

Leach Botanical Garden

Upper Garden Design Community Engagement

Final Report



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Program Overview

In April of 2015 the Northwest Institute for Community Enrichment (NICE) was contracted by Leach Garden Friends (LGF) to assist in conducting a community needs assessment regarding renovations and improvements of Leach Botanical Garden's "Upper Garden" property. The purpose of this assessment was to better understand how different communities in the surrounding East Portland neighborhoods perceive the botanical garden, and how they imagine it might provide value to them. Additionally, the purpose of this assessment was to elicit community feedback for incorporation in the refinement of design plans, subsequent capital investment, and the execution of the renovation and remodelling of the Upper Garden.

In order to achieve the purpose of this assessment, the three most common languages other than English were identified and focused outreach was conducted to elicit and incorporate feedback in those languages. Spanish, Vietnamese, and Russian were identified as most prominent within the geographic area identified by Leach Garden Friends as key and central to the success of their enterprise.

The following objectives were developed for the community needs assessment:

1. Increase opportunities for community feedback on Upper Garden project design specifics and choice points.
 2. Improve community awareness and utilization of Leach Botanical Garden and its services.
 3. Expand community dialogue regarding the benefits, potential benefits, and culturally specific benefits of Leach Botanical Garden.
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Methodology

The central organizing strategy for increasing the inclusion of priority language groups in the community needs assessment was based on combining a Community Survey with the creation of Community Ambassador positions for each priority language. Community Ambassadors were provided materials and contacts from LGF, and training and coordination support from the NICE. Materials were created in the three priority languages, in addition to English. The surveys were made available online in each language, however the paper version of the survey was not translated due to the fact that the Community Ambassadors would be administering the surveys in person and translating responses into English before submitting them to LGF for evaluation.

The work needed to complete the needs assessment was broken into 3 phases - Preparation, Implementation, and Reporting - to occur between the beginning of March and the end of June 2015. These phases, and the work each partner was responsible for, are detailed in the following table.

Phase	Timing	Responsibilities
<i>1</i>	<i>March - April</i>	<i>Preparation</i>
	NICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Community Ambassador Position Descriptions • Recruit, hire, and train Community Ambassadors • Assist Community Ambassadors in scheduling their attendance at community meetings
	LGF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create materials including ad for local newspaper, community needs survey, and outreach materials to accompany the survey. • Develop community contacts list and contact tracking and reporting system. • Translate materials for use by Community Ambassadors
<i>2</i>	<i>May - June</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
	NICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage Community Ambassadors as they use the materials and contact information provided to attend community meetings and survey people there in the priority languages. • Attend the Leach Garden Nature Fair and East Portland Sunday Parkways to promote garden design and survey general community members.
	LGF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information with design team and work to ensure outreach efforts connect to the design questions/decisions that are being made.
<i>3</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>Reporting</i>
	NICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile report detailing the methodology, engagement data, and conclusions for the community needs assessment outreach efforts.
	LGF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate and create a report on the data collected by the community needs assessment for consideration while making decisions on the design of the Upper Garden.

(Source: Community Outreach Timeline 2015)

The following materials were created for outreach in the focus languages:

- Community Ambassador job description and recruitment materials
- Community contact list for conducting outreach in the priority languages
- Online surveys translated into priority languages
- Advertisement in local newspaper with translated invitations to take the survey online
- Paper surveys (not translated) for conducting intercept interviews
- Maps, fliers, and materials for tabling and visual aid in communicating about the garden

Adaptive Management Requirements:

We were able to hire and train the Community Ambassadors on schedule, but needed to spend more time developing the contact list. Ambassadors found it difficult to complete their requirement of attending 6 community gatherings based on the information provided in the contact list. Our focus shifted to identifying more community contacts and local businesses that catered to the priority languages. A secondary goal of 20 surveys was identified to act as a balance for the goal of attending 6 community gatherings. Ambassadors utilized their personal networks to survey people in their focus language, however these people were sometimes from a location that was not within the geographic focus of the initial project.

As outreach progressed, and tracking requirements were clarified by LGF, it emerged that a main focus of our efforts was to raise awareness of the garden within the priority language communities. Ultimately local businesses, churches, and school programs were the best avenues for identifying and connecting with people who spoke the priority languages and reaching larger groups of people. These places, however, were sometimes not very conducive to intercept surveys.

Community Ambassador Feedback

Spanish:

"I was able to have 29 people take the survey. I went to the Rigler Elementary School Carnival, Baltazar Ortiz Community center, Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, and to Saint Peter's Church where I reached out to one of the groups they have. I called some people I knew who are involved with the Latino community, I also called some of the contacts on David's list but some of them wouldn't pick up or respond to my emails or voicemails."

Vietnamese:

"I told Vietnamese people (150-200) about my project at Leach Botanical Garden surveyed them. I attended at La Vang church, local businesses, 4 campuses of Portland Community College, Ngoc Chau Buddha Temple, Multnomah County Library, or people's houses. I emailed people from the given Contact List. They said they sent out the surveys to Vietnamese people. However, when I contacted them to ask about the number of Vietnamese people, they did not reply. Fortunately, I have a good connection and networking with Vietnamese people. The nun at Buu Hung Temple sent the Monkey Survey to 73 people. My former instructor helped me sending the survey to her Vietnamese colleagues, students, friends. A marketing developer of Lavang Church said she sent the survey to other people at church. Also, my friends help me a lot by forwarding my surveys to their friends."

Russian:

"I tried to contact the person who was among the numbers compiled by Leach Garden. However, I never heard back. I contacted Russian Slavic Coalition Coordinator, who, at first, responded to my emails and later disappeared. I got in touch with a number of churches, however, could not conduct interviews there. The most successful activities were interviewing people at the grocery store and farmer's market, as well as contacting the acquaintances and getting references from them. Emailing was successful to a point. Many churches have "contact us" page, yet I never received a response to any of my emails. Yet, emailing was more successful among the younger Russian speaking people from Meetup group. Phone calls had more success - while talking over the phone is easier to provide needed information, going to locations was the most successful."

Outreach Data

The following data is an approximation of the outreach conducted by the NICE and Community Ambassadors on behalf of LGF. Since the process of data entry for the surveys was conducted collaboratively, with the responsibility of inputting surveys and managing survey data resting with LGF, the NICE does not have the ability to verify final numbers of surveys submitted. Additionally, data does not include surveys that were submitted online as the result of the outreach conducted by Community Ambassadors and the NICE.

Furthermore, many of the places that people visited to conduct intercept surveys were public spaces and made estimating the data provided necessary in many cases. The data provided in this report is intended to serve as an approximation of the work done, for a more accurate description of the work done please reference the “Leach Botanical Garden Community Ambassador Contact List” in the attached materials.

Overall Totals:

Places Visited	People There	People Informed	People Surveyed
31	17,178	1,262	127

By Language Cluster:

Spanish

Places Visited	People There	People Informed	People Surveyed
4	74	44	20

Vietnamese

Places Visited	People There	People Informed	People Surveyed
19	292	212	20

Russian

Places Visited	People There	People Informed	People Surveyed
5	212	556	17

English/Other

Places Visited	People There	People Informed	People Surveyed
3	16,600	450	70

Conclusion

Analysis of Community Interest:

People from each priority language group were excited to learn about Leach Botanical Garden. While many of the people surveyed and otherwise engaged with were not aware of the gardens existence, they were interested in visiting and some were excited to organize group trips to the garden. This lack of awareness created some degree of difficulty for the Community Ambassadors while conducting the survey, in terms of identifying common perspectives regarding the garden itself. General perceptions regarding what a botanical garden is, and what people would be interested in seeing or doing at a botanical garden were much easier topics to discuss with the general public. Conversely, the people who we interacted with who had visited the garden expressed a large degree of appreciation and interest in the garden.

The Community Ambassadors were able to connect with a few people from organizations who expressed interest in bringing groups from their organization to the garden as part of a program. Working with these people to develop a program that is available in the focus languages, and then working with the partner organization to recruit program participants would increase the general awareness of Leach Botanical Garden. These programs will serve as an introduction for individuals to the garden, and provide the opportunity for them to build a personal connection to the space and communities that congregate there. In order to ensure that the garden is accessible, programs and design decisions should address the concerns that were voiced in the surveys. Common concerns expressed were the potential cost of admission, access to the garden via public transit, and occasionally the safety of being in nature.

Community Ambassador Feedback

What were people most excited about when you talked to them about the Garden?

Spanish:

“What stands out the most to me is that majority of the people I surveyed or talked to had not heard of Leach Botanical garden. They were surprised that they didn't know it was fairly close to them. Specially when they saw pictures of how it looked. A lot of them mentioned that they would go visit Leach soon.”

Vietnamese:

“People were most excited about I talked to them about the Garden. I told them: I am working for Leach Botanical Garden. We are doing to expand 8 acres. We would like to know about your ideas when you think about the Garden. Your feedback is very valuable for us because we want to serve Vietnamese community better.”

Russian:

“That there is such place. That has a creek. That they might have an opportunity to visit it.”

Did people express any concerns or reservations about visiting the garden?

Spanish:

"A lot of people mentioned if it cost (admission) to get into Leach Botanical gardens. If there was an admission some of them wouldn't be able to go."

Vietnamese:

"I haven't heard about that, tell me about the Garden? Is it free or how much is a ticket? If it is free, how could they get the money to take care of the Garden? How can I get there? Are there wild animals?"

Russian:

"Location. Many people that I interviewed are immigrants and do not have a car. Also many of them don't speak English well, which limits their chances of doing things outside the home. "

Analysis of Outreach:

In general, the outreach and surveying work was well received by community members and we were able to reach the basic objectives for the project. Given the nature of the work being done, and the complexity of a design process for a space as large and interesting as the Upper Garden, this project was undertaken partly as a learning opportunity. The following opportunities and challenges emerged during our program and are detailed to provide insight as to conducting more inclusive outreach in a community as diverse as the one surrounding Leach Botanical Garden.

- Contacts and Community Capital -

The contact list that was provided to the Ambassadors was not sufficient to enable them to identify enough meetings to attend and survey people. Two common problems were lack of response from heads of organizations (like churches and community groups), and lack of common or frequent meetings for people who speak the priority languages in the focus area. Additionally, some communities were less open to outsiders, even if they were outsiders who spoke the same language.

Each Ambassador was able to identify a member of at least one group who would be interested in connecting their group more to Leach Botanical Garden. Building relationships with people who are influential in the communities that are being focused on, and then working with them to include people in a variety of involvement opportunities may yield better long-term results than broad outreach efforts. It is also important to recognize that these community leaders do not always represent the full spectrum of experiences and values that may be present in their community. Broad outreach helps compliment the longer-term relationship building and brings in new people and organizations to begin developing relationships with.

- Clarity of Purpose -

While conducting more inclusive outreach for the design process was understood as important, we were not able to clearly articulate the purpose and measures of success for this project at its start. At the onset of the project it was assumed that existing community contacts would be

willing and able to help the Community Ambassadors schedule their attendance at events. This assumption proved to be wrong in some cases. As a result, the project goals were re-evaluated and changed. Although making people aware of the garden had always been an objective, its emphasis in this project became more necessary. This shift in emphasis also contributed to reporting requirements being finalized later than would have been optimal for focusing and recording the work of the Ambassadors. This lack of clarity was not unmanageable, but did contribute to some extra work and confusion for the Community Ambassadors.

A certain degree of uncertainty is certainly to be expected in this type of undertaking, and what we experienced may have been unavoidable. We recommend, however, that future design survey efforts focus on creating more clarity on the purpose of the survey questions in relation to the design process, and that materials and the reporting matrix be drafted before the beginning of outreach work. More work to clarify these things at the beginning of the design process should help to reduce the amount of extra work required for adaptive management.

- Language Barriers -

The paper surveys were only available in English, and this made it difficult to have multiple people take the survey at community gatherings. People would have self administered the survey in some occasions, had they been able to read it in their primary language. In an effort to generate even more feedback through our in person outreach we distributed survey cards with a link to the online translated surveys, and invited people to take the survey online. We heard from people that there may be cultural and linguistic barriers to taking the survey online, and understand that there is a lower follow through and completion rate in general for surveys that are taken online after being invited at an event.

Online outreach seemed to be more effective with a younger and more affluent crowd, although it is also more common for these people to be able to take the survey in English. Additionally, online surveys often require a more focused online outreach effort. This type of effort would require the translation of more online information. At a minimum, this might mean putting a translated call to action on the homepage of the Leach Garden website that links to a translated landing page for that language which features the translated survey form. The collection of survey responses in multiple languages also requires the ability to translate any responses that are received.

One of the most interesting ideas that surfaced for us as we worked through the translated surveys was that the ability to use things like checkboxes and icons reduced the translation needs. Continuing to include images and non-language centric means of conveying the vision and values of Leach Botanical Garden will increase its accessibility to people regardless of their primary language.

Community Ambassador Feedback

What were the Challenges and Opportunities that we uncovered in doing this work?

Spanish:

"If this would have been a little bit more clear from the beginning. I believed that the task was to get as many surveys done as possible. But at the end it was mentioned that the important part was to get as many contacts as possible and not necessarily the surveys."

Vietnamese:

"It was difficult to contact some people in the Contact List. First, I thought the project was easy because I just contacted them, and they would help me out. Looks like they were busy. Some businesses are known as unfriendly places. When I talked to some managers they denied helping me, but I gave them survey flyers. Luckily, my friends and I know other owners of businesses in the area, like Hang (Jessica). They were willing to help me completing my project there. As a friendly person, I have my personal resources. When I talked to shoppers, they were in a rush. Someone rejected my conversation. I kept asking others. It is easy to survey people at church, temple, school, and library. When I smiled at them. They were friendly, and they listened to me. I met many wonderful people there. "

Russian:

"Russian community is very closed! Even though my native language is Russian, members of the community did not recognize me as someone they can trust. People were more welcoming when I was brought it by someone that they know (cashier at the grocery store, or former client)."

How did you do the outreach?

Spanish:

"I would go to classes in community centers before or after the class and asked them to take a survey. I would explain what it was for and the purpose of the survey. This way the entire class will take it instead of asking one person at a time. I also spoke to a couple people I know and they told me where to go or who to contact."

Vietnamese:

"I loved to talk to people at La Vang Church. I was surprised when I saw more than 200 Vietnamese people on Friday. I talked to 60 people. I missed talking to many people. However, Ms. Van will send the online survey for them. The Internet is effective to connect others, too. Especially, the nun at Buu Hung temple in Vancouver sent online surveys to 73 Buddhists. I also approached a teacher at PCC.

Also, libraries, temples, coffee shop, and personal homes are good sources. However, I did not survey people at some businesses formally. As a member of the Vietnamese community, I get to hear people's perspectives of local businesses. Some businesses do not have the best standing with their community, and are not welcoming places to engage people. I still made an effort to talk to other managers and shoppers at these businesses and I believe it was not too bad to have experience talking Vietnamese people there because at least people know us."

Russian:

"E-mailing - it had more success for online surveys among younger people. Older people that I interviewed informed me of their discomfort with internet. Phone interviews and face to face interviews."

What suggestions do you have for future outreach to the communities you worked with?

Spanish:

“Through email or in the Hispanic News (the newspaper). A lot of the people I talked to were intrigued about the future plans for the garden. Possible new bridges, suspension bridge, boardwalks etc. “

Vietnamese:

“I suggest we should follow La Vang, the nun at Buu Hung, the teacher at PCC, and the ASPCC coordinator. We should advertise our Garden on Vietnamese news. With the fliers, we should have a special sentence for people who take survey, ‘You have a chance to win an iPad after finishing this survey online.’ I am sure that people love it.”

Russian:

“IRCO senior lunches has a number of people who were particularly interested in the garden. Out of the other people, it would be difficult to track them down, since they were mainly the customers at the grocery store.”
