

## **Support for 5902 Clemons Vacant Lot Redesign and Activation**

The West End residents desire to improve the entrance to the area along Hamilton from Delmar to Page. We want residents, visitors to feel safe, sense of pride, hopeful inspired as they walk to school or drive by. Residents who own property adjacent to Hamilton have committed to create gardens or maintain greenspace along the road. One property near the entrance, 5902 Clemons, borders Hamilton and needs to grow from a vacant lot to an active community space and an attractive contributing property to the area. To activate this property we created a team composed of the St. Louis Arts Chamber of Commerce, ArtWorks, Pocket Parks and West End CID. Continuation of our plan and progress so far are the focus of this request for funding.

**St. Louis Arts Chamber of Commerce** is a membership-based collaborative of artists and patrons who are committed to establishing the greater St. Louis region as a premier arts destination. An advocate for all genres and mediums of the arts, we aim to build a strong network of individuals and organizations with a shared interest in promoting and supporting: professional growth, artistic expression, and community engagement. Our program, **Art Heals Violence**, is working with neighborhoods bringing arts to the table to creatively address priorities identified by residents. We are currently working with partners including ArtWorks, Pocket Parks, West End CID to artistically redesign the vacant lot at 5902 Clemons with resident input to reconfigure the property to include native gardens, pathways and artwork from local artists and ArtWorks as well as a sculpture/glass structure to commemorate the history and accomplishments of the West End.

**St. Louis ArtWorks** enriches the lives of the region's youth by providing art education, essential job skill training, and exposure to career opportunities through paid apprenticeships in the arts. St. Louis ArtWorks (SLAW) is a year-round job training program using art to teach essential life and job skills to underserved youth, ages 14-19. Programming takes place after school and on weekends during the fall and spring, and five hours a day, five days a week for six weeks during the summer. Youth apprentice with professional artists to develop art, life, and communication skills. All apprentice works of art are either commissioned by local companies and organizations, or sold at public sales.

Each program combines in-depth art instruction, employment training, and life skills focused on personal health, fiscal literacy, and environmental stewardship. In all programs, teens earn a stipend, are required to have a bank account, and attend financial literacy training. Activities such as client meetings, open house events, and public sales give apprentices a chance to practice presentation and public speaking skills, and leave better prepared for the future with community contacts, resumes, and a portfolio of work.

**Pocketparks** reimagines and redevelops unused plots of land to provide communities with active and beautiful recreational areas. Pocketparks are small but make a big impact. By focusing on small outdoor parks, we can quickly provide a positive impact without extensive resources. Through community

engagement, each park is designed to meet the specific needs of the neighborhood in which it is located. Every park incorporates three things: activity, artwork, and opportunity. Pocketparks not only offers beautiful recreational areas, but works to increase safety, boost community pride, and contribute to economic development. Pocketparks would be creating opportunities for local businesses to benefit from the space through programs and events. This helps with higher foot traffic throughout the area shaping a safer community.

### **West End CID**

The purpose of a community improvement district is to develop a comprehensive plan and budget to meet the needs of a community. Benefits include security enhancements, infrastructure, marketing and economic development. Our proposed West End South CID intends to improve our neighborhood infrastructure as a way of maintaining residential and commercial diversity while honoring historic and social characteristics which adds to the uniqueness of St. Louis neighborhoods. It is one of the first North of Delmar. The West End is in the process of developing a comprehensive neighborhood plan that will be adopted by the city in 2022. Reducing vacancy, parks, safety and security, health, wellness, nature are priorities. Activating this space will speak to all of those priorities. It will show residents the possibilities. You can look at the website [westend plan.com](http://westendplan.com) for more information on it.

### **Project Demographics**

Audience impacted by this project include the residents of the West End Neighborhood as well as those who transit the area. Per the 2010 Census (the latest available), the West End Neighborhood has a population of 6,574 people. The population is approximately 8% Caucasian, 85% African American with the balance made up of AAPI, Native American, those identified as biracial and others not specified. Assuming the neighborhood has a similar demographic make up as the City as a whole, the area is almost 52% female with a median household income of \$30,500. Almost 20% of the population is under 18 years old while those 65 and over comprise approximately 14% of the population. These two groups who are known to frequent greenspaces comprise 34% of the population (approximately 2300 people). This number significantly increases when caregivers for each of these age groups are included. While these numbers represent those residents directly impacted, an additional 3100 vehicles traverse Hamilton on a daily basis. With running stop signs and speeding significant issues on Hamilton directly impacting resident safety, an additional goal of the vacant lot redesign with the memorial project sculpture is to increase the number of people who at least pause at the stop sign.

### **Crime Rates**

Crime rate in the neighborhood for 2020 according to St. Louis Metropolitan Police: (compared to 2019, increase in crime is in red, decrease is in green)

Person related:	Homicide: 8
	Rape: 9
	Robbery 25
	Aggravated Assault 97
Property Related:	Burglary 52
	Larceny 160
	Vehicle Theft 49

The redesign and activation of the property is part of a larger effort to redesign a minimum of seven vacant lots in the neighborhoods along the Hodiamont Tracks.

## **Crime and Vacancy**

In black neighborhoods asthma rates are higher, vacancy has negative effects on physical and mental health, education outcomes. Reducing vacancy has been shown to reduce gun violence in particular. Neighborhood and built environment is one pillar of a 5 tier system that affects one's health. Research has shown that violent crime occurs around vacant lots around the country. In St. Louis there are over 20,000 vacant properties. According to the SLMPD, in 2020 alone, homicide rates increased over 70%. Other large cities, such as Philadelphia, have seen compelling reductions in crime where vacant lots have been transformed into usable land. Best practices include bringing in viable businesses and community development projects such as this proposal that help better the community.

## **Experience with Violence Prevention and Vacant Lot Redesign**

The St. Louis Arts Chamber of Commerce's founder Sandy Brooks has her doctorates in education and public policy as well as certifications as a master gardener and master naturalist. She has redeveloped lots throughout the city and the county as part of her work with the Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, several churches and residents in the area. Pocketparks President and Founder, Samantha Lee Smugala, and STL Artworks Board Member, Tonnie Gilpse-Smith, both sit on the Reinvest and Reuse Committee of the Vacancy Collaborative, a coalition of partners dedicated to reducing the negative impact of vacant property in the city of St. Louis. Through this involvement, they have collaborated to adopt and engrain specific considerations and practices to help tackle vacancy and violence prevention. These include community engagement and awareness, vacant lot activation, beautification, and more.

## **Grant Proposal for St. Louis VPC Grant**

### **Overview**

This proposal addresses two priorities: improving the built environment/vacant lots and responding to community trauma. The St. Louis Arts Chamber (STLACC), ArtWorks, Pocket Parks (PP) and West End CID propose to improve the vacant lot at 5902 Clemons to include sustainable design and flora as well as a memorial to community trauma and successes. This grant request is specifically for the vacant lot redesign on which the history project will later be placed.

### **The Property at 5902 Clemons**

The property is a vacant lot adjacent to the well landscaped yard of a master gardener. She, along with the residents of the neighborhood have participated in community forums about the frontage property along Hamilton from Delmar to Page. The consensus is that this area with its multiple vacant lots, individual owners commitment and the commitment of the community is ripe for a major change. The lot at 5902 Clemons sits between a lot being developed as a neighborhood garden and private property committed to be a greenspace. Hence, improvement of this property already expands the effect of the funds by being a centerpiece in a larger project.

The neighborhood has had, and is in the process of gaining more, community input as to the use of the space. On June 26th, the community is invited to a pop up event at the property to gain resident suggestions to be incorporated in sample designs for the property (see samples on page 5). On August 7th, additional input and potential volunteers will be sought as part of the Bicentennial ArtFest and Ice Cream Social taking place along the Hodiament Tracks a few blocks north of the property.

However, there are some basics that are needed to activate the resident suggestions. These include:

1. Survey of the property
2. Architectural design of the major memorial project which will directly address community trauma, history, present and future (see appendix 1)
3. Landscape design of the space with hardscape and plantings as well as space for temporary and permanent artwork to directly address the environmental approval of vacant lots with sustainable planting (see appendix 2 for sample plantings)
4. Permits for any construction of walkways or memorial if necessary
5. Installation (labor and materials) for any hardscape
6. Installation (labor and materials) for the flora. Preference is to hire local youth to install the plan.
7. Maintenance plan

Items currently being donated to the project include survey of the property (possibly), architectural design of the memorial project with stamped architecture plans, and landscape design plans with lists of appropriate low maintenance native flora. Funding is needed to obtain the necessary permits, install the hardscape and first phase flora. Phase two will require additional funds or donated support for installation of the Memorial Project (glass sculpture structure based upon the Gun Violence Awareness Project). This proposal covers the permits, installation of the hardscape and first phase of sustainable flora.

### **Community engagement opportunities**

By enhancing this vacant lot, we are turning a neighborhood burden into a community asset. The new park will incorporate culture and art as well as honor the neighborhoods past, present, and future. Neighborhood organizations and other groups can utilize the park for meetings, events, and activities that support community building and socialization.

### **Youth Focus**

Youth programs can participate in not only the building of the park, but use the park as an educational reference for future parks and projects. ArtWorks is working with its artists to design visual and sculptural elements for the site.

## **Evaluation Tools**

### **Surveys**

Surveys have been used for resident input both electronically and personally. They are also included in events around the property such as the June 26<sup>th</sup> event seeking resident input and the August 7<sup>th</sup> Bicentennial ArtFest and Ice Cream Social.

### **Events/Attendance**

There are activation events planned to solicit resident input but the park design is to encourage pop up events and community engagement throughout the year. Partners such as the West End Neighborhood and ArtWorks will be utilizing the space for events in the future.

### **Maintenance Program**

Two organizations are in the process of determining a maintenance program.

### **Vacancy Reduction**

While redesigning the lot as a community friendly park is unlikely to be the deciding factor in decreasing vacancy rates, it is well documented that improvements in vacant lots do relate to decreased vacancy rates and increased property values on a macro level.

### **Crime Rate**

As above, the change in one lot is unlikely to dramatically change global crime rates, it is well documented that decreasing vacant lots and activating community use on a global scale dramatically reduces incidents of crime.

### **Closing**

The 5902 Clemons property is not as much of a park project as it is about community, activation, violence prevention. Our team is working to weave in vibrant spaces for a more active, dense, beautiful urban fabric. We are creating a platform using parks to reactivate the community and build up the ecosystem of the West End Neighborhood.

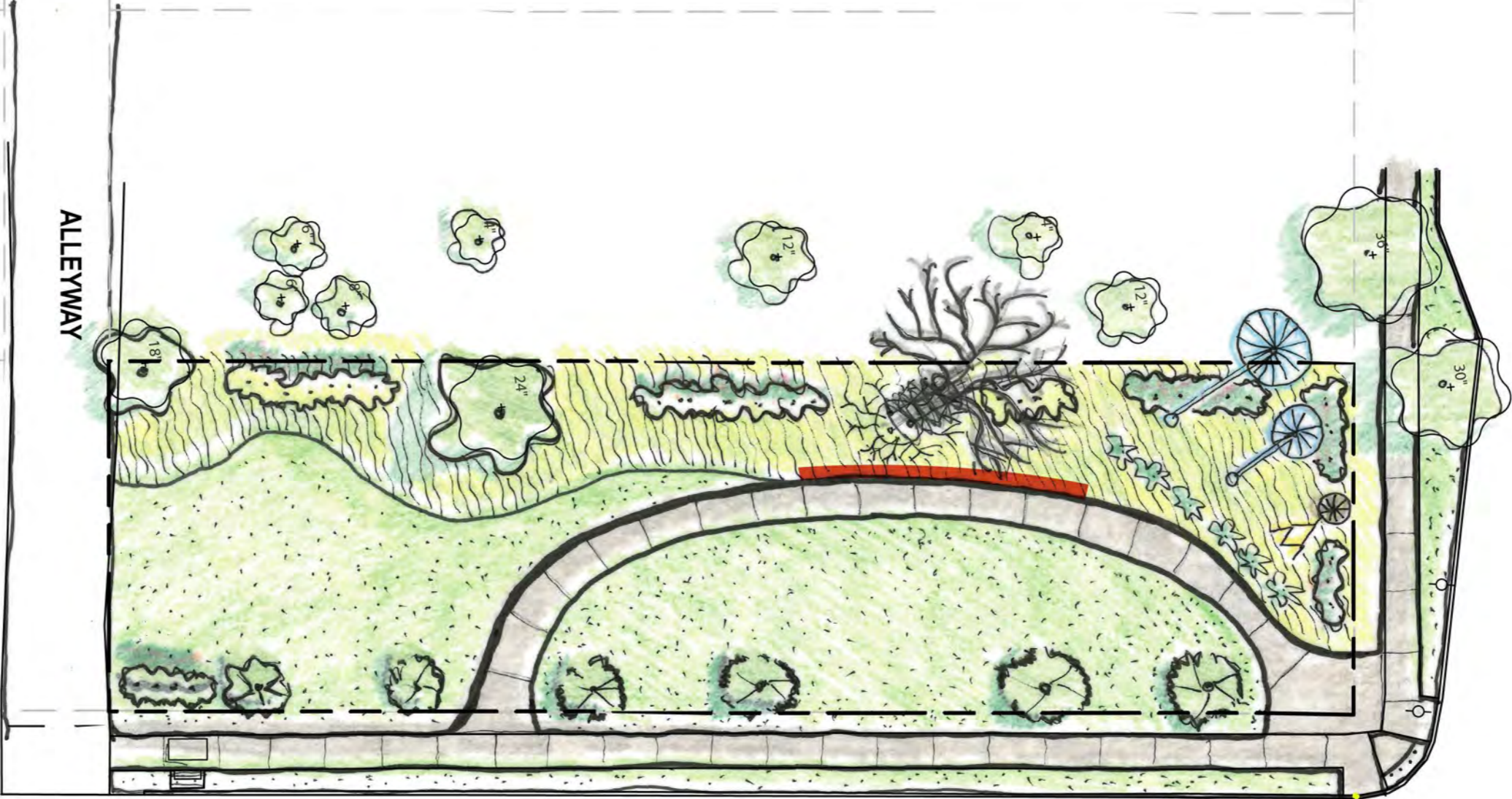
Sample designs:







CLEMENS AVENUE



HAMILTON AVENUE

ALLEYWAY













