

Climbing the Swiss Alps in Roseland, Chicago.

Type of action: Playgrounds / long term action

Type of solution: Play based solution.

Location of the Good Practice: Roseland, Chicago, USA.

Rational and overall scope of the intervention

This new playground is located near the intersection of 103rd and Wentworth Avenue on Chicago's Far South Side and it used to be a vacant, trash-strewn lot nestled in between two storefront churches. Using ropes and other materials but especially a lot of imagination the play lot brings contrast to an area that would otherwise become a landfill or a place for street crime.



Photo by demoiselle2femme

Target groups addressed and related needs: Roseland residents (children)

Community engagement process / Participatory process

Ten teenagers attended a Design and Build Boot Camp. Then chose a vacant lot where they could develop a number of tactics to learn what the community envisioned – they knocked on doors, created live twitter feeds and installed life-sized chalkboards where people could write their ideas for what the space could become. Before bringing the architect they had to clean

up the place and, as soon as the neighbors saw them they started cleaning with them. After they set up the playground, the community has maintained the place in order to make sure children can still play there.

Description of the designing/co-designing process

The group was assigned a task: ‘selecting a place in need of transformation along 103rd Street, raising awareness of issues that face the community, and using community engagement and design principles to transform it’.



Then they developed tactics in order to collect ideas from the community, such as knocking on doors, create live twitter feeds and installing life-sized chalkboards for people to write their ideas of what the place should become. It wasn't only going to be a playground, it also had a powerful meaning as the Swiss Alps represented an area that, besides being surrounded by conflicted areas, stays neutral.

Photo by Demoiselle2femme

A. Part of the curriculum for the project was to work with a Chicago-based architect to bring the design from a concept to reality. But before any building could take place, the site had to be cleaned up.

The girls soon became very popular in the area. The local community was curious about what the team was doing, as the area has been better-known for people hanging out rather than taking care of it. That went for the larger lot across the street, too. “All of the sudden, the people across the street were out there with brooms, dust pans and garbage bags cleaning up their space.”

Locals helped cut wood, mix concrete, and continue cleaning up the site. “Lots of people would walk by just to let us know they'd be coming back later to help.” T-awannda recalls, “It was like an open workshop for the community.”

Description of technologies and material used for works: Cleaning up, cutting wood, mixing concrete, and hanging ropes.

Impact on the place aesthetics: From a vacant lot full of rubbish into a beautiful playground where children can play.

Impact on the community wellbeing This project connects to one of the main placemaking principles: ‘The community is the expert’ as residents who participated in the process now also look after the place.

Impact on the community inclusion

Months later, newfound pride for this lot continues to be evident in the way the park has been maintained. People put their trash where it belongs and have been respecting the area as a safe place for kids. To T-awannya “the work says, ‘hey, community, this is your space.’ It is truly a community transformation.”



Photo by Demoiselle2Femme

Coherence with sustainable development goals

-Establish Good Health and Well-Being

-Provide Quality Education

-Reduce Inequality

-Mobilize Sustainable Cities and Communities

-Build Partnerships for the Goals

Potential of improving people’s health: High.

Level of creativity: High.

Attention to gender equality and inclusion: High.

aesthetic impact on the urban environment: High.

Level of sustainability: High.

Links to sources

<http://www.placemakingchicago.com/places/roseland.asp>

<http://demoiselle2femme.org/>