Lot-by-Lot: Baltimore Strategies for Creating a New Urban Landscape through Vacant Lot Reuse

Moderator: Mark Cameron
Presenters: Miriam Avins, Rashelle Celestin, Valerie Rupp, Beth Strommen
Agenda

• Overview
  – Vacant lots in Baltimore
  – Baltimore City initiatives
  – Featured nonprofit programs
    • Parks & People Foundation
    • Baltimore Green Space

• Charrette

• Q&A Panel
Currently.....

- 30,000 vacant properties (14,000 vacant lots + 16,000 vacant bldgs)
- Only 25% owned by the City
- Vacant properties concentrated in ‘distressed’ neighborhoods
- Vacants to Value Program is working well in areas not considered ‘distressed’.
Most Common Vacant Lot Types in Baltimore

- Corner Lot
- Missing Tooth
- Inner Block
- Remnant
- Vacant Block
  - Whole Block
  - One Side
- Swiss Cheese
Challenges associated with vacant properties

- Weak housing markets / insufficient housing demand
- Abandonment is random - gap tooth vacancy and demolition
- Poor condition of the vacant land
- Trash and dumping
- Crime and safety (fire)
- Maintenance is costly
- Costs / time for demolition and acquisition
Over the next ten years...

4,000 structures will be demolished

*Change to Grow* (Mayor’s Ten-Year Financial Plan)
Accelerate the demolition component of the City’s Vacants to Value initiative by capitalizing a new Blight Elimination Fund.

*Strategically planned whole block demolition rather than scattered site / gap tooth*
GROWING GREEN INITIATIVE

USING VACANT LAND TO CREATE GREENER NEIGHBORHOODS
By strategically planning new demolition and combining it with creative greening techniques, we have the opportunity to change vacant properties from a problem ...
...into a resource for transforming communities
The Growing Green Initiative (GGI) is a City-led effort to use sustainable, innovative, and cost-effective practices for stabilizing and holding land for redevelopment, and reusing vacant land to green neighborhoods, reduce stormwater runoff, grow food, and create community spaces that mitigate the negative impacts of vacant properties and set the stage for growing Baltimore.

This initiative will support a number of other City initiatives and goals, including:

- Stabilize distressed neighborhoods by greening and maintaining vacant lots so that they are assets and not liabilities
- Strengthen the social fabric of neighborhoods by helping communities and non-profits adopt and green vacant land
- Attract new development by re-using vacant land for permanent, public benefit – such as strategically placed new open space
- Support City MS4 stormwater permit requirements, and support new economic development by providing opportunities to construct cost-efficient stormwater management best-management practices on vacant land
- Increase the City’s tree canopy by planting trees on or near vacant lots
- Create jobs and job training opportunities and increase access to locally grown, healthy foods in Baltimore’s food deserts by creating new farms on vacant land
Elements of the Growing Green Initiative

• Improving City policies and processes to support greening as buildings are demolished and land assembled

• Working to develop a strong vacant lot maintenance strategy.

• Developing and supporting public/private partnerships (*City / Community Groups / NGO’s / State and Federal Gov’t / Developers*)

• Using investment and partnerships to leverage resources (*State and Federal Gov’t / NGO’s / Foundations / Citizens and Private investment*)

• Using a ‘Green Pattern Book’ to guide greening strategies
CITY AGENCIES
• Growing Green Work Group
• Acquire lots through tax sale and foreclosure (HCD)
• Use the Green Pattern Book in making decisions about re-using vacant land
• Agreements / leases / MOU’s
• Refer applicants to NGOs
• Participation in pilot projects
• Participation in community outreach and engagement
• Vacant Lot Maintenance
• Support Vacants to Value and GGi using designated Blight Elimination Funds

COMMUNITY GROUPS / CDCs / FAITH BASED
• Adopt vacant lots and create community-managed open spaces (gardens, etc)
• Monitor lots (311)
• Use Green Pattern Book for neighborhood scaled planning for vacant land reuse
• Participate in a pilot vacant lot maintenance program

NGOs
• Provide technical assistance to groups greening vacant lots
• Provide assistance to groups wanting to adopt vacant lot
• Provide funding assistance
• Use the Green Pattern Book in making decisions about re-using vacant land
• Participate in GGi policy meetings to provide feedback and identify partner opportunities
• Adopt and care for vacant lots
• Assist with vacant lot maintenance
• Support Power In Dirt (Parks and People Foundation)
The Green Pattern Book is a tool to support the greening of vacant land by City agencies, NGOs, community-based organizations, and individual residents by creating a ‘common language’. This document includes information on:

- **Visioning**
- **Site selection**
- **Guidelines**
- **Resources**
How Do We Grow a **Green** City?

Promoting eight different green “patterns” for re-using vacant land:

- Clean and Green
- Community Managed Open Space
- Urban Agriculture
- Green Parking
- Stormwater Management
- Urban Forests
- Neighborhood Parks
- Mixed Greens
GROWING GREEN INITIATIVE PROJECTS

“Clean and Green” Pattern Projects
~75%

- Care A Lot Program
- Vacant Lot Turf Study
- Traveling Art
- Urban Grazing
- Fencing

Other 7 Green Pattern Projects
~25%

- Homegrown Baltimore Farms
- Stormwater Mitigation Sites
- Baltimore Growing Green Design Competition Sites
Baltimore Growing Green Design Competition: Vacant Lots Transformed

GGI and Competition Announced May 2014 with $300,000 in funding for winning designs

40 Pre-selected sites were identified

3 Public Workshops held and attended by 60+ participants from residents, community associations, NGOs, and design/engineering firms

11 Teams comprised of community members, NGOs, and design engineering firms submitted applications and designs in August 2014
7 Winners Announced in September 2014 Award Ceremony

Real Food Farm’s Flower Factory

Civic Work’s Green Parking Lot

Jane’s House of Inspiration Recovery Fruit Orchard
Druid Height’s Peace Park

Bridgeview Greenlawn’s Community Enhancement Project

Hollins Roundhouse’s Lots of Art

32nd and Harford Road Gateway Garden
Adopt-A-Lot

Baltimore Housing Land Resources Division

Rashelle Celestin, Asset Manager
Rashelle.Celestin@baltimorecity.gov
What Are We Facing?

- 4,232 vacant lots owned by MCC
- Blight
- Annual maintenance costs
• Request is made to Dept. of General Services (usually via telephone)
  – request vetted by checking location, ownership, occupancy type and responsible agency and whether they need water access
  – logged into Access spreadsheet
  – DGS prepares cover letter and Adopt-A-Lot license and sends to licensee for signature

• Once the document was received, Adopt-A-Lot license is circulated for signatures
  – This is the part of the process that took the most amount of time. Everything was done by interagency mail and Adopt-A-Lot licenses sit around for too long.
    – goes to responsible agency(s) for signature
    – goes to law department
    – back to Dept. of General Services
    – out to licensee

• Limited permission given
Revamping the Adopt A Lot System

- Make the process electronic
- Extend license terms
- Expand permissions
- Give gardeners access to water
• Partnered with Bureau of Water & Wastewater
• Established fixed rate of $120 for the garden season
• Created a service request for installation of spigots in water vault
• Convening appropriate agencies
• Amending license language
• Integration with data systems and website
• Providing water
Adopt-A-Lot Program

Adopting a city-owned vacant lot can improve the living conditions in your neighborhood. You and your neighbors can create a peaceful space for everyone to share. It not only improves your neighborhood, it helps the City become a beautiful and productive place to live for everyone!

We've STREAMLINED the Process!

In addition to calling 410-396-4111 or emailing V2V@baltimorecity.gov, you now have the option of researching vacant lots and applying for an Adopt-A-Lot license online!

Click here to view the list of vacant lots that are available to adopt.

Click here to apply for an Adopt a Lot License.

We're GIVING YOU ACCESS to Water!!

Thinking about how you are going to water your new greenspace or garden? The City has partnered with the Water Department to give adopt-a-lot participants access to water for a low fixed-rate of $120.00 per garden season (March 1st thru November 30th). *If you have already adopted a lot and just need water, you only need to complete this form.

Click here if you would like to apply for water for your garden

We're CONNECTING You to Resources!!

There are many non-profit groups that can assist you with starting up a garden, greenspace or continuing your existing garden. You can also download our tips for converting a vacant lot in a garden.

Click here for links to resources.
Online License Request Form Submission
You Can Adopt One of These Lots!!

*Lots designated as "Adopted" or "CMOS" are not available

*Although a lot appears on this list, it is not automatically eligible for adoption. Once your application is received it will be reviewed for eligibility and you will be notified.

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<tr>
<th>Adopted Lot</th>
<th>Power In Dirt Target Area</th>
<th>Community Managed Open Space</th>
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<tr>
<td>1572 007</td>
<td>2413 E CHASE ST</td>
<td>BIDDLE STREET 12-3X70 DHCD</td>
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<td>0325 086A</td>
<td>NS OF ROBERT ST, 284 FT +/- NE OF EUTAW PL</td>
<td>BOLTON HILL 0.965 ACRES DHCD</td>
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<td>0355 034</td>
<td>1743 PARK AVE</td>
<td>BOLTON HILL 30X85 DHCD</td>
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<td>SWS MASON ST 49 FT, SE OF W LAFAYETTE AV</td>
<td>BOLTON HILL 5-6X20-7 DHCD</td>
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<tr>
<td>0204 069</td>
<td>SS BOOTH ST 218 FT W OF, SMALLWOOD ST</td>
<td>BOOTH-BOYD 37-6X52-6 Tax Sales</td>
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<tr>
<td>0206 029</td>
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Managing the Data
SUCCESS!!

- In the 13 months leading up to 6/30/11 there were a total of 162 lots adopted
- In FY 12, from the launch in August thru May 31st – In 9 months there were 649 lots adopted
- This reflects a **300.6%** increase in the number of properties adopted as a result of the initiative
- As of 12/30/14, there were **1,046** lots adopted
- Turnaround time has been reduced from 4-6 weeks to **TWO weeks**
Partnering With Land Trusts

Approved a policy to allow sale to approved land trusts for $1.00 for permanent preservation as a community managed open space.
Side Yard Program

- Allows sale of city-owned vacant lots to adjacent owner-occupants and non-owner occupants for a fixed price of $500 per 1500 square feet
- Allows sale of city-owned vacant lots to non owner occupants for a fixed price of $1,000 per 1500 square feet, respectively
Ash Street Garden
Valerie Rupp, Assistant Director of Community Greening & Great Parks Programs
valerie.rupp@parksandpeople.org
ONE PARK
Background & Programmatic Resource Overview

- Parks & People
  - Gwynns Falls Trail Project
  - Community Forestry
  - Youth Outdoor Recreation
  - Research

- URI Intern Program
- Schoolyards

- Neighborhoods & Vacant Lots

- Watersheds

- Environ. Education

- Interdisc. Youth Programs

- Green Jobs for Adults

- Water Quality Improv’t Projects

- Green Infra. Projects

- One Park Schools/Whole Community Approach

- Strategy, Planning & Policy
Resources for Vacant Lot Improvement

- Land Access
- Training & Technical Assistance
- In-kind and Financial Resources
- Collaboration and Stakeholder Coordination
- Project Design and Management
- Volunteer Project Management
- Landscape & Tree Services (social enterprise)
Land Access

- Power in Dirt (city-owned)
- Self-help nuisance abatement assistance and referrals
Training & Technical Assistance

- Free trainings
  Examples:
  - Project development
  - Community organizing
  - Grantwriting
- Skill-building workshops
  Examples:
  - Building raised beds
  - Raising chickens in the city
  - Rain garden management
In-kind and Financial Resources

- Community Grants
  - Neighborhood Greening Grants
  - Clean Water Mini-Grants
  - Garden Irrigation Fund
- Community Greening Resource Network (CGRN)
  - Materials & supplies
  - Tool libraries
  - Give-away days
  - Hands-on volunteer learning days
Collaboration and Stakeholder Coordination

- Partnering with community groups, governments, business
  - Grant opportunities
- Partner in City of Baltimore programs - Growing Green Initiative, Power in Dirt and TreeBaltimore
  - Develop vacant lot reuse strategies
  - Annual adopted lot assessment
  - Grant seeking/joint projects
  - Plantings and giveaways
  - Partner involvement in advisory committees
Image from “Preliminary Results of the Baltimore City Stewardship Mapping & Assessment Project (Stew-MAP)” presentation by Michele Romolini, Ph.D. (January 3, 2013)
Project Design and Management

- Urban Forestry
  - Community engagement and projects
  - Partnerships (TreeBaltimore, etc.)
  - Training and Technical Assistance
    - TreeVision
- Green infrastructure projects
Volunteer Management

- Community organizing
- Preparation and on-site coordination
- Tools
- Equipment
- Supplies
- Training
- Post activity reflections
Landscape & Tree Services

- Fully licensed and insured contractual team
- Workforce development programs
- Community involvement
Miriam Avins, Executive Director
miriam.avins@baltimoregreenspace.org
Criteria

- Request comes from the community
- Community can maintain the site for the long term
- Site really benefits the neighborhood
- Match between the soil and how the site is used
Process

• BGS meets with Site Manager and others.
• Application filled out. Goes to board.
• Research. Another board vote.
• Acquisition.
• Celebration! Insurance! Annual visit! Technical Assistance!
Greeners’ Needs

→

Research

→

Programs and Advocacy
Preserving Community-Managed Open Spaces:
Criteria and Process

February 2010
Office of Sustainability
Department of Planning
Baltimore City

with assistance from
Baltimore Green Space
Garden Irrigation Fund

Deadline: March 15, 2013 at 5:00 p.m.

More information coming soon at: www.parksandpeople.org

The Garden Irrigation Fund (GIF) is a competitive fund that can provide up to $3,000 in services to install irrigation in community-managed green spaces. This program is designed to help community-managed green spaces that have tried but have not been able to access water service with the City of Baltimore Department of Housing and Community Development’s Adopt-a-Lot program (http://www.baltimorehousing.org/adopt-a-lot) or prefer and can demonstrate a need for an onsite line to be installed.

Eligibility

- Any community group managing a green space in Baltimore City may apply. Applicants must commit to securing or providing funds in excess of the award amount, a maximum of $3,000.

Review Criteria

- Projects should:
  - Engage and provide benefits to the neighborhood and/or the larger Baltimore community.
  - Include active volunteer involvement in the management of the green space.
  - Show clear and logical plans for maintenance and sustainability of the green space.
- Demonstrate a reasonable need for irrigation.

Preference will be given to sites that have been in existence for three or more growing seasons.

All GIF applicants will receive an estimate for installing an irrigation line at the project site. GIF award recipients must work with the pre-approved contractor selected by GIF partners to keep costs at a minimum and ensure that proper procedure is followed.

To discuss a potential project or obtain an application, please contact Valerie Rupp, Community Greening Manager for the Parks & People Foundation at valerie.rupp@parksandpeople.org or 410-448-5663 ext.114.
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BALTIMORE'S FOREST PATCHES:
EMERALD ASSETS FOR ECOSYSTEM
Legend
- Tree Canopy
- Park Land
- Forest inside Parks
- Forest inside Parks
- 15% of Tree Canopy
- Forest outside Parks
- 20% of Tree Canopy

Forest Patches
at least 10,000 s. f. or greater
in Baltimore City
Lot by Lot: Charrette

City of Baltimore
GREEN PATTERN BOOK
USING VACANT LAND TO CREATE GREENER NEIGHBORHOODS
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