

Lethbridge Family Services **Garden for Growth**



Vegetables Harvested
Radish potatoes

Romaine Lettuce dill

Beets

Green Onions + Onions
tomatoes

Spinach zucchini

Cucumbers



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“The Garden for Growth has had a tremendous impact on our agency. As initially intended it has allowed our clients to learn new skills to help find employment and improve their overall quality of life. It has provided new opportunities for growth and development that our clients never had before. For that we will always be grateful to Stantec and their team.”

- Melody Garner, Director of Advancement and Community Relation, Lethbridge Family Services

“The hands on involvement established the connectivity with the project. So often we design but not build, this was an opportunity to do both. The construction experience established new relationships and will create a lasting legacy.”

- Mark Bellamy, Stantec Senior Principal





LFS offers a variety of services including: counselling (individual, couples, family, and group), educational presentations, workshops, personal growth groups, immigrant services and outreach to youth and seniors in the community.

Nature of the Project

The Garden for Growth project was a Stantec-led community out-reach initiative that benefited the clients and staff at Lethbridge Family Services (LFS). It also provided value to users of food banks through garden grown food donations, and has brought a greater understanding of the services offered at LFS to the business sector of the community. This project provided our staff, contractors, suppliers, and landscape professionals the opportunity to donate their skills and experience towards a community based project that provided significant societal benefits to the individuals directly involved and has spread outward to our community.

LFS is a charitable human services organization that serves over 6,800 individuals and families in southwestern Alberta. For over a century their users have been able to access services that includes support for persons with physical/cognitive disabilities, victims of trauma, families, seniors, youth, and children and services devoted to helping recently immigrated newcomers settle into the community.

Driven by Stantec's commitment to "design with community in mind" our Lethbridge team embraced an opportunity to enhance a plot of unused ground to create an outdoor classroom and therapy garden for this worthy organization.

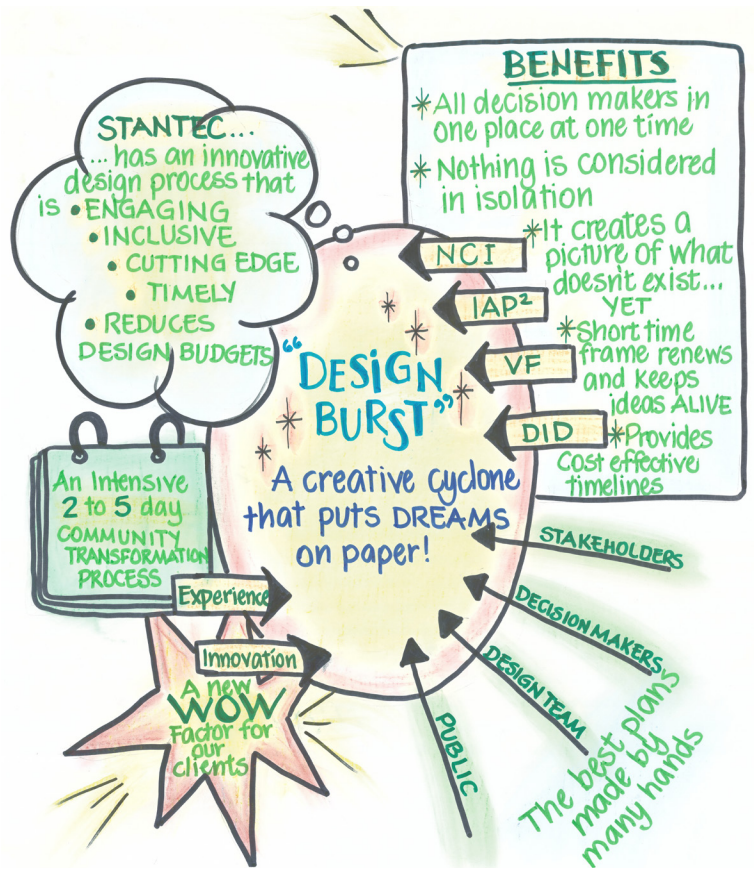
The Garden for Growth was initiated with a grant from DuPont Pioneer. This donation mandated that the garden space would serve 3 functions:

- teach users how to plant and care for a garden
- educate users on harvesting and utilization of the grown produce
- contribute to the community by donating 50% of the harvest to local food banks

We realized that for all that LFS does for our community, their staff and clients deserved a place that could meet the criteria from the grant, but also go beyond. Our designers saw a vision for the garden that could improve upon the original idea of a few raised beds with plants. Taking our design expertise and willingness to commit our skills, time and effort, we created an exceptional space for staff and clients at LFS.

We led the visioning, concept development, design, and construction coordination that brought life to the project. The passion of our Stantec staff, LFS members, construction, and project partners elevated this joint venture to heights that no one imagined when the project was first proposed.

The garden ultimately benefited not only the clients and staff at LFS but users of Lethbridge food banks through garden grown food donations.





700+ hours

Over 700 hours of volunteer time went into transforming the space into a garden that nourishes independence and community.

Effort and Complexity

To create this garden we began with the \$5,000 seed money grant from DuPont Pioneer. From there our challenges included a rigorously condensed schedule, reliance on donated materials, coordination of over 70 volunteers and contractors, and a project that would need to serve a community of over 6,800 users with diverse needs and abilities.

We were able to achieve our goals by working closely with the Lethbridge Family Services team. Shared creativity was paramount in the design of the Garden. Using an innovative and visual design process called a “design burst,” we were able to actively engage the client and all stakeholders in the process. The design burst engagement tool enabled us to bring all stakeholders together in one session to interact, strategize, and co-create the Garden. This got everyone on the same page with early design decisions, saving time, creating stronger buy-in, and ultimately reducing costs. The design burst visual approaches also engaged the group from beginning to end to allowing participants to see their ideas come to life.

Stantec staff stretched their imagination and skill sets to develop an engaging innovative process and create a high quality product benefitting the users and community as a whole. Beyond the traditional garden, and the food production requirement for the grant, we included a musical garden space, outdoor classroom areas, counselling corners, and therapy spaces.

Despite the tight time frame we were able to meet our aggressive schedule. Our team was energized by the

challenge to create a physical garden and therapy space in a ‘two-weekend build’ and then have members of the DaCapo program and the Bhutanese community able to begin planting the next day. By maintaining our schedule LFS was able to plant and harvest throughout summer and fall of 2015.

The tagline, developed in the initial visioning session “nourishing independence and community” has certainly been embodied in the finished garden. Through donations from the community and volunteer time we were able to turn the initial grant into a \$120,000 project that benefits a worthy group in our community.

“What I thought was going to be this pretty small community garden has turned into this amazing project...We’re not just talking a community garden, we’re talking an outdoor therapy space for our clients with a whole bunch of different elements. It is an exciting initiative as we are seeing a level of engagement that shows the community cares about the work LFS does.”

***– Melody Garner in the Lethbridge Herald,
March 5, 2015***



Garden space before



Garden space before



Garden space after

Social, Economic & Other Benefits

For Lethbridge Family Services an underused garden space was transformed into a flexible multi-use area that benefited both staff and clients. The space before was not very inviting, some patches of grass, a shed and a few benches, in nice weather it would be used by staff for lunch breaks. Now the area is a hub of activity, an area for connection, reflection, and additional space for programming offered through LFS.

A great example of this is the individuals in the DaCapo program. They have taken charge of planting the Garden this year and are overseeing the planting schedule and care. The DaCapo program helps individuals affected by brain injury, developmental disabilities, and/or fetal alcohol spectrum disorders develop skills and relationships that enhance their well-being. For them, the Garden has created another opportunity to maximize personal potential.

In addition to the direct benefit the project had for Lethbridge Family Services, our collaborative approach allowed participants to see how their work fits in with the work of all the other participants, as well as how impactful the completed project was to the entire community. Often, each contributor is exposed only to their portion of a project – for example, the conceptual design or the physical construction. Having all parties involved from start to finish provided a whole new appreciation for each other's expertise, as well as how everyone could work together to make the entire project more efficient.

The success of this project has been defined in a multitude of different ways by the users, volunteers and Stantec staff. Some of the ways our team described their efforts includes: “transformational”, “enthusiastic cooperation”, “connectivity with a project that is part of a change”, and “a heartfelt achievement.”

“Stantec’s enthusiasm for this project grew exponentially, and their leadership and philanthropic example inspired countless volunteers and donations. Before we knew it, there was an entire community of volunteers building our garden and showing Lethbridge Family Services love. It was incredible to feel the community’s dedication and affection for our Agency, through Stantec’s leadership!”

***- Sandra Mintz, CEO
Lethbridge Family Services***

Every participant came away from their work on the Garden with the understanding that the work we do directly benefits the community. Our commitment to our profession and our work, sometimes with a wheel barrow and a shovel, is a part of making our communities a better place.



“As a group in the DaCapo Program, we learned how to plant seeds, how to take care of them and how to pick the vegetables. ..We have worked with other individuals in DaCapo that we do not usually get to see ...We can go into the garden whenever we want and it teaches us teamwork and brings friends together”

- LFS DaCapo client

Environmental Value

This site provided revitalization of a brownfield development; creation of a garden that produces food for local charities; understanding of our ecosystem; aesthetic improvement of a barren space; and education for designers, users, and volunteers alike.

Great effort was made to also be sustainable throughout this project. All existing features within the site were reused or repurposed within the final design. Furniture was made of discarded pallets; old concrete blocks from the existing patio became paving stones to guide users, throughout the garden. An outdoor chalkboard was created from used signage, and existing planters on the site were incorporated into the garden design.

The garden itself stands as an area of environmental education. Through this space some clients were able to taste a home grown vegetable for the first time. Cooking and preparing of fruits and vegetables was taught to inexperienced gardeners and participants pulled weeds to ensure an improved harvest. Each lesson in gardening provides education into the importance of caring for our environment, and becoming stewards of the ecosystems around us. Having concrete examples and lessons help drive home the value of our environment.

Counsellors are now able to use the garden for outdoor therapy sessions. Expanding the space of the facility.

From a small seed of an idea in the beginning to a spectacular garden, the benefit this project has brought to its users has been profound. Stantec staff and the community volunteers in working with this organization have also benefitted.

Our Stantec staff, who in their day to day working lives, are consultants, drafters, design technologists, and administrators experienced something that isn't typically part of their average day – taking a project from a dream to a constructed reality and participating in every phase of it.



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Lethbridge Family Services -
Garden for Growth