ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION/THESIS/RESEARCH PAPER/CREATIVE PROJECT: The Revival of South Memphis; Community Gardens as the Patriarch of Urban Resurgence in South Memphis, Tennessee.

STUDENT: Carlotta M. Askew

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America's decaying urban centers are an unfortunate fact for cities of all sizes. There are a number of reasons behind urban decay including job loss, displacement, white flight, slum lords, education barriers, and even catastrophic events. Trying to reverse urban decay has proven to be an even harder struggle especially if the given area has been in a state of distress for an over extended amount of time. Billions of dollars are wasted on programs that fail to revolutionize inner cities because they fail to unlock inner creative intellect of resident people, and they fail to reduce the alarming rise of stress in each particular society.

This study explores the issues facing the South Memphis neighborhood located in Memphis, Tennessee. It has been suggested by the City that the addition of an attractive community garden could support as an anchor and provide as the positive resource that will improve the viability of the neighborhood. Community Gardens are a great way to get both children and adults involved in beautifying the neighborhood community while working with nature. (Westmacott, 1992) It has been proven, in many different communities, that community gardening and the greening movement brings together neighbors of diverse cultures, ethnicities, ages, and abilities to work for change by creating new community resources. Community gardens can serve as a catalyst for neighborhood development, beautification, recreation, therapy, and food production. (Hynes, 1996) But due to the current state of the neighborhood, the crime, the amount of abandoned housing, a Community Garden alone, could not restore order and give the neighborhood a strong foundation. My research paper examines the validity of a community garden as a launching project for community
redevelopment. It will include field work, data analysis and community input which helped to develop a conceptual plan, a “Catalyst Plan” that recommends an alternative “organizing driven” model that could possibly align the problems with the appropriate solutions.