

## Green Dreams taking shape in concrete heart of the city

Stories and photos by Mike Maunder

The Manitoba Eco-Network is working with inner city community groups to plan dozens of projects, big and small, to show that even in the concrete heart of the city, green dreams can become reality.

Replacing some of that concrete with green life is one approach – for instance, researchers are helping First Mennonite Church (Arlington and Notre Dame) investigate how to best de-pave some of their three parking lots to plant greenery.

“The more green you have, the cooler it is,” explains researcher Tushar Raichura. He’s one of two UofW researchers spending the summer working on ideas put forward by community partners, including Spence Neighbourhood Association, West Broadway Community Organization, and the West End Resource Centre (formerly DMSMCA).

One of his special areas of research is developing tools to help low-income people keep cool during summer heat waves. He’s writing up several ideas contributed by community partners – opening public buildings at specific times for cooling centres; spray pads; parks with shade centres; an information kit with strategies to replace air conditioning (closing curtains, window coverings with light



colours facing outwards, misting a sheet hung in a doorway at night); and more.

Co-researcher Chaturi Mudalige is also examining a host of ideas presented by community groups to adapt to climate change – challenges faced by inner city community gardens (See: *West End team going above and beyond*, next page); using grasses to replace canopy loss; climate strategies from other urban centres (like the use of trellises near Boston

to replace trees (see photo, bottom right); and much more.

Both researchers will spend the summer fleshing out these, and dozens of other ideas, and preparing to involve the wider public by developing tools like a project website, brochures, graphic design components, social media, fact sheets, etc.

Alexandra Caporale, Manitoba Eco-Network resource manager, is leading the Neighbourhood Climate

Resilience Project. She authored the first stage of the research – a 2020 report, *The Will is the Way*, which consulted 90 Winnipeg organizations to identify gaps in climate adaptation. The report’s title suggested that, while organizations know many ways to develop climate resiliency, there is little political will to do so.

“We are far behind in planning and instituting adaptations that recognize climate change,” explained Caporale. “We’re also far behind in truly engaging Indigenous perspectives in our research.” She hopes that the project’s work with a coalition of Indigenous partners can add this perspective to their research. For instance, a major concern by West Broadway community partners is riverbank stabilization, and the researchers are consulting West Broadway Indigenous knowledge keeper

Audrey Logan as they develop ideas.

The research being conducted over the summer is focussing on helping inner city communities define what they want and figuring practical ways to get there. This research will be presented in an information forum sometime in late summer or fall and then summarized in specific green action plans for a final report in March, 2024.

Caporale hopes the community process of developing these plans over the next eight months will translate into political will to finance the many projects when they enter the final phase – actual implementation.

Her research project hopes to prove that out of the concrete heart of the city can come concrete steps which neighbourhoods can take to adapt to climate change.



### Of Trees and Trellises

Manitoba Eco-Network’s Tushar Raichura, Chaturi Mudalige and Alexandra Caporale show a blank spot on Sherbrook where a tree used to grow. Restoring trees in areas of heavy concrete is problematic, but they’re proposing other solutions, like bushes pruned to grow into tree shapes on trellises. (See photo provided of trellis project in Boston area, left).

‘Canada’, from ‘Kanata’, the Iroquois-Huron word for ‘village’.

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