A project of the Sixth Street Library

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Park Land

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More than 35 percent of Little Rock, Arkansas's urban core is taken up with surface parking. A progressive church and gallery believe the key to their city's resurrection and future health lay in finding new ways to use that land. One parking space at a time, we will daylight the soil and show the potential just below the blacktop.

CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH sits in the heart of downtown Little Rock, surrounded on three sides by surface parking lots. The average size of a parking space is 10 feet by 15 feet, or 150 square feet—about the same area occupied by the Sixth Street Library, an exhibit space dedicated to urban issues.

We propose to take one of these spaces and transform it into an miniature green space. It will investigate not only our relationship to parking, but the way in which parking lots take living, three-dimensional spaces and turn them into two-dimensional surfaces.

This project will also address other topics, such as water run-off, heat-island effect, soil remediation, and fertility and microbial activity.

Here is how will do it:

1. **Remove the blacktop.**
   The asphalt will be removed and carried piece by piece into the Sixth Street Library, where it will be reassembled on a specially built platform. It will raise several questions, in particular the amount of surface area given to parking. The asphalt will remain on display for one month.
2. **Take a core sample.**
   A six-foot-deep core sample will be taken to show the layers of stratification and compaction, both human-made and natural. The core sample will also be displayed in the Sixth Street Library.

   (The following steps will take place on the site of the removed parking space over the course of a year.)
3. **Loosen the soil.**
   The soil will be loosened as much as possible and swales built to capture parking lot run-off. At this time, the soil's moisture content, heavy metals, and microbial activity will be measured.
4. **Build compost system on-site.**
   The space will then house a compost pile, composed of scraps from Christ Church's kitchen.
5. **Add worms and worm juice.**
   A vermiculture project will be set up on the space, and the resulting earthworm castings and nutrient-rich liquid will be incorporated into the soil.
6. **Seed with cover crops.**
   The space will be planted in a succession of cover crops and deep-rooted annuals, such as clover, rye, radishes, and turnips.
7. **Chickens brought in.**
   Once a cover crop is established, chickens will be brought in one weekend a month to feed, scratch the surface, and add their own "fertilizer."
8. **Take new measurements.**
   At the end of one year, any remaining cover crops will be turned into the soil, and the soil in the space will again be tested for moisture content, heavy metals, and microbial activity.
9. **Scale up or pave over?**
   The church congregation will decide if the green space should be expanded to include more of the parking lot or if it should be converted back into a parking space.