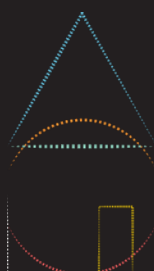




Responding to the Community's Call

A Case Study of Arts-Based Community Development in Gravois Park



ST. LOUIS
ART
PLACE
INITIATIVE



Before API built anything, it conducted town halls with artists to learn their barriers to housing affordability.

Introduction

The launch and development of the St. Louis Art Place Initiative (API) over the past six years provides an example of how a unique arts-based community development model, including affordable for-sale homes, can build wealth and strengthen a neighborhood. API was founded in 2019 in response to the Gravois-Jefferson Historic Neighborhoods Plan's call for affordable housing for artists and the transformation of vacant land. Grassroots listening, bold investment, strong collaboration, and innovative thinking birthed a model that uses vacant land to build wealth and equity for artists through homeownership, while creating arts and cultural assets with the community.

Like all cities across the United States, St. Louis is challenged to meet the needs of low-to moderate-income residents for affordable, quality housing. The city suffers from a shortage of such housing due to an uptick in mortgage interest rates, old housing stock, low wages that don't keep up with housing costs, and some of the fastest rising rents in the country. A study by AffordableSTL in 2021 revealed that a prevalence of households earning less than the Area Median Income (AMI) did not have access to affordable housing in St. Louis City and County. These households spent more than 30% of their income on housing—surpassing the federal affordability standard. According to the study, 73% of households earning 50% or below the AMI, and 52% of households earning more than 50% AMI did not have affordable housing.²

This continuing shortage is not only challenging for individuals, but also impacts the fabric of neighborhoods. Often in the context of severe neighborhood disinvestment, St. Louis' old housing stock has declined, requiring major renovation or demolition. With 20% of its population in poverty, quality housing in the city of St. Louis has been accessible primarily to higher-income residents, leading to gentrification in some areas—particularly on the southside. In many neighborhoods – most starkly in north St. Louis which experienced the devastating May 16, 2025 tornado – empty homes and vacant properties are prevalent. This decreases the safety of residents and visitors, and the overall value of land and occupied homes. These areas are often ripe for speculators who profit from purchasing low-cost properties but don't maintain an interest in preserving the identity of neighborhoods or developing affordable, quality housing for current residents. There is a significant need for innovative, affordable housing models that benefit individuals and neighborhoods, while providing them the opportunity to stay in their neighborhoods. API offers a solution that is intentional and targeted enough to make a deep impact in the Gravois Park neighborhood, while being transferable enough to scale and replicate within St. Louis and similar cities.

St. Louis Public Radio, "St. Louis and Missouri Have Some of the Largest Rent Increases in the Nation," February 26, 2024, <https://tinyurl.com/morentincrease>.
2 "St. Louis Affordable Housing Report Card": Community Builders Network of Metro St. Louis and the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Coalition. (2021). St. Louis Affordable Housing Report Card (p. 6). Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/affordablereportcard>.

Origin Story

Gravois-Jefferson Historic Neighborhoods Plan

From 2016-2018, Dutchtown South Community Corporation (DSCC) and partners facilitated the creation of the Gravois-Jefferson Historic Neighborhoods Plan, inviting participation from residents, community groups, and other interested and impacted parties. The plan articulated the community's comprehensive vision for growth and development for the area: to create "a thriving, inclusive community with vibrant mixed-use corridors, historic architecture, with myriad activities available for all ages; these are neighborhoods where residents of all backgrounds and beliefs can enjoy communal space and engage in civic matters."

The planning area—including Gravois Park, Benton Park West, northeast Dutchtown, and a small portion of the Mount Pleasant neighborhood—has attracted a large, vibrant arts community for decades. According to the Regional Arts Commission's 2023 Creatives Count, a research study of the region's creative population, one of the highest concentrations of the region's artists live in the planning area. The creative community has contributed to the area in many ways, including the openings of intimate concert venues, art galleries, boutique shops, unique local restaurants, and the Neighborhood Innovation Center—a small business tech incubator. Additionally, artists have contributed to the creation of public art, while Cherokee Street—named Missouri's Creative Community of the year in 2021—continues to be a hub of arts programming that attracts patrons from around the region.

One of the highest concentrations of the region's artists live within the planning area.

Compared with the City of St. Louis, the planning area has fewer owner-occupied homes and more vacant properties. It also experiences high poverty rates, low market values, and century-old housing stock in need of repair. Nearby Benton Park is an established middle-to-upper-income neighborhood and Benton Park West is experiencing strong development activity and maturation. With Gravois Park directly adjacent to these neighborhoods, the possibility of speculative purchases that could displace residents was of concern during the planning process.

The plan recognized and aimed to address the area's challenges with solutions grounded in the community's assets and resident participation. It called for the community to "leverage the power of creativity and ingenuity to spur positive community development." The plan offered recommendations around eight areas of community need, including arts and culture, housing, and the environment. The plan specifically recommended that the community explore creating a non-profit housing model that would ensure artists could establish long-term roots in the area. It also called for solutions that would use art to enhance and transform vacant properties, create sustainable art spaces, foster access to homeownership, and preserve housing affordability and neighborhood diversity.

Vision and Mission

API envisions a future where St Louis artists root and build wealth in the places they call home while advancing their creative practice and shaping their neighborhoods. Its mission is to build wealth for artists through homeownership and transform vacant spaces into cultural assets with communities. API is guided by the below values that center residents and artists to ensure it achieves its mission.

Values that inform mission

Keep artists in their neighborhoods.

We are passionate about preventing artist displacement. From their perspectives to what they create, artists transform their neighborhoods and their rootedness has far-reaching positive impacts for the larger community.

Build and preserve artist wealth. We believe that building wealth through homeownership and preserving affordability are important tools in allowing artists to root in their neighborhoods, creating ripple effects for future generations, the arts ecosystem, and regional economy.

Build and preserve community wealth. More than just developing affordable homes, we build community assets that are preserved through a cultural asset community land trust to meet community needs and create more artful lives into the future.

Values that inform practice

Serve and give voice to the underserved.

We believe that serving the most vulnerable and those who have been locked out of opportunity helps us all. We prioritize working with underserved artists and communities. We create space for their voices among staff and board members and throughout our design processes.

Center artists and their practice. Art is incredibly powerful and transformative. From the artists we serve to the methods we use to make our vision a reality, we use art and engage artists to make art's value visible and visceral in achieving our mission.

Be invited. We only work in communities where we've been invited by resident organizations and neighborhood groups, through conversations, neighborhood plans, and other means of community engagement.

Co-design with residents. We collaborate with residents through continuous community-directed conversations to realize their vision for their community.

Build partner capacity. We seek to not only build our capacity but that of our partners at the same time.



A window of opportunity opens for bold investment and collaboration

As the Gravois-Jefferson Historic Neighborhoods Plan was finalized, a collaboration of partners emerged who were interested in increasing the stability of the area and its creative community according to the recommendations of the Plan.

Cara Spencer, Alderwoman of the 20th ward included in the planning area, and Bridget Flood, Executive Director of the Incarnate Word Foundation—a grant-maker with deep connections to southside neighborhoods, had been active participants in the planning process. Bridget, an artist herself, knew that artists were indeed facing the challenges highlighted by the Plan. Bridget had first-hand experience being priced out of a studio and knew that a large number of vacant properties were held by the city's Land Reutilization Authority (LRA). She remembers driving through the Gravois Park neighborhood and reflecting on heart-shaped signs that read "Call me." In an effort to reduce vacancy, the signs were posted by concerned and creative residents on LRA properties that had been vacant for years. As Bridget was thinking about housing and vacancy, and having conversations with Alderwoman Spencer, Bridget called the number. Alderwoman Spencer then convened a meeting with the LRA and Incarnate Word Foundation to discuss possibilities for purchasing vacant parcels for redevelopment.



Alderwoman Alisha Sonnier and other residents discuss ideas for API's future development.

Alderwoman Spencer then introduced Bridget to the Kranzberg Arts Foundation to begin to explore the viability of a larger scale, scattered-site, multi-unit, for-sale housing development project. The Kranzberg



API's Board of Directors and staff have extensive expertise across the arts, design, and community development fields.

Arts Foundation is an institution committed to developing infrastructure for the arts to thrive in the St. Louis region. With excitement building, the Incarnate Word Foundation and Kranzberg Arts Foundation continued to gather public and private partners interested in creating and investing in a model to develop affordable housing for artists, as well as public green and art spaces within the community, according to the Plan's recommendations.

Aware of the need for strong accountability to the public beyond private foundation involvement, the Kranzberg Arts Foundation thought it was important to have a quasi-governmental, public-facing entity involved. The Regional Arts Commission could not only provide such accountability, but could provide a sustainable pipeline of artists to purchase homes. The Kranzberg Arts Foundation's first ask of the Regional Arts Commission was to sit on API's board of directors and help build out its leadership, and they obliged.

The Incarnate Word Foundation ultimately purchased options for 25 properties within four city blocks for \$30,000 with a goal of rehabbing the homes as affordable housing for artists.

The Kranzberg Arts Foundation so believed in the vision that they made a bold \$650,000 investment. Coupled with investments by the Incarnate Word Foundation (\$250,000) and the Regional Arts Commission (\$150,000), momentum was established to begin working with the Gravois Park neighborhood to create a community-driven non-profit model for arts-based community development that would become the St. Louis Art Place Initiative.

St. Louis Art Place initiative is born

With the initial dollars committed, the Incarnate Word Foundation, Kranzberg Arts Foundation, and Regional Arts Commission set out to engage residents to secure their buy-in and flesh out ideas for how API could work. DSCC was an early partner that brought knowledge and community trust from its recent planning process and was integral to creating a resident-informed process. The Regional Arts Commission also contributed to resident engagement through its deep ties to the artist community.

Before API began development, a small working board was formed in 2018. In early 2019, Kaveh Razani, an arts advocate, creative placekeeper, entrepreneur, and neighborhood resident, became API's first staff person. API then conducted three town halls that affirmed the community's desire for transformed vacant lots and increased affordable housing. The artist-only session revealed insights on artists' variable incomes, their need for predictable and affordable space to create, and their primary homeownership obstacles—qualifying for mortgages and affording down payments.

With organizational partners, funding, and a community mandate, St. Louis Art Place Initiative incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 2019 with an original goal of building 20 single-family homes over the next three to five years on the 25 parcels that were secured in Gravois Park. Its board included artists living and working in the neighborhood, architects, and representatives of organizational partners.

API is now staffed by two co-directors, Razani and Jennifer Allen, with over 35 years of combined experience in arts-based community development, as well as community planning, organizing, and engagement. The future is bright for expanding its home-building and other arts-based development work in Gravois Park and throughout the Gravois-Jefferson Historic Neighborhoods Plan area, with potential partnerships for implementing their model in other neighborhoods in the city of St. Louis.

Serving the underserved

Serving and giving voice to the underserved is a deeply held value at API. It is the lens and paradigm of API's mission and is embodied in several ways:

- Gravois Park, the community API serves and the one that called it into existence, is a geographically, racially, and economically underserved neighborhood. In 2018, eight percent of the lots and 29% of the housing stock were vacant. All census tracts in Gravois Park have households below 60% of the area median income and are located in HUD Qualified Census Tracts and City of St. Louis Economic Justice Initiative priority tracts. Black, indigenous, and other people of color represent 79% of Gravois Park's population and therefore represent people groups disproportionately impacted by poverty and vacancy.
- API's staff is 100% BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), 50% women-led, and 50% Black-led. API's Board of Directors is 40% BIPOC and has 40% artist representation.
- API created its home application process with a racial equity lens using the wisdom of a committee with high BIPOC and artist representation.
- API serves a diverse group of potential artist-homebuyers through its Homes for Artist program. For example, they are 73% BIPOC, 63% women, and 37% men.
- API uses universal design in all of its home designs to support all abilities.
- API seeks out partners that represent the community it serves including, but not limited to, Dutchtown South Community Corporation, Volunteer Lawyers and Accountants for the Arts, Kranzberg Arts Foundation, and the Regional Arts Commission.



Gravois Park Site Plan 2025

API's model is comprised of 11 pillars



Resident co-design

API was created as a result of a community-driven neighborhood planning process and API continues to work with residents through its programs to implement its mission successfully.



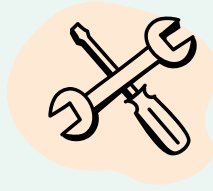
Affordable land

In a context with so much vacancy, the cost of vacant land is very low.



Access to financing

API has been able to secure pre-development, construction, and gap financing, through banks, CDFIs, partnerships and grants.



Construction economies of scale

Habitat for Humanity St. Louis (HFHSL) is API's general contractor, giving API access to the economies of scale HFHSL has achieved through its scaled operation.



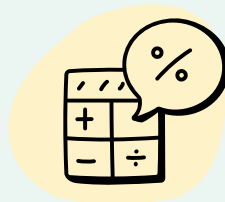
Affordable mortgages

HFHSL's pooled mortgage fund provides API's artists with 2.5% to 3.5% mortgages.



Down payment assistance

API secures grants to subsidize 95% of the artist-homebuyer's downpayment costs.



Property tax abatement

The artist-homebuyers have property tax abatement at 90% for 10 years because the parcels are part of a HUD Qualified Census Tract.



Homebuyer readiness

API, and its partners, provide technical assistance and education during the entire home-buying process.



Artist and mortgage application process

API selects housing-insecure and community-connected artists as potential homebuyers while connecting them to HFHSL for its mortgage application technical assistance.



Preserving home affordability

Each home has a deed restriction that requires the homes to always be sold to the next low-to-moderate-income artist.



Developing and preserving cultural assets

API further reduces vacancy by co-creating cultural assets with residents such as an artist residency and neighborhood-serving green spaces. API will ultimately create a cultural asset community land trust that will steward the cultural assets created.

API's Model

API's first year was spent defining the organization's mission, building partnerships, engaging the community, and understanding the complexities of developing affordable for-sale homes and a cultural asset land trust. What emerged was a model that promised to serve both the community and the artist-homebuyers. It would ensure affordable homeownership, retain artists, reduce vacancy, and enhance vibrancy in the neighborhood. Though a few organizations across the country had embarked on similar models at that time, API's founders looked to Musician's Village in New Orleans and Big Car Collaborative in Indianapolis to learn about for-sale home development for artists, and benefited greatly from Grounded Solutions as a resource on community land trusts.

As of summer 2025, API has completed two homes that have been successfully purchased by artists; another two homes will be completed by August 2025. Four more homes will be completed by the end of 2025 and another five slated for completion in spring 2026, bringing the total to 13 completed homes by 2026. API has completed a conceptual plan to guide all future development and has secured funding for the creation of a cultural asset community land trust, as well as funding for its first cultural assets. With each project, API has honed and evolved its model to best serve the community.

API finished and sold its first two homes in 2021 and 2022.



Photo credit: RJ Hartbeck

The Pillars in Practice

Construction economies of scale

As API looked to identify a general contractor, ways to keep construction affordable, and banking partnerships for mortgages, Habitat for Humanity St. Louis (HFHSL) emerged as a key ally. HFHSL brought expertise, partners, and an existing infrastructure to a new organization with limited housing development experience. HFHSL serves as API's general contractor and also provides artist-homebuyers access to its pooled mortgage fund, while offering mortgage technical assistance. HFHSL uses local subcontractors and volunteers for construction, and saves on materials through tax-exempt purchasing as a nonprofit. As a result, API homes can be built for a lower cost than other St. Louis affordable housing projects. For example, in 2023, API's per unit cost for new construction of for-sale homes was the lowest among all seven projects awarded construction subsidies through the City of St. Louis Community Development Administration; API's per unit cost was \$311,885 while the average among all awards was \$434,556. An API home is rehabbed for around \$250,000 and sold for approximately \$180,000.

Downpayment assistance and affordable mortgages

By securing grants, API subsidizes the majority of the downpayment expense, enabling artists to only pay approximately \$1,000 at closing. For many artists who are low-to-moderate-income entrepreneurs, homeownership is often out of reach because of the savings required for a downpayment and/or lack of creditworthiness due to inconsistent income. API artist-homebuyers also have access to HFHSL's pooled mortgage fund, which provides clients an interest rate of 2.5% to 3.5%. This keeps monthly mortgage payments in the \$600 to \$800 range, well below the federal affordability standard for an average household earning \$56,940 in Gravois Park. While making affordable payments on their homes, artist-homeowners enjoy the benefits of building credit and equity.

Homebuyer readiness and education

API recognizes that education and support are important for the success of any first-time homebuyers. API's homebuyer pipeline has six stages:

Stage 1: **Initial Assessment**

Stage 2: **Application Readiness & Education**

Stage 3: **Mortgage Pre-Screen Application**

Stage 4: **Mortgage Application**

Stage 5: **Closing**

Stage 6: **New Homeowner Orientation**

API and partners support prospective artist-homebuyers at each stage with technical assistance to prepare them to apply for a new home. For example, during the initial stages, API orientates prospective buyers to the process and assesses their eligibility of the program. Help with tax preparation and record-keeping are often needed, so API partners with Volunteer Lawyers and Accountants for the Arts who provides free legal and accounting services to artists. HFHSL figures heavily in the mortgage stages as they both pre-screen prospective buyers and provide technical assistance to those who move on to fill out a full

mortgage application. Once artist-homebuyers close on their homes, HFHSL and API stay engaged with them over the course of their mortgage.

Preserving home affordability

Preserving home affordability is crucial to API's mission. As API created its model, initial conversations explored whether artists would own only their home, with the land being held by a community land trust, or own both their home and the land underneath. Ultimately, API decided on the latter, for two key reasons. First, the local banks that would provide financing did not have a track record of working with community land trusts and expressed concern over the management of foreclosures if the land was owned by a party other than the homeowner. Second, some local residents thought the arrangement would be reminiscent of share-cropping and believed artist-homebuyers should benefit from owning their land in a similar way to market-rate homebuyers. Given this feedback, API's model allows each artist to own both the home and the land underneath it, but each home includes a deed restriction dictating a right of first refusal for API to purchase the home or designate a buyer. This allows API to ensure the homes are always sold to low-to-moderate-income artists.

The homes are sold according to a resale formula that accounts for inflation, as well as increases in the Area Median Income. The resale price is the original cost of the home plus a proportional increase tied to the rise in Area Median Income as reported by the Community Development Administration. For example, if an artist purchased a house for \$175,000, and from the time of sale, the Average Median income had increased by 10%, the sale price would be \$192,500 ($\$175,000 + 10\%$ of the initial purchase price, or \$17,500). The resale formula is designed to prevent the flipping of houses for profit and the potential pricing out of artists in the neighborhood. It also ensures the homes can only be sold to artists in the same Area Median Income bracket as the initial artist-homebuyer. While this limits what artists can earn from the sale of their home, they retain all equity earned through timely mortgage payments and down payment assistance grants, therefore building wealth.

API's next three homes are currently under construction and will be completed by summer 2025.



Developing cultural assets

API creates more than houses; it supports the sense of “home” already in the neighborhood by turning existing artists into new homeowners and by transforming vacant lots into cultural assets where neighbors can connect. In 2024, API worked with residents to complete its Block Dreams plan, which lays out a vision for transforming vacant parcels throughout the community footprint into green spaces and art spaces. It also includes architectural guidelines for future home design. Thanks to Neighborhood Transformation Grant funds provided by the City of St. Louis Community Development Administration, an artist residency, community art space, and garden are currently in development.

Through API’s new Art Makes Neighbors program, each artist-homebuyer will have the opportunity to lead a participatory art project with Gravois Park residents. These art projects will not only create art that will remain in the neighborhood, but they will also foster relationship-building among artists, their immediate neighbors, and the larger community—an act of neighboring that strengthens the sense of home. API has received its first funding for this program, which will launch in 2025.

Creating a cultural asset community land trust

Grounded Solutions Network, a nationally known technical assistance provider to community land trusts (CLTs), defines CLTs as nonprofit organizations that acquire, own, and steward land permanently for the common good. CLTs develop rural and urban agriculture projects, commercial spaces to serve local communities, affordable rental and cooperative housing projects, and conserve land or urban green spaces. CLTs are typically governed by a board made up of CLT residents, community residents, and public representatives.

API looks to establish a cultural asset community land trust to ensure any cultural assets developed by API will be placed in the land trust. Though CLTs often include a housing element, the land trust API will create, in partnership with Dutchtown South Community Corporation and residents, will only preserve and steward green spaces and art spaces as the artist-homeowners own both their home and the land it sits upon. Given its specific focus, API is currently referring to the CLT as a cultural asset community land trust. The land trust will be governed by a board of directors—made up of artist-homeowners, other residents, representatives from API and Dutchtown South Community Corporation—that will help manage and direct the use of these assets. Additionally, the cultural asset community land trust’s board of directors will serve as a check-and-balance to ensure any homes that are sold go to low to moderate-income artists.

API will partner with DSCC to manage the cultural asset community land trust as a way of developing a sustainable, collaborative land trust rooted in the community. With a 50-year history of trusted relationships and accountability to the community, DSCC will administrate the work of the cultural asset community land trust. This partnership will leverage the assets of an existing organization

in the community, prevent infrastructure duplication, and ensure that the cultural asset community land trust can continue into the future with or without API. The governance structure of the land trust will

**API seeks to
preserve green
and art spaces by
establishing a land
trust.**

ensure community oversight, and the board will be composed equally of API homebuyers, neighbors and residents of the neighborhood, and community stakeholders (e.g. school representatives and business owners). API's intent is that eventually the cultural asset community land trust will facilitate the resale of homes, eliminating API's role in that process.

Access to financing

The foundation of API's work is developing subsidized, for-sale affordable housing. This work follows a traditional model of securing loans to finance the construction of a house, selling it at an affordable price for less than the cost of construction to a housing-insecure buyer, and securing grant-based subsidies to cover the gap between the sale price and the construction costs.

API funds its development through construction financing from community development financial institutions (CDFIs) and banks that have deep experience funding affordable housing development. Because these institutions are mission-driven, they are aligned with API's mission from the start and often provide more favorable financing terms than a traditional bank.

While the construction lending covers the cost of construction, the reduced-price sale of the home to the buyer would not cover the repayment of that financing. To cover this deficit, API applies for gap subsidies for each development through municipal agencies and programs, primarily through the Community Development Administration of the City of St. Louis. These subsidies allot a small percentage of the total development cost to the applicant (API) as a developer fee. This fee helps cover the operational expenses incurred by API as an organization. However, because API operates as a 501(c)3, it does not earn developer fees on par with the private sector, and relies on grants to fund the majority of its operational expenses.

While API enjoys reliable funding sources for its affordable housing development, it is more difficult to find funding for planning/design costs and operations to support the cultural assets it is developing. API's sustainability is dependent on developing innovative funding partnerships that sit at the intersections of affordable housing development, community development, design, and the arts.



Habitat for Humanity St. Louis is one of API's most important strategic partners.

Accomplishments & Looking Forward

API has completed and sold two homes, and 13 more homes are under development; six homes will be completed in 2025. API has already reduced vacancy and improved the well-being of its artist-homebuyers. Neighbors celebrate transformed lots and artists now have affordable monthly housing costs and increased household wealth. Artist-homebuyers report increased stability, freedom, and joy resulting from predictable housing costs and reliable space for practicing their art.

API has also completed Block Dreams—a conceptual plan to guide all of its future development within Gravois Park. With this vision in place, API will implement a series of important funded projects and goals over the next two years that will increase its positive impact. API will:

- Complete the construction of seven additional homes between 2026 and 2027
- Streamline its artist and mortgage application process to serve more low and moderate-income artists
- Create a community art space and garden by 2026
- Create two murals and two additional art pieces as part of the Art Makes Neighbors program by 2026
- Create a cultural asset community land trust by 2026 that will steward the art and green spaces it develops and help ensure housing affordability is preserved
- Create an acquisition fund to acquire vacant land and properties to be developed in the future
- Pave the way to partner with other St. Louis neighborhoods who have reached out to API with interest in its arts-based community development mode

Residents came together to dream new ideas for cultural assets.

Gravois Park community members build out their dreams for API's footprint during the Block Dreams planning process.



Conclusion

While it is still too soon to evaluate long-term impact, API's community- and artist-driven model holds immense potential for replication in other St. Louis neighborhoods and beyond. The structure of API's arts-based community development model suggests that it could be scaled, replicated, or adapted in other contexts.

Knowing that one of St. Louis' greatest assets is being an art city, API sees how its arts-based community development model could provide benefits for other neighborhoods or cities. Not only could API's model increase affordable homeownership and household wealth for artists in other neighborhoods and cities with high vacancy, but also be a positive force in stabilizing those neighborhoods by creating community ownership of once-vacant land turned into cultural assets. With 25,000 vacant parcels in the City of St. Louis, API has the opportunity to continue to hone its model and prove that meaningful dents can be made in vacancy in exchange for stable housing costs that generate wealth at the same time. If API's cultural asset community land trust model proves effective, it could be replicated in other neighborhoods also interested in turning vacant parcels into green and art spaces.

However, adhering to its values, API is only interested in bringing its model to neighborhoods where it is invited by the community and is clear that their model is not intended or suited to be a large-scale affordable housing model. Instead, its target is to develop five to ten homes per year at a grassroots scale that can be responsive to community needs, shaped and defined by each individual neighborhood. API's model makes the case that transforming a small number of homes can have positive community-wide impacts.

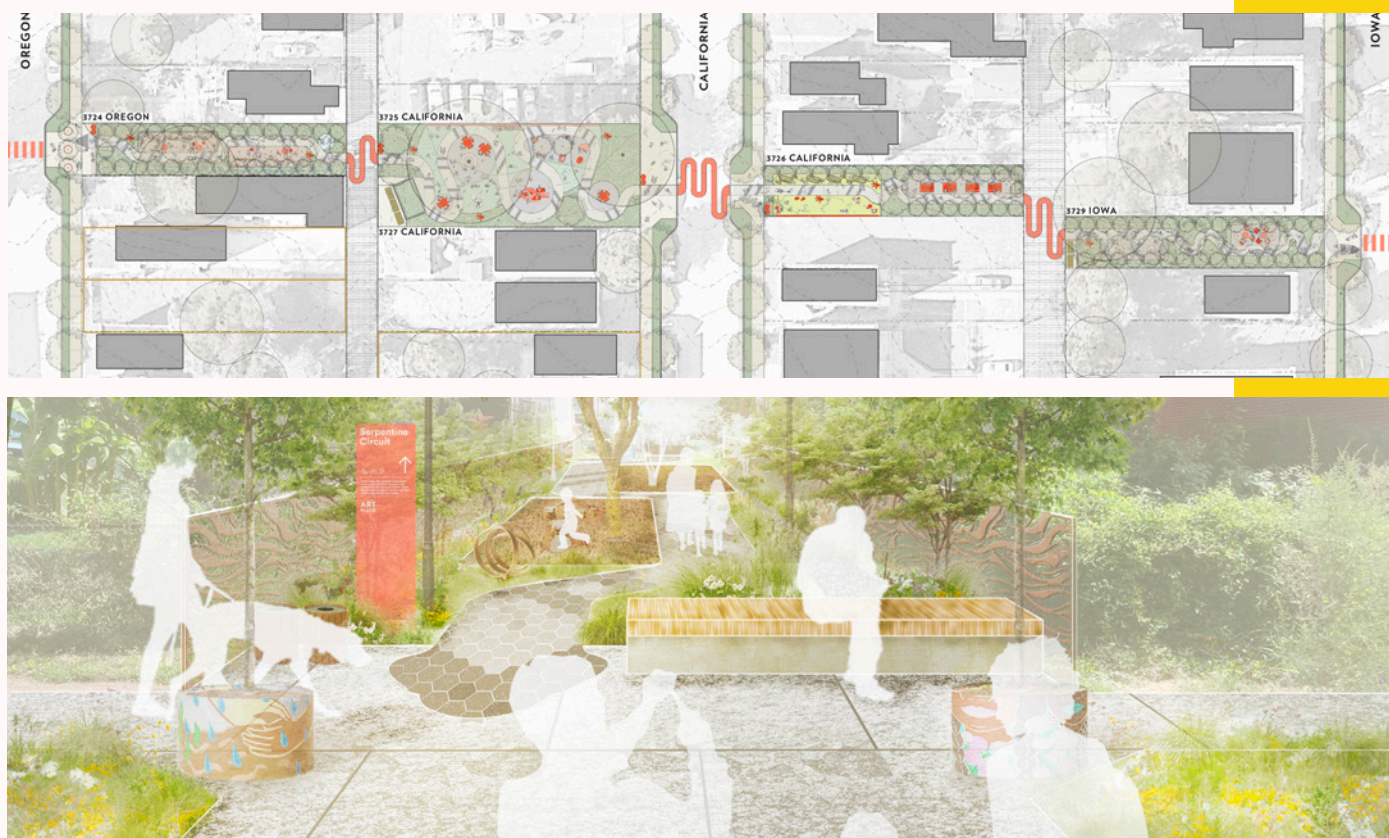
API does not yet know what its long-term role will be in Gravois Park. Once API completes development of its current parcels, creates the cultural asset community land trust and it becomes self-sustaining, and turns over the cultural assets it develops to the cultural asset community land trust, API will need to determine how its purpose evolves. To its credit, API is open to this uncertainty and has created a nimble structure that is able to adapt as the organization develops and its model is tested over a longer period of time.

API is rehabbing the below structure to house a neighborhood-embedded artist residency.



API envisions a future where St. Louis artists root and build wealth in the places they call home, while advancing their creative practice and shaping their neighborhoods. Many organizations, agencies, policies, and people will be required to achieve this vision, but API's role in building wealth for artists through homeownership and transforming vacant spaces into cultural assets with communities is an important contribution. The development and early phases of St. Louis Art Place Initiative reflects what is possible when individuals and organizations respond to community needs, make bold investments, collaborate across sectors, and dare to develop new solutions to long-standing problems. While API's story is still being written, it already offers these important lessons and inspiration to community leaders, funders, developers, and nonprofits looking to make a deep impact in neighborhoods experiencing similar challenges.

The Serpentine Circuit is a planned series of four pocket parks in the center of API's footprint. Top: plan view from Oregon to Iowa Avenues. Bottom: Elevation rendering of Oregon Avenue entrance.



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