We’ve got all the right ingredients here at home.

In the city of Chicago, there are over seventy community gardens, and in seventeen neighborhoods, those gardens have joined into networks that do everything from sharing volunteers to swapping vegetables. These gardens contribute to all kinds of positive side effects: a reduction in crime rates, an increase in community organizing, and more educational initiatives.

At the same time, the trend for fresh, sustainable, and local food is on an upswing. Coupled with the growing tendency of Americans choosing to eat out rather than cook at home, locally-owned and independent restaurants find themselves in the position to capitalize on this trend.

When people “shop local” at an independent restaurant, they bolster the neighborhood economy. For every $100 spent at a locally owned business, $71 stays in the community, and local business create job opportunities for residents. But the value is more than just financial: they are a key ingredient in the neighborhood’s personality. Locals who invest in their neighborhoods feel like they are a part of their community.

**Insights**

- Personal values and accessibility influence consumption choices.
- Investing in a local endeavor creates value throughout the neighborhood and gives residents a sense of pride and belonging.
- Customers are willing to pay more for what they perceive as fresh, local & convenient.
What if there were a service that connected local restaurants, community gardens, and neighborhood residents, in a way that benefited the environment and the community as a whole?

A great solution will take into account the needs of all the stakeholders:

**Neighborhood Residents**
- Community gardeners want to earn extra income.
- Restaurant owners want to run a profitable business.
- Community members want to eat a delicious and affordable meal.

**Community & Environment**
- A healthy environment is supported by a reduction in agricultural chemicals, which will limit the production of greenhouse gases.
- A strong community is supported by fair pay for goods and services, access to fresh and healthy foods, green spaces, and a robust local economy.
TRF is a platform that enables Community–to–Business (C2B) transactions. Through TRF, neighborhood restaurants and community gardens collaborate to create sustainable and locally-sourced menus that are accessible to community members.

What makes TRF different?

TRF goes beyond just “eating local”.

TRF means that you can eat hyper-local food, grown in your neighborhood and served at a locally owned restaurant.

TRF means that you know your meal is grown and served by people who are actively working to support each other and to meet sustainable development goals.

We are TRF

Community gardeners work with restaurant owners to plan a menu with ingredients that will be ready for harvest.

Neighborhood resident customers purchase tickets for this menu ahead of time.

Restaurants offer this special menu once a month. Any compostable waste is returned to the community garden.
TRF makes communication and financial transactions easy through their website and mobile apps for gardeners, restaurants, and local diners.

**Messaging**
Gardeners and restaurants use "Messages" to create and adjust menus.

**Harvest Tracker**
Gardeners use the "harvest tracker" to update the restaurant on their crop's progress.

**Orders**
Gardeners and restaurants use "Orders" to schedule and confirm TRF transportation of produce from garden to restaurant and of compost materials from restaurant to garden.

**Events**
Restaurants upload their menus and ticket availability to Events so that customers can check out what's for dinner at upcoming events.

**Tickets**
Customers purchase tickets to TRF meals.

**Revenue Management**
TRF facilitates a fair division of profits between the restaurant and garden.
User Journey

Future of TRF

Growth in participating communities
Restaurants offer more frequent meals. Community members become interested in participation in gardens. Using some of the revenue and the labor of new members, gardens can expand into new areas. As the supply of produce increases, restaurants can sell more tickets to TRF meals, and the tickets become more affordable.

Scaling into new communities
TRF connects with locally owned, independent restaurants and gardens in other neighborhoods. In wealthier neighborhoods, TRF collects a higher percentage of revenue, allowing them to lower rates in lower-income neighborhoods.
Doing good for the community and the environment

1) Bolstered local economy & sense of community

Money flows in & stays within the neighborhood as restaurant owners source their ingredients from local gardeners & neighborhood residents pay to dine at these restaurants. The pre-sale ticketing model is an opportunity for residents to invest in their own “backyard” to support local talent. As TRF scales up, the demand for ingredients could result in community gardening for commercial purposes, thereby creating more jobs & attracting a whole new segment of “part-time” gardeners.

2) A sustainable dining system

In stark contrast to how majority of the restaurants function today, the TRF model emphasizes pre-planning based on number of guests, seasonal availability of produce etc., thereby reducing excess food waste. Ingredient waste & other biodegradable materials are composted & sent back to the community gardens to be used as manure. Since the ingredients are local, it reduces the greenhouse gas emissions from transportation.

3) Increased access to fresh, nutrition-rich food

As more community gardens spring up to meet the demand of the restaurant owners, residents will have greater access to fresh, organic foods within their neighborhoods & more control over their food choices. Additionally, by becoming “part-time” gardeners themselves, residents can learn more about their food – how it’s grown, it’s nutritional value etc.
TRF development process: It’s all about collaboration

Convergence map & situated junction
The TRF team began by identifying products, services, and stakeholders in the food and innovation space and looking for situated junctions where we could create something new.

We wondered if there was a way to connect community gardens and local restaurants: a way to transform what we knew about food purchasing as a B2B model into a “C2B” model in which a community garden could develop a relationship with a local restaurant to provide hyper-local ingredients.

Primary and secondary research
We analyzed national and local trends in food and sustainability and interviewed Chicago locals—some of whom work in home and community gardens—to learn about potential users and existing solutions.
Workshop
We ran a workshop to develop interactions between TRF’s stakeholders. Participants engaged in ideation, role play and prototyping.

Concept Gallery
Innovators and professionals who are involved in local food and sustainability efforts came together with the Institute of Design community to discuss the work of all the teams in the Sustainable Solutions Workshop class. Their feedback influenced some of TRF’s finishing touches.
Acknowledgments

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“Hostess Cakes & Wonder Bread Delivery Truck” by Allen, used under CC BY-NC 2.0 / Original logo removed and replaced by TRF logo. https://flic.kr/p/pmfqM
Our TRF Team

Urba Mandrekar  Renee Albrecht-Mallinger  Blue Cuevas

Thank You!