

Team Sunflower Power

Brief Overview:

Our idea is to grow sunflowers on the vacant lot because sunflowers grow well here and they naturally remove toxins from the soil. Sunflowers would provide immediate neighborhood beautification (which is proven to reduce criminal activity and improve mental health in the area.) Sunflowers provide several opportunities for economic development including selling the seeds as snacks and selling the oil for cooking or to refine into biodiesel fuel. We chose lot number four because we need a lot that gets maximum sunlight.

There are many benefits of sunflowers. According to GTECH, the pioneers of this model, property adjacent to green space increases in value up to 20%, whereas property adjacent to vacant land decreases considerably. This is a simple, innovative project that provides immediate benefits as well as long term economic development potential. It provides many opportunities for community engagement and building. It could also be easily replicated throughout the city.

Our team should be selected because we have the expertise to see the long term vision through, and to truly engage the community around this project to ensure its success. Ultimately this could brand the city of St. Louis as one of the most sustainable cities in the U.S.

Team Qualifications:

Jessica Freiberg has her Masters in Social Work from Washington University with a specialization in Environmental Justice. During her Masters program she gained experience in engaging low-income communities around an environmental issue. While at Wash U, she worked with the East Saint Louis Green Partnership to restore the greenhouse in Jones Park and helped develop several green business social enterprises. Currently she works as a Case Manager and Healthy Homes Specialist for People's Community Action Corp, where she educates clients on the North side of the city about household environmental toxins and asthma triggers. She also works with several community gardens.

Jackie Hutchinson has a BS in Business from Washington University in St. Louis; and MS degree in Urban Affairs and Policy Analysis, from Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville IL. She is Director Vice President of Operations for People's Community Action Corporation. She has implemented federal, state and private donation programs in the St. Louis area for more than 30 years. Jackie is actively involved in policy issues and a voice for low-income consumers on a local, state, and national level. She is board of Missouri Consumers Council, the National Fuel Funds Network, and the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT). NCAT seeks to find local solutions for a sustainable future and will be an excellent resource for this effort. www.ncat.org

Sara Edgar also has her masters in Social Work from Washington University with a specialization in Environmental Justice and Sustainable Development with a background in International Development. During her time at Washington University she focused her work on community development and environmental issues in North St. Louis, East St. Louis, and abroad. She currently serves as the Organizing Representative for the Beyond Coal Campaign at the Sierra Club.

Kathleen Logan Smith is the Executive Director of the Missouri Coalition for the Environment. She long has been an environmental activist and organizer. She began canvassing in college working with embattled communities and rural residents fighting polluters on issues like toxic waste, medical waste, Superfund, factory farms, and nuclear fuel facilities. As an organizer with the Medical Waste Incinerator Group, she helped to build a grassroots, community-based organization. This effort resulted in passage of a St. Louis City ordinance that ended medical waste incineration in St. Louis. Kathleen helped found Health & Environmental Justice-St. Louis (HEJ), an organization that exposed systemic failures to end childhood lead poisoning in St. Louis.

Dennis Potter is a master gardener who coordinates People's Community Action Corporation's community garden outreach program. He is retired from a long career in social services, most recently at the Human Development Corporation.

Video Link

This is a video of this idea being implemented in Pittsburgh:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJ2u1gQqjlc>