

This is why our first move when we are invited into any neighborhood, city or community is to build community. As Wheatley goes on to point out, "There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about." Building community is the catalyst for deep and lasting change.

I want to thank you, our Great Lakes Urban community, for helping us plant community across a growing number of neighborhoods, cities, and even states now! Be assured that the seeds you help us plant today will grow belonging, connection, and the will to act collectively for the common good. In time, hope and transformed lives will be the harvest.

With that, I just know that you will appreciate the stories contained within. The City of Holland is adding new neighborhoods to the connector program. The work in Florida is underway. And, people are rising up to be the change they wish to see in the world by investing in their neighbors, by jointly fundraising through ROC, and by giving of their talent, as is the case with board member, Chris Schock. These are exciting times!



Eric Smith, Director

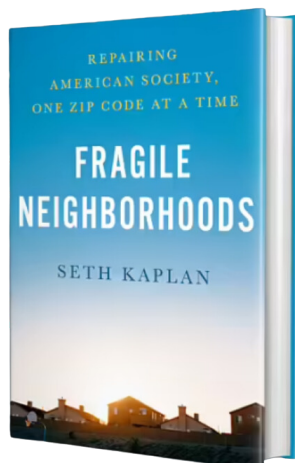
Board of Directors

Brigit Hassig
Christian Schock
Dave Veltkamp
Jay VanGroningen
Ken Genzink
Ren Broekhuizen

Help us grow the movement

- **Donate** to Great Lakes Urban to support our neighborhood strengthening activities.
- **Get to know** your neighbors.
- **Like and follow** Great Lakes Urban on Facebook!
- **Watch and share** our Lunch+Learn recordings and blogs with your networks.
- **Encourage** your church, business, etc. to get involved with a local neighborhood.
- **Visit our website** at: GreatLakesUrban.org to learn more.
- **Share** your ideas with us by emailing: info@greatlakesurban.org

To change how you receive this newsletter, or to talk with someone at Great Lakes Urban, send an email to: info@greatlakesurban.org or call 937-935-4844



Promising Practices in Planting Community

At Great Lakes Urban, we like to share promising practices in planting community from around the country. Here's how to engage.

Our Sept. 6 episode of Bright Spots in ABCD was a smashing success. If you missed our stimulating conversation with ABCD luminary De'Amon Harges you can find the recording at www.GreatLakesUrban.org/reports-and-information. Discover how inside-out change is happening in Indianapolis!

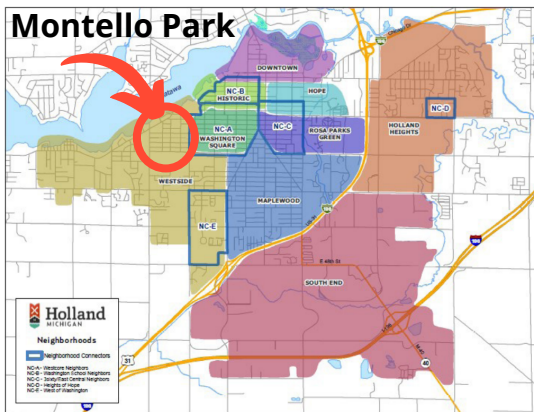
And, don't miss our free, virtual, one-hour Oct. 4 visit with Seth Kaplan, author of the forthcoming book "Fragile Neighborhoods." Seth is a leading expert on fragile states. He is a Professorial Lecturer at Johns Hopkins U.,

Senior Adviser for the Institute for Integrated Transitions (IFIT), and consultant to multilateral organizations. Register at www.GreatLakesUrban.org/events to hear about why American society is in trouble, and how to fix it, starting with the places we call home.

Planting Community in Montello Park



3Sixty working with neighbors



In partnership with 3Sixty, Great Lakes Urban has received a \$25,000 grant from the Oakspring Fund of the Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area. This grant will support the emerging work in the City of Holland, Michigan's Montello Park neighborhood! Montello Park, a westside neighborhood located from South Shore Drive to 32nd St, between Ottawa and Graafschap, represents the sixth (and newest) neighborhood to establish a connector program.

The funding will provide for the hiring of a part-time Neighborhood Connector to begin organizing and supporting the residents of Montello Park to care for one another, and to build a vibrant community in partnership with neighboring congregations, businesses, and other organizations.

The grant adds to the support already being provided by the City of Holland, as well as four partner churches, all located in Montello Park (All Saints Holland, Christ Memorial Church, La Casa de Mi Padre, and Real Life Fellowship), who have contributed funding as well as time and energy to make this work viable.

3Sixty has been laying the groundwork for this expansion since 2022. Staff have been out and about, getting to know neighbors, discovering what they care about, coordinating a gatherings and a clean-up events, and organizing an Asset-Based Community Development training for residents and leaders. .

Smith noted that, "This is an exciting step for Holland and for the neighbors and stakeholders dedicated to growing a community where all can flourish!"

Harvesting Hope in West of Washington

What was known a few decades ago as the rural part of town is now filled with shops, businesses, and housing developments. The West of Washington neighborhood is located in South Holland and, thanks to support from the City of Holland, is one of the newer neighborhood in town with a connector program. Jonna, the Organizer, spends time with neighbors each week to identify gifts and common interests.

Among all the places in West of Washington, a condominium complex with mostly retired adults has best planted the seeds for neighboring. Over the past two years, the neighbors have gathered together to get to know one another and find ways to build or maintain the infrastructure that drives social connection. Neighbors advocate together for shared common space and benches along a path where many residents walk their dogs. With determination and gumption, this group, led by Robin Klay, continues to explore opportunities to band together and make their community a great place to live.

With support from the Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area, Jonna Johnson, organizer with Great Lakes Urban, has been able to expand on these early successes. Jonna has developed and implemented a new workshop for neighbors across the West of Washington community. In a six-week series Jonna engaged residents in learning about the impact of being engaged in one's neighborhood and building gift-based relationships. The participants learned together once a week and then put these ideas into practice where they lived in between the sessions.

As Makya, one of the participants, said, "Attending the Connector class has been extremely beneficial for me so far. Not only am I learning key techniques in bringing my community together, it also aides in learning the skills necessary for accurately recognizing the different qualities and assets in other individuals. I'd recommend this class to anybody wanting to improve themselves and their community!"



Robin Klay & Jonna Johnson
telling stories from the work in the WOW neighborhood

Planting Community in Central Florida



Great Lakes Urban is glad to be supporting the emergence of new neighborhood strengthening work in central Florida through the adaptation and integration of our signature CommunityWorks framework. Why Florida?

In 2005, the University of Central Florida conducted a research project on the state of social capital in Florida. This was shortly after Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* was released and the goal was to see if the level of social capital in Florida was really as bleak as noted in the book. Overall, the local research confirmed Putnam's findings for Florida, but, there was one detail that emerged from the study that is unique to Florida. In my (Megan) home state, one of the main contributors to the development of social capital (especially of neighbors getting to know each other) is hurricanes.

For those who have never experienced a hurricane, there's a lot of last-minute preparation as the storm could turn, strengthen, or weaken within a day. While it's never a surprise (as one episode of *Golden Girls* alluded to), there's a shared experience of preparing for something that you don't really know how bad it will be. After the hurricane passes, the damage is assessed. Neighbors come out to help cut down trees that fell, collect limbs and debris, and, in the unfortunate instances, provide shelter and safety for families whose home isn't safe. In these moments, you must rely on your neighbors as the fallen trees and downed power lines could prevent anyone from coming into or out of the neighborhood. It's in moments like these that we are reminded of our need for one another. From checking in on neighbors to make sure they're safe to passing a cup of much-needed coffee over the fence when your neighbor's power is still off (Thanks again, Larry!).

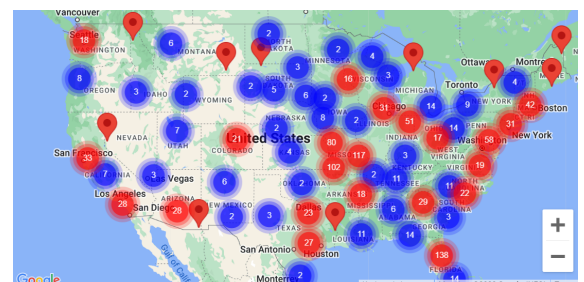
These bonds don't just last in the aftermath. As damage can be severe, we've also seen neighbors come together and collaborate years later for their homes to be restored. In one such neighborhood, neighbors are advocating for repairs to homes that have been under distress since the trifecta of hurricanes in 2004. At a recent meeting, one neighbor shared that many people outside the neighborhood often assume it was torn down years ago. And yet, these neighbors are leading by advocating for their neighborhood. At Great Lakes Urban, we work to strengthen neighborhoods on both levels, both in the connecting and relationships, and in helping neighbors live into their power to create the vibrant, safe, and disaster-prepared communities for which they long.

You Can Plant Community Right Where You Live!

National Good Neighbor Day is upon us! This national holiday, established by presidential proclamation in 1978, is a great excuse to meet or reconnect with your neighbors. You can celebrate in your own neighborhood by dropping off a sweet treat, hosting a front-yard BBQ, or just taking time to ask a neighbor how their day is going.

National Good Neighbor Day is Thursday, September 28th!

How will you celebrate this fall? For ideas, tips, to sign the National Good Neighbor pledge, and to add your zip code to the map, go to www.nationalgoodneighborday.com. The great thing is it doesn't have to be complicated. In the end, "It Starts with Hello."



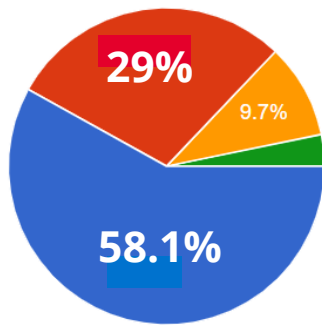
Building Community to Support Community Building

The annual Restoring Our Cities (ROC) fundraiser was this past month! This event has fueled the work of Great Lakes Urban over the past several years and also provides a unique opportunity. ROC is made possible through the support of donors, organizers, fundraisers, local businesses, and sponsors. It also relies on everyday neighbors who see more in their community, Neighborhood Connectors, and grassroots nonprofits. Each person leverages their gifts and interests to create vibrant neighborhoods.

At the ROC fundraiser, we had the privilege of bringing all of those groups together. Those supporting the work, curious about the work, on the ground doing the work in their own neighborhood, and even those cycling enthusiasts who just couldn't pass up such a great day to ride. As we mingled, stories were shared, and people who, outside of this event, would probably never cross paths forged connections. By the end of the day, the remark "It was really great to meet you" became a familiar phrase.



ROC was a huge success! Not only did we raise the funds we need to continue planting community and harvesting hope, we also saw the joy of our work in full force. Everyday people coming together for the good of the community. We'll ride again Sept. 7, 2024 in the 10th annual! Visit www.greatlakesurban.org/rocfundraiser to see pictures, what we raised, and more!



Naming the Hope

We are grateful to everyone that took the time to help us explore what name best describes who we are today. You can see the results of our survey so far in the graph to the left. A clear winner is emerging... Community Works! Stay tuned as the our Board of Directors maps out the next steps in our organization's journey.

Community Works
Communities First

Thriving Communities Accelerator
Great Lakes Urban Restoration Network

Thanks!



Chris Schock

Board Member Spotlight: Meet Chris Schock

We regularly interview leaders, volunteers, donors and others in our generous Great Lakes Urban community. Check below is a snippet of our conversation with Chris Schock, a member of our Board of Directors. You can find the full interview at www.GreatLakesUrban.org/blog.

Can you tell us a little about yourself, Chris?

Though I'm retired from public service, and live abroad in southern Spain, I'm pleased to serve on the board. I spent over 25 years as a planner, economic developer, and community development director in seven US states. I was originally called to the vocation having grown up in Cleveland, Ohio in the '70s and '80s, and wondering about the 'why' of the realities of the rustbelt. It's what drew me to get a degrees in Development Economics and Urban and Regional Planning.

You've been involved in a lot of good work. Tell us, what's uniquely important about the mission of Great Lakes Urban?

I think Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)-driven efforts are especially timely for two primary reasons: one, grassroots neighborhood level programs are the most valuable in breaking down divisive politics; and two, there's an increased recognition that poor physical planning and a lack of social connectedness have real public health costs.

Finally, Chris, what would you say to other community leaders about the value of our CommunityWorks framework?

Any city, but especially those grappling with significant change (be it rustbelt style disinvestment or sunbelt style influxes of new development), will benefit from implementing CommunityWorks at the neighborhood level to increase social connectivity. Investing in better connected neighborhoods is the best and proven way to determine what physical improvements are most valuable, how to define meaningful economic development, and how to improve mental and public health.