

Walbrook's North Ave. Temporary Community Garden. Calvin McCargo Jr.

The Walbrook neighborhood is a place that is filled with crime, lost hope, lost space and abandoned homes, hard bricks and cold lifeless streets. Some of the people in the neighborhood have lost faith in their community and see it as a lost cause better just left alone until someone comes in and stops the crime and fills the abandoned houses. Through my research I feel that it is best for the community to come in and make a change themselves. The implementation of a temporary community garden will help to beautify this run down and barren space while influencing other such projects in the neighborhood thus helping to improve the look of the neighborhood and eventually the property value and then the people.

For this project I first had a few meetings with the North Ave. Task Force and discussed with them the situation and what I planned to do for them. The people on the task force showed interest in a temporary community garden that would take the place of one of the numerous abandoned lots to help beautify the area. Through my research I found that the implementation of such a garden could have a number of positive affects on such a neighborhood. Some of these are things like the increase in property value, the strengthening of community and the improvement of the population's mental health. Studies have shown that nature is a necessity in healthy human functioning and that with the introduction of vegetation into a hard brick community it helps to improve social problems.

After approval on a final plan of action I went into the neighborhood to talk to the people to find out what they felt would work best for their community. To my surprise many of the people I talked to could care less. Some felt that nothing could help improve the community while others felt that the crime and drugs were the only real problem and that no community garden will ever help this neighborhood with such problems. Among the dark there were some that still held on to a twinkle of hope and understanding. They had suggestions on what would work best in the community garden and why they also felt it would be a beneficial idea.

Now we are in the final stages of implementing the garden. We have a design and more people are getting excited about the idea of a beautiful place to go within there perished neighborhood. Hope seems to be slowly creeping back into the dark revealing light for a better looking tomorrow. Just the idea of a place that will be so lavish and green with vegetation is already improving the mindsets of some. I believe that once it is built that even more will start to see its benefit and hopefully this will influence a trend within the neighborhood; community gardens on all open lots of lost space.

I learned a lot about working with people and how persistence and a positive attitude can start to change even some of the most negative situations and mindsets.