

Proposal: Pilot to of Adjacent Neighbors Land Acquisition Program in Old North

What is the true cost of vacant properties to the people who live and grow up next to them?

Studies in Richmond, Philadelphia, St. Paul, Chicago, and St. Louis have shown that residents adjacent to vacant and abandoned properties have a lower quality of life.

- **Crime:** “Vacant/abandoned properties had the highest correlation to the incidence of crime” in Richmond, VA.
- **Economic nuisance:** Over a five-year period, St. Louis spent \$15.5 million, or nearly \$100 per household, to demolish vacant buildings.
- **Lost tax revenue:** In St. Paul, Minnesota, demolishing a vacant building and leaving a vacant lot in its stead led to “\$26,397 in lost property tax revenue over a twenty-year period.”
- **Depressed property value:** In Philadelphia, PA, houses within 150 feet of a vacant or abandoned property experienced a net loss of \$7,627 in value. Properties within 150 to 300 feet experienced a loss of \$6,819 and those within 300 to 450 feet experienced a loss of \$3,542 (see diagram below).

What does this mean? This means that trendy proposals for community parks, gardens, and shared spaces will fail to solve one of the most conspicuous and detrimental problems: private ownership over neighboring land that leads to appreciation of surrounding homes, increased taxes generated from the plot, and a closed space so children do not have to play on the street.

Proposal Outline

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Site Selection: LOT 4. 1318-24 Warren Street, St. Louis, MO 63106

Theory of change: By empowering neighboring property owners of 1314 Warren Street to take ownership over the vacant lot adjacent to their building, they will have the chance to increase the value of their property, decrease their insurance rates, and improve their neighborhood.

Feasibility: Budget – \$10,000 budget will cover the labor time and processing fees associated with communicating and building buy in from necessary stakeholders in the City of St. Louis, ensuring clear deed and title to the vacant property, and associated paperwork. Space: Live power lines on a residential intersection and a separately owned adjacent corner lot limit potential usage for this space. Cost: No building or renovations will be necessary, reducing the need to raise additional funds.

Scalability: A successful pilot of an adjacent neighbor land acquisition program in St. Louis (also known as side-lot programs) would create a model and set a legal and policy precedent that could be replicated to applicable vacant properties adjacent to willing neighbors throughout St. Louis.

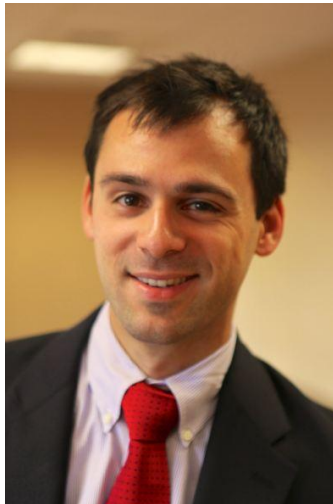
Overall: Our proposed solution is not sexy, but it is site specific, psychologically empowers neighbors to take control over their neighborhood and improve its aesthetics, financially empowers neighbors by appreciating their property values and community tax base, and has a long term impact on the quality of live for residents in Old North neighborhood

ROI: To the City of St. Louis, based on Philadelphia benchmark, is \$1.54 in benefits for every \$1.00 in costs from eliminating vacant land over 20 years.

Preliminary Project Activity Outline

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Project	Activities	Outcome
Confirm Feasibility	Review parcel zoning and history. Conduct best use and market study to evaluate local housing market, and confirm best economic use of property.	A letter of support from the alderman and City Council approval will be required for all purchases.
Confirm Viability of Resident	Purchaser is not delinquent on payments and proves ownership of adjacent parcel.	Deed and title transferred to neighbor(s) and neighbors sign commitment to maintain property.
Benchmark	Establish benchmark of home values, crime, and key statistics.	Review in 3-5 years to against same metrics to assess improvement in immediate vicinity.

PMBA 32: Team



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“Over the course of twenty years, the City of Philadelphia would receive \$1.54 in benefits for every \$1.00 in costs from eliminating vacant land (\$158.7 million in benefits, \$106.7 million investment). This figure stands before even considering the additional benefits that may “accrue to families and private businesses if the elimination of vacant land results in an increase in the value of their property, a decrease in insurance rates, or a greater interest by businesses to locate in a more attractive city.”