

OVERVIEW

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBvCftpcpOs&feature=youtu.be>

I guess this is the place we get to be realistic about things. First of all, I want to thank the competition organizers for giving us this opportunity to knock ourselves out and see if we have what it takes to go another couple of rounds. It's obviously structured to weed out the weak of heart and build mental muscles for devoting oneself to the ultimate task. But why shouldn't a competition for a vacant lot be nearly as demanding as a competition for a \$100 million mixed-use development? There is poetic justice in that. The 'haves' and 'have-nots' can work together.

In that spirit, I'd like to mention that the team coordinator is willing to make a substantial and continuing commitment of time devoted solely to this project, for little compensation, rain or shine. This is the type of commitment that is most essential for making things happen. For inspiration, we can look to stories like the Israeli inventor who worked for years in his back yard to develop a cardboard bicycle when everybody said it couldn't be done, and whose affordable cardboard bicycle is now poised to change transportation patterns in the entire developing world.

At our church community garden, we give all the wonderful vegetables we grow to local food pantries and other not-for-profit organizations. A lot of people have been involved in the creation and development of this garden, but we have found that it's a core group of very dedicated individuals who keep the thing going through monsoons and snowflakes. At the day of this writing, December 7, we harvested and donated in the neighborhood of 100 radishes, 50 turnips, salad greens and other leafy green vegetables. Some credit for this, I believe, goes to global warming, but we cannot discount the power of faith and hope in the face of daunting conditions.

Therefore, even though there are some formidable obstacles awaiting those who continue on this journey into vacant land, we would ask the competition organizers and jurors not to give up hope. For instance, even though bamboo is fast-growing, it is not as fast-growing as depicted on our slide show, and plants sold at nurseries, while a lot less expensive than bricks and mortar, are still a considerable expense. However, we hope to garner donations of some established plants to speed the process, perhaps from a botanical garden or some wealthy landowners who would be only too glad to have their lovely but encroaching landscaping trimmed back without charge.

It is our sincere hope that the competition organizers/jury will provide us with feedback on what aspects of the entry seem most promising, what they would most like to see developed, what presentation exhibits would be most cogent, what questions answered. It is certain that the team needs to grow, that a conversation with the Missouri Botanical Garden should happen, that there should be people good with community outreach and education involved, that the energy of this project may very well spill out over geographical and individual boundaries. All are welcome in this place.

The writer and team coordinator is a believer in the healing power of sustainable social justice, a local architect and community garden worker, and the owner of a heavily used bicycle

Glossary (a beginning)

information kiosk Various commercial uses and current research can be highlighted in a demonstration area with built pieces. Bamboo is useful as a material for bike frames, scaffolding, structural building material, flooring, furniture. Entire houses are being constructed of bamboo. Free bamboo seedlings will be given out, and information for cultivation and homesteading will be made available. Biofuel farming will be investigated. Partnership with bamboo manufacturers, advocacy groups and growers will be explored.

artist installations One possibility: mockup of a Metro light rail station built entirely of bamboo, used as a bus shelter, an intimation of future potential rather than a ghost, suggesting a path for future urban development in the area. Or perhaps something not quite that literal, but still thoughtful. Partnerships with Metro and Citizens for Modern Transit and other arts-centered organizations such as museums, would be explored, as well as possible collaboration with the design consultants for the original Metro light rail platform canopy.

partnering Proposal for a bamboo-themed botanical garden on a larger scale located in the surrounding area will be investigated, and presented on the BambooLAB site. Possible partnership with the Missouri Botanical Garden, perhaps a 'sister garden' in China. A small satellite zoo park based on animals that thrive on bamboo might be considered. Partnership with the St. Louis Zoo would be investigated. Perhaps this is a joint effort with the Garden. A grant from Gateway Greening will be sought to augment the competition grant. On the lighter side, a sports event fund-raiser, conceivably called the 'Bamboo-athlon' involving kendo, javelin throw, hurdles and slalom running could become part of an annual neighborhood cultural activities festival.

Community involvement Portions of the competition grant may be used to fund to hire workers from the area to help with site cleanup, planting etc.