

# Research Proposal

DES 481

Team: Delos Inc.

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## Introduction

For many Seattle residents P-Patches, or Seattle's community gardens, are not used in any capacity. However, to those taking part within the P-Patches, these gardens serve as a center of community, culture, and healing. With over 90 gardens in the Seattle area and the oldest being over 40 years old, these locations have proven crucial for encouraging public wellbeing and collaboration (Conlin). A global pandemic also serves as an additional context that will inform our research into how these gardens continue to develop and evolve.



## Important Secondary Research Takeaways

1. **A lot of people want to get involved.** There is an interest list with a wait time of 1-2 years for community members to reserve a spot in the P-Patch. Gaining interest in participation is not an issue for these limited spaces.
2. **P-Patch participants strongly value building a sense of community in the gardens.** P-Patches highlight opportunities for socialization and real human interaction.
3. **Everyone is a leader.** There is no “boss” label or “ordering around,” since working in the garden is meant to create opportunities for developing leadership and teamwork. The language that is used to represent the community that works in the patches is important.
4. **The gardens emphasize diversity and cultural exchange, meanwhile they have a culture in itself with shared values.** They constantly work towards making sure that the patches reflect on the communities they are in. For example, the Jackson Park P-Patch has a variety

of crops from community members that come from all over the world, including herbs from Sudan and a banana tree (refer to images.).

5. **There is a sense of spirituality that comes from working in the gardens.** Participants find themselves reconnecting with real-time, enjoying the escape from city life, and feeling “the rhythm of the Earth.”
6. **There are large issues with communication and technology within the garden’s cohorts and with the outside community.** Most difficulties involve dealing with non-tech savvy people, language barriers, older populations that prefer snail mail, access to technology, etc.
7. **P-Patches are not too successful in getting non-participants to care for these public spaces.** Community members are not as aware of these spaces and that there are people who work hard to preserve them, which leads to activities such as dumping, stealing, and human encampments. These spaces also vary in how clean they are.
8. **Most participants prefer to work at their local P-Patch.** It is more common that participants live in the neighborhood they work at, where it is an easy walkable distance from home.
9. **No one is “living off the patches.”** The turnover from the patches isn’t enough to sustain households. The opportunity to work at the P-Patches is not meant to replace grocery shopping, it is more meant for the rewarding sense that comes from gardening along with the subsidized crops.

### **Research Questions**

Given this space, our team is interested in exploring the influence community gardens have on neighborhoods in Seattle. Specifically:

1. What impacts do community gardens have on those that do and do not interact with the gardens? In what ways do community gardens benefit the surrounding neighborhood?
2. What methods are used to amplify this influence?
3. What methods make the influence stronger?
4. How have these gardens impact individuals’ mental and physical well-being?

### **Research Population**

Our participant population includes those actively engaged within the Seattle P-Patch community gardens. Participants include folks with plots within the gardens, folks attending community events at the gardens, and folks who organize events. From an initial visit to a P-Patch work day event on October 9th, the community was sociable, very responsive to conversations, and welcoming by inviting spontaneous contributions for activities and discussions. A large emphasis for these gardens is the community-first approach and the diversity that flourishes within these communities. Given this wide range of cultural perspectives, our team is excited to embrace differences in technology limitations, age gaps, and language barriers both in our research methods and eventual design response.

### **Research Methods**

To better understand our audience, we plan on using a variety of research methods that meet our participants at their level of comfortability. Physical visits to P-Patches will be bolstered with asynchronous data collection to better understand these local communities.

- In-person interviews: Using P-Patch work parties and related social events, we will engage with participants in the neighborhood gardens while helping with activities including garden management and cleaning.
- Anonymous letter/drop box: To encourage longer form reflection and connect with technology-averse members of the community, we will design and distribute postcard-eque artifacts with prompts. A drop box on location or mailing address will be used to recollect responses.
- Graffiti wall: From our initial in-person visit, the community shed is a social hub that can support a graffiti wall research activity. Multiple language translations of the prompt will help ensure participant inclusion regardless of background.
- Online Survey: Utilizing our internal recruitment technique that involved partnering with key community garden organizers, an online survey will be distributed to a city-wide mailing list to assess macro-level associations with the gardens.

### **Works Cited**

Conlin, R., Diers, J., & Moty, J. (2019, October 17). *Seattle's treasured P-patch community gardens face uncertain future*. The Seattle Times. Retrieved October 10, 2021, from <https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/seattles-treasured-p-patch-community-gardens-face-uncertain-future/>.