

## **Youth Development**

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Given that nearly 35 percent of the Olivette Park population is under the age of 18, it is imperative that the needs of youth be addressed in the redevelopment of the neighborhood. It is sometimes easy to ignore youth as a necessary component of building a strong neighborhood coalition when youth are not recognized as a legitimate constituency group or when adults lack the resources to make youth participation an important part of neighborhood improvement. Youth participation in the community contributes to organizational development and creates lasting community change. The youth improvement initiative seeks to create a sense of “place” in Olivette Park and the city, to ensure that youth have a strong voice in decision-making, to urge community leaders to view youth as a resource in Olivette park and to the city and financially commit to that vision, and, finally, to develop a strong support base for youth in the community. In order for the following programs to work effectively, a strong leadership base must emerge to sustain the ideas and work of youth in Olivette Park. Such a leadership structure might include: a coalition of public officials, the school board, the park district, the public library, 4-H, Junior Achievement, the Boy’s Club, social service and health providers, business leaders, neighborhood association members and religious leaders.



*Figure 9.1. Young artists involved in the Katherine Dunham Center for the Arts and Humanities*

## **Project One**

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### **Create a Youth Services Directory**

*Description* A directory of youth services and programs in Olivette Park and in East St. Louis would categorize and summarize those services and programs so that adults and youth have a reference for quickly and simply matching their needs and interests with an appropriate agency in East St. Louis.

*Rationale* The general lack of awareness about existing youth resources available to youth in the neighborhood and the city is a major concern to youth service providers and residents. It is important to remind citizens that many of the services provided for youth and their families are free and open to all residents. A system of coordination and information sharing amongst the organizations is essential for an overall youth improvement initiative.

*Activities*

- 1. Inventory neighborhood youth organizations.*  
Using the list of social service and religious institutions provided in this plan, contact a representative from each organization and try to set up an interview with her or him. Also contact any other institutions that provide youth services and programs. The East St. Louis Youth Commission, a 42-member umbrella organization of youth service providers, can help assemble a complete list. Kelvin Jones, the Executive Director of the commission and assistant to the Mayor, is the contact person at 482.6600. The commission meets on the second Tuesday of each month.
- 2. Design survey instrument.*  
Develop a short survey form that includes the name, address, phone number, contact person, and short description of the service or programs that the agency provides. Use a survey form similar to the social service and business interview instrument provided in the appendix of the Olivette Park Data Book as a guide for collecting important information about the agency.

3. *Publish and print the directory.*

The agencies that are listed in the directory should be asked if they would print at least 50 copies of the original directory to distribute. Each agency should be responsible for reproducing the directory to fulfill additional requests for the directory after the initial distribution. A directory titled *Assuring a Healthier Tomorrow* compiled by the East St. Louis Task Force in 1993 was successfully reproduced and distributed in a similar manner. Businesses could also have the opportunity to advertise through the directory.

4. *Distribute the directory.*

Enlist a group of kids to circulate the directory door to door, in the schools, and at all youth agencies throughout the city. The agencies included in the directory should also make copies available at those agencies.

5. *Produce a monthly event calendar.*

Youth service providers also stressed the need for promoting their services through a monthly calendar of events for youth and their families. Kids could design the layout for such a calendar and take responsibility for publishing and distributing it each month. A monthly events calendar would also make updating the directory an easy task each year because the organizations involved would be connected throughout the year. A similar circulation strategy could be used. The events in the calendar could also be posted on weekly cable shows.

*Timeline* The interview instrument needs to be designed first and then the committee should allow for two months to schedule and complete all interviews. Once the information is collected, the directory can be published by one or two volunteers with access to a computer and desk top publishing software. This part of the project may take a month to complete. Distribution of the directory should be on-going. The monthly events calendar should be published and distributed immediately following the directory. The directory should be updated every year through one on one interviews.

*Costs* Reproduction costs will be associated with both the directory and the calendar. The costs will depend on whether or not the directory will have more than one color ink, color photographs, special

paper, binding and any other special features. As a prototype is developed, the document should be sent to a printer for an initial price estimate. The estimate should be based on at least 1,000 copies. Usually, the more copies purchased, the cheaper each individual copy becomes. The committee should then decide if certain features are still within the budget based on that estimate. For example, a 60-page, bound, 3-4 color copies directory would cost about \$20.00. The calendar may be a bit more expensive if the children decide to use a lot of color of photographs in the design. Joe Lewis at Crusader Press, can provide initial cost estimates before printing the directory or a calendar. A graduate student from a regional university in Social Work could be contacted to assemble the information for the directory. The student may do this for internship credit or as a volunteer and therefore the costs would be minimal.

*Funding* Local businesses that hope to sell products and services to children and their families might underwrite the costs of producing the calendar and the directory. Local banks are another potential sponsoring source for such publications. Another approach to covering the publication costs would be to request that each organization represented in the directory make either a monetary donation or a material donation to help defray the costs. Organizations could donate supplies like binding, cover pages, or bulk copies.

*Resources* Mr. Joe Lewis at Crusader Press could be asked to provide reproduction cost estimates.

Mr. Willie Reed of the East St. Louis Drug and Alcohol Task Force coordinated the publishing of the *Assuring a Healthier Tomorrow* directory in 1993 and could be contacted about effective distribution efforts at 482.7672.

## **Project Two**

### **Design, Improve, and Maintain the Bolden Community Garden as an Annual Summer Youth Program**

*Description* The project would involve students who want to learn and work through a real community development project throughout the design and implementation phases. The project would prepare youth for future employment, encourage them to think creatively and logically through problems and improve self-esteem. The Garden could possibly function as a source of summer employment for neighborhood youth, possibly in connection with the Farmers Market. Students would be introduced to the Olivette Park Neighborhood Revitalization implementation effort. They would develop skills in landscape design, basic construction, community activism, and entrepreneurship. Their involvement would also instill a sense of ownership over the garden.

*Rationale* Given the fact that most open spaces in Olivette Park are underutilized for creative or productive purposes, the Bolden Community Garden is a refreshing alternative use of open space. This program would enhance the Bolden Garden by linking a neighborhood beautification effort with the economic, social, and educational needs of youth in Olivette Park. By developing and maintaining a community garden, youth will learn about and value the educational, economic and social resources within their neighborhood. Furthermore, youth will develop employment skills, build self-esteem and life skills, value team work, and become involved in the community. The neighborhood will benefit from the program aesthetically and socially. The garden could also become a neighborhood gathering place were residents will have immediate access to locally-grown food.

*Activities* 1. *Contact a member of the Curriculum Board.*  
As recommended in the cultural resource initiative chapter, the “schools in the community/community in the schools” curriculum provides an excellent opportunity to combine learning and community development skills. The garden project would transform traditional classroom assignments with hands-on community improvement projects, and initiate a program that will build self-esteem, self-empowerment, and social responsibility. The com-

munity garden program should be integrated into teacher lesson plans in science, social studies, art, and math. The curriculum should incorporate hands-on demonstrations on plant propagation, transplanting, soil amendments and preparation, composting and harvesting, which should be supplemented by reading assignments and written critiques. Issues of sustainability, marketing, and product development should also be discussed.

*2. Recruit students.*

Those students that successfully master the lessons focused on ecology and show an interests in developing the community garden should be invited to participate in a summer work crew that puts those lessons into action. A group of eight to 10 students interested in working on the garden over the summer should be organized in early April. They should then meet once a week to discuss their plans for the summer. A committee consisting of a teacher involved in creating and implementing the “schools in the community /community in the schools curriculum”, a representative from 4-H or from Cooperative Extension and a member of the neighborhood association should supervise these meetings and help the participants develop realistic plans.

*3. Provide additional training.*

The committee should supplement and expand the students training and experiences in gardening, landscape maintenance, and ecology that the “school/community” curriculum addresses with additional field trips and guest speakers revealing different aspects of open space planning, environmental stewardship or business management for the weekly meetings. For example, youth interested in improving their sales and management skills could also attend a mini-course during a week in the summer at the University of Illinois focused on developing a marketing strategies. This would not only provide them with useful information, but would also expose them to life and learning at a major university. An Americorps volunteer could conduct the training and supervise this component of the program.

*4. Promote and develop the entrepreneurial aspect of the program.*

Youth employed in the Summer by this project will develop valuable job skills that would enable them to obtain other part-time and summer jobs. A key element of a youth-managed community garden is the entrepreneurship component. Youth gardeners

would grow produce which they could then sell at the East St. Louis Farmers Market and to local restaurants.

5. *Investigate expanding the program.*

Flowers grown in the garden could be replanted to beautify the commercial and residential area and to attract increased pedestrian traffic. A separate landscape crew could be an additional component to the program. Youth interested in such a program could also visit the University of Illinois Department of Landscape Architecture for a summer mini-course on the essential landscaping skills and practices.

*Timeline* Before this program can be implemented in the summer months, the training and plans for the garden need to be integrated into the school curriculum. Students would spend the spring semester creating the plans for the garden and then be hired for the summer to put their plans into action. This program will require at least a year of curriculum planning and staff development before it can be fully implemented. It should be utilized in the curriculum being proposed for the pilot program at Hughes Quinn-Rock Junior High. The program can then expand in the following year to other schools in Olivette Park.

*Costs* A budget needs to be created that includes wages, adult supervision, tools, supplies, training and support services. It is estimated that the initial operating budget would require about \$5,000. The annual operating budget for this type of program would require at least \$7,000. If the project acquires additional participants, obviously the financial resources will have to increase to cover the costs. An East St. Louis college student who is home for the summer or an Americorps volunteer might supervise the effort for internship credit or as a community service project. The costs of hiring such a staff person would be low. Many college students complete summer internships on a strictly volunteer basis. The committee for this project may also decide to pay a modest stipend for living expenses. An appropriate stipend would be about \$500 a month.

The materials that students will need for the garden should be donated by various local and regional businesses. A list of the businesses that donated materials for the Olivette Park neighborhood clean-up in April of 1996 is provided in table 9.1 as a start-

ing point for soliciting donations. A materials list should be generated before contacting the following businesses. They are more apt to donate materials if you have specific requests.

Business	Contact Person	Phone	Address
Kara Meadows	John Lannagan	314.894.7661	465 Lemay Ferry, St. Louis
Nollaus	Jim Classen	618.233.5100	2012 W. Blvd., Belleville
Crabapple Cove	Ken	314.846.4021	St. Louis
The Greenery	Bob	618.446.8475	1021 Delmar Ave, Godfrey, IL.
Bowood Farms	Monica Barker	314.242.3840	RR1 Box 90, Clarksville, MO
Hillside Gardens	Christie Dotson	314.739.3400	Hwy 79, PO Box 150, Foley, MO

Table 9.1. Metro-area greenhouses that may donate plant material

*Funding* Churches and local businesses should be asked to provide a modest stipend for participating youth. In the long run, the community garden could reach financial self-sufficiency if sales at the Farmers Market produce an adequate revenue stream. The Urban Resources Partnerships Program (URPS) should be contacted for potential funding for this project. The URPS program receives funds from the United States Department of Agriculture for projects that will help improve, restore, maintain, preserve, and protect urban natural resources. In the Spring of 1996, the East St. Louis Community Action Network submitted a proposal on behalf of several neighborhood organizations (including Olivette Park) for park improvements at Miles Davis Elementary School. Don Johnson at State Community College, Room 2032, 601 James R. Thompson Blvd, East St. Louis is the contact person for the URP's program in East St. Louis. He can be reached at 271.9540 or 583.2635.

*Resources* The University of Illinois Cooperative Extension program could provide training in gardening techniques. The Edwardsville Extension Center should be contacted for assistance at:  
 Wilbon Anthony  
 200 University Park Drive  
 Edwardsville, IL 62025-3636  
 Phone: 618.692.9434  
 fax: 618.692.9808

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### **Project Three**

#### **Develop a Youth Video Production Project**

- Description* Youth will learn the elements of production work such as interviewing, directing, researching, videography, and editing during their regular academic school year. They will then be given the chance to put their skills to the test by being responsible for the artistic vision and direction of videos. For example, youth could develop a weekly East St. Louis Youth News program and special in-depth documentaries.
- Rationale* The overall goal of the project is to increase youth awareness of their environment and assist them in discovering the sense of history in their community. By documenting the history and contemporary environment of Olivette Park, the youth will discover that the community is built upon a rich history of struggle and hope for the future, and that they have a role to play in the development of their community. Moreover, the facilities for such a program already exists at State Community College. If youth are given proper guidance and support, they will be able to produce highly-effective media projects for the enjoyment of the whole community and develop job skills.
- Activities*
1. *Meet with the Curriculum Board and decide on program contents.*
- The “schools in the community” curriculum should include video classes which incorporate learning the basic equipment operation, technical direction, set design sound and lighting techniques. The participants in this program would initially be high school students. By adapting the existing curriculum, students could get credit for participating in an inter-disciplinary program as an alternative to the traditional curriculum. For example, students could receive credit for English or journalism by writing and editing the weekly copy for the news show. A unit for speech or communication could be earned for those who conduct interviews and anchor the news each week. Art credit could be earned for set design and construction. A business class credit might be given for those who organize the ad sales and keep accounting records for the weekly show. The details of the curriculum need to be developed by the curriculum committee. A representative with a

background in the media and media production needs to be a part of the curriculum planning committee prior to implementing this program.

*2. Hire and train students.*

Students should be hired to work about 20 hours a week during the summer to produce the news program and to do other video production projects that may benefit the community. The students that show the most promise during the school year and are interested in pursuing a career in the media field should be encouraged to apply for summer positions. A total of eight to 10 students should comprise the first summer video production crew.

*3. Finalize projects and partners.*

The youth could then either be paid in the summers or given college credit through State Community College to create and produce in-depth videos and news shows that address issues from a youth perspective. Each project would be a unique collaboration with a community center, youth group, park facility, or cultural institution that involves both youth training and production. For example, a group of students could produce a video about Katherine Dunham's work in East St. Louis through the voices of children who are involved in her programs. The GEMM Centre could then air the piece as a special feature.

*4. Expand the program.*

As an extension of the course, a video services employment arm could be created to produce videos for organizations, businesses and individuals in East St. Louis. This may require some additional course work to enhance the skills of the youth so they achieve a professional level of quality. This would transform into an income-producing project for some students after they graduated from high school. They will have developed skills that are in demand and can market themselves as experienced and credible producers.

*Timeline*

This program could be an important component of the pilot curriculum program proposed for Hughes Quinn junior high. A year would be required to plan the details of the curriculum and then the following year it could be implemented in the classroom and employ youth for the summer.

*Costs* If State Community College agreed to allow students use of their facilities, the costs of producing videos would be fairly low. They may charge a fee to rent the facilities out for a specified amount of time. If an Americorps volunteer or university student were to supervise the summer program, the costs of hiring a staff person to run the program would be low. Funds would have to be found if the program was designed to employ youth in the summer. If 10 youth were hired for the summer at \$5.00 per hour and expected to work 10 hours per week, then at least \$5,000 would be needed to cover salaries.

*Resources* The Community Television Network in Chicago runs neighborhood video classes and an award winning teen-produced cable television series, currently in its ninth season. The series, "Hard Cover", was featured on NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw on November 16, 1994 as the America Close-up segment. The contact person at the CTN is:

Denise Zaccardi, Executive Director  
Community TV Network  
2035 West Wabansia  
Chicago, IL 606047  
312.278.8500  
e-mail: ctvn@aol.com

The University of Illinois Agricultural Communications Group can also help in training youth on video techniques. Gary Beaumont and Randy McCabe are the contact people for that group. They can be reached at 217.333.7175.

**Project Four:**  
**Plan a Youth Summit**

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*Description* Many agencies provide services to the youth of East St. Louis, but the services offered by these agencies are usually based upon what adults perceive to be the needs of youth. A Youth Summit would provide youth with the opportunity to tell community leaders what their needs are from their perspective and propose solutions for positive change. The Youth Summit also provides youth with the opportunity to explore their ideas and develop their role as citizens who strive to improve their community. A Youth Summit for youth in Olivette Park would complement the annual regional youth conference organized by In-Touch.

*Rationale* To become an active participant in the community development decision-making process requires more than just concern or motivation. It also requires that people have an organized forum to achieve their goals. The Olivette Park Neighborhood Summit and the monthly meetings of the OPNA serve as examples of such forums for meaningful community participation. What is lacking, however, and what the Summit failed to provide, is a mechanism to incorporate young peoples' input into the neighborhood planning process. The Youth Committee at the neighborhood Summit recognized this omission and proposed to remedy the lack of youth participation by including a Youth Summit planned by and for youth in Olivette Park as one of the neighborhood improvement initiatives. The residents of Olivette Park believe that bringing youth into the planning process is a sound investment. When youth are ignored, they become disenfranchised, which later in their lives can translate into little interest or involvement in their community.

*Activities* 1. *Organize a youth planning committee.*  
Establish a representative planning committee of 10-12 youth from various agencies in the neighborhood to work with one or two adults who can facilitate the planning process.

2. *Coordinate efforts with regional youth conference.*

Consult with staff at In-Touch at 618.397.8930 on using existing city and regional resources to plan such an event. That organization currently organizes a similar regional program.

3. *Develop work plan and assign tasks.*

Have the planning committee develop a feasible work plan for completing all of the necessary preparations before the event. The work plan table provided in the cultural resource chapter may be a useful guide.

4. *Prepare tentative agenda.*

Prepare a schedule of events and possible resource people for the day of the Youth Summit. Consider the following list as possible activities. This list can be used as a jumping off point for further discussion about the type of activities that would get youth the most involved and excited about participating in the project.

- Create a mural of what their ideal neighborhood would be in the year 2001
- Take the morning to introduce them to the project and organize their thoughts and ideas about neighborhood improvement. Give them the afternoon to create the mural. Allow them time to present the mural to public officials and residents.
- Allow the children to “take over city hall “ for a day, they would get the chance to fill the shoes of various public officials, including the mayor. Allow them to run a mock city council meeting.
- Write a letter to the mayor addressing what they envision the future of Olivette Park to be. These letters could be read out loud at the Summit and some could be chosen for publication in the ESL Monitor.
- Take them into the neighborhood to do a photographic SWOT analysis before the Summit and allow them to tell their story with those pictures during the Summit.
- Choose a neighborhood improvement project that they kids could plan and implement in the immediate, short and long term.

5. *Conduct a publicity campaign.*

Conduct an extensive community outreach campaign to attract youth and their parents to attend the Summit. Send out press

releases to all local and regional media outlets. Invite public officials. (See Appendix A for details on outreach strategy.)

6. *Finalize summit activities and agenda.*

Print a final agenda and have the youth planning committee rehearse their roles and responsibilities for the summit. Confirm attendance of all invited speakers and guests.

7. *Hold the Youth Summit.*

Allow for about 30 minutes to register all participants and pass out name tags. Try to start the summit on time and stick with the agenda. If certain issues or activities though produce a lot of discussion, then adjust the schedule to fit the concerns of participants.

8. *Conduct follow-up activities.*

Form a committee of interested youth who want to work on creating a youth plan for neighborhood improvement possibly as part of a class in their school for credit or as part of the community-based curriculum proposed in the cultural resource initiative in this plan. Encourage the youth to plan other follow-up activities.

*Timeline* This event will require at least six months of preparatory work. Youth will have to be organized early in the process and be given ample time to plan the details of the summit, raise funds and publicize the event. It may be advantageous for the youth planning the summit to attend the regional youth conference sponsored by In-Touch before embarking on this project.

*Costs* If the February, 1996 Olivette Park Neighborhood Summit is used as a guide for the total costs associated with holding a summit, then the planning committee should be prepared to spend about \$2000. The majority of that cost was due to the location of the Summit. If the planning committee wants to hold the Youth Summit at Frank Holton State Park and provide lunch, the fee averaged about \$13.00 per person. Additional copying and material costs (folders, paper, name tags, brochures, poster board, film, door prizes and postage for invitations) averaged to about \$250. The planning committee will have to consider the location of the summit and whether or not they want to provide food or refreshments for participants.

*Funding*    The East St. Louis Community Fund, which sponsors the East St. Louis Youth Commission, should be contacted for potential funding. The In-Touch program should also be contacted about potential regional funding opportunities.

*Resources*    Carl  
In Touch Prevention Service Area 16  
618.397.8930

Willie Reid  
East St. Louis Drug and Alcohol Task Force  
618.482.7672