RETROFITTING THE VANDALIA CORRIDOR THROUGH LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT

Northside and South Cumminsville
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Goal(s)

The goal for Northside and South Cumminsville through my project is to create a connection between the two communities through implementing urban agriculture and low impact development strategies. By incorporating this type of infrastructure along the Vandalia Corridor will help to preserve natural areas and open space as well as convey stormwater and help reduce the ecological footprint.

The Vandalia Corridor addresses the proposals that were delineated through the framework plan by using the greenway as the backbone of the project and having urban districts, natural areas, and designated spaces for social and cultural interaction spur off to adjacent areas. This will in turn increase property value and promote economic activity and offering a bike trail just opens up more area for cyclists to enjoy throughout the communities.

To address the triple bottom line sustainability aspects through urban agriculture and community gardens include providing a catalyst for economic and community development, preserving greenspace and conserving existing resources, and presenting the opportunity for recreation, social integration between intergeneration and cross-cultural connections. Applying the principles of Low Impact Development the development and infrastructure costs will be reduced along with a reduction in taxes and fees, reduced wetland impacts and associated impact fees, reduced downstream erosion, improved aesthetics as well as air and water quality improvements, and increased public participation through home owners associations.
Project Description

The project I am proposing is to retrofit the Vandalia Corridor through implementing low impact development strategies. I am proposing to highlight a multitude of spaces along the corridor that are potential sites where these techniques could be used. The areas of focus will be surface parking lots, vacant parcels, and buildings with flat roofs.
Urban farms are proposed on vacant pieces of land along the corridor to create a sense of community among the residents and to promote education and increase the property value of the homes that run along the corridor. There will be four hot spots designated throughout the Vandalia Corridor, two in Northside and two in South Cumminsville. These particular areas were chosen because the areas were already vegetated areas, so there would not be a need to tear up concrete and put in and treat new soil. The community gardens will be located within distance to residential areas that are adjacent to the corridor which in turn will encourage residents to want to take part in the upkeep of the gardens because they will be in proximity. These areas of agriculture will not only be used for individual and private uses but also for use on the commercial scale. Slim’s Restaurant in Northside is an example of how food can be grown and then sold to local businesses as well as providing food security and not having to rely on outside sources.

Green roofs and rooftop gardens are a potential use for this corridor project because there are flat roofs in Cincinnati that are untapped urban space that should be utilized. The Great American Can Building is located in Northside and runs adjacent to the Vandalia Corridor that presents the unique opportunity implement this type of green infrastructure. Green roofs will convert the impervious surface of an area that is 180,000 square feet to stormwater collectors or solar energy collectors. Even though this study area is not as dense as Manhattan where green roofs would be more successful, there is still a need to manage stormwater runoff and make buildings energy efficient, so it would beneficial to the industrial buildings to incorporate green techniques into these facilities.
Rationale
The existing conditions of the Vandalia Corridor is an old abandoned railroad line that is overgrown with vegetation, but still shows the framework for the potential development of a greenway. There are a few vacant factory buildings and houses that are along the corridor that can be retrofitted. Talking to the community member, Tim Jeckering, I found that community gardens are existing in the neighborhood, so making use of more space would expand on what is already there. He also shared with me that the soil was of condition that would allow the growing of plants and would not have to be manipulated too much to accommodate and sustain plant growth. I also spoke with Robin Corothers, who is part of the Mill Creek Restoration Project, about the potential urban farms that I proposed in Northside and it created a new incentive to create exercise points along the trail that is being proposed along the Mill Creek and incorporate the importance of nutrition from the farms.

Implementation/Funding Strategies
To implement the proposal of urban agriculture and low impact development techniques throughout the Vandalia Corridor will come from the Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program as well as the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. For the green infrastructure aspects we could look into NatureWorks and also Community Development Recycling.

Precedent Studies (if applicable)
The precedent study that I found to be relevant to my proposal is the Rochester Roots Program which is a non-profit organization that focuses on urban agriculture around schools and other community facilities to educate the residents about the importance and responsibility of these farms. This organization also shows the importance of becoming self-reliant and providing the education and tools for low-income people to obtain and have access to locally grown food that is nutritious. This can be applicable to the area that falls within the spectrum of where the corridor will be developed. Rochester Roots has four aspects that they follow to make sure that they are accomplishing their goal of getting the word out about community and urban farms, which are community food security, urban agriculture, sustainable agriculture, and community development.

Bibliography
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