Reviving Troost: Reactivating Vacant Lots Through Urban Acupuncture

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Reviving Troost
Reacting Vacant Lots Through Urban Acupuncture

Abstract
Modern day cities are riddled with vacant lots that attract illicit activity and give a negative impression of the surrounding neighborhood. Vacant lots are born from an urban history of an increasingly privatized public realm and growing socio-political and economic polarization (Foo 2014, 176). Suburbanization, redlining, and urban renewal disproportionately affected lower income neighborhoods, which are rarely able to rebuild without outside financial assistance. “Urban acupuncture” is a theory that views cities as living, breathing organisms and a variety of projects can serve as “needles” that revitalize the community by healing the parts. When applied correctly this theory can help repair urban blight while simultaneously uplifting people in the immediate surrounding area.

I believe urban acupuncture is the key to helping low-income neighborhoods by using a bottom-up or community-centered approach that will help discredit the negative reputations of these neighborhoods brought by vacant lots. By activating vacant lots through the creation of designed green space, cities have the opportunity to create community assets, develop a vibrant urban environment, provide social spaces for the community and create new civic infrastructure that can have positive long-term effects on the immediate property values.

My aim is to revitalize my neighborhood near Troost Avenue in Kansas City, Missouri through the use of urban acupuncture and revitalized vacant lots. My driving question for this investigation is: How can we turn empty lots in low-income neighborhoods into community assets? By conducting extensive research into “urban acupuncture” and several precedent analyses of activated vacant lots, I hope to build a tool box of knowledge that I can later use to make the demonstration plot I created in the first part of this project a reality.

Conclusion
After comparing precedents of reactivated vacant lots, I have concluded that for my proposed pocket park to come to fruition, it will need multiple contributors. Many of the urban acupuncture projects received assistance from several sources, such as participation from their municipality, a landscape architecture firm leading the renovation, and maintenance by community members. In order to fund a pocket park on Troost, I will most likely need to pursue foundation and city grants.

I found that sites with stormwater filtration systems and other environment-friendly alternative applications were more likely to receive municipal funding and support. The original vacant lots of the five sites studied previously served no purpose. Today they have been reactivated with multiple functions and benefits for the surrounding area. After completing this precedent analysis, I realize that my proposed neighborhood park could serve as a green space, a phytoremediation site, and a hub for face-to-face interaction.

Examples of Urban Acupuncture Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Previous Use</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Caretakers</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Amenities</th>
<th>Benefit to the immediate area</th>
<th>Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uplift Garden</td>
<td>189 N. Broxbye</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1.4 Acre</td>
<td>Vines, Municipalities of Kansas City</td>
<td>Old garden</td>
<td>CEO/CTO</td>
<td>Master Gardeners of Greater Kansas City</td>
<td>food source, civic engagement</td>
<td>Stormwater Collection, community garden</td>
<td>ASLA Central States Honor Award</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini Valley Aquaponics</td>
<td>2825 Wabash, Kansas City</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>7.0 Acre</td>
<td>Dre Taylor, CEO, Land Bank of Kansas City</td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>Non-federal grants</td>
<td>Community park, free park</td>
<td>stormwater, civic engagement</td>
<td>Urban Land Institute Development of Excellence Award Winner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paley Park</td>
<td>313 E Elm St</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1.4 Acre</td>
<td>Zon &amp; Green, Mayor, William Pitty (Owner)</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Community park, free park</td>
<td>Stormwater Collection, green space</td>
<td>ASLA Central States Design Awards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantworks</td>
<td>720 Main Street</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1.0 Acre</td>
<td>Municipality of Hyannis (Owner)</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Municipality of Hyannis</td>
<td>Community park, free park</td>
<td>Stormwater Collection, civic engagement</td>
<td>BIOL Award</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT Pop-Up Park</td>
<td>121 E Douglas</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>0.5 Acre</td>
<td>Bob Dickerson, Owner, City of Wichita</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>City of Wichita</td>
<td>Community park, free park</td>
<td>Stormwater Collection, civic engagement</td>
<td>ASLA Central States Design Award Winner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proposal for Troost

After reviewing previous projects, I have concluded that my proposed pocket park on Troost Avenue will need multiple contributors. In order to fund and construct a pocket park on Troost Avenue, I will most likely need to pursue multiple funding sources.

I found that sites with stormwater filtration systems and other environment-friendly alternative applications were more likely to receive municipal funding and support. The original vacant lots of the five sites studied previously served no purpose. Today they have been reactivated with multiple functions and benefits for the surrounding area. After completing this precedent analysis, I realize that my proposed neighborhood park could serve as a green space, a phytoremediation site, and a hub for face-to-face interaction.