

Urban Garden Completion and Education Program Implementation

Wilmington Green Box

Bailey Davin, Sophia Crisomia, Jose Manuel Lanzona

May 1, 2021

Table of Contents

I. Introduction of Team Members	3
II. SWOT Analysis	4
III. Project Purpose/ Mission/ Vision Statement	5
A. Team Mission Statement	7
IV. Project SMART goals and objectives, linked to a timeline of completion	7
V. Project Process	9
VI. Assessment of Project Success	11
VII. Recommendations	12
VIII. Personal Outcomes	12
IX. Thank You Letter	14

Our Team

The 2021 BHLTP Tier 3 team working with Wilmington Green Box consists of Bailey Davin, Sophia Crisomia, and Jose Manuel Lanzona. Our team is connected by our shared interest in the healthcare field. We share a passion for plant-based nutrition and the positive environmental impacts of veganism. For this reason, we have welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with Wilmington Green Box. Wilmington Green Box is a non-profit that has introduced plant-based options in an area with inadequate access to fresh produce. Our team members' personal values, career goals, and passions have created clear guiding principles that drive our commitment to Wilmington Green Box.

Sophia Crisomia: Secretary

Sophia is a third year undergraduate majoring in Spanish, neuroscience, and biology. Sophia's values include education, integrity, and encouragement. Sophia is disciplined, decisive, and focused. Sophia thinks with reason and is very systematic and organized. These qualities have been important so the team may adeptly determine what is the most important and pertinent information to record. These traits simultaneously ensure the group timeline is effectively managed. Moreover, Sophia's focus has allowed for redirection to the nonprofit's mission when obstacles arise. Her passions include addressing healthcare disparities so as to eliminate a lack of access due to race, socioeconomic background, and geographic location. Moreover, she is interested in increasing accessibility to nutrition and lifestyle medicine education for K-12 children. She is also passionate about increasing access to healthy food options in urban communities. Given these interests and passions, Sophia is highly motivated by the transforming work Wilmington Green Box is doing. Sophia can be contacted at sophcris@udel.edu.

Bailey Davin: Liaison Coordinator

Bailey is a third year undergraduate majoring in nutrition and dietetics and minoring in exercise science. Bailey's values include health, education, and compassion. Bailey prioritizes relationships, helps set clear expectations within our team, and creates a positive energy that has helped propel our team forward. Her ambitious spirit and strong sense of focus keeps the team's pace high and goals in check. Bailey is hypothetical, analytical, actively develops models, and pursues new ideas. These traits have been pivotal to Bailey's team roles because it enables her to ask questions, seek to understand, and think creatively alongside team members to create an amazing product for the nonprofit. She is goal driven and motivated, which has allowed her to consistently maintain and streamline communication between all parties involved in the project. Her passions include reducing the prevalence of health disparities in lower income communities specifically due to a lack of access to nearby nutritious food options. She believes

food education and the creation of safe places for physical activity are equally important. Bailey can be contacted at bdavin@udel.edu.

Jose Manuel Lanzona: Spokesperson

Jose is a third year undergraduate majoring in exercise science. Jose's values include compassion, fun, and affirmation. His enthusiastic, adaptable, and energetic spirit has provided our team with the endurance needed to navigate project hurdles. His strengths include service, empathy and teamwork. These strengths align with the ambitions of Wilmington Green Box: to create a sustainable community garden in a food desert. Jose is also kind and empathetic; he is patient and trusts the process, even when project goals need to be readjusted. His promptness, and performance oriented mindset has allowed him to accurately benchmark team progress and prioritize project steps. Jose is always checking in and supporting team members. His passions include veganism, which is a way to combat environmental racism and health related racism. He also believes it is pivotal that people of color and their respective communities are supported to promote self efficacy. These passions reinforce Jose's ambitions to work with Wilmington Green Box, Jose can be contacted at joselanz@udel.edu.

SWOT Analysis

The strengths include qualities that separate an organization from competitors, tangible assets like intellectual property, capital, and technologies, and what customers love about the company and products. Additionally, strengths include most positive brand attributes and resources at disposal that competitors do not have. For Wilmington Green Box, its determined top 3 Strengths:

- Community support is intimate with the nonprofit's social media presence and outreach within the Wilmington Community
- As teens get older and more experienced, management opportunities arise and creates a self-sufficient system of older teens managing and training younger teens.
- Installing the SNAP Benefits program has expanded the reach to target low-income families who require access to healthy food

Weaknesses are things the company lacks and/or things competitors do better. Its top 3 weaknesses are:

- Unconsolidated board without regular meetings, and absence of members
- Financial documentation is not inclusive of financial support breakdown or employee payout dispersal, making it difficult to keep track of contributors for the future
- Delineation between nonprofit and business ventures is unclear. Prioritization of the business over

the nonprofit and management of a small board may prevent may impede nonprofit's development

Opportunities include emerging needs for products or services. Plus, having few local competitors is another opportunity. We decided on the Top 3 Opportunities:

- WGB has a plot of land that they are developing to be an urban garden, which can serve to meet nutrition and nutrition education needs of the community, as Wilmington is a food desert
- With the urban garden in the works, seasonal items such as different squash and tomatoes, can open up variety in the menu for Wilmington Green Box such as soups which allows for a more year-round impact
- The employment of teens and provision of mentorship may decrease crime statistics in Wilmington; it also provides long term educational and employment opportunities through The Green Box Kitchen

Threats represent future trends in the field, or uncertainty posed by COVID-19. Moreover, threats could be the economy, especially considering the United States is due for a recession. Demographics of the staff and target audience pose a potential threat. The physical environment and its accessibility may indicate another threat. Importantly, local, national, and international events can be a threat. At the time of writing the SWOT, we decided on the Top 3 Threats:

- Crop yield for urban garden will be dependent on the unpredictability of weather
- COVID-19 vaccine has not been released, community garden and kiosk space, when exposed to a large gathering, have the potential for safety concerns
- City of Wilmington processing time for waterline management may deter the progress of the community garden due to impending cold weather

Project Purpose/Mission/Vision Statement

In March 2020, the Tier 2 WGB team set out on a project to help build a community garden. WGB Executive Director Jason Aviles purchased a plot of land on 14th Buena Vista street in Wilmington last year in the hopes of creating a garden space that could increase WGB's self sufficiency and expand their community outreach. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the community garden was never completed. Understandably, since the pandemic started, no progress was made to the physical garden. Since the plot of land was not yet purposefully addressing the problems it was designed to address, the Tier 3 WGB team saw an opportunity.

A problem our team uncovered during the SWOT analysis is the lack of evident green space in the West Side of Wilmington. This does not set up Wilmington residents to healthy, active lifestyles. The World Health Organization published a review of evidence in 2016 suggesting that urban green spaces can promote mental and physical health, reduce morbidity and mortality, obesity, and type 2 diabetes. Many citizens of Wilmington face food insecurity, meaning that people have limited access to healthy and safe food options and proper nutrition. One major cornerstone of WGB's mission is to address this need for direct access to healthy goods through their outdoor juice kiosk and through their for-profit vegan restaurant business, Green Box Kitchen. While WGB has successfully expanded their organization and made a meaningful impact on the Wilmington community, WGB felt that the addition of this garden could open a host of potential opportunities that further their mission. While the produce grown in this plot of land certainly would not supply all of the ingredients needed by the restaurant, it would reduce sourcing from outside vendors. In addition, we envisioned a nutrition education and community engagement, where Wilmington youth could learn how to grow fruits and vegetables and teens through Jason's ongoing mentorship. In doing so, the teens would contribute to the upkeep of the garden as another means of employment. In accordance with the team's SWOT analysis of WGB, our team imagined the garden as another way Wilmington Green Box could expand and hire more teens. As per the SWOT analysis, Wilmington Green Box satisfies a niche in the Wilmington market, advocating for plant based nutrition. In addition, plant-based health is steadily becoming popular, especially among youth and city areas creating an environment of need and support for Wilmington Green Box's mission. Given the increased demand in vegan lifestyle, the garden would also serve to provide produce directly to the people of Wilmington. Our team understood none of these many possibilities could be explored with the land remaining idle. So, our plan for Tier 3 was to move forward with the creation of garden beds and implementation of an educational program for the teens.

Our team aspired to continue the garden project from last year as a way to sprout a space for the community to go through learning activities and develop and strengthen connections. We believe creating an opportunity for community members to grow their own food and harvest their own produce is truly priceless. The garden emphasizes Wilmington Green Box's value of self efficacy. It is an educational opportunity because community members can re-establish their connection with nature in an urban environment, in a food desert, shifting perspective on nature and ourselves and the connection between the two. Wilmington Green Box operates with a two pronged educational approach. The garden is sustainable on all fronts because it is being created by the community and for the community. In doing so, Wilmington Green Box is promoting its value of self efficacy through 100% vertical growth of the community, providing long term access to things that allow members' basic needs to be met.

Our WHY is to create a community hub that increases accessibility to fresh produce and promotes

plant-based nutrition through education. We envisioned a plot of land in the city of Wilmington where community members of all ages can aggregate, learn from one another, and build the foundation for a sustainable future through plant based nutrition. Through the full support and guidance of our nonprofit liaison, Jason, our team has been motivated to the urban garden project and will continue with the project in the upcoming months to see it through. We view this project as a promise to the community and to Wilmington Green Box.

Team Mission Statement: As BHLF Community Fellows 2020-2021, Wilmington Green Box has emphasized self-efficacy and self-direction as we move toward the complete construction of the Community Garden and organization of a more structured board. Our combined strengths make us a group who wants to please and achieve while being excited to problem solve and support WGB with their organizational help. Our team is balanced with both head and heart, ensuring that we have the abilities to create a task force of volunteers to aid with the garden construction.

Project SMART goals and objectives, linked to a timeline of completion

Our primary goal was to focus on consistent contact with the city throughout the year to ensure the water meter was installed and the garden was prepared for planting seeds/seedlings by end of April or early May. In addition, our team wanted to lay the groundwork for an educational program that would train 12 teens in 2 hours weekly rotations in groups of three (4 weeks total). Our progression of the educational programming was determined by our communication with the Delaware Center for Horticulture and The Urban Garden Initiative. It was difficult to follow an exact timeline throughout the duration of our project, especially for water meter installation, as our progress was dependent on city officials' availability and response time.

The first task was to install the water meter. Before the water meter was installed we reached out to 1800 Miss Utility to set up a site visit and look into underground piping, important for the water meter installation process. After a March 19th call to Miss Utility, we were told that a representative would come to the site to mark everything on the plot, including underground pipes. The water meter was finally installed on March 23rd after frequent contact with the water meter shop, Joe Orsetti, and even reaching out to mayor of Wilmington, Michael Purzycki and Maria Cabrera from the Community Development and Urban Planning committee on the Wilmington city council. The mayor and Community Development and Urban Planning committee were contacted late January. We followed up via phone and email approximately one week later, with no response.

While we were waiting for the water meter to be installed, the last week of February, we reached

out to DNREC about rain water collection and Wilmington codes on composting for legality purposes. We also met with George to discuss how much we should actually be composting. It was determined that only half of the scraps from Green Box Kitchen would be composted. The last week of February, an outline for compost training and the financial aspect of composting was researched. At the same time, methods on how to collect rainwater were researched. The cost of collecting rainwater was evaluated. After meeting with George and Jason, materials for composting and rainwater collection were determined. The materials were not to be purchased until after the plot of land was cleaned. On March 24th, an excel sheet was created, listing all required materials to build the garden, composting bin, rainwater bin, and seeds/seedlings, with appropriate links on where to purchase. This spreadsheet was emailed to George for review. On April 7th, George sent over the spreadsheet with comments and edits were made accordingly. The finalized spreadsheet was sent over to Jason who purchased materials the last week of April. Once the garden supplies have arrived, the actual construction of the urban garden and other amenities such as benches and shed will commence. During the same time, the teens will be trained through the help of George and TUGI.

While George agreed to spend time with teens for the educational programming aspect, Jason was also interested in funneling teens through a pre-existing program. For the garden training curriculum, we reached out to the Delaware Center for Horticulture who offer a program “Branches to Chances.” While the Branches to Chances program was determined to not be suitable for the type of programming Jason wanted to offer, we met with DCH on March 9th to review other alternatives. Immediately after meeting with DCH, they pointed us in the direction of a Delaware Urban Farm Coalition networking event. DCH had requested an internal meeting to discuss possibilities. On March 30th we received notification that DCH does not have the time nor staff capacity to help with an educational training program this year. While this was a setback, on April 6th, the DCH grant manager reached out with a Cedar Tree Found grant opportunity that could be used to implement programming for the teens summer 2022. After DCH prepared the grant, Jose, Bailey, and Sophia reviewed and edited it as necessary so that it would align with the interests of WGB. The edits were submitted on April 29th and the grant proposals were due April 30th. On April 30th, we received an email from the DCH grants manager that she would not be able to complete and submit the grant proposal by the deadline due to personal events. The grants manager expressed that they will be looking into grants with later due dates that could be used to fund educational programming for the teens summer 2022. Following Tier 3, Jose, Bailey, and Sophia are dedicated to helping with the grant proposal process so that the educational programming for the teens may be funded for next summer.

After DCH confirmed they did not have the resources to assist with educational programming for this summer, we reached out to Megan Chen from The Urban Garden Initiative (TUGI) on March 30th to

discuss training possibilities. Megan confirmed TUGI could provide educational programming to the teens. Megan is currently in the process of digitizing content and preparing material for the programming! While DCH is interested in providing long term educational programming to the WGB employed teens beginning summer 2022, The Urban Garden Initiative will be offering the training for summer 2021.

After the water meter was installed, it was time to clean the garden (rake leaves, rearrange wood, etc.) via a garden clean-up event that was carried out on March 27th. Delmarva was contacted on March 29th to cut down branches that were hanging over on the side of the garden. Since Delmarva was liable if damage occurred, they would be responsible for the cost. Delmarva said they would come out to remove hanging branches on April 6th, but never did. After calling back, Delmarva explained never having a note in their system to remove the branches. A ticket was put in so that the branches could be removed from the site. We were given about a one month waiting period. The last week of April, we called Delmarva to check in on the situation; the branches were not yet removed, but no one needed to be on the site during the branch removal process.

Though our project timeline included many obstacles and roundabouts, our team managed to stay motivated because we were guided by common goals and objectives. We did not have exact dates to complete given tasks like water meter installation or educational program creation because some decisions were reliant on outside organizations whose responses we could not always accurately anticipate. For our project, it was critical that we trust the process and go with the flow. Jose, like a gold, is rigid with deadlines; like an orange, he holds a flexible mentality. Bailey, like a green, actively develops models and is solution oriented. Sophia, like a green, mobilizes problem solving skills to effectively analyze situations. In conjunction, our true colors have allowed us to pivot and redirect attention without compromising team morale. Though the timeline has not always been clear, the end goal has always been the same: create an urban garden for the community and employ teens who will embark upon educational programming to help kick start the garden this summer.

Project Process

Although the completion of our SWOT analysis in the fall reiterated a need to physically complete the garden as a main project objective, our team wanted to additionally expand upon the benefits we identified would come with a completed garden. Initially, we struggled coming up with clear project objectives. During winter and the beginning of spring, we lacked a clear direction. Moreover, one of the specific project objectives we did have, which was incorporating a water source for the garden, was progressing at a rate slower than we had anticipated.

The delay in water meter installation represented one of our major project challenges- communication barriers with governmental agencies. Our team experienced difficulties in maintaining consistent communication with the city of Wilmington about the inquiring of a water source, specifying how to obtain one, and being informed on when this process would take place. Despite regular attempts at calling various numbers within Wilmington Public Works, we would get redirected to a different contact, who would either fail to return our calls or who would redirect us once again. This proved to be a major roadblock hindering any forward progress, as the key to beginning the garden building process was having a known source of water.

As previously stated, our team knew that the physical completion of the garden was only one component of our project. Our mission was to help Wilmington Green Box begin to explore the various opportunities in conjunction with a finished garden space. Although the water meter installation delay was a hindrance, it enabled us to redirect our attention elsewhere. After holding frequent meetings with Jason, George (the horticulturalist working with WGB) and Brendan (another partner of Jason's), all of us agreed that one of the major potential benefits of the garden was its ability to serve as a basis for additional educational programming for the teens. This would add another dimension to the training program they currently follow for several weeks in the beginning of the summer that eventually enables them to serve as cashiers for the restaurant, as well as cold press, bottle, and deliver the juices and other healthy goods around the local Wilmington community. It was our original understanding that the three of us would be in charge of researching and creating an instructional program the teens could follow so they would eventually be in charge of garden growth and maintenance. We also had the idea that we were going to create plans for the incorporation of mini side projects that involved a water rain barrel collection and composting system. However, our weekly meetings with Jason and George led to the realization that the way in which we were going to provide the most help was not to serve as the experts or to try to take on too many elaborate plans at once. Our job was going to be served best by calling on the experts instead of becoming them, and narrowing our focus to the most essential steps first. Thus, it became our job to find people and organizations who were already equipped to provide an educational program, and to simplify our plans for the composting and rain barrel with purchasing smaller scale materials.

The first person we came into contact with to inquire about educational programming was Nora Melley, who is the Education Manager for the Delaware Center for Horticulture (DCH). Unfortunately, after a few weeks of deliberating, DCH concluded their resources did not align with our plans for an extensive community-based garden training and education program. We therefore had to continue our search. DCH might in fact prove to be an asset regardless, as Nora came back into contact with a grant opportunity that may provide a financial basis for future collaborations with DCH in terms of a teen garden training program. This will comprise one of the next steps to further the objectives of the project.

As for this coming summer, however, we organized a meeting with Megan Chen, a local high schooler who runs the non profit The Urban Garden Initiative (TUGI). TUGI's mission is to empower youth to practice urban sustainability through gardening. The existing educational content TUGI already has in the form of supplemental videos, as well as a plan in development for hands-on planting activities, are going to hopefully lay the groundwork for initial garden growth and maintenance. TUGI will serve as the bridge to a more comprehensive long term program that new teens can engage in every summer before they go on to take care of the beds.

Although the beginning of our project was filled with a lot of ambiguity, clear communication, collaboration, hard work, and guidance by our core values and team mission statement led to success in refining our objectives, setting clear goals, and most importantly, moving us closer to their completion.

Assessment of Project Success

Success for our project seemed to be simple. There is a garden built. Since the garden is a physically concrete goal, our measurement of success included a working garden space. However, we began throwing in other variables that can threaten the livelihood of a garden. Who would take care of the garden? How are the teens going to be trained? How should we prepare the garden beds? Since nobody in our group were garden experts, we had to rely on outside resources such as George for his gardening expertise and The Urban Garden Initiative for training the teens. We also measured the success of our calls to the city on dates and times the city or other third-parties could commit to performing an official service such as installing the water meter or removing branches from the plot.

Highlighting our knowledge gap, we were successful in delegating trust and opportunities to community partners successfully serving as a group that inspired a shared vision and enabled other members of our community to act. With calling the water meter shop for months, we finally were able to have a date set once spring came around. We then deemed our calls successful because something came to fruition after months of not hearing anything concrete back from the city.

We did not achieve our goal, or it seemed like we did not, when we were at deadends of talking to the city. We kept on being redirected from department to department and told to wait to hear back several times. It was not until we made a breakthrough when a call lady redirected us to the water meter shop when we started seeing results.

Recommendations

Securing water and getting the garden off the ground is one job, recruiting the labor for garden maintenance is another. Wilmington Green Box has dedicated personnel, along with the support of the

neighbors, to help tend the garden beds. Since the non-profit employs youth, and trains them, a hierarchical system can start naturally with older teens teaching younger teens the ropes on how to continue with maintenance. Dedicated neighbors can volunteer, and have expressed desire to, to ensure that the planting happens at the right time especially with George leading that aspect. Quite frankly, our team does not have to do much as the garden will be self-sustaining due to the natural community aspect of it. The rain barrels and compost bins, however, have been shafted to the side and were low priorities but can be considered once the garden is producing goods.

The resources required to sustain the project is labor. Since the garden is a community garden, volunteers, such as the neighborhood, will naturally want to tend to it for they are the immediate benefactors of the garden. Although not coming anytime soon, winter can pose a problem because once the plants die off and there is no more garden to tend to, spring will come and the hard work of revitalizing the beds will be an arduous task not as rewarding as planting. However, since the neighborhood seems to collectively have a green thumb, there is no doubt that there would be an initiative for plot cleanup and remulching/resoiling.

Since the Board is practically nonexistent, we can recommend having a board member(s) selected from the neighborhood can lighten the load on the Board. People such as the neighbor Emilia can serve as a board member especially since she is also a teacher, thus responsible. Since she lives near the garden, she can play some role in community outreach to secure grants or other connections with her status as a teacher at the local school district.

Personal Outcomes

JOSE MANUEL LANZONA

Not only does Jason serve as a mentor for the teens but he also served as a mentor for me. I am a non-confrontational individual who gets discouraged by uncertainties such as not knowing when we would hear back from the city. He kept pressing to us “Keep calling, so they know you’re serious” as a motto because it was true! We cared about the garden and wanted to see this project to completion since it was a Tier 2 project initially. We kept calling and found different ways to contact the specific department - the water meter shop. At the end of this process, I think I will take away that passion and persistence are key elements in making a project successful. If you need third-party assistance, such as the city for clearance, annoying them with phone calls and reminders is a necessity as it will instill a shared vision within them, as well!

BAILEY DAVIN

Getting the opportunity to work with Jason and team is an experience I am forever grateful for. I was so disappointed last March when COVID stopped us in our tracks from getting to complete the garden. However, I think it may have been a blessing in disguise. In Tier 2, we had well meaning intentions, but we were unknowingly missing key steps needed to build the beds, like the need for a legitimate water source. We learned that as much as we wanted to achieve some highly ambitious goals, our best shot at making noticeable progress was going to come from setting smaller, more achievable ones and maintaining clear communication on exactly how we would complete them- who to call, what information to obtain, and what the expected timeline should look like. For example, it was likely not as feasible for us as a team to come up with a garden educational program when none of us are experts in gardening. However, finding other organizations who would be willing to help, was most definitely a more attainable and realistic objective!

SOPHIA CRISOMIA

One of my biggest takeaways, applicable to leadership, non-profits, and group work, is that time is valuable and time is scarce. Through our team's outreach with the Delaware Center for Horticulture, we were connected to a possible networking opportunity through the Delaware Urban Farm Coalition. We were unsure of whether or not attending the event would be purposeful. Jason had described the importance of being cautious with our time and considering opportunity costs. Our team came to the consensus that the networking event was not crucial to our project's progression. The experience resonated with me because it showcased the importance of our time. With group work, time must be purposefully allocated so as to be mindful of time and improve task efficiency. In leadership, delivering results means outlining clear expectations and thinking carefully about the process, all of which require a careful consideration of time. Jason is able to juggle many responsibilities between WGB, family, and FLYOGI because he takes his time very seriously and is selective of how he allocates it, something I will be able to take with me for years to come.

A thank you letter to Jason, WGB, and George:

Jose, Sophia, and Bailey want to sincerely thank you for giving us the opportunity to collaborate with you on the completion of this project. We could not have partaken in a more rewarding and fulfilling experience. Jason, you made it clear from the beginning that you trusted us and you were going to let us

take initiative on whatever direction we wanted to go in for what we thought would be suitable goals. At the same time, your guidance and wisdom has been invaluable to us. We feel as though we take away something meaningful every time we get to meet, however some lessons have especially stuck with us. You taught us that when it comes to communication with public officials, persistence is key- you just have to “keep coming back,” and eventually they’ll know they have to take you seriously. You also taught us that our time is precious, and this means that sometimes the best way you can use it is by reaching out to others who have the means to get a certain job done rather than trying to do it yourself. George, you provide a perfect example of this. Your knowledge about what it takes to physically build a garden turned this project from a hypothetical into a reality. You truly are the major catalyst that will cause the transformation of 14th Buena Vista St. from a small plot of grass into a beautiful community garden. We are beyond excited to see what it will look like!

Once again, thank you for letting us help you in your mission to foster growth, sustainability, and healthy food accessibility within the local Wilmington community. We can’t wait to see what progress will be made, and we hope to keep contributing to it.

Sincerely,

Bailey Davin, Sophia Crisomia, and Jose Manuel Lanzona, your Tier 3 Community Fellows.