



The Bulletin

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A CREATIVE "TOOLBOX" FOR GARFIELD

By Paula Martinac
The Bulletin

Would you like to see a T-shirt design contest that generates a unique neighborhood identity for Garfield? How about a monthly flea market on Dearborn Street, or a café run by and for kids? If the answer is "yes," read on. These were just some of the ideas for attracting innovation and investment to Garfield presented at a community meeting on September 7 by cityLAB, a nonprofit neighborhood "do tank" (as opposed to a "think tank"), that has been working in partnership with the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation.

cityLAB calls its Garfield project "6 Percent Place." "When a neighborhood has 6 percent creative workers, these neighborhoods are very lively, more people want to live and work there, more people want to invest," explained cityLAB leader Eve Picker. At present, only about 0.1 percent of Garfield's population qualifies as "creative workers."

Examples of "creative workers" include artists, writers, architects, graphic designers, engineers, and media, advertising and entertainment professionals. Metropolitan areas with concentrations of people in these fields have stronger economic prospects and higher property values, according to CEOs for Cities, a national network of urban leaders.

cityLAB spent months interviewing Garfield residents and stakeholders, as well as people outside of Garfield who might consider moving to the neighborhood, and collected a range of comments about changes that might make

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Garfield a better place to live and invest. Common themes emerged: "I wish Garfield had a better reputation"; "I want an authentic place... I want an affordable life"; "I want a clean and safe neighborhood"; and "I don't want Garfield to become Friendship 2."

From 400 ideas generated by residents and potential in-comers, cityLAB identified six main priorities that kept cropping up: to make Garfield (1) more visible, (2) an entrepreneurial hotbed, (3) a creative

hotbed, (4) family-friendly, (5) clean and safe, and (6) more diverse. They then whittled the ideas down to a "toolbox" of 16 projects, each of which satisfies four to six of these priorities, and could conceivably be led by members of the community. The toolbox ideas are presented in detail on page 3 of this issue.

As the next step, Garfield residents and business owners, as well as people from other neighborhoods interested in seeing some of these

projects brought to fruition, are needed to join advisory groups for each of the 16 ideas. Ready and willing to work with the community volunteers are 70 architecture students from Carnegie Mellon University, who will do research and strategize to help develop concrete plans for each of the ideas, so the community can decide which projects are most feasible and might actually be implemented.

"We need community input," Picker stressed. "The students have a body of

work to start from," but ultimately the success or failure of 6 Percent Place will depend on neighborhood involvement, Picker said. ♦

cityLAB will host a Brainstorming Session on Tuesday, October 4, at 6 p.m. at the BGC's Community Activity Center, 113 N. Pacific Avenue in Garfield. If you are excited about the future of Garfield, come out to hear 16 great ideas for Garfield, share some ideas, and be part of the planning and brainstorming.

What's in Garfield's "Toolbox"?

The 16 projects in the "6 Percent Place" toolbox are listed here from easiest to hardest to accomplish:

1. Tea/Tee Contest. Brand Garfield with the help of kids. Design a T-shirt: this could be by or for children, supervised by a local artist, or even be the beginning of a small home-based business. Funds raised could also support other neighborhood activities.

2. BBQ Cook-Off. A BBQ cook-off could accomplish many things. Family-friendly, it would promote neighborliness. At the same time, it might attract people into Garfield — everyone loves BBQ. It could also support budding entrepreneurs and teach them how to start a food-based business.

3. Dream Property Database and Guide. The vacancy that residents have complained about can also be viewed as an opportunity: vacant lots and buildings, foreclosures, and inexpensive properties for sale are dreams come true for people in expensive cities. Will we attract some new residents if we create a database that simplifies the search for property?

4. Expand the Penn Avenue Arts Initiative. Although we've heard that the people of Garfield appreciate the arts, we have also heard that the Penn Avenue Arts Initiative could be better connected to Garfield. How can the Penn Avenue Arts Initiative be expanded to have greater appeal? Can the people of Garfield take ownership in it and make it stronger than it is now? Creative place-making can seed economic development by expanding entrepreneurship to both arts and non-arts related businesses.

5. Community Internet Radio. Neighborhood residents

spoke of having no "voice." One way to provide a voice could be launching an Internet community radio station. Internet radio remains unlicensed and is relatively easy to get started. A very small space is required along with a group of people dedicated to ensuring consistent programming. Equipment costs approximately \$25,000.

6. Dearborn Street Market. This market would include antiques, secondhand goods, handmade goods and locally grown fruit and vegetable stalls. It would bring visibility, creativity, and entrepreneurship to Garfield. It should be located on a problem block to encourage family friendliness and to "take back the block." Vendors would be a mix of locals and outsiders, to encourage diversity and to learn from each other.

7. Bikes on Broad. Currently, Pittsburgh's bike map bypasses Garfield. While routes on Bike Pittsburgh's maps are only suggested, it's unlikely that bicyclists will choose a route not marked. Our goal should be to put Garfield on the map. To that end, a permanent route, with a great bicycle/pedestrian environment, could be planned.

8. Exercise Parks. China has it right. Exercise equipment is dotted throughout the urban landscapes of dense Chinese cities, available for everyone to use. People both young and old gather to use the facilities, stay fit, and socialize. Many Garfield locals commented on the lack of facilities for exercise; could the neighborhood try a free exercise gym like this?

9. 6% Space. There are many vacant and discarded properties in Garfield — more than can be quickly



converted into affordable housing. We propose finding alternative uses for these properties that encourage in-migration and private investment. Could Garfield incentivize rapid development through ideas like these?

10. Housing That Sets Garfield Apart. The goal is to create affordable housing solutions for the Garfield community that do more than just provide a roof over someone's head. Well-designed housing could set Garfield apart. A memorandum of understanding has already been developed between Carnegie Mellon University's School of Architecture and the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation to design and build a series of affordable houses that take another approach to what Garfield's new housing stock might look like.

11. Tiny Housing. Tiny housing is another way to provide affordable housing. Small equals cost-efficient. There is a growing "tiny housing" movement in the United States. We'd like to look at what these innovative and creative little houses might mean to Garfield.

12. Kid Cafe. Create a space for youths, managed and programmed by them. Programming should be creative, with music and the arts. Young people should be in charge. This will be difficult to implement, but worth trying. With the high percentage of youths in Garfield, a place for and by young people could provide many benefits.

13. Garfield Hilltop Park. The BGC's Garfield's 2030 Plan suggests the topography of Garfield should be respected. In keeping with this plan, the Bloomfield-Garfield

Corporation is looking at ideas for assembling enough land to allow the neighborhood to develop the hilltop park.

14. Bike Incline. A bike incline would connect Penn Avenue to the Garfield hilltop. A bike incline runs along the curbside, lifting cyclists up a hill at 3 or 4 mph. A bike incline was installed 15 years ago in Trondheim, Norway, and has been a big success: 14,600 people, or 9 percent of the town's population, use it annually. Although bikes are probably more prevalent in Trondheim than Pittsburgh, the East End has perhaps the highest bicycle usage in Pittsburgh, making Garfield an excellent place to try this experiment.

15. Girl Cabs. Girl Cabs would be a women-only taxi company. There are many such companies around the world. Their goal is to provide safe rides for women and flexible jobs for women with families to look after. One such company, Viira Cabs of Mumbai, takes its name from the Hindi word for "courageous woman." Perhaps we can nurture such courageous women in Garfield.

16. Food Incubator. There are plenty of support agencies for tech start-ups in Pittsburgh, but little for other fledgling businesses. The food incubator would be a full-service incubator that supports only food industries. We believe it will be the first in the country. Each class will be fully supported through to profitability. It should require absolute excellence and be competitive for entry.

To become involved in any of these projects, or to find out more, email info@citylabpgh.org, or call 1-866-PGH-CITY.