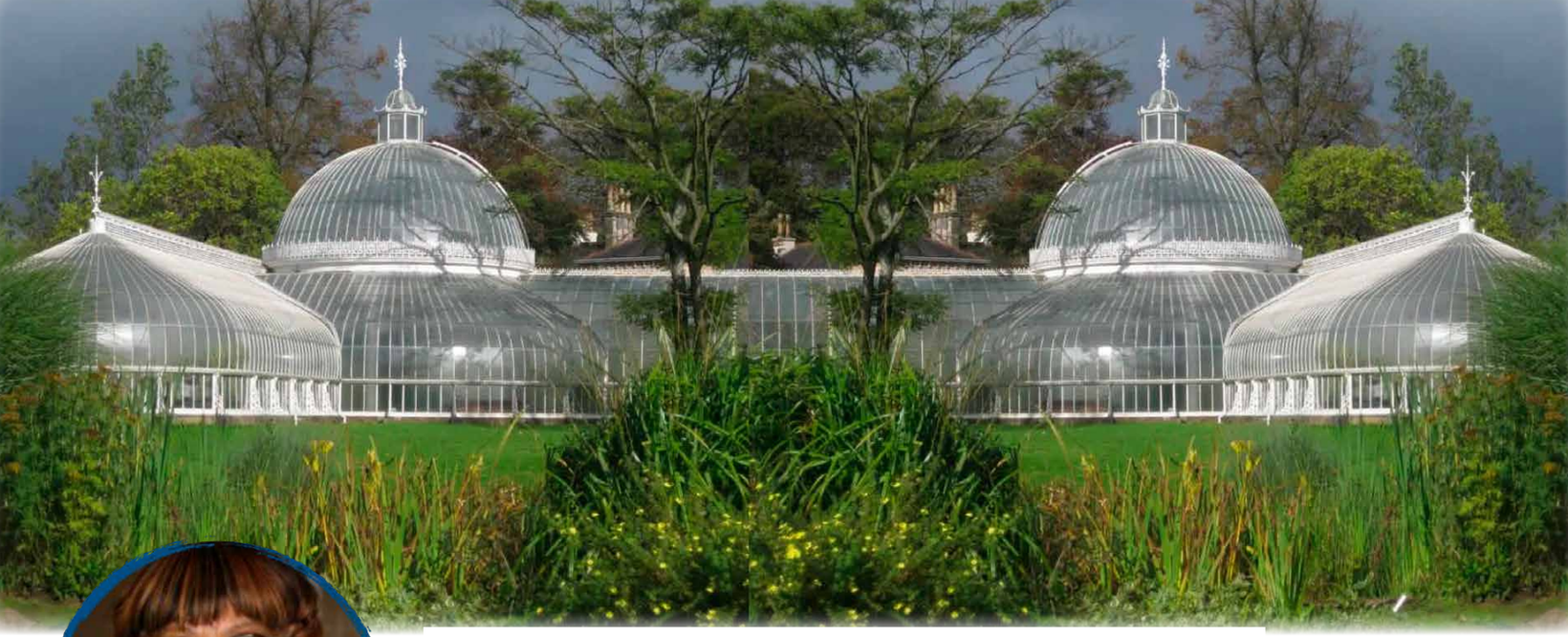


Mother Josephine Wade's
OPEN AIR MARKET & VERTICAL FARMING

Josephine, with her southern charm and determination to create a better future for her people, established a home for political figures looking for words of wisdom, encouragement, and prayers. Josephine's was also a safe-haven for at-risk youth and a place where those looking for a job could find employment, but above all, it was the place to come and have a fantastic, down-home, southern meal.

A Beacon of Hope

In the heart of our city's south side, a visionary project desires to take root, one that promises to revolutionize not just the way we access food, but the very fabric of our community. Inspired by the grandeur of Istanbul's historic bazaar, the Josephine Wade Open Air Market and Vertical Farming in the Nexus District is more than just a solution to the food desert crisis; it's a promise of transformation, a testament to what is possible when we unite with purpose.

Imagine a thriving market, teeming with life, where every family can find fresh, locally-sourced produce and in walking distance to home. Picture the vertical gardens that rise proudly, not only providing sustenance but breathing life into forgotten corners of our city. This installation is a testament to our commitment to inclusivity, as it creates jobs across all skill levels, empowering individuals to contribute to the vibrant tapestry of a very possible community.

This endeavor is more than a project; it's a catalyst for change, a beacon of hope in an area that has long been overlooked. By breathing new life into these spaces, we are not only addressing a critical need but nurturing a sense of pride and ownership among our residents. It's a promise of opportunity for every generation, a pledge to foster an environment where diverse cultures and incomes coalesce to form a rich culture of shared prosperity.

By throwing our support behind the Josephine Wade Open Air Market and Vertical Farming Installation, we are not just endorsing a noble cause, but embracing a future where abundance, opportunity, and unity flourish. Together, we have the power to turn this vision into reality, to create a legacy of sustenance, prosperity, and beauty for generations to come.

Let us stand united, and let this installation be a testament to our unwavering commitment to our community's well-being. Together, we can make this vision a reality, for the betterment of us all.

THE CONCEPT

The Washington Park Nexus District Catalyst concept envisions the Mother Wade's Market as the transformative nucleus around which the entire community will evolve. Unlike traditional development strategies that often focus on individual corners or parcels, this approach leverages the expansive vacant land to create interconnected districts, each designed to foster social and economic sustainability. The Josephine Wade Open Air Market and Vertical Farming will serve as the catalyst for this ambitious master plan, setting the stage for a thriving, resilient, and inclusive community.

Inspired by the grandeur of Istanbul's historic bazaar, the Mother Wade's Market will be more than just a marketplace; it will be the heartbeat of Washington Park. This vibrant, open-air market will feature local vendors, fresh produce, and vertical gardens, transforming the area into a hub of activity and a model for sustainable urban agriculture. The market will not only address food security but will also create jobs, stimulate local businesses, and attract investment to the area.

What We Know

Population and Demographics

Population: Washington Park, located on Chicago's South Side, has a population of approximately 11,000 to 12,000 residents. The population has seen a decline over the years due to economic challenges and other social factors.

Racial Composition: The area is predominantly African American, with over 90% of the population identifying as Black or African American.

Age Distribution: The median age in Washington Park is around 35-40 years. There is a significant presence of both young adults and older residents, with fewer children compared to other neighborhoods.

Household Structure: The average household size is about 2.5 to 3 people, with a mix of single-parent families and multi-generational households.

Economic Status

Median Household Income: The median household income in Washington Park is significantly lower than the citywide average, at around $20,000 to $25,000 per year. This is well below Chicago's median household income, which is approximately $60,000.

Poverty Rate: The poverty rate in Washington Park is high, with estimates ranging between 40% to 50% of the population living below the poverty line.

Employment: The unemployment rate in Washington Park is also higher than the city average, often hovering around 15% to 20%. Many residents are employed in low-wage jobs, with limited access to higher-paying opportunities.

Education: Educational attainment in Washington Park is lower than the city average, with a significant portion of the adult population lacking a high school diploma. Only a small percentage hold a college degree or higher.

Housing and Land Use

Housing Stock: Washington Park has a mix of older single-family homes, multi-family buildings, and public housing developments. The area has suffered from disinvestment, leading to a high number of vacant and dilapidated properties.

Vacancy Rate: The vacancy rate in Washington Park is high, with estimates indicating that up to 30% of residential properties are vacant. This contributes to the neighborhood's challenges with blight and crime.

Homeownership vs. Renting: A majority of residents in Washington Park are renters, with homeownership rates being significantly lower than the city average. Many rental properties are owned by absentee landlords, which exacerbates maintenance issues.

Vacant Land Availability

Estimate of Vacant Land: Washington Park has a substantial amount of vacant land, largely due to the demolition of buildings over the past decades. It is estimated that there are over 300 to 400 acres of vacant land within the neighborhood. This vacant land presents both a challenge and an opportunity for redevelopment and investment in the community.

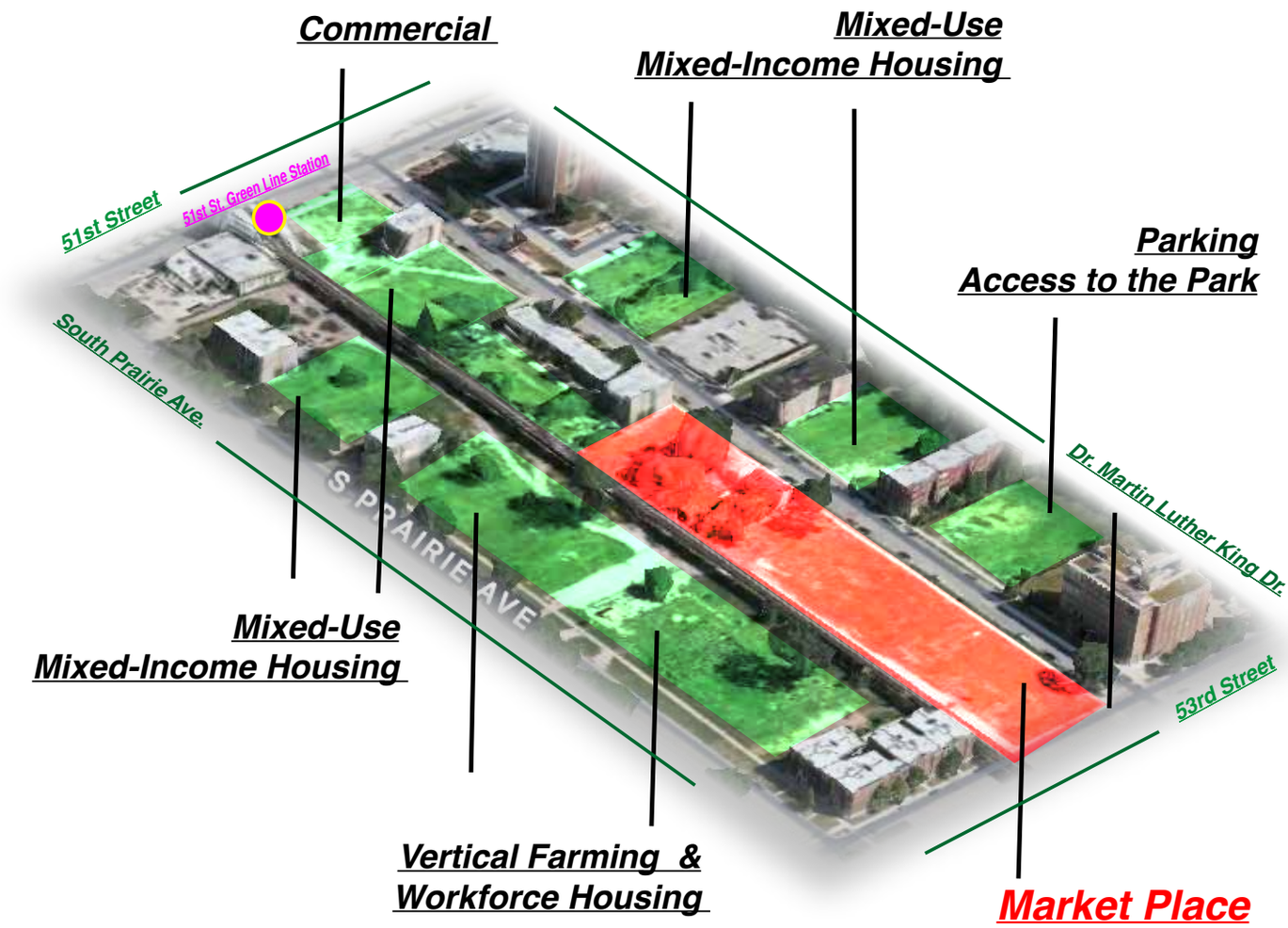
Potential for Development: The availability of vacant land in Washington Park makes it a prime candidate for large-scale redevelopment projects. However, any development must consider the needs and desires of the existing community to avoid displacement and gentrification.

Washington Park is a neighborhood with significant challenges related to poverty, unemployment, and disinvestment. However, the abundance of vacant land offers an opportunity for transformative development that could address the economic and social needs of the community. A well-planned and inclusive approach to development could leverage this vacant land to revitalize Washington Park while preserving its cultural heritage and supporting its current residents.

The Opportunity

The Zones

The Catalyst Site



The Mother Wade's Market in the Nexus District, as the catalyst for the district development strategy, will elevate the entire community, changing the current trajectory that only supports low-income or deeply affordable housing. By creating a mixed-use environment with a focus on diverse economic activities, the plan will attract new investments, increase property values, and foster an economically and socially sustainable community.

Iconic Design

Principle: Visionary Architecture with Cultural Resonance

Iconic design should integrate visionary architectural elements that resonate culturally with the community. This involves utilizing bold, innovative structures that not only define the skyline but also reflect the area's history, values, and aspirations. The goal is to create spaces that are instantly recognizable and foster a sense of pride and belonging among the residents.

Sustainable Landscaping

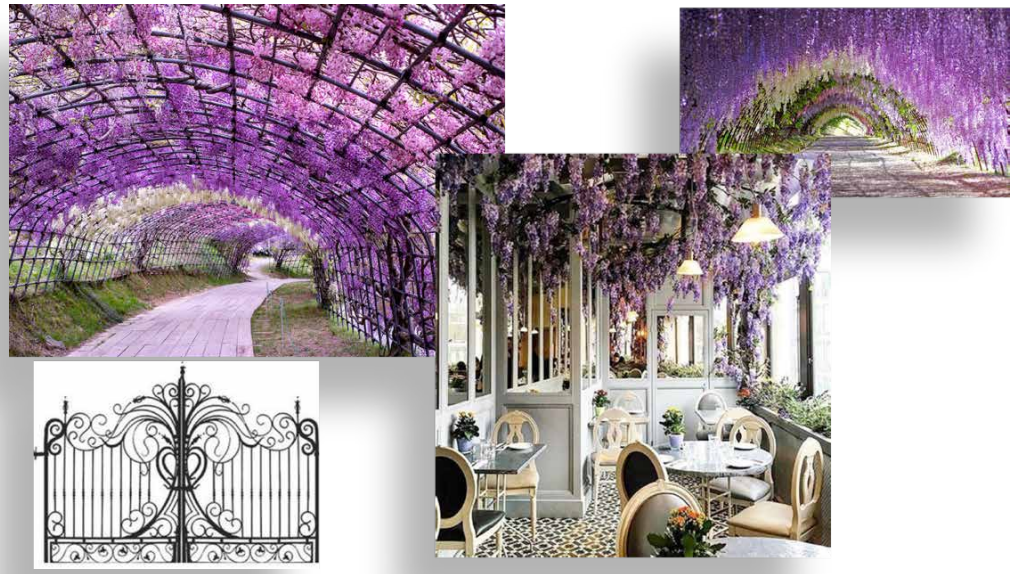
Principle: Eco-Friendly and Community-Centric Spaces

Sustainable landscaping should prioritize native plantings, water-efficient gardens, and biodiversity to promote ecological health. This principle extends beyond aesthetics to include functional green spaces that serve as community gathering spots, recreational areas, and urban wildlife habitats, contributing to the overall sustainability and resilience of the environment.

Creative Installations

Principle: Interactive and Engaging Art

Creative installations should be more than visual spectacles; they should encourage interaction and engagement. Installations can serve educational purposes, celebrate local heritage, or provide whimsical elements that surprise and delight. By integrating technology and community input, these installations can become dynamic, evolving with the community and fostering a deeper connection with the art.



Walkability and Walkways to Public and Commercial Spaces

Principle: Accessibility and Connectivity

Designing for walkability involves creating a network of safe, accessible, and well-connected pathways that encourage walking as a primary mode of transportation. This includes wide, well-lit sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, and amenities such as benches and shade structures. The layout should strategically connect residential areas with public and commercial spaces, promoting ease of access and reducing reliance on vehicular transport.

The Precedent

Key Features

- **Life Sciences Hub:** At the heart of The Nexus District lies a state-of-the-art Life Sciences hub, where cutting-edge research and development in biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and healthcare flnourish. The district attracts leading scientists, entrepreneurs, and investors, fostering an environment of collaboration and breakthrough discoveries.

- **Digital Media and Content Creation Center:** A vibrant creative ecosystem thrives within the district, providing a nurturing environment for digital artists, fifilmmakers, animators, and content creators. Advanced studios, co-working spaces, and production facilities offer the resources and support needed to bring imaginative ideas to life.

- **Mixed-Use Development:** The Nexus District seamlessly integrates residential, commercial, and recreational spaces. Modern, eco-friendly buildings with sustainable features provide a dynamic living experience. The integration of work, play, and living spaces promotes a balanced and fulfilling lifestyle for all residents.

- **Multi-Income Housing:** The Nexus District prioritizes exclusivity and affordability by offering a range of housing options tailored to various income levels. From affordable apartments to middle-income homes, everyone has access to quality housing within the community, fostering a diverse and dynamic population.

- **Affordable Haven Co-op:** A cornerstone of The Nexus District is the Affordable Haven Co-op, a cooperative venture that empowers residents to actively participate in the management and decision-making processes of their community. By pooling resources and sharing responsibilities, residents contribute to the collective well-being and sustainability of the district.

- **Social Enterprise Incubator:** The district houses a thriving ecosystem of social enterprises, supporting ventures focused on creating positive social and environmental impact. Incubator programs provide mentorship, resources, and funding to budding entrepreneurs, ensuring that their innovative ideas flourish and contribute to the greater good.

- **Regenerative Design and Practices:** The Nexus District prioritizes sustainability and regenerative practices, incorporating renewable energy sources, green spaces, and eco-conscious infrastructure. A commitment to circular economy principles minimizes waste and maximizes resource efficiency, ensuring a lasting legacy for future generations.

- **Community Engagement and Education:** The Nexus District encourages active participation and lifelong learning. Community centers, educational institutions, and skill-building workshops empower residents to continuously develop and contribute their unique talents and perspectives.

For generations, the Black community in the United States has endured systemic disinvestment, resulting in widespread economic and social disparities. In a world where innovation is rapidly becoming mainstream, it is crucial that all Americans, especially those who have historically been marginalized, have the opportunity to evolve and thrive. The persistent legacy of discrimination and neglect underscores the need for a comprehensive humanitarian effort that not only supports but also uplifts our living legends, like Mother Wade, who have tirelessly advocated for their communities. Now is the time to acknowledge and address these inequities, ensuring that the future is inclusive, just, and reflective of the rich contributions and resilience of the Black community.