

Community Stabilization Project:

Planning Toolkit

Developed in partnership: Urban Edge, CJET Consulting, The Urbano Project, and Shawntell Usher-Thames

1. What is this Toolkit?

This is a tool for people to develop vacant and blighted land in Egleston and Jackson Squares. We have identified 124 parcels – so there is plenty of room for you and your neighbors to put your ideas into action! We conducted a survey, still in progress, that points to art projects, gardening projects, recreation, and housing as ideas neighbors have to vacant and blighted land.

What is inside this Toolkit?

- *Partners in the Egleston/Jackson Neighborhood*
- *A Framework for your Project*
- *Examples to Guide you Through your Project*

2. Who are the partners that have committed and want to work on developing the vacant/blighted land? How can they help me?

- Shawntell Usher-Thames: Activities coordinator at Academy states. Email: shawntellusher@gmail.com
- The Urbano Project: brings together teens and professional artists to make change through participatory performances and works of art. Contact Stella McGregor at stella@urbanoproject.org, or Diego Gomez-Aristizabal at diego@urbanoproject.org
- Urban Edge: builds affordable housing and vibrant, prosperous neighborhoods. Contact Sahar Lawrence at slawrence@urbanedge.org
- Nubia: implements urban gardens, youth programs, workshops about hands-on skills contact Sayed Mohamed-Nour at a.sayed@nubianet.net
- Boston Food Forest Coalition (BFCC): a non-profit community land trust for neighborhood “forest gardens,” contact Orion Kriegman at orion@bostonfoodforest.org
- Egleston Square Main Streets (ESMS): works to retain and expand area businesses, improve business facades and the street scape, and promote the business district, contact Luis E. Cotto at luis@eglestonsquare.org
- CJET Consulting: Carlos Espinoza-Toro’s Consulting Firm led the development of this tool and is reachable at carlos@cjetconsulting.com

3. So you want to get started? Developing a piece of land:

A. Which piece of land?

Use our **map** to identify the land and get important information about it, including who owns it. <http://www.urbanedge.org/community-stabilization-project/>

B. What do people want?

Use our **survey** to ask neighbors what they would like to see there or to get feedback <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1qndFZDv4Trqbsjn0F7MIG1iCuFskWsWEKXwVnRNVOPo/viwwform?c=0&w=1>

C. Create it!

Use our guiding questions and the example below as a guide for creating your project. The partners listed (including us at Urban Edge!) can provide technical assistance for your project.

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D. Should it be temporary or permanent?

Both during and after the project is created, make sure to get feedback on how long neighbors want this project to fill the vacant/blighted space. This will help determine how you move forward.

E. Advocate!

If people want the project to be permanent, advocate for this! Connect to the partners to work on how to ensure that the project can stick around.

4. Are there guiding questions I can follow?

Yes! We have three sets of guiding questions for an open mic, a mural art project, and a community garden. These questions are a tool that you can use to implement similar projects or projects that go beyond what is imagined here.

Guiding Questions A: Open Mic

1. What do people want? According to our feedback, neighbors are looking for art projects in our neighborhood. Be sure to consider your audience – who will listen and participate? Children, teens, young adults, all ages?
2. Who can partner to create it? Check out the list of partners, especially Urbano and Urban Edge.
3. What other concerns should I consider?
 - a. Who owns the property? The city? A private landowner? Check out our map!
 - b. What is the quality of the property? Vacant? Blighted? What materials are needed? Do you need to borrow a (battery-powered) sound system? Ask partners to help!
 - c. When will the event take place? Do you need a “rain-date” in case of bad weather? Use your partners to help make sure the date makes sense.
 - d. How will you advertise? If you want people to come, you have to let them know! Social media, fliers, conversations with neighbors, and other ways you get news are great resources for spreading the word.
 - e. Are there other resources that can be tapped to support the creation of the project? Ask partners to help and reach out to other organizations!
4. Once created, do neighbors want the result to be temporary or permanent?
 - a. Temporary? Encourage neighbors to enjoy the event while it lasts and to send love to the artists who participated.
 - b. Permanent? Encourage neighbors to advocate for permanence. Is this a tradition that happens every year or even more often? Are there partners or other volunteers who could help make this event happen regularly?

Guiding Questions B: Mural

1. What do people want? According to our feedback, the highest priority from neighbors contacted is for more art and education projects.
2. Who can partner to create it? Check out the list of partners, especially Urbano and ESMS.
3. What other concerns should I consider?
 - a. Who owns the property? The city? A private landowner? Check out our map!
 - b. What is the quality of the property? Vacant? Blighted? What surfaces are available? What materials are needed? Ask partners to help!
 - c. Are there other resources that can be tapped to support the creation of the project? Ask partners to help and reach out to other organizations!

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4. Once created, do neighbors want the result to be temporary or permanent?
 - a. Temporary? Encourage neighbors to enjoy the mural while it lasts and work to ensure that people know that it is temporary and when it might be dismantled for a new project.
 - b. Permanent? Encourage neighbors to advocate for permanence. Can a partner acquire the land from the city or private owner? Is collective ownership an option? No matter what method, advocacy is key to getting what you've created to stick around.

Guiding Questions C: Community Garden

1. What do people want? According to our feedback, the second highest priority from neighbors contacted is gardening or farming on vacant lots.
2. Who can partner to create it? Check out the list of partners! Shawntell Usher-Thames is a resident of the area and is interested in urban gardening. Boston Food Forest Coalition, Nubia, ESMS would all be great partners to work with on this project.
3. What other concerns should I consider?
 - a. Who owns the property? The city? A private landowner? Check out our map!
 - b. What is the quality of the property? Vacant? Blighted? Is the soil ok? Can people eat plants grown here? What materials are needed? Ask partners to help!
 - c. Are there other resources that can be tapped to support the creation of the project? Ask partners to help and reach out to other organizations!
4. Once created, do neighbors want the result to be temporary or permanent?
 - a. Temporary? Encourage neighbors to enjoy the garden while it lasts and work to ensure that people know that it is temporary and when it might be dismantled for a new project.
 - b. Permanent? Encourage neighbors to advocate for permanence. Can a partner acquire the land from the city or private owner? Is collective ownership an option? No matter what method, advocacy is key to getting what you've created to stick around.

5. Is there an example I can follow?

Yes! Community members together with Urban Edge, Urbano, and CJET Consulting put together an open mic event.

Example Case Study: Open Mic Event on March 26th, 2016 at the intersection of Columbus Avenue and Dixwell Street in Roxbury, MA

1. What do people want? We used a version of the Urban Edge survey to find out that neighbors are looking for art projects in the neighborhood. We wanted teens to participate, especially because Urbano works with a cohort of teens who were already working to perform their art. We also wanted neighbors and people passing by to feel included, and in fact we had several people, who were just passing through, stop by listen to the performances and write down their ideas.
2. Who can partner to create it? We worked very closely with Urbano and also got support from Urban Edge, the Urban Edge Planning Team, Christ the King Church, and CJET Consulting.



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3. What other concerns should I consider?
 - a. Who owns the property? The city? A private landowner? We used the map to determine that Urban Edge owns the property and that it is right next to several other Urban Edge properties.



- b. What is the quality of the property? Vacant? Blighted? What materials are needed? Do you need to borrow a (battery-powered) sound system? The property was vacant, perfect for the open mic. We borrowed a sound system from Christ the King, Urban Edge provided tables, and Urbano connected us to the most important resource – the performers!
 - c. When will the event take place? Do you need a “rain-date” in case of bad weather? The teens were already supposed to perform that day so connecting our schedules was key to making the open mic a success. That being said, because the property was vacant, having a rain date was very important.
 - d. How will you advertise? We posted the event on social media like Facebook and put up fliers to let people know.
 - e. Are there other resources that can be tapped to support the creation of the project? We wanted pizza and soda for participants and the audience, chosen because teens like pizza.

4. Once created, do neighbors want the result to be temporary or permanent?
 - a. We're not sure yet – we would love to have a similar event happen again. It was easy to plan, though it does take time (about 3-4 months). We're considering several models. JP Porch Fest puts on an annual series of concerts in public/private spaces that we could copy. Or we might borrow an idea from the traditional events in towns in the Peruvian Andes where a “godfather” of events is selected to shepherd events and gather resources.



Want more information and ideas? Check out this [video](#) of the event, a [sample poster](#) and [agenda](#), and an [interview](#) with one of the organizers.