Across Chicago, more than 15,000 city-owned lots sit vacant. These empty spaces represent a challenge and an opportunity for many neighborhoods. The 24th Ward, which spans through North Lawndale, has approximately 1,100 vacant lots alone. How might these lots provide space for neighborhood activities, foster economic investment and opportunities, and also provide places where individuals and groups might gather? The Available City Collective imagines these lots not just as infill of 1,100 individual projects, but as a whole set capable of providing a distinct identity to the neighborhood. Newly designed spaces might include: a roof and walkway that could host outdoor gatherings; exhibition or classroom space; a grid of outdoor rooms that open to one another at their corners; a collection of storefront-like openings with protruding balconies; a set of flexible spaces along property lines that could be home to new businesses such as car washes, markets, kitchens or bike shops.

Regardless, the exposition prompts further thought about the potential for new kinds of collective spaces within North Lawndale or other west and south side wards where the 13,000 city-owned lots are most prevalent.