Project Flyway

As American cities have transitioned from places of industrial might to contemporary nodes of capitalism and culture, centered on technological information and service industries, several unintended consequences have played out on the urban landscape, including informal, ever-changing, open-ended, and vacant spaces. With a reframing of the reference perspective, however, one can argue that such spaces are the life-giving elements of the contemporary city. Open-systems theory, for example, posits that environments should be viewed as nonlinear feedback loops, tinged with a certain sense of unpredictability (Barnett n.d.). Similarly, the notion of "liminality" of place situates landscapes (particularly leftover, disregarded, and vacant post-industrial remnants) within a sea of change (Berger 2006). Such spaces are in-between landscapes, not fully able to be ascribed to a specific function, category, or idealistic endeavor because contemporary societal desires have not incised them with value or status. Perhaps, in this respect, these in-between spaces that often occupy large portions of postindustrial cities may be reconsidered under a new set of criteria that does not judge landscapes by the context of their current situations, but in terms of what they used to be and what they may become.

St. Louis is engaged in a revitalization effort to reinvigorate the "Old North" neighborhood by reinvesting in its people and its historic character. This effort builds upon current renewal efforts including a local farmers' market, neighborhood grocery co-op, outdoor movie area, and a history trail. These efforts have reconnected the commercial district to the neighborhood but more work is needed to repurpose the many vacant lots in the area. Simultaneously, crucial planning initiates are underway to implement St. Louis's first Sustainability Plan, recognizing the interaction and interoperability of social, environmental, and economic forces within the Gateway City. Project Flyway uses these forces advantageously, seamlessly flowing through boundaries of scale by viewing the demonstration plot as a pilot for an urban systems approach to sustainability, resulting in a design scheme that both carefully articulates the milieu of the individual plot and enables it to link to and benefit from other similarly engaged plots. At its core, the project strategy fundamentally addresses the three components of the St. Louis Sustainability Plan as well as the definition and perception of "vacancy."

This strategy will raise consciousness and promote a public dialog on issues of stormwater management, art, habitat engagement, community engagement and economic development. The proposed demonstration site will showcase innovative stormwater management methods (stormwater as art) such as downspout disconnects of building gutters from municipal stormwater system, rain gardens, amended soils and permeable paving to increase infiltration, rain barrels for stormwater reuse, and native plants for biodiversity. The site will be a place for habitat engagement particularly for the Eastern Bluebird (Sialia sialis) Missouri's State Bird. The design will include native plants such as the White Hawthorn, Missouri's State Flower and native fruiting shrubs such as black raspberries which bluebirds find tasty. This concept is transferable to additional lots and will begin to build a green infrastructure system to connect "Blue Birding" throughout the city. Citizens of St. Louis and tourist alike will come to the site to see the blue birds, artist renderings of Blue Bird Boxes as well as to learn more about the habitat of the State bird. The influx of visitors will spur economic development as the visitors will linger, purchase food and drink and souvenirs. Auburn University will use and share this asset as a living laboratory and teaching tool for local, regional and national education. The site will be included in the Auburn University Landscape Architecture Field Studies Program.

Team Qualifications

Charlene LeBleu, ASLA, AICP, associate professor and low impact development specialist, works with communities on green infrastructure and stormwater systems. She and her students have won many project awards including the Green for Life! in Auburn, AL which was chosen as an ASLA National Green Infrastructure and Stormwater Management Case Study.

http://www.asla.org/uploadedFiles/CMS/Advocacy/Federal_Government_Affairs/Stormwater_Case_Studies/Stormwater%20Case%20130%20Green%20for%20Life,%20Auburn,%20AL.pdf

Stephen Everett is an Assistant Planner in the Auburn University Facilities Management Campus Planning and Space Management Department. He is currently serving as Lead Staff on the Auburn University Campus Landscape Master Plan. The main campus landscape is defined as the sum of all open space including roadways and parking, requiring a comprehensive management approach to address the environmental and social objectives of the University. Conceptually, the exterior campus is made up of two landscapes: the ecological landscape, governed by biophysical processes, and, the cultural landscape, governed by the social activities and experience of Auburn's students, faculty, staff, alumni, and other supporters. Mr. Everett is working on the development of the University's first Campus Landscape Master Plan to engender the performance and value of both of these conceptual landscapes through a holistic approach based on ecology, stormwater best management practices and protecting/enhancing the image and character of Auburn University.

References

Barnett, R., n.d. A Ten Point Guide to Open-Systems. http://www.rodbarnett.co.nz/pub/news/a-ten-point-guide-to-open-system/files/A_ten_point_guide_to_open_systems_theory.pdf. August 2010.

Berger, A., 2006. Drosscape. Wasting Land in Urban America. Princeton Architectural Press, New York.