Beasley-McMaster Collaborations:
An Archive and Assessment

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Introduction

Between August-December 2016, the Beasley Neighbourhood Association collaborated with the McMaster Research Shop to gather information and materials pertaining to collaborations between Beasley and McMaster.[1] We defined our terms quite broadly.

Beasley	Beasley residents, groups, organizations, agencies, and the Beasley Neighbourhood Association
McMaster	McMaster departments, offices, student clubs, groups, volunteers, students, researchers, instructors, etc.
Collaboration	Working together for mutual benefit[2]

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[1] We also included research conducted by affiliates from other universities.
[2] See Paths to Research Collaboration: https://reo.mcmaster.ca/download/paths-to-collaboration

While investigating examples of collaboration, we also came to look at how Beasley has been represented – in research conducted by McMaster affiliates, perspectives held by McMaster volunteers and groups offering programs in Beasley, and in media like the Hamilton Spectator.

This report and accompanying [Archive](#) seek to do a couple of things:
- Describe our search for information;
- Share the information we found;
- Identify important themes; and
- Offer some ways for moving forward with Beasley-McMaster collaborations.

We have divided this report into three sections:
- Section 1: Research Collaborations
- Section 2: Program Collaborations
- Section 3: Media Representations

We end the report with some overall recommendations for goals to consider adding to Beasley's 2017 Neighbourhood Action Plan.

Methodology: How We Searched for Information

To uncover examples of collaborations with Beasley, we searched Canadian thesis and dissertation databases, academic journal databases, public media, and Google.

We sent an enquiry through McMaster's community engagement network and to related student clubs for information about Beasley-McMaster projects and programs. We received several responses. We phoned some community partners to gather more detailed descriptions of projects.

We also facilitated a focus group with about 30 participants from the Beasley Neighbourhood Association on October 12, 2016. A summary of this material is included in this report. Additional details are available in our focus group notes.

For a more elaborate discussion of our methodology, please visit our Research Process Archive.

Limitations

There are several limitations to our research strategy:

Limited Range of Beasley Voices	When gathering information from Beasley residents, our reach was fairly small and based on convenience; we only connected with people already engaged in the Beasley Neighbourhood Association. As a result, we have not been able to capture the full range of diverse Beasley voices.
Follow-Up Scope	**Program Coordinators:** Our request for information about collaborations was sent to McMaster's community engagement network via email. We did not individually approach each staff member or instructor involved in community engagement projects at McMaster. It is likely that some projects have gone unnoticed because our email request was not received or understood by all connected stakeholders. We only followed-up with a few by phone.
	Researchers: We individually connected with a few of the identified researchers. Contacting each researcher that contributed to an article about Beasley was outside the scope of this project. It could be a helpful follow-up project.
	Placements: We did not have a chance to investigate all of the school-related placements that have happened in Beasley over the years through various faculty (e.g. nursing, social work, Occupational Therapy).

Section 1: Research On/With Beasley

We were able to find evidence of roughly 30 research projects conducted between 2000 and 2016 that involve Beasley in some manner. Information about these has been compiled into a Beasley research chart. All of the freely available research reports have been gathered in their entirety into a Google Drive for anyone to access. Unfortunately, several academic articles are protected behind pay-walls that we cannot legally share. The abstracts of these have been compiled instead.

Below, are our interpretations of these materials. These have been categorized as follows:
- Difficulties Locating Material
- Beasley's Involvement and Representation in Research
- Recommendations for Future Research Relationships

Difficulties Locating Material

We discovered that it's not an easy task to locate examples of Beasley-McMaster collaborations, as this information is not stored neatly in one place. Some of our key observations about the difficulty of locating material are listed below.

Materials Not Available Online	- Research papers or reports prepared by undergraduate students are rarely stored in online databases. - We were unable to locate any undergraduate reports about Beasley collaborations as they were not available on the internet and we do not have contact information for the students/supervisors involved.
Academic vs. Community Records	- It was easier for us to locate academic material about Beasley than to find community-written examples of collaborations. - We think this may be because a lot of university resources are invested in writing things down and maintaining academic archives and databases. As a community, Beasley has less resources to do this and so information is often not written down or made permanently available on the internet. - A university library account is needed to access most academic material about Beasley. This is a significant access barrier.
Limitations of Academic Publishing	Most of the academic articles we found do not describe meaningful collaborations with Beasley. Beasley residents are usually only involved as research participants. There may be several reasons for this:

	- Perhaps the academic journal does not value community based research and so the author did not include information about collaboration in their article, even though this did occur. - The Research Ethics Board may have required identifying information about the neighbourhood to be removed (e.g. the name Beasley, information about residents who worked in collaboration with the researchers). - The author did not include a detailed description of recruitment, relationships, or dissemination (for any number of reasons), so it is impossible to know from reading the article whether active collaboration happened or not In many cases, it is also likely that a collaborative process did not occur; the research was primarily *about* Beasley, not *with* or *for* Beasley. This routinely happens for many reasons, including many researchers' limited understanding of community-based research options and difficulties negotiating academic and community timelines and restrictions.

Beasley's Involvement and Representation in Research

Topics
Researchers from a range of disciplines (anthropology, environmental science, geography, public health, urban design) have explored a variety of issues in Beasley, such as: social determinants of health, food security, health risks, social services, rates of air pollution, affordable housing, and poverty rates.

It appears that geographers are particularly interested in Beasley because of its unique character and demographics; Beasley is seen as an ideal site to study downtown deterioration, social planning, gentrification, mobility patterns of immigrants, and diverse communities.

The sorts of topics that get covered and the way Beasley is situated in them often leads to representations of Beasley as being "in need" (of help from researchers, social services, etc.).

Beasley Included, but Not Emphasized
While Beasley has been included in over 30 studies over the last decade, it is often not emphasized as a focus. Instead:

Beasley as Comparison	Beasley is often used in contrast and comparison to other wealthier neighbourhoods (e.g. air pollution, poverty rates)
Beasley as	Beasley is not directly mentioned, but census data, street names, and

Statistic	maps allow readers to identify the neighbourhood.
Beasley Disappears into Research on the "Downtown Core"	Many studies are focused on the "downtown core" (e.g. as the centre of poverty). This includes the geography of Beasley but does not include identification or discussion of Beasley as a neighbourhood or specific place.
Beasley as Site to Recruit Marginalized Participants	Similarly, it appears that Beasley residents are regularly involved as research participants for studies about marginalization. Many of these studies are interested in Beasley residents as examples of "marginalized people", rather than caring about the concerns and priorities of Beasley residents themselves. Researchers set the agenda and research question rather than Beasley residents.

Beasley as Object, Not as Partner

The Beasley neighbourhood often appears as an object to study. In the majority of the articles we located, the research appears to have been initiated, led, conducted, and written by the university researcher.

Communication	- Almost no studies indicated whether or not members of the Beasley community ever received notice of research being conducted. - Almost no studies detailed their dissemination strategy or indicated whether the Beasley community received copies of the final reports following the conclusion of the project.
Connection	The authors don't discuss how they approached the Beasley community as a community, other than mentioning that they distributed flyers, surveys, or directly approached residents for interviews.
Participation	- For the most part, the research studies don't indicate the nature of Beasley's participation in the research beyond serving as interview or survey participants. - It appears like researchers predominantly identify their own research question and then invite Beasley residents to participate in very limited ways as research subjects.
Collaboration	- The Beasley Neighbourhood was only listed as an active research partner in a handful of cases. - Among published articles and dissertations, there is little

| | indication that Beasley residents are actively working with researchers to co-investigate research questions. |
| | ● There are a couple of examples of researchers getting involved in the community,[3] but often this relationship or work is not mentioned as one of the research goals. |

Recommendations for Future Research Relationships

Based on the above assessment, we offer these ideas for moving forward:

Recommendations for the Beasley Neighbourhood Association

Research Priorities	The BNA may want to develop a list of research priorities to share with prospective researchers so they can ensure researchers ask the 'right' questions. During our focus group, residents highlighted how research projects should align with the Beasley Neighbourhood Plan. Example research priorities that emerged included: ● Supporting the Elgin Street Alley project; ● Identifying the importance and effects of bike lanes; ● Describing the importance of social recreation in Beasley; We don't really know what Beasley residents think about the research they've participated in (or chosen not to participate in), which might be another research question to explore.
Research Process and Archive	The BNA may want to develop a process for researchers to follow,[4] such as requesting that all prospective researchers submit a plain language research proposal: See example template. This could:

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[3] For example, Dr. Tina Moffat was involved in the Community Food Security Advisory Committee as a researcher for a period of time. This is a form of community engagement, but in research articles, this kind of information is often left out: http://joeycoleman.ca/2013/09/04/hamilton-community-food-security-stakeholder-advisory-committee-for-september-4-2013/.

[4] The following guides may be helpful when planning a process for engaging researchers:
- Identifying researchers that share the community's interests: http://maggiestoronto.ca/uploads/File/A-note-to-researchers.pdf
- What to expect from student and community-partnered research projects: https://reo.mcmaster.ca/download/paths-to-collaboration
- What to do when researchers knock on the door: https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/wp-content/uploads/KMb-NGO-Guide-Key-Issues-in-Research-Processes-and-Managers.pdf
- How to engage underrepresented groups in community-partnered projects: http://fresc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Best-Practices-for-Community-Engagement.pdf
- Developing a community-engagement framework: The Community Advisory Model: https://www.hanc.info/cp/resources/Documents/Recommendations%202014%20FINAL%206-5-14%20rc.pdf

	- Prompt more collaborative and useful research in line with Beasley's Neighbourhood Action Plan; - Make supervision of researchers easier and more time efficient; - Enhance communication about research in the neighbourhood; and - Support follow-up and evaluation of research through the creation of a more thorough paper trail and research archive. Beasley residents have a general awareness that research is being conducted in their community, but generally haven't been told what's being done, why, or how. - An additional benefit of requesting that researchers submit a proposal is that these could be mentioned/reviewed at monthly BNA meetings. This way, the community is more informed about research in Beasley and has an opportunity to give feedback.
Archivist Role	The BNA might consider reviewing the job descriptions of Executive members to see about adding an archiving function to the Secretary role or developing a new Archivist role. This job could involve maintaining a record of research projects, student involvement, and collaborative programs involving Beasley.
Review	The BNA may want to evaluate the impact of Beasley's participation in research over time by reviewing archived research reports and results. This could lead to new ideas for engaging with researchers. - The BNA might set this up as an annual agenda item for a monthly meeting – where the community reviews and discusses the year's list of research projects. - This could be connected to an annual or semi-annual research forum where researchers conducting research on/with Beasley report back on their results.

Recommendations for McMaster Researchers

Community Engagement Principles and Process	At the very least, the BNA requests that researchers attend Beasley neighbourhood meetings and share a copy of research findings.[5] This is a good starting place. There are many additional things researchers could do.

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[5] The BNA currently takes a fairly "hands-off" and efficient approach to working with students/researchers. By asking researchers to attend already existing monthly meetings, the Executive avoids additional demands from researchers on their time. The BNA seems to have fairly low expectations of researchers, anticipating that some projects may turn out to be incredibly or somewhat helpful, while others will flop with little consequence or lost resources.

	● We encourage incoming researchers to become more familiar with principles of community engagement and to draw on these when engaging in research about/with Beasley. ● There is a lot of related work happening on campus about this that researchers can get connected to.[6]
Coordination	During our consultation, it was suggested that McMaster needs to take responsibility for research with neighbourhoods. ● As one example, McMaster could hire a person to coordinate and act as the primary contact for relationships with Beasley and other neighbourhood associations. Having one designated person who stays the same over time would help with building trust (compared to a constant influx of new research assistants and students every year). ● This person's role could also involve an archiving function – where they help keep a record of projects and programs involving collaboration between Beasley and McMaster.
Research Priorities	Before beginning a research project, ● Ask the Beasley neighbourhood what research is most needed in their community; and ● Involve Beasley in determining research questions and approach.
Paper Trail	In order to help the Beasley Neighbourhood Association keep track of the research that is happening in their community, ● Prepare a 1-2 page plain language research proposal with your research questions, approach, timeline, plans for compensation, anticipated short-term and long-term impacts, and contact info that the BNA can keep in their archive: See example template.
Representation of Beasley	When writing about the community, keep in mind that they are the readers and audience. ● Is your representation of Beasley in line with community perspectives? ● Seek feedback from Beasley residents.
Sharing Results	Return to the community to communicate your results and the impact of your study: ● In both writing (sharing a final report, communicating through community newspapers, circulating via online networks); and ● Through a conversation (attendance at a BNA meeting or research forum). ● Explain how the research can be useful to the community. Beasley residents are really interested in hearing from researchers about what they've found. There often isn't enough time to do this through the

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[6] See http://macconnector.mcmaster.ca/

	infrastructure that currently exists (e.g. 5 minute report back at a BNA meeting). ● McMaster could collaborate with Beasley to establish an annual/semi-annual research forum in the community.
Broader Knowledge Exchange	Focus group participants shared that they are interested in hearing from the university and learning more about the knowledge it holds. They would welcome McMaster students and researchers to visit the community to share information about: ● How to clear up community misconceptions (for instance about drug use, sex work) ● How to reach newcomers and encourage them to participate in the community ● Other topics proposed by the community that McMaster students could speak about

Section 2: Collaborative Programs in Beasley

We have compiled a [Beasley program chart](#) of collaborations with McMaster. We were able to locate a dozen examples.

Below, are our interpretations of these materials. These have been categorized as follows:
- Successes and Challenges
- Best Practices for Collaboration: The Example of Community Volunteer Action
- Programs Beasley and McMaster Can Work on Together
- Recommendations for Future Program Collaborations

Successes and Challenges

We discovered that in many cases, McMaster offers important infrastructure to support Beasley-McMaster program collaborations. One limitation of this infrastructure is that it does not always include thorough training opportunities for students. Another challenge is the limited recording and evaluation of programs.

Offering Needed Infrastructure	Several McMaster departments and groups coordinate student participation in Beasley by: ● Connecting with Beasley residents/groups to identify program opportunities; ● Distributing volunteer postings to McMaster students ● Recruiting applicants, reviewing applications, interviewing; and prospective students, linking students to Beasley projects ● Supervising students, providing feedback, dismissing if necessary. This is helpful to the Beasley neighbourhood because it: ● Makes the process of connecting to students less work for Beasley community members and organizations; and ● Offers some level of supervision so that any arising difficulties with volunteers are not solely the responsibility of Beasley to resolve. This approach works for students because it: ● Links them to Beasley more quickly and with less steps; ● Offers more flexibility (when a whole team of students is involved, the inconsistent participation of any one student is less impactful); ● Generates some sense of accountability; and ● Offers some structure to the volunteer experience.

Limited Training Opportunities	Very few of the Beasley-McMaster program collaborations involve any formal training on community engagement, the Beasley neighbourhood or its action plan, or social issues or population groups the students may work with. This lack of training means that biases or assumptions students have about Beasley may not be counteracted, causing attitudes like the following to persist: ● Pathologizing views of Beasley community members (e.g. of criminality, drug use, sex work, poverty) that can depict Beasley as "unsafe"; ● "Us" and "them" thinking, rather than students seeing themselves as part of the community; ● Non-mutual charity orientations that are based in ideas that the student knows better and that Beasley needs "help", and ● McMaster bringing their ideas to Beasley vs. being led by Beasley members and what they want. There are several notable exceptions, where training/orientation is taken seriously: ● *The Living Rock* educated volunteers from McMaster Athletes Care about working with their particular population of youth; ● *McMaster Child and Youth University* provides extensive training on community engagement; and ● *Open Circle* offers an orientation as well as ongoing reflection activities
Little Evaluation	The BNA has little written record of the Beasley-McMaster programs as well as limited evaluation of them (impacts, successes, challenges) over time. This also means that the programs are not always explicitly tied to Beasley's Neighbourhood Action Plan. ● Sometimes the programs are discussed at BNA meetings and documented in the meeting minutes, which is a good way to keep track of them. ● Some materials can be found through Google or community newsletters (e.g. from the Beasley Community Centre).

Best Practices for Collaboration: The Example of Community Volunteer Action

Community Volunteer Action (CVA), a project of McMaster's Student Open Circle, is one example of an excellent collaborative effort. CVA schedules weekly volunteer opportunities in the Beasley neighbourhood for McMaster students – including a breakfast program at Dr. Davey school and a soup kitchen at Wesley Urban Ministry's Wesley Centre shelter.

CVA integrates social justice values by disrupting the "helping" and "charity" model and ensuring the placements are designed as a co-learning opportunity for students, the community, and partnering agencies. The group also works to unsettle stigma and stereotypes of the Beasley community by supporting students to learn from the community firsthand.

CVA has developed an infrastructure to ensure consistent volunteers. This includes recruitment, direct support to volunteers, collective transportation to volunteer locations, and training. CVA also maintains a positive relationship with the partnering Beasley organizations to help them work collaboratively with groups of volunteers. Coordination staff facilitate communication to resolve issues, build on successes, and keep the programs growing. [7]

Programs Beasley and McMaster Can Work on Together

During our focus group, the following suggestions were raised about programs that Beasley and McMaster could collaborate on in the future.

Social and Educational Programs

Programming for Kids	- Drawing on the success of the Hoops basketball collaboration, McMaster could support kids with soccer and skating (such as participating in the Skate the Dream program, which McMaster athletes currently support[8]) - Roller-skating by the waterfront - Literacy programs and writing clubs (poetry, journals) - Cooking club - Meal and movie nights where people socialize and feel connected - Rehabilitation services for children in schools or after-school programs - Class projects based on Beasley's Neighbourhood Action Plan
Programming for Adults	- Make sure there are programs for adults too, not just kids - Parent engagement - Movie nights to share ideas (e.g. about safe injection sites, recovery) - Activities in seniors' residences - ESL classes

Outreach and Advocacy Programs

Outreach	- Help draw newcomers to the community and the BNA - Support with the integration of newcomers into Beasley - Collaborate with the Urban Core Community Health Centre

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[7] See https://opencircle.mcmaster.ca/volunteer
[8] See http://www.marauders.ca/news/2015/4/6/WHOCKEY_0406153801.aspx

Advocacy	● Develop partnerships between student and activist groups to support the creation of a safe injection site ● Identify activities from the Neighborhood Action Plan to partner on ● Partner with community to tell stories; share power in telling these stories

Recommendations for Future Program Collaborations

Based on the above assessment, we offer these ideas for moving forward:

Recommendations for McMaster program coordinators

Evaluating Impact	● If not already developed, programs could create an internal feedback process. ● Share these results with the BNA for inclusion in their archive.
Training for Students	● Work with the BNA to develop more comprehensive training opportunities for students.

Recommendations for the Beasley Neighbourhood Association

Evaluating Impact	● It may be helpful for the BNA to design a simple feedback survey or form that can be used to record information about and evaluate programs that are taking place in Beasley. ● Program feedback can also be solicited at monthly BNA meetings and then recorded in the minutes. ● Over time, this archive of feedback can be reviewed to search for cumulative themes and suggestions. ● Impact will be easier to evaluate if the programs more explicitly align with specific goals identified in the Beasley Neighbourhood Action Plan.
Training for Students	● The BNA may want to develop a presentation, brochure, flyer, and/or website page to share its vision and inform students about how they can best work with the community. This could happen in collaboration with McMaster. ● This information could also be shared with McMaster groups and staff so that it can be incorporated into trainings facilitated by McMaster. ● The BNA may want to add some of these duties to the role of the "Membership & Communication Coordinator(s)".

Section 3: Media and Community Voice in Beasley

We located two dozen articles and editorials in the Hamilton Spectator newspaper which feature the Beasley Neighbourhood. While the Spectator has published a great number of articles related to Beasley or McMaster in the past fifteen years, virtually none of these articles specifically address partnerships between the two. Rather, the articles generally reflect news coverage of Beasley, including studies, reporting, and editorials related to living conditions within Beasley.

Below we explore the following emerging themes:
- Representations of Beasley in the Media
- Recommendations for Enhancing Beasley's Community Voice

Representations of Beasley in the Media

Popular Topics

Social Issues	Security, shortage of public spaces, "prostitution", vandalism, crime, transience, poverty, housing shortages, dilapidation, substance abuse, cheap housing, flight of industry, toxic torment, precarious and insecure economy
Life Improving in Beasley	People's platform, "cleanliness", a reduction in crime rates, organizing, property values increasing, Rick Gillespie, used needle collection, influx of young professionals into the area, early childhood development, Beasley Charter, green space, parks, breakfast program, children's "Beasley theatre", community, pitching in, community gardens, refugees

Key Themes and Issues

The Story is Complex	Communities are complex and messy, and media portrayals should reflect this. - Our research indicates that, overall, the media's coverage of the Beasley neighbourhood presents a complicated story that draws attention to both the struggles (poverty, crime, safety, transience), as well as the initiatives that reflect Beasley's strong sense of identity and community (outreach programs, art projects, grassroots initiatives). - However, while this coverage is more or less even, is not always balanced. News stories about Beasley tend to draw attention to *either* the struggles *or* the successes in Beasley in separate articles, rather than addressing these themes at the same time.
Advocacy and Awareness	Many articles spoke of poverty in Beasley as a way to draw attention to the neighbourhood. The tone of these pieces suggested a motivation for

	awareness and advocacy on issues facing the community. It did not seem intended as a complaint or manner of exclusion.

Recommendations for Enhancing Beasley's Community Voice

Based on the above assessment, we offer these ideas for moving forward:

Recommendations for the Beasley Neighbourhood Association

Media Strategy	It might be helpful for the Beasley Neighbourhood Association to: ● Discuss residents' thoughts and ideas about how Beasley has been and is being represented in the media and other public conversations. ● Create a goal for Beasley's Neighbourhood Action Plan related to how Beasley is represented, and develop a plan for implementing this goal.[9] ● Share this material with others, such as prospective researchers (who will be representing Beasley in their writing), students, and volunteers working with the Beasley community.
Keeping and Reviewing Media Records	The BNA does not currently record or monitor media coverage of its neighbourhood in a systematic way. As such, it can be difficult to know, let alone assess, public understandings and awareness of the Beasley community. Being aware of these portrayals can help Beasley intervene and contribute to the way it is represented, which can help in advocating for political, financial, and social support for the community. ● In the future, the BNA may wish to more thoroughly collect, review, and/or evaluate representations of Beasley in the media and other public documents. This could be an interesting research project for a willing student or added to an Executive member's job description.

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[9] This may be added to the already existing media plan, which is **Action #3: Establish Media Strategy** under the Objective: Improve Perception of Neighbourhood. This can be found on page 36 of Beasley's 2011 Neighbourhood Action Plan.

Conclusion

This report has summarized our research findings related to Beasley-McMaster projects and partnerships. We encourage you to also visit the [Beasley-McMaster Collaborations Archive](#) to review for yourself the materials we have collected.

Based on the assessment and recommendations above, we have developed the following 3 goals for possible inclusion in Beasley's 2017 Neighbourhood Action Plan. They can be incorporated into the Diversity and Inclusion section under the "Increase Awareness of Beasley and its Assets" objective:

Goal 1	Develop a Beasley Media Strategy to assess and respond to how Beasley is portrayed in media, research, and volunteer training.
Goal 2	Develop a list of priority research questions to be distributed to prospective researchers and volunteers.
Goal 3	Create and maintain an archive of material from research projects, programs, and collaborations in Beasley so that they can be reviewed for contributions to diversity and inclusion and shared with the community.