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THE SOCIAL LOT: REIMAGINING THE FUTURE OF SURFACE PARKING LOTS IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

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May 2020 Honors Capstone
Bachelor of Architecture

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1.1. THE URBAN REORGANIZATION AND THE SPRAWL CITY

Since the beginning of civilization, people connected with each other through their communities and bound themselves to a place through building. As life became more sedentary and buildings more permanent, civilizations succeeded through rapid growth and development around these built forms through the creation of public space—comprising of squares and streets, like the Greek agora and Roman forum. This new organization of the landscape began a new lifestyle, an urban one. Currently, the world is experiencing a resurgence of the urban lifestyle as humanity undergoes its third great wave of human history, the metropolitan tide. Humanity's advancement in the past few decades has made cities the largest technology possible. In 1952, only thirty percent of the population lived in cities, and by the end of the twenty-first century, eighty-five percent of the world's population will be urban. With this influx of population in the urban landscape, it is pertinent now more than ever for cities to redesign the city for the pedestrian.

In the 1950s, there was a predominant reorganization of the landscape and shift in the urban lifestyle in the United States as the "American Dream" ignited a move out of the city into the suburbs. This outward expansion to places to be later deemed "suburbia" transformed the landscape into separated business districts and living districts. The space in between, and even the space within the city was transformed and was designed for the consumer and the car—not the pedestrian. So, now, the contemporary urban landscape is comprised of large blocks of commercial or industrial buildings followed by intermittently organized underutilized and underperforming open space. These open spaces are usually space left-over after planning, and are created by happenstance, not intention. When this reorganization of the landscape occurred, a new model of the urban form was created, the sprawl city model. The sprawl city usually witnesses this type of car-centered organization downtown, which leads to a disconnection within the city core and its people.

Located in the heart of the United States lies a city so much in sprawl that it straddles two states. Connecting Kansas and Missouri, Kansas City has the potential to be a paradigm for sprawl city revitalization. Currently, Kansas City, Missouri is undergoing transformations towards a 21st century city, but the main issue inhibiting the success of these transformations is the disconnection within the city. Not only is it an expansive sprawl city, but the downtown core organization caters to the needs of the car. Miles of highway act as barriers towards connection of the city's districts, and at the pedestrian scale, the landscape is plagued by wide streets and boulevards and underutilized open space and surface parking lots. Kansas City, Missouri is city desperately wanting to connect and revitalize the downtown core, which is rich in history and culture, but with these connection barriers, the city is having difficulty. This capstone investigates the hypothesis that engaging public spaces into the city's almost non-existent public realm will ignite a network of public space and create a better-connected city.

1.2 CAPSTONE QUESTION

This capstone reimagines the future of surface parking lots in the Crossroads District of Kansas City, Missouri as public space. Through the analysis of Kansas City, Missouri, surface parking lot typologies in the Crossroads District, and the study of successful public space as determined by theories and cases studies in placemaking, this capstone aims to determine a public space toolkit needed to transform Kansas City's surface parking lots into public spaces that provide better connectivity between its districts, neighborhoods, and people. The goal of this capstone is to examine the viability of the toolkit as a public space placemaking method, in relation to Kansas City, and ultimately answer its initial research question: How can public space serve as an ultimate layer of connectivity in a currently disconnected city?

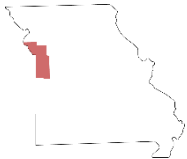
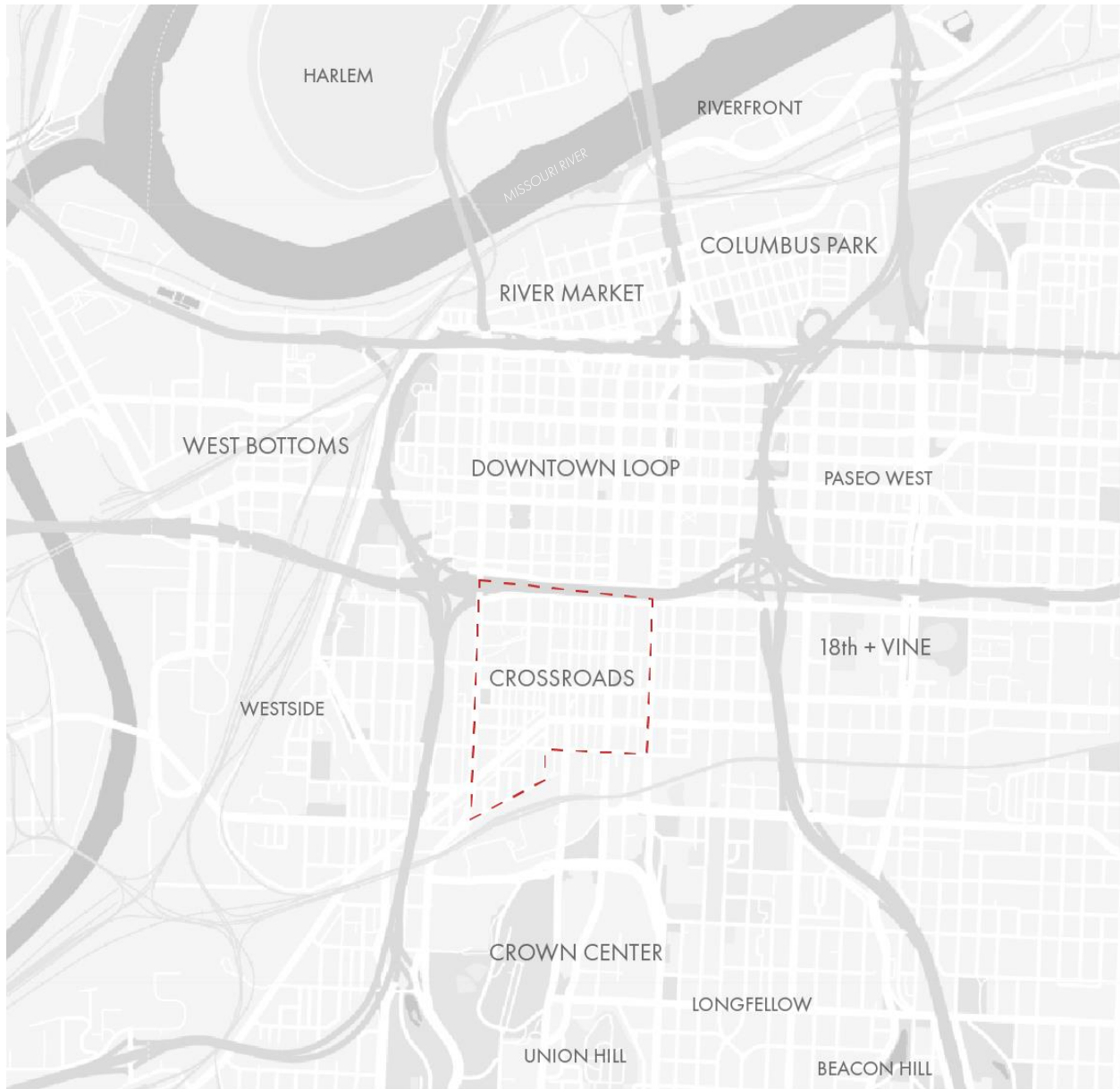


Fig. 1: Districts of Downtown Kansas City, Missouri with drawn boundary line indicating the Crossroads District.
SOURCE: Created by author and Google. Google. Accessed February 4, 2020.
<https://mapstyle.withgoogle.com/>.¹

¹ Google. Google. Accessed February 4, 2020. <https://mapstyle.withgoogle.com/>.



Fig. 2: View of Downtown Kansas City from WWI Memorial.
SOURCE: photo by author.

2.1 THE DISCONNECTION OF KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Kansas City, Missouri—the future epitome of the connected sprawl city—is currently undergoing revitalization. The Greater Downtown Metro Area includes fourteen districts. Each district acts as a pocket of density, with its own points of connection, within the overall organization of the city. Although some districts have strong connectivity within their pocket of density, others are lacking, and connectivity between the districts is weak. The reason for this weak connection stems from the observation that the planning of Kansas City, Missouri is car culture centric. Components of the urban fabric that would typically enhance connectivity in the city—streets and squares—are designed for the car. In the open void space of the fabric that alienates the pockets of density within the district, and in turn, the districts from each other, lies underutilized, open, residual space—usually in the form of surface parking lots. As people move back into the city, and the city makes strides towards a 21st century city, it is important to question and hypothesize what will make this currently disconnected city successful and sustainable. This capstone aims to determine the future of Kansas City's success is in the connectivity of the city through a network of public space.

Fred Kent, an urban planner and co-founder of Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is quoted to say that “if you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and place, you get people and places.”² Kansas City, Missouri was designed for the car, which led to a disconnection within the city. In 1892, Frederick Law Olmstead sent George Edward Kessler, a city planner, landscape architect, and parks consultant, on a mission to design boulevards and parks for Kansas City, as part of his City Beautiful movement, which aimed to relieve overcrowding and pollution in cities and that “both the aesthetics and the air quality could be improved by interspersing parks and boulevards throughout an urban setting.”³ Once in Kansas City, Kessler created “more than 135 miles of boulevards and

² “Times Square Debate Lays Bare the Importance of Proactive Public Space Management.” RSS. Accessed February 4, 2020. <https://www.pps.org/article/times-square-debate-lays-bare-the-importance-of-proactive-public-space-management>.

³ “HI Mailbag: Origin of the Name of Kessler Boulevard - Historic Indianapolis: All Things Indianapolis History.” Historic Indianapolis | All Things Indianapolis History, December 18, 2017. <https://historicindianapolis.com/hi-mailbag-origin-of-the-naming-of-kessler-boulevard/>.

parkways that wind their way through and provide green connections”⁴ within the city, granting Kansas City the nickname the “Paris of the Plains”. This Parisian dream of an idyllic boulevard landscape in Kansas City, however, did not fully come into fruition as these wide boulevards only further promoted car culture in Kansas City, Missouri. The Kessler boulevards are predominantly found in the Country Club Plaza District, but when the same principles are applied to the downtown core, only the wide streets are prevalent—without the trees and parks running alongside the road. This road dominance in the urban landscape organization encourages vehicular travel, and as a sprawl city, mainly requires it to get from place to place. Because of this, Kansas City is currently ranked as number 59 out of 100 urban areas in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Index, as it is one of the poorest performers in carbon emissions per capita in the United States.

Kansas City has **“more freeway miles per capita than any other major metro area”⁵**. Not only does this expansive mileage of freeways promote the use of the car and disconnect areas further outside of the city, but they severely disconnect the downtown core as a series of highway arteries wrap themselves in a loop around the Downtown Loop (Central Business District) (seen in Figure 3). This highway loop is one of the major factors in the disconnection of downtown Kansas City, Missouri, and the major detractors of connectivity are the commuters who rely on this infrastructure every day. The highways push people around and over the urban neighborhoods, and Kansas City’s extensive road and boulevard infrastructure further enhances this effect through the neighborhoods and districts. Graph 1 demonstrates how the built landscape is disproportionate when comparing car-influenced infrastructure

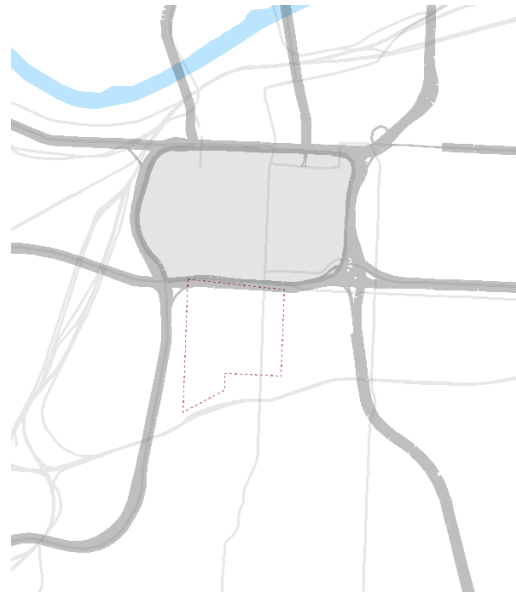
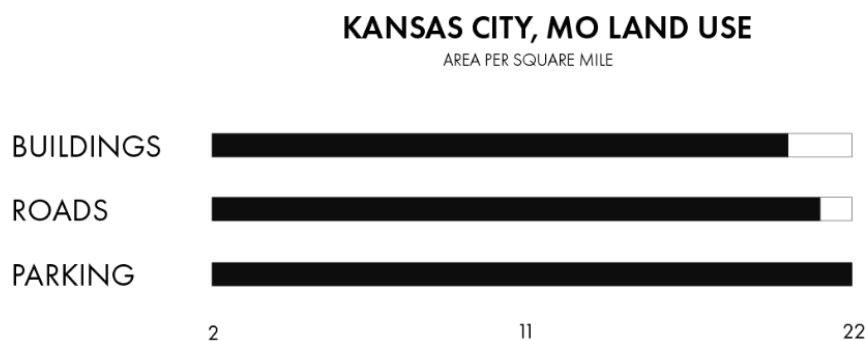


Fig. 3: Highway loop in Downtown Kansas City separates the Downtown Loop (Central Business District) from its other districts.

SOURCE: created by author.

GRAPH 1



SOURCE: created by author with data from Strong Towns. “Live in Kansas City: ‘We’re a Suburban Community Learning We Can Be Urban.’” Strong Towns. Strong Towns, November 5, 2019. <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2019/11/4/live-in-kansas-city-were-a-suburban-community-learning->

⁴ “Boulevards & Parkways - KC Parks and Rec.” Kansas City Parks. Accessed January 30, 2020. <https://kcparks.org/about-parks/boulevards-parkways/>.

⁵ McCammon, Sarah. “As Kansas City Booms And Sprawls, Trying Not To Forget Those In Between.” NPR. August 25, 2017. Accessed May 04, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/2017/08/25/541607542/as-kansas-city-booms-and-sprawls-trying-not-to-forget-those-in-between>.

versus the built forms comprising the city. Road and parking together significantly outnumber the building area in Kansas City. A successful urban form requires a balance between these entities and Kansas City represents how a disproportionate balance leads to a disconnected city. One of the districts with the greatest disparity between the built form and underutilized open space, roads, and parking is the Crossroads District.

2.2 THE CROSSROADS DISTRICT

The Crossroads District is a vibrant arts district in Kansas City, Missouri. The Crossroads District is centrally located within Kansas City, south of the Downtown Loop (Central Business District) and is a combination of creativity, technology, and heritage, mostly known for its arts and entertainment culture. It quickly growing and revitalizing as more people move into its neighborhoods, visit its galleries, and innovative businesses increase. It is one of the most popular districts in downtown because of its diversity, artistic vibrancy and culture, and walkability. The Crossroads is one of the top three most walkable areas in the city, with a WalkScore of 87, and it is an increasingly popular destination with its multiple galleries, shops, restaurants, and apartment buildings. With all this growth, the Crossroads is becoming one of the most concentrated gallery districts in the nation.

The capstone will limit its scope to specifically investigate the Crossroads District in relation to Kansas City because of its expansive and effective revitalization and because of its severe lack of public green space. For a district that is attracting so much attention and experiencing an influx in business and population, its number of public spaces is surprisingly, extremely low, as there are currently no designated public spaces within the district. The phenomenon happens throughout Kansas City, which is the major reason why it is so disconnected, but the Crossroads District is the only district that does not have any public space present, which is represented in Figure 4.

Implementing public space in this district will help make its revitalization successful by engaging the community in the one realm that it is lacking—the public realm. The district already has an inherently high social wellbeing, and this and the environmental wellbeing will increase through the addition of green space. Figure 5 exposes the unbalanced urban composition of the Crossroads District in relation to the built environment, surface parking lots, and green space. Surface

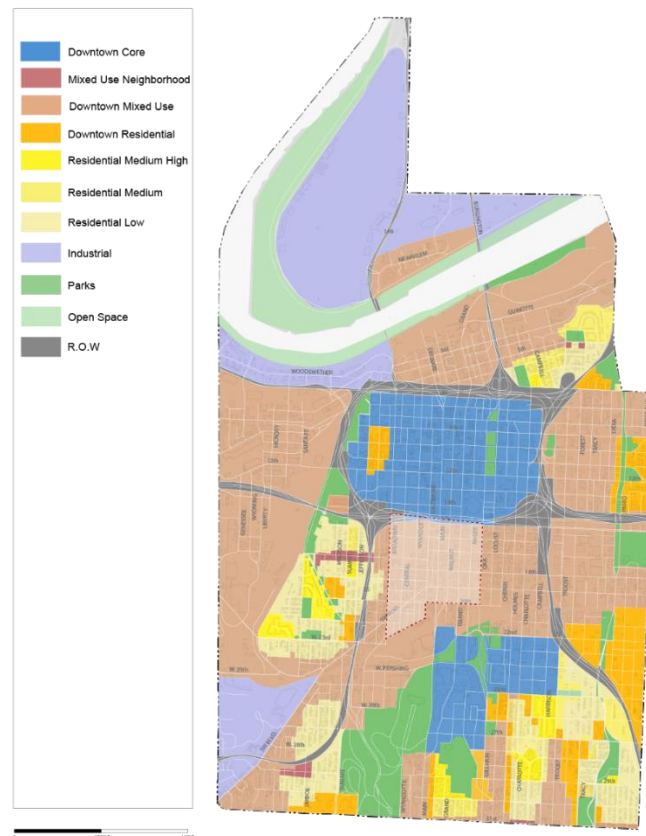


Fig. 4 : Kansas City, Missouri Greater Downtown Area Land Use with Crossroads District call-out.

SOURCE: "Greater Downtown Area Plan | Open Data KC." Data.kcmo.org. Accessed May 07, 2018. <https://data.kcmo.org/Area-Plans/Greater-Downtown-Area-Plan/e9ss-ttb9>.

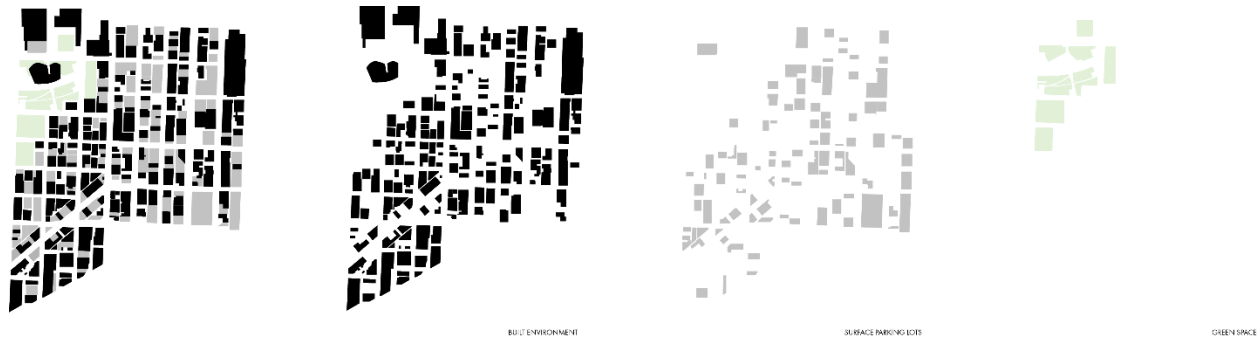


Fig. 5: The Crossroads District Figure Ground Composition calling out the built environment, surface parking lots, and green space.

SOURCE: created by author.

parking lots plague this district and green space only exists as underutilized and under-programmed lawns, except for 18 Broadway Urban Garden. The district has a strong want and pull to be a main center for connection, and the transformation of surface parking lots into public spaces has the ability to make the Crossroads better-connect with itself, its people, and the rest of the city.

2.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SPACE AND PLACEMAKING

In the present-day, contemporary city, there is a disproportionate reading of the urban form occurring. The built form dominates, and open, void space becomes secondary and seemingly not purposeful. Public space is a main urban design tactic that seems to have gotten lost in the contemporary city. With the heavy reliance on cars and highways, cities have lost their sense of connectivity within their fabric and social, public realm. By understanding the history of public space, how it transformed in the contemporary city, and how a successful public space benefits the social and environmental wellbeing of the city, this capstone will be able to develop criteria for a public space toolkit.

2.3.1 THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC SPACE

The idea of public space within the city is not a new one. It is an integral component of the creation of the urban form and has been since ancient Roman times. But, with the dawn of the age of the automobile, as well as the commercialization of the city and industry take over, public space seemed to get lost and replaced by vacant buildings, space left over after planning, and surface parking lots. It is important to review the first organization of public space in relation to the urban form, how it is a key aspect in the ideal modern city, and its implications of reintroducing it in the current modern city.

Public space is an “area of place that is open and accessible to all peoples,

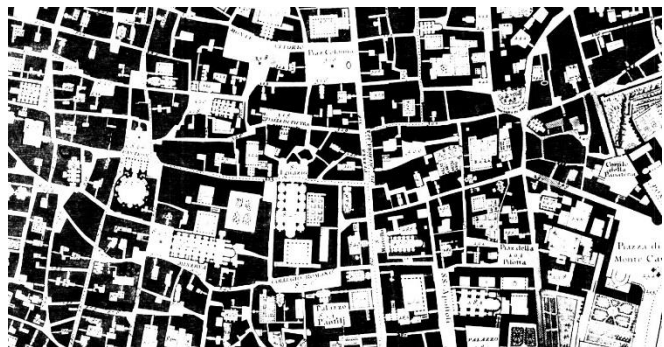


Fig. 6: The Nolli Map of Rome.

SOURCE: “Wonderful Maps: Nolli.” City. November 11, 2010.

Accessed November 23, 2018.

<https://cityeu.wordpress.com/2010/11/03/wonderfull-mapsnolli/>.

Plan of Rome, Giambattista Nolli, 1748

regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age, or socio-economic level. These are public gathering spaces such as plazas, squares, and parks”.⁶ Plazas, squares, and streets were the first public spaces. The ideal urban condition is realized through Bufalini’s Nolli map of Rome 1551 (seen in Figure 6). The city of Rome is “represented primarily as the interwoven relationship of space, incorporating the entire spectrum of sequences which connect the public and semi-public to the private”⁷. The Nolli plan simplifies the city into positive and negative space. The positive is public, open space and streets, enclosed by the negative built forms and architecture. These enclosed open spaces are streets and squares, and they become crucial in the connection of views, people, and elements of the city. “The streets and squares are the principal elements formed from the urban medium of space”⁸. Streets and squares are the seemingly ever-flowing organic field that are the more definitive elements when compared to the space made by the built form, especially when considering the modern additions to the urban form.

Modern contributions to the urban form become an anti-urban idea because of the clean, open ambiguity of the transition between the positive and negative elements of the form. In the contemporary city, these anti-urban notions translate into roads and surface parking lots as circulation priority and edge conditions are granted to and defined by the car—not the pedestrian, like the city once was. Leon Krier, an architectural theorist and urban planner, is an advocate of New Urbanism, which promotes the “creation and restoration of diverse, walkable, compact, vibrant, mixed-use communities composed of the same components as conventional

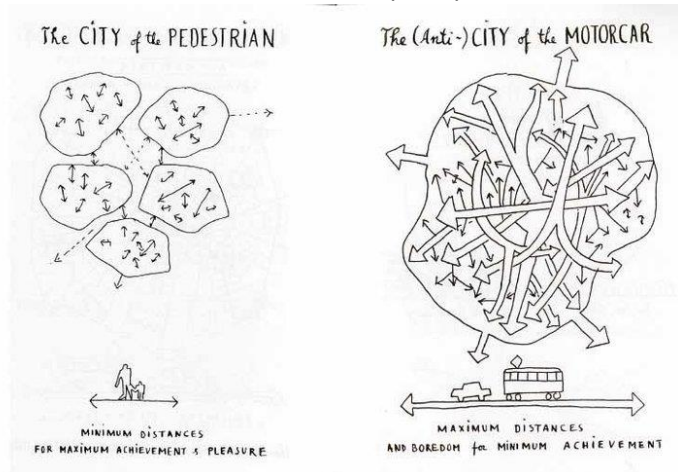


Fig. 7: The Pedestrian City vs. The Motorcar City.

SOURCE: Krier, Leon. “Leon Krier on Sustainable Urbanism and the Legible City.” *Architectural Review*. Accessed December 10, 2018. <http://www.architectural-review.com/essays/viewpoints/leon-krier-on-sustainable-urbanism-and-the-legible-city/8659343.article/>

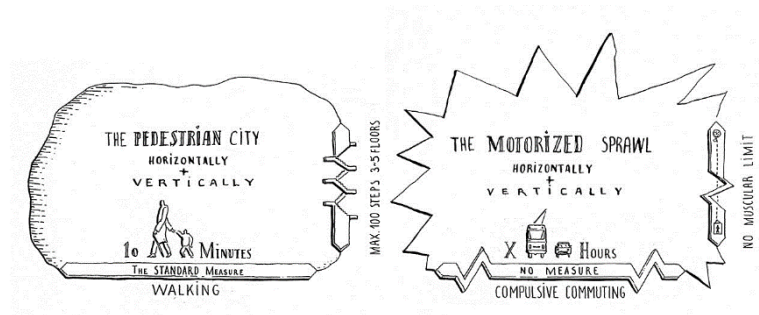


Fig. 8: Walkability vs Car Transport.

SOURCE: Krier, Leon. “Leon Krier on Sustainable Urbanism and the Legible City.” *Architectural Review*. Accessed December 10, 2018. <http://www.architectural-review.com/essays/viewpoints/leon-krier-on-sustainable-urbanism-and-the-legible-city/8659343.article/>

⁶ "Inclusion Through Access to Public Space | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization." UNESCO. Accessed May 02, 2018. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/urban-development/migrants-inclusion-in-cities/good-practices/inclusion-through-access-to-public-space/>.

⁷ Peterson, Steven. “Urban Design Tactics.”

⁸ Peterson, Steven. “Urban Design Tactics.”

development, but assembled in a more integrated fashion, in the form of complete communities”⁹. Through his diagrams shown as Figure 7 and 8, Krier demonstrates how the contemporary city transformed itself into a city for the car, creating a disconnection phenomenon that most cities are trying to correct as they adapt 21st century means of placemaking.

2.3.2 WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?

Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public space as the heart of the community, and the creation of public space within large space, like a city, strengthens the connection between people and the places they share. The idea of placemaking is not a new idea and has been in motion since the 1960’s because of Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte. “Eyes on the street” is an idea created by Jane Jacobs explaining how street-scale features, such as street landscaping, block size, and public amenities help support community trust by increasing the feeling of safety. Street-scale features enhance the sense of community and shared social identity tied into a space that allows for place-making to happen. Whyte is an American urbanist, sociologist, organizational analyst, and journalist who studied how human behavior is affected by public spaces. In the book, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, Whyte looks at New York and observes what makes public space in the city successful. He found that the most successful spaces were ones that allowed for the maximum comfort of people through the design of the space and ones that promoted socialization. He developed a theory on triangulation, which is the process by which an external stimulus provides a connection between people and prompts strangers to interact with one another in a friendly manner. Social connection strengthens the community aspect of space, and the idea connectivity through placemaking is community driven, meaning that design should be programmed to the activity of the community, not vice versa. People in the community must create a sense of place to connect to a space, and in turn, the spaces give a city its identity. Good public spaces are an extension of the community. They benefit the economy, the environment, and the social activities that it promotes. Placemaking relies mostly on the idea of place and how it is affected by the identity of the people and affects the identity of the city. Edward Relph was a humanist geographer who had a theory about the phenomenology of place and space. Phenomenology is the interpretive study of human experience. He developed an idea about place and placelessness and advocated for a response against placelessness by developing the environment in which “places are for people, reflecting and enhancing the variety of human experience”.¹⁰ A varied human experience is a major component in placemaking as it enhances the connection of a person to a space.

2.3.3 CONNECTIVITY

Humans are highly social beings. “Human connection brings complex values to our lives: relationships give us a sense of belonging in the group, a sense of identity in contrast to others in that group”¹¹. Humans need to connect to each other, and the spaces they inhabit should offer opportunities for connection. Public spaces offer these kinds of opportunities. Public space connects people to the city and to each other and “when the urban environment has a high level of connectivity and spatial definition, people will be naturally drawn to it”.¹² In this age of hyper-connectivity, people are finding

⁹ New Urbanism. Accessed November 26, 2018. <http://www.newurbanism.org/newurbanism.html>.

¹⁰ Seamon, David. "PLACE AND PLACELESSNESS (1976): Edward Relph (2008)." Academia.edu. Accessed May 02, 2018.

¹¹ Summary, A GoodTherapy.org News. “The Profound Impact of Human Connection.” GoodTherapy.org Therapy Blog, October 25, 2013. <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/profound-impact-of-human-connection>.

¹² "Greater Downtown Area Plan | Open Data KC." Data.kcmo.org. Accessed May 07, 2018. <https://data.kcmo.org/Area-Plans/Greater-Downtown-Area-Plan/e9ss-ttb9>.

multiple means and methods to connect with each other, and this usually comes in the form of technological connection. If the need for connection is so high, why aren't people connecting with each other in person? Could it be because there are not spaces in their community available for this connection to happen? Connectivity is an important issue of the city because a city needs enough connection points to meet its metabolic needs. A city's metabolism is sustained through the balance of environmental, social, and economic wellbeing and this balance is crucial as "cities are ultimately environments that allow people to build communities and friendships, raise families, and live their lives".¹³ One way to increase connectivity is by activating the public realm by programming spaces to the needs and activities of the people. Another way is through its walkability and street-scale features, such as landscaping and pedestrian amenities because it helps create a sense of place and shared social identity within the community due to the increased possibility for social interaction to happen. Sense of place is determined by personal experiences, social interactions, and identities. "Sense of place—the way we perceive places such as streets, communities, cities, or ecoregions—influences our wellbeing, how we describe and interact with a place, what we value in a place, our respect for ecosystem and other species, how we perceive the affordances of a place, our desire to build more sustainable and just urban communities, and how we choose to improve cities"¹⁴. Sense of place—including place attachment and place meanings—helps people appreciate ecological and social aspects of a city.

2.3.4 12 CRITERIA OF PUBLIC SPACE

A public space is successful when it engages all factors of the environment—social, ecological, and economic. According to architect and urbanist Jan Gehl, "public spaces do not exist as static physical entities but are constellations of ideas, actions, and environments"¹⁵, and in this regard, "public space is understood as street, alleys, buildings, squares, bollards: everything that can be considered part of the built environment"¹⁶. An important factor in public space placemaking is examining what elements create a successful public place through the lens of the pedestrian landscape. Gehl has created a list of "12 Criteria of Public Space" (see Table 1), and this capstone assumes that this is a correct way to measure and determine what makes a successful public space. With this assumption, and background of placemaking, this capstone has the ability to create a series of methods to study public space in Kansas City, Missouri and achieve the goal of creating a public space toolkit that reimagines the future of surface parking lots as a network of well-connected public spaces.

¹³ Cohen, Steven. *Sustainability Management: Lessons from and for New York City, America, and the Planet*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

¹⁴ Adams, Jennifer, Khadija Darmame, Ellsworth Rustia, Chie Armenta, Chandra S, and Brooklyn College. "Sense of Place." *The Nature of Cities*, July 6, 2016. <https://www.thenatureofcities.com/2016/05/26/sense-of-place/>.

¹⁵ Gehl, Jan, and Birgitte Svarre. *How to Study Public Life*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2013.

¹⁶ Gehl, Jan, and Birgitte Svarre. *How to Study Public Life*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2013.

TABLE 1: 12 CRITERIA OF PUBLIC SPACE

| COMFORT | PROTECTION | ENJOYMENT |
|---|---|---|
| Options for mobility. | Protection against traffic and accidents. | Scale. |
| Options to stand and linger. | Protection against harm by others. | Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate. |
| Options for sitting. | Protection against unpleasant sensory experience. | Experience of aesthetic qualities and positive sensory experiences. |
| Options for seeing. | | |
| Options for talking and listening/hearing. | | |
| Options for play, exercise, and activities. | | |

SOURCE: created by author with information from Gehl, Jan, and Birgitte Svarre. *How to Study Public Life*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2013.

3.1 METHODS

Through a series of exploratory studies, the ultimate purpose of this capstone is to assess the viability of all potential sites, develop criteria for their selection, make account of all relevant contextual factors that need to be take into consideration when making the site available to pedestrians, and provide a reference concept for potential development of other surface parking lots in the city, as well as for other similar cities. This will physicalize itself in the form of a public space toolkit that will be applied to all sites and understood as a basic approach to creating public spaces that better connect to people, their community, and a larger city context in Kansas City, Missouri, specifically in the Crossroads District.

TABLE 2

| PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Volume | Massing and Enclosure Open Enclosed Covered Dimensions Shape and Configuration |
| Ground Plane | Topography Natural Built Material Condition |
| Vertical Plane | Walls and Facades Frontality |
| Permeability | Physical Built Urban greenery Visual Barriers Street Parking Highway Gates Water |

SOURCE: created by author.

The methods towards this result are determined by studying public space theories and case studies, as well as interpreting Jan Gehl's "12 criteria of public space". This capstone adopts a series of its own criteria and methods for analyzing public space. In tables 2-4, the capstone identifies three defining categories of characteristics that a site should possess, or have the potential to possess, to be deemed a successful public space.

3.2 CASE STUDIES

The physical, sensory, and social characteristics are important factors in the success and sustainability of a public space, and with these defining characteristics, this capstone will conduct an exploratory investigation of public space case studies and determine which elements provide the best means in connection within the space and the city, and add them to the capstone's toolkit taxonomy. The goal is to select elements that are successful, not necessarily replicating them, but using similar conditions and characteristics to better connect them with a selected site. A successful component in one case study may not have the same result in another, and a case study may not directly relate

TABLE 3

| SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS | |
|------------------------|---|
| Living + Lodging | Apartments Hotels Air Bnb |
| Food + Drink | Restaurant Sit Down Counter Service Fast Food Café Bar Bakery Food Truck |
| Shops | Grocery Clothing Furniture |
| Commercial | Business |
| Art | Gallery Street Art |

SOURCE: created by author.

TABLE 4

| SENSORY CHARACTERISTICS | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Light | Glare Natural Daylighting |
| Shade | Trees Coverings Building Shadow |
| Sound | Noise level Traffic Construction |

SOURCE: created by author.

to conditions present in Kansas City, but may indicate valuable conditions in placemaking that can be applied to the toolkit.
Overall, these methods will present a valuable way to understand public space, and the components derived from them through this case study exploration will determine a strong public space toolkit.

3.2.1 CASE STUDY 1: KC POWER AND LIGHT

Kansas City, Missouri



Fig. 9: Kansas City Power and Light District Transformation.

SOURCE: <https://archinect.com/news/article/150128414/parking-madness-2019-which-urban-transformation-will-take-home-the-trophy>

Located in the Downtown Loop (Central Business District), the Kansas City Power and Light District once was a landscape of surface parking lots. As mentioned previously, the Downtown Loop is disconnected from the other neighborhoods and districts in Kansas City because of the ring of highways that surround it. In a bid to revitalize this important downtown core, in 2006, Kansas City underwent a major urban transformation. A total of nine city blocks, mainly consisting of surface parking lots, were transformed into the Kansas City Power and Light District. The nine block sight includes a major convention center—the Sprint Center, which is a popular destination for concerts and sports games, includes shops, restaurants, a grocery store, and finally, a public piazza, which is now KC Live!. This urban transformation is a key player in the succeeding revitalization of Kansas City, as it attracts business, people, and development. The district continues to grow from this large catalyst project.

FOR THE TOOLKIT

Although this case study analyzes a major surface parking lot transformation, this capstone will not utilize the same tactics of placemaking. This is because of the size and programming of the project. The Downtown Loop was in need in a major urban transformation project, and the creation of the Kansas City Power and Light District helped propel Kansas City towards a 21st century city, but this capstone is investigating how small scale interventions can achieve the same effect.

The Kansas City Power and Light District is a great example of how public-focused design revitalizes an area and encourages public engagement and connectivity and economic growth. The district continues to grow and business booms in this area. The area, although designed for the pedestrian, heavily focuses on the consumer. The main public space is a public piazza that serves as a main focal point. It attracts people and engages them to connect with each other and the space through wide sidewalks, narrow streets, open storefronts, public art, and extensive green space. These elements give strength to the space and promise long term viability. It proves that a public space, although centered around commercial industry and sometimes only accessible through monetary contributions, promotes economic and social prosperity in a city. The downfall of this project is that it reiterates the idea that Kansas City is organized around pockets of density with disconnection between its neighborhoods,

districts, and people. This project creates a strong pull towards connection within it, but as it continues to grow, it still fails in connecting with other districts. The capstone assumes that Kansas City will be successful in revitalization through a network of connected public spaces, and this is a good case study to represent that a network is necessary for continued economic and social growth throughout the city.

3.2.2 CASE STUDY 2: BROADWAY STREET

New York City, New York



Fig. 10: Broadway Street transformation in New York City, New York

SOURCE: Sadik-Khan, Janette, and Seth Solomonow. *Streetfight: Handbook for an Urban Revolution*. NY, NY: Penguin Books, 2017.

In Times Square in New York City, Broadway Street was a traffic congested, accident prone, and loud transit corridor. People were shoved to the side along the narrow sidewalks and the read as though the city valued the life of the car, not its people. Janette Sadik-Kahn, former New York City transportation commissioner under Michael Bloomberg's administration, had a mission to reclaim New York streets, parking lots, and underutilized open spaces and give them back to the people. She implemented a series of tactical urbanism pop-up plazas throughout the city to test the viability of public space instead of car and transportation space. Through these public spaces, Sadik-Kahn improved traffic flow, decongesting the street, increase biking and walkability, connected the city back to its people, and attracted more people and business to the projects' adjacent spaces. Broadway Street was one of these projects. It was shut off from traffic, and a public area was created with paint and temporary materials. Traffic flow improved, and the area turned into a top ten retail area in America due to the public access and space it created. Areas designated for bikes, buses, and the people spread throughout the city, and most of these areas were created by simply painting portions of the street, sidewalks, and surface parking lots. Adding paint and moveable objects for people to sit allocated areas for pedestrians to walk, bike, and stop to enjoy the city, and increased the walkability, sustainability, and overall happiness of the community.

FOR THE TOOLKIT

Although New York City is a dense city model and holds no comparison to a sprawl city model, like Kansas City, this is still a valuable case study for this capstone. After the redesign, retail rents tripled, and major stores moved in around the new street plaza. This demonstrates a possible ripple effect that a public space can have in the economic realm and sustainability of a city. Its adjacency to Times Square can serve as parallel insight that a successful and prosperous public space should exist near, or next to, main destination points, like a restaurant, bar, gallery, or public facility. When the desire to go to a place is already present, the spaces around it can amplify that desire and transform into either supplemental or main public spaces that connect. The approach to placemaking and design is another component that is important to investigate in creating a toolkit for this capstone. Complete with only paint, bollards, smart traffic management, café seating, and moveable objects, this project transforms a space once meant for cars into a vibrant public space. Other cities throughout the country have taken lessons learned from New York City and implemented similar placemaking strategies—creating other successful public spaces. Yes, the density in population and urban form of New York City made this a successful public space, but the materials played a large role as well. By determining a specific space for people to pause and interact with each other, the materials created a space for connectivity and wellbeing to develop.



Fig. 11: Broadway Street transformation placemaking strategies.

SOURCE: Sadik-Khan, Janette, and Seth Solomonow. *Streetfight: Handbook for an Urban Revolution*. NY, NY: Penguin Books, 2017. Annotations by author.

3.2.3 CASE STUDY 3: PEARL STREET PLAZA IN DUMBO

Brooklyn, New York City, New York



Fig. 12: Pearl Street Plaza before (left) and after (right).

SOURCE: Sadik-Khan, Janette, and Seth Solomonow. *Streetfight: Handbook for an Urban Revolution*. NY, NY: Penguin Books, 2017.

Another project implemented under Janette Sadik-Kahn's "streetfight" initiative is the Pearl Street plaza in DUMBO, at the foot of the Manhattan Bridge. This was the first placemaking project completed from the New York City Department of Transportation. It was completed in 2007 and although at first a temporary design, it is still intact today. Sadik-Kahn transforms an awkward surface parking lot into a painted public plaza that now acts as a central connection node. Pearl Street plaza at first was a test in if transforming places typically utilized for cars—the street and surface parking lots—would bring people back together in the city and increase pedestrian safety by reducing traffic and accidents. The result? It did. With only a painting the pavement, adding café seating, and outlining the space with planters and bollards, Sadik-Kahn created a successful public space that encourages pedestrian interaction and biking and Pearl Street plaza became the catalytic project that ignited sixty other pop-up plazas to be installed city-wide.

FOR THE TOOLKIT

This project serves as a great case study for the toolkit not only because it is a surface parking lot-turned-public space transformation, but because of the tactical approach to placemaking with temporary materials and objects used to program the space. This project exemplifies the idea that simple placemaking strategies can transform a desolate place into a main node of connection and eventually serve as a catalyst to a future public space network. For this capstone, the toolkit will utilize the site's adjacency to a bike lane, and its programming elements such as planters, painted surface to delineate space, and café seating. Through these small-scale interventions, Pearl Street plaza was able to become a safer and better-connected public space, so it is assumed that this design strategy will act as a catalyst of connection when implemented in a similar site condition.

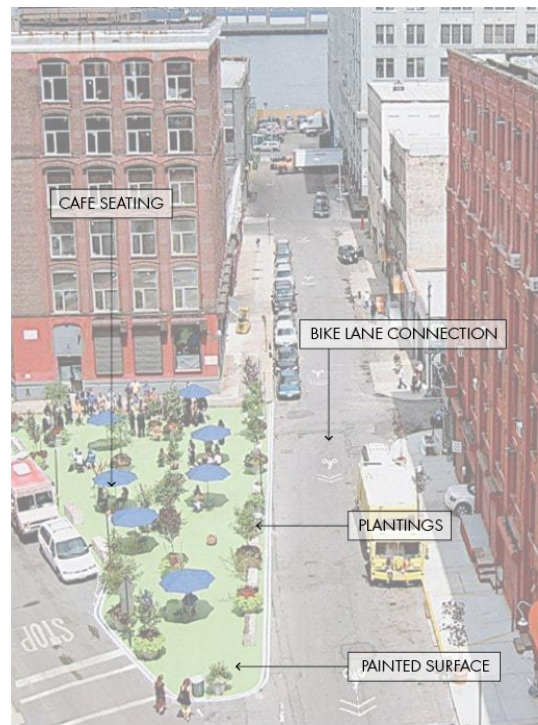


Fig. 13: Pearl Street Plaza in DUMBO transformation placemaking strategies.

SOURCE: Sadik-Khan, Janette, and Seth Solomonow. *Streetfight: Handbook for an Urban Revolution*. NY, NY: Penguin Books, 2017. Annotations by author.

3.2.4 CASE STUDY 4: THE SPOT 4MKE

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

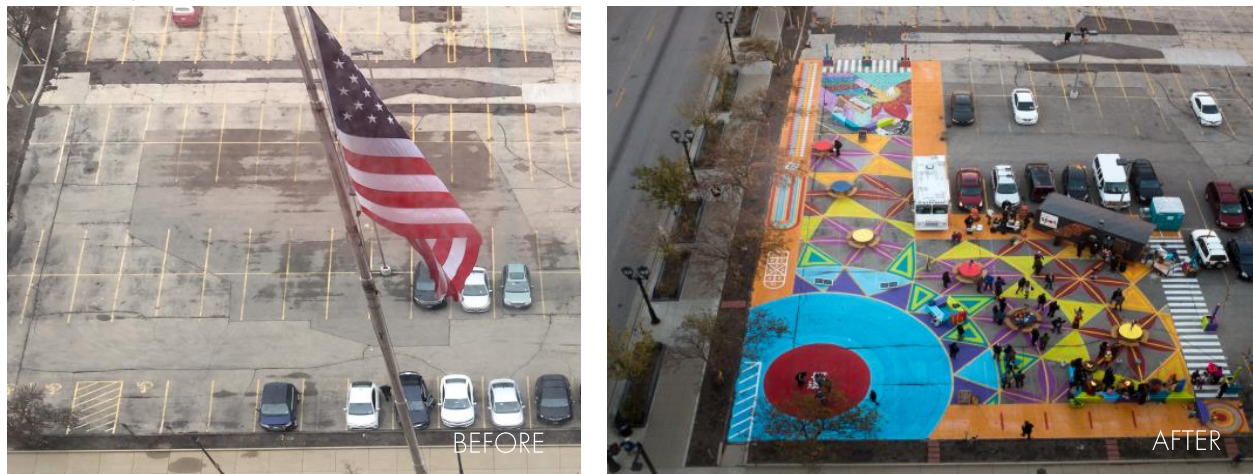


Fig. 14: The Spot 4MKE before (left) and after (right).

SOURCE: "From Parking Lot to Hotspot in Milwaukee." RSS. Accessed March 4, 2020.

<https://www.pps.org/article/from-parking-lot-to-hot-spot-in-milwaukee>.

One of the many placemaking projects Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a "nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build strong communities"¹⁷, promotes is a surface parking lot-to-public space transformation in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Before, The Spot 4MKE existed as a city-owned surface parking lot for twenty-five years and was a problematic gap that disconnected both the physical and social landscape of downtown. The goal of the project was to clearly communicate that the area was now a place for people—not cars.

In 2015, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a sprawl city in the Midwest, was selected as one of the six Southwest Airlines Heart of the Community cities. With this selection, The Spot 4MKE site was transformed over the course of six months using PPS's "lighter, quicker, cheaper" placemaking principles to ensure that it was a collaborative, inclusive, and community-led project. The project grew in stages and developed through an iterative approach that began with a public workshop and expanded through small-scale site interventions and community engagement until it was completed. Through this community-heavy approach and on-site observations and research, the team determined at the beginning of the project that there "was a huge demand for more dynamic, inclusive, and community-oriented activity downtown and that any development of the site should include a flexible public space that supports a wide variety of activities"¹⁸. The design of the site reflects the needs and demands set for public space in downtown Milwaukee. The design gave people permission to be there through amenities such as picnic tables with umbrellas, public games, area for community dance and theatre, beanbag chairs, and a sound system. Local artists were also engaged in the project as the design reinterpreted the parking lot asphalt into a vibrant, colorful mural.

The intervention only utilizes a L-shaped portion of the site, signifying that not all surface parking needs to be replaced—there just needs to be a better balance of it with public space. The portion also represents that even at a small scale, there can be a big impact on the community. This

¹⁷ "About." Project for Public Spaces. Accessed April 5, 2020. <https://www.pps.org/>.

¹⁸ "From Parking Lot to Hotspot in Milwaukee." RSS. Accessed March 4, 2020. <https://www.pps.org/article/from-parking-lot-to-hot-spot-in-milwaukee>.

project acted as a catalyst for future projects because once it was completed, the city was granted a \$50,000 grant to put towards future programming, management, and improvements for the site, and eventually other projects in the city. Once a point of disconnection, The Spot 4MKE now serves as a main connection node in downtown Milwaukee and proves that communities lead with people and places and use creative, inclusive design can establish more inclusive, prosperous, and connected cities.

FOR THE TOOLKIT

The most successful part of this project to investigate is how it engaged the community and served as a catalytic project for future development. The key components in the project, as annotated in Figure 14, are the painted pavement, public games, café seating, and open space. All these components allowed people to organize the space to fit their needs and allowed them to be creative and have fun. It is a space that is programmed for flexibility and community-centered activities, such as the café seating for gatherings and open space for dance, theatre, and other group events.



Fig. 15: The Spot 4MKE Placemaking Strategies

SOURCE: "From Parking Lot to Hotspot in Milwaukee." RSS.

Accessed March 4, 2020.

<https://www.pps.org/article/from-parking-lot-to-hot-spot-in-milwaukee>.

3.2.5 CASE STUDY 5: FICKETT "PLAY STREET"

Los Angeles, California



Fig. 16: Fickett "Play Street".

SOURCE: Brown, Patricia Leigh. "Los Angeles Tests the Power of 'Play Streets'." The New York Times. April 29, 2018. Accessed May 08, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/29/arts/design/play-streets-los-angeles-boyle-heights.html>.

Los Angeles, California is a great example of the revitalized car-cultured city. Currently, Los Angeles is undergoing a major urban revolution as the city implements transformative placemaking and green space projects throughout the city, increasing its social, cultural, and environmental sustainability. Although Los Angeles is almost twice the size of Kansas City and has eight times as many people, it is a valuable case study to investigate because of how this concrete and car dominate urban landscape is successfully transforming its urban landscape to be a greener and people-friendlier one. There are about "7,500 miles of streets in Los Angeles"¹⁹ and in a neighborhood bisected by six freeways, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation paired with the nonprofit Kounkuey Design Initiative, temporarily transformed one of these miles of streets into a one-day "play street". The "play street" is not intended to replace permanent parks, but instead bridge gaps in public space and community connectivity. Due to the lack of park areas available in the Boyle Heights neighborhood because of the bisecting freeways and streets, the community reclaimed Fickett Street for civic life. For the temporary installation, the area was cleaned of graffiti and litter and structures for shade were added. Painted speed bumps and

¹⁹ Brown, Patricia Leigh. "Los Angeles Tests the Power of 'Play Streets'." The New York Times. April 29, 2018. Accessed May 08, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/29/arts/design/play-streets-los-angeles-boyle-heights.html>.

colorful transitional play equipment inspired by local Mexican American artwork and murals were scattered along the street. Through simple, small-scale transformations, the street was reclaimed and multiple members of the community from all ages came to play for the day. Once a place strictly dedicated for the car, it was now a place for people and the community.

FOR THE TOOLKIT

The elements that are the most compelling placemaking features in this project are the shading and play elements (as noted in Figure 12). With its temporary, tactical, and transitional approach to placemaking, Fickett “Play Street” demonstrates that a community will connect with itself when given a place to, even if a space at first was not designated for people. For the capstone toolkit, it will pull from these elements in the play street, such as the “wobbles”, which transition into lounge chairs, seesaws, and hurdles for skateboarders. This space has such a successful impact on the neighborhood, even just for the one day, because of its versatility and playfulness. People are given options to make the space their own, and this choice allows the community to further engage with the space and itself.



Fig. 17: Fickett “Play Street” Placemaking Strategies.

SOURCE: Brown, Patricia Leigh. "Los Angeles Tests the Power of 'Play Streets'." The New York Times. April 29, 2018. Accessed May 08, 2018.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/29/arts/design/play-streets-los-angeles-boyle-heights.html>. Annotations by author.

3.2.6 CASE STUDY 6: PACIFIC PLAZA PARK

Dallas, Texas

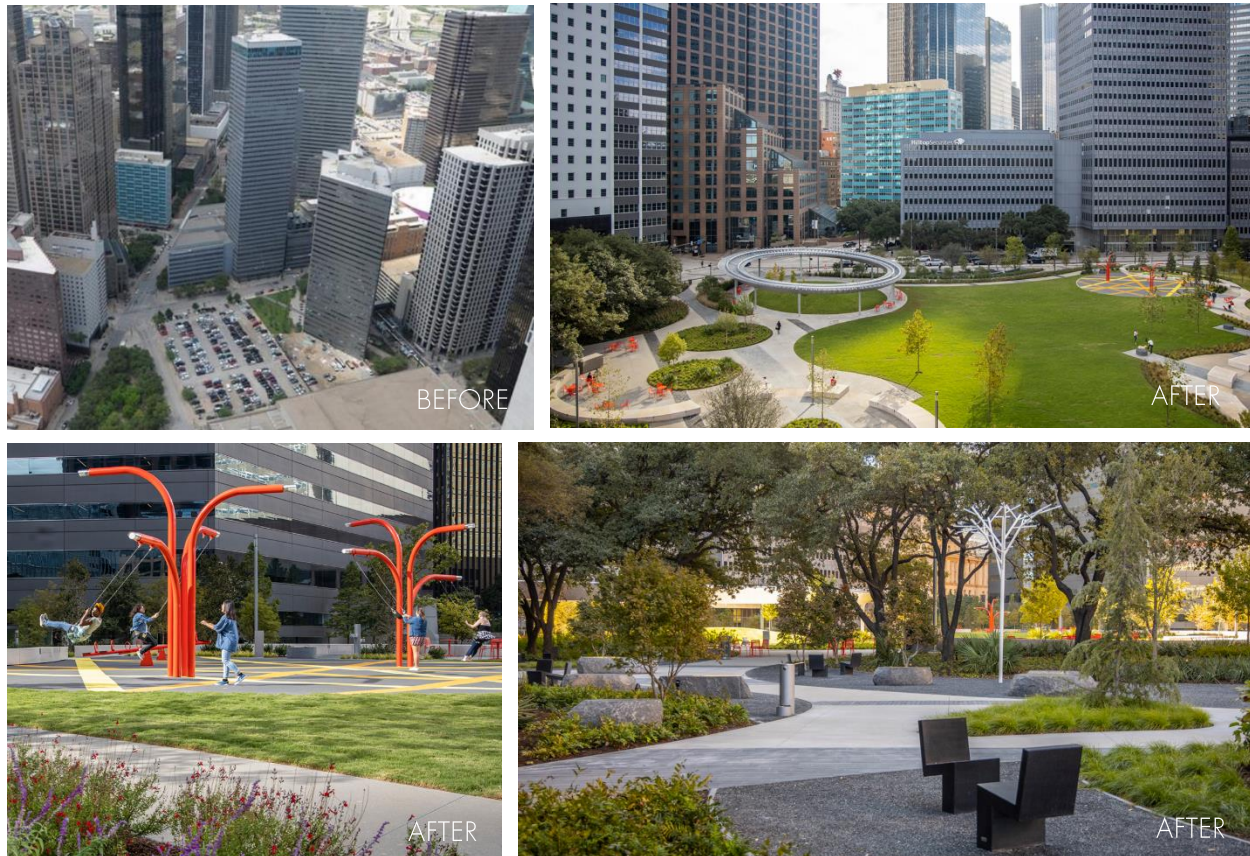


Fig. 18: Pacific Plaza Park.

SOURCE: Brown, Patricia Leigh. "Los Angeles Tests the Power of 'Play Streets'." The New York Times. April 29, 2018.

Accessed May 08, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/29/arts/design/play-streets-los-angeles-boyle-heights.html>. Annotations by author.

Like Kansas City, surface parking lots plague the urban landscape of downtown Dallas, Texas. Dallas, Texas is another example of a sprawl city working to revitalize its downtown urban core. As its population continues to grow, a city designed for the car and the commuter must make changes to accommodate the downtown center's residents. An urban renewal project that works towards this goal of transformation is Pacific Plaza Park. In 2018, a bid was proposed to transform a surface parking lot downtown into a large-scale public park and plaza. Designed and built by the Dallas office of architecture firm HKS, the once bleak block of space is now a \$15 million, 3.74-acre green neighborhood refuge in this concrete-dominant city. Pacific Plaza Park is a diverse landscape which includes a central lawn, play area, shaded paths, dog-walking zones, space for food trucks, and a large, open-air public pavilion.

The Pacific Plaza Park is an in-depth public placemaking project that transformed a desolate parking lot into a main node of connection with the city. This park provided an increase in social and environmental wellbeing in downtown Dallas. It gave space back to the people and the environment and began the linkage of place to place within the downtown, as similar projects are starting to be proposed for other underutilized sites in the city. This park was a creation of public and private partnership and demonstrates that the city at all levels need to be a stakeholder in public placemaking. The park's great

role is as a gathering space, and as the population increases throughout the city, more types of this kind of public space will be needed to help aid connection and wellbeing.

FOR THE TOOLKIT

This park is at a much larger scale and budget than what this capstone is investigating, but it is still a valuable study because it embodies all aspects of placemaking that this capstone toolkit is wanting to convey. All aspects of this park encourage social interaction and engagement. The main features that encourage this are the grass lawn, which allows for recreation; the playground space, which attracts members of the community of all ages and gives kids a safe place to play in the city, with its Seussical play structures and colorful soft surfacing; café seating that allow people to pause and stay in the space for a while, as well as providing people a space to eat their food from the food trucks; the public pavilion; finally, the lightly forested areas that provide people a space for shade and refuge and beautify the city while also promoting pedestrian walkability. The design also uses permeable systems and paving to help with urban runoff mitigation.

Due to its large size and budget, the Pacific Plaza Park was able to implement many successful placemaking strategies. These strategies, which are listed above, all can be successful on their own, and as this case study proves—when they are implemented as a mixture in a place that housed built-up potential, they can create a successful public space and lead to the creation of a public space network.

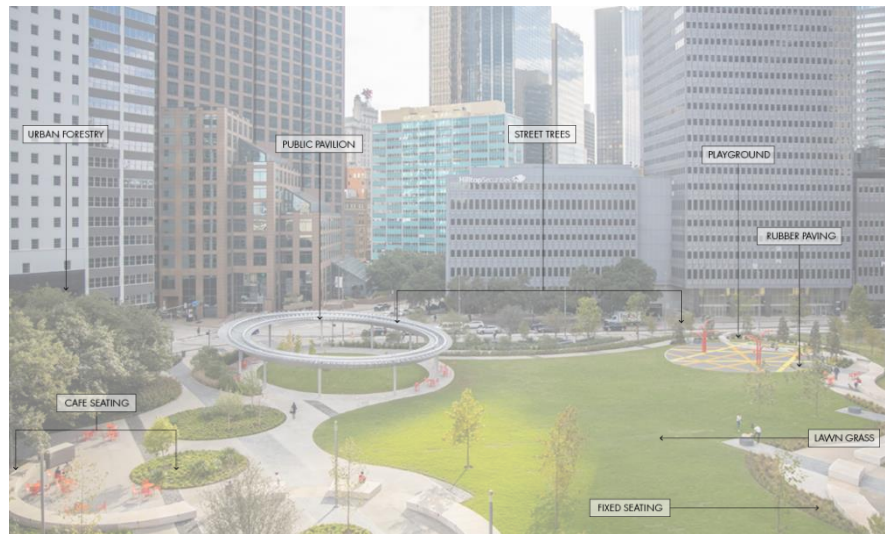


Fig. 19: Pacific Plaza Park Placemaking Strategies.

SOURCE: Brown, Patricia Leigh. "Los Angeles Tests the Power of 'Play Streets'." The New York Times. April 29, 2018. Accessed May 08, 2018.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/29/arts/design/play-streets-los-angeles-boyle-heights.html>. Annotations by author.

3.3 APPROACH

The capstone utilizes a series of methods and exploration of case studies to understand public spaces. Through the creation of physical, sensory, and social characteristics that make determine a successful public space, and an in-depth study of public space transformation case studies, this capstone will now determine a toolkit for public space placemaking. The overarching ideas that can summarize what made the case studies successful public spaces are that there was a natural pull and interest to a space, whether through location, businesses, restaurants, or environmental factors, and the design of the space promoting interaction between people and the community through landscape, furnishings, and community-centered programming. From these determined methods and case study investigations, the next step of this capstone is creating a public space toolkit. The toolkit will expand upon these ideas in placemaking and create a taxonomy of elements that encourage social, environmental, and economic sustainability, wellbeing, and connectivity.

4.1 CREATING THE TOOLKIT

The goal of this capstone is to create a public space toolkit to apply to public spaces in Kansas City to make it a better-connected city. The toolkit is derived from the methods and characteristics of placemaking as determined by this capstone, by the examination of placemaking theories and cases studies, and by place and site analysis of Kansas City, Missouri, more specifically, the Crossroads District. The toolkit is also determined by the ideas of what makes a great public space. "Great public spaces are those places where celebrations are held, social and economic interactions take place such as friends running into each other, and cultures mix. Great public spaces are accessible to people, engage the public with activities, are comfortable, project a good image and foster a sense of community."²⁰ A great public space focuses on four factors:

1. Sociability
2. Uses and activities
3. Comfort and Images
4. Access and Linkages

These factors influence the success of a space by how successfully it connects and draws people in and together, how successfully it is used, and how successfully it is accessed. This toolkit aims to comprise these factors through its categories and their elements to achieve a successful place. The capstone will determine why each element, individually, (displayed in Table 5) is important to the success of a public space and how it enhances connectivity at the pedestrian scale and eventually, at the urban scale. The approach to this toolkit comprises a

TABLE 5
TOOLKIT

GREENSCAPE

Landscape
Street Trees
Urban Forestry
Lawn Grass
Plantings
Urban Runoff Mitigation
Permeable Paving
Water Garden/Bioswale

FURNISHINGS

Fixed
Benches
Lighting
Semi-Fixed
Cafe Seating
Umbrellas
Non-Fixed
Moveable Objects

BRANDING

District Signage
Wayfinding
Gateway
Public Art
Painted Surfaces
Wall Mural
Public Sculpture

PLAY

Surface
Rubber Paving
Objects
Playground
Public Games
Wobbles

TRANSIT CONNECTIVITY

Bicycle Connection
Bike Lane
Bike/Bird Racks
Streetcar Hub
Bus Stop

SOURCE: created by author.

²⁰ "What Makes a Great Public Space?" [www.nar.realtor](https://www.nar.realtor/blogs/spaces-to-places/what-makes-a-great-public-space), May 19, 2016. <https://www.nar.realtor/blogs/spaces-to-places/what-makes-a-great-public-space>.

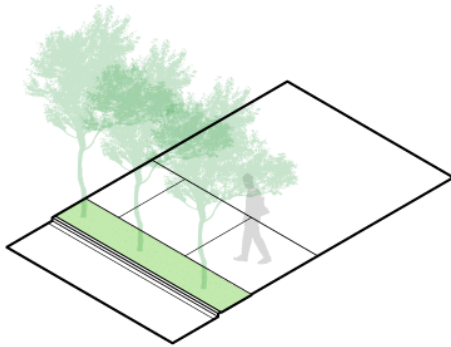
Hear #insert TOOLKIT

mix of tactical urbanism ideology with more designed landscape architecture practices to best distinguish the phasing and permanence needed in implementing successful public placemaking strategies.

4.1.1 GREENSCAPE

Green space is a very important factor in the environmental, social, and economical sustainability and wellbeing of the contemporary city. Green space improves ecological conditions of the city and has positive psychological effects on people within the city because “individuals living in urban areas with more green space tend to have reduced level of stress and better well-being compared to those with poorer availability of green space”²¹. This reduction of stress because of green space improves the health and happiness of people in the city. Grass encourages recreation and interaction between people, improving physical and mental health. Green space also improves the health and happiness of the environment. Trees, grass, and plants help improve air quality, cool urban ‘heat island’ effect, reduce humidity, reduce noise, create shade, and provide much needed areas of refuge. Green infrastructure, which includes rain gardens and bioswales serve as urban runoff and stormwater mitigation which slow water infiltration and clean pollutants in the water as well. Greener cities make for more attractive places to live and inhabit and creates social and environmental cohesion that benefits the city and its people in positive ways.

LANDSCAPE



STREET TREES: Street trees are essential in the environmental and social sustainability of a city. Street trees help improve air quality, reduce urban heat, provide shade and relief from sun and humidity, and can also lower driving speeds, improving safety. In relation to open space, street trees act as a semi-permeable edge condition that delineates space from circulation zones, such as a street or sidewalk.

Fig. 20: Street Trees.
SOURCE: created by author.

4. TOOLKIT

LANDSCAPE (continued)

²¹ Braubach, Matthias, Andrey Egorov, Pierpaolo Mudu, Tanja Wolf, Catharine Ward Thompson, and Marco Martuzzi. "Effects of Urban Green Space on Environmental Health, Equity and Resilience." SpringerLink. January 01, 1970. Accessed May 8, 2018. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-56091-5_11.

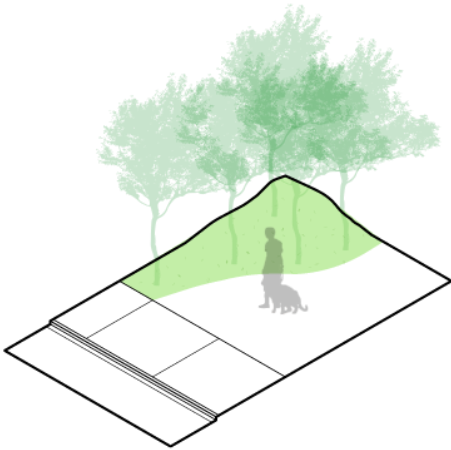


Fig. 21: Urban Forestry.
SOURCE: created by author.

URBAN FORESTRY: Urban forests are dynamic ecosystems that provide people and the city critical benefits. Urban forests enhance environmental wellbeing by improving air quality, controlling storm water, providing shade and animal habitat, and reducing noise. They also improve social wellbeing by beautifying spaces, adding green to the urban structure, and encouraging community revitalization.

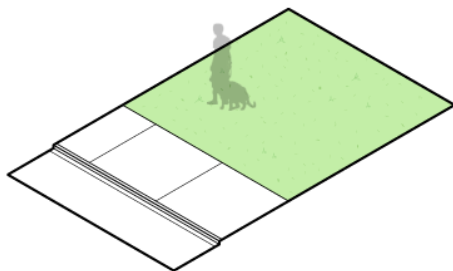


Fig. 22: Lawn Grass.
SOURCE: created by author.

LAWN GRASS: Lawn grass is an important aspect in urban green infrastructure and serves as a main component in this toolkit. A grassy lawn in a city disrupts the various hard surfaces in a city, like concrete and asphalt, and helps improve air quality, reduce erosion from stormwater runoff, decrease noise pollution, and reduce temperatures that rise from a city's heat island effect. Lawns serve as special places for leisure and recreation. When given a grassy area as opposed to a hardscaped one, people will utilize the grassy one more frequently with activities such as sports, exercise, picnicking, resting, walking dogs, and games. Through these activities, people interact with each other and become better connected with each other and their community, therefore making lawn grass a driving force in enhancing quality of life.

LANDSCAPE (continued)

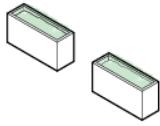


Fig. 23: Plantings.
SOURCE: created by author.

PLANTINGS: Plantings, or planters, serve as another way to delineate an edge condition and determine space. They act as a physical barrier and can increase safety from traffic and accidents.

URBAN RUNOFF MITIGATION

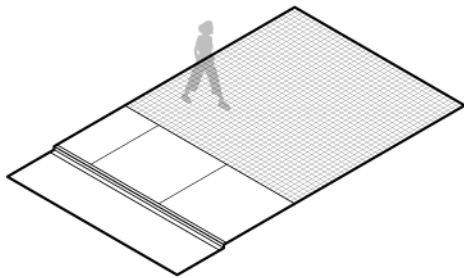


Fig. 24: Permeable Paving.
SOURCE: created by author.

PERMEABLE PAVING: Permeable paving reduces surface runoff, filters pollutants from stormwater, and reduces urban 'heat island effect'. It also helps break up large swaths of concrete that typically plague urban centers and helps delineate the confines and edges of a specific site.

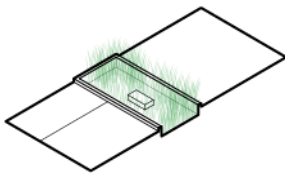


Fig. 25: Water Garden and bioswale.
SOURCE: created by author.

WATER GARDEN + BIOSWALE: Water (rain) gardens is a small vegetated basin designed to absorb runoff stormwater. Bioswales are designed to clean, process, and redirect water to slow water flow infiltration into the soil. They are channels which usually run along streets or in parking lots. Both are designed to better mitigate urban runoff and increase aesthetic along a public space or sidewalk.

4.1.2 FURNISHINGS

Furnishings are an integral element to a public space that help structure, program, and enhance the place for human engagement. Furnishings increase the appeal of a public space and reinforce place identity by offering choice and purpose. It engages people to pause and seek refuge from the urban realm, as well as promotes connection between people, especially through elements such as lighting and seating. Furnishings define safe and engaging places, and through size, material, and function can promote an identity and purpose to a place, which is essential in a successful outdoor open space. Different levels of fixation in the furnishing allow people to choose how they inhabit a space. People can physically engage in a space when they can adjust seating and other objects to fit their immediate needs, which help them bond to and identify with a space. Urbanist William H. Whyte studied this idea of choice in small urban spaces and deduced that furnishings are a powerful aspect to a successful public space. People like to sit, and if given the option, they like to arrange the chairs before they sit. Furnishings are an important element in placemaking and help create a sense of interiority outside, which helps program public space to be perceived as more than just an open space, but as a well-defined, engaged space in the public realm.

FIXED



Fig. 26: Benches.
SOURCE: created by author.

BENCHES: Benches are a place to pause and enjoy a space. Also, if placed at an edge of space, benches act as a barrier. Benches should be placed in view of the action of the space and should display an ergonomic design. Benches invite people to a space and encourages them to stay a while.

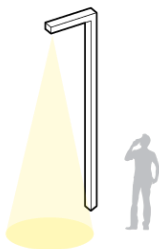


Fig. 27: Lighting.
SOURCE: created by author.

LIGHTING: Lighting in a public space increases the safety of a space and aids in navigation to and from the space. Well-designed lighting can also beautify and add character to a space and help tone the ambience of place through color and light luminosity.

SEMI-FIXED



Fig. 28: Café Seating.
SOURCE: created by author.

CAFÉ SEATING: Café seating helps program an open space. It provides a chance for community interaction and gives the option to rearrange the space to accommodate a singular person, couple, group, or party. Café seating also serves as an extension of food areas adjacent to a site and encourages people to experience the exterior urban realm as well as an interior one.

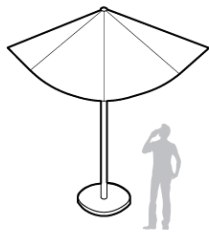


Fig. 29: Umbrellas.
SOURCE: created by author.

UMBRELLAS: Umbrellas offer pedestrians a place of refuge from the sun and their shade cools down the temperature in an area.

NON-FIXED

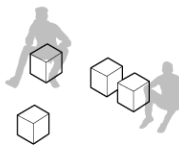


Fig. 30: Moveable Objects.
SOURCE: created by author.

MOVEABLE OBJECTS: Simple, inexpensive, and effective way to activate a public space. It gives people choice and allows people to make the space their own as they can rearrange it for their needs—chair, stool, ottoman, side table, table, or stacking game.

4.1.3 BRANDING

Branding is a positive way to impact the economic, social, and cultural realms of the city as it defines a city's identity and helps create place attachment in a space. Place attachment happens when a place is accessible at a personal level to people in the public realm. This capstone suggests that branding in the form of district signage and public art will better connect people to a space. These components directly and dynamically engage people to a place by providing them information, destination, and relation to a city's culture and history. Branding allows for personal connection to happen in a space, and when this is achieved, a public space is successful because of the shared identity and personal value people associate with a space.

DISTRICT SIGNAGE



Fig. 31: Wayfinding.
SOURCE: created by author.

WAYFINDING: Wayfinding signage improves and encourage walkability and helps a city become more personable. Wayfinding helps people “orient themselves and provide confidence in navigating the geography of a city” Wayfinding can increase people’s comfort in choose to walk when they understand a destination proximity. It is used to locate public plazas, parks, public facilities, and transit stops. Quality wayfinding systems should indicate walking and cycling time with five to ten-minute walking distances—those within the half mile pedestrian shed. In direct correlation to this capstone, wayfinding signage will locate destinations with similar high pedestrian volumes—reinforcing this idea that public space can become a connected network. The design and elements should be universally accessible and understood to be a successful wayfinding tool. Signage should be scaled to the human body and eye height, and use clear, visual language and graphics so that it is accessible for all pedestrians, visitors, and residents of the city.

DISTRICT SIGNAGE

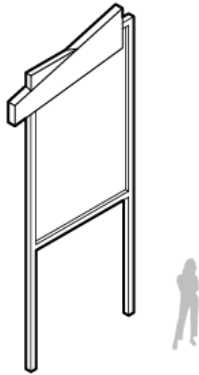


Fig. 32: Gateway.
SOURCE: created by author.

GATEWAY: Gateways provide entry into a neighborhood and district and introduce a neighborhood's character. Gateways may be physical landmarks, signs that mark a transition, or simply discernible changes in built character. In Kansas City, each district has its own unique signage that acts as a gateway. These district signs help reinforce place identity and establish important public realms. Gateways should associate themselves with public space they represent the identity of a city and a city should represent the idea that it is for the people.

PUBLIC ART

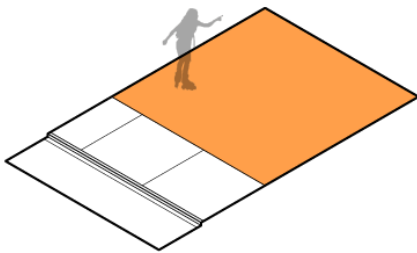


Fig. 33: Painted Surfaces.
SOURCE: created by author.

PAINTED SURFACES: Painted surfaces and pavement is an easy and affordable way to enhance the aesthetic environment of a space through placemaking. Painted surfaces engage all members of the community by connecting to cultural history and futures and by engaging local artists at all levels.

PUBLIC ART (continued)

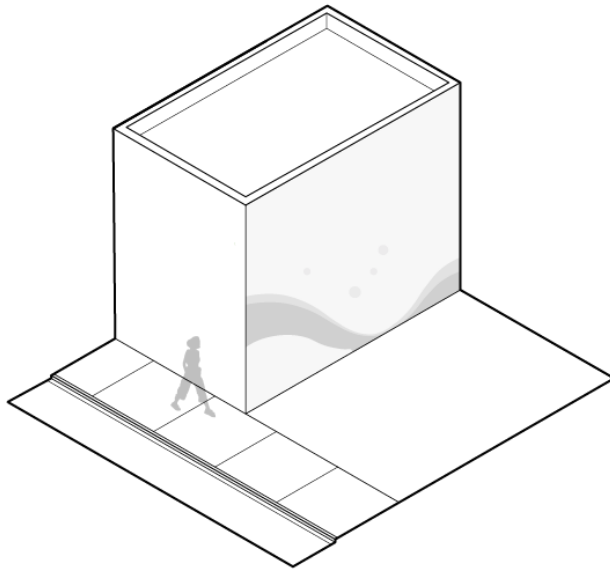


Fig. 34: Wall Mural.
SOURCE: created by author.

WALL MURAL: Murals beautify the city and help build a sense of community by making a city more walkable and welcoming. Murals help add to sense of place and identity, and for Kansas City, specifically, contribute to Kansas City’s Art in the Loop Foundation (AILF), whose mission is to “contribute to the visual identity, enrichment, and revitalization of Downtown Kansas City, create new opportunities for artistic development, and expand public interaction with new art of excellence.”²² AILF creates art all over the city—on building walls, the streetcar, streetcar stops, and so much more. The foundation promotes local art talent and engages with the community directly as all interventions are implemented in the public realm. Contemporary art murals are already helping define the city’s identity, and the pairing of them with potential public spaces will further define identity and purpose of place and connectivity as well.

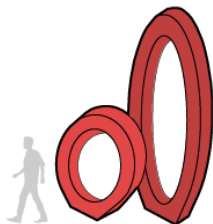


Fig. 35: Public Sculpture.
SOURCE: created by author.

PUBLIC SCULPTURE: Public sculpture helps give a place function and meaning. Public sculpture is visually and physically accessible to the public and when installed in a public space or the public realm, it not only helps promote an identity of place but helps provide a cultural connection between people and the city as a physical and three dimensional form of art. It enriches lives by adding whimsy, color, and vibrancy to a place. Public sculpture also helps with wayfinding and navigation by providing an identifiable object or landmark for demarcation.

²² “About.” Art in the Loop, December 20, 2019. <https://www.artintheloop.com/about/>.

4.1.4 PLAY

When there is a lack of green or public spaces in a city, there is also a lack of play. The purpose of this capstone is to question how public space can lead to greater connectivity within the city, and play space offers an accessible, inclusive, a conducive approach to this connectivity. A successful public space allows people to slow down, pause, and engage with the space to rejuvenate themselves. Free play in public spaces is important and fundamental in the development of children, adults, and a community. It encourages exploration and ignites curiosity in imagination. Where public art is lending playful ambience to a space, tactile designed play spaces physicalize this ambience and further engage in the city in a new and fun way. Play spaces increase health as they encourage physical activity and increase mental health as they encourage pause, wander, and socialization—leading to better connected network in the mind and body and externally in relation to space. “Play has always helped break the ice among children regardless of where they come from [and] it isn’t much of a stretch to expect the same effect on adults”²³, so if a public space is programmed with play elements, there is a possibility for greater moments of interaction to happen between people. With these interactions, the resiliency of urban public spaces of tomorrow is bright, which means the greener, more inclusive, and more playful a public space is, the better connected and successful it will be.

SURFACE

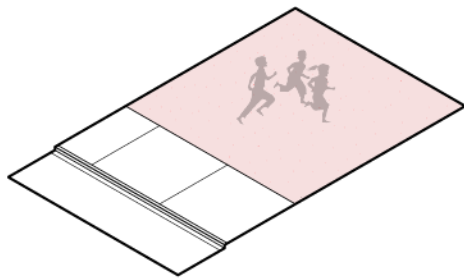


Fig. 36: Rubber Paving.
SOURCE: created by author.

RUBBER PAVING: Rubber surfacing is safe and durable. It encourages play and recreation activities and provides a more kid-friendly environment. Rubber paving is hygienic, as it is easy to clean and does not absorb bacteria. It is durable against the elements as it is not affected by water, snow, or ice and keeps the ground cool in the summer.

OBJECTS

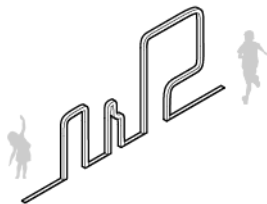


Fig. 37: Playground.
SOURCE: created by author.

PLAYGROUND: A playground or jungle gym programs a public space for play encourages engagement from all ages. It acts a recreational equipment where one can complete a workout or engage in active play. Children are important consumers in the city often forgotten, so providing a space for all ages of the community to be represents gives a space a more inclusive, better connected atmosphere.

²³ Sanyal, Ira. “Bringing Play to Public Spaces.” Medium. Medium, October 27, 2016.
<https://meium.com/@irasanyal/bringing-play-to-public-spaces-78721f670d24>.

OBJECTS (continued)

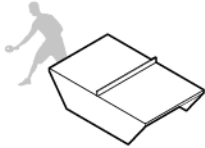


Fig. 38: Public Games.
SOURCE: created by author.

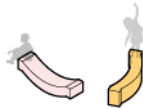


Fig. 39: Wobbles.
SOURCE: created by author.

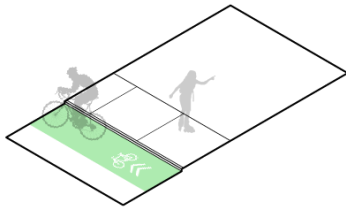
PUBLIC GAMES: Public games improve the practice of conventional placemaking methods by adding the method of “play” into the mix. Games such as ping pong, human scale chess, checkers, and tic-tac-toe, bocce ball, four-square, etc. are accessible and involves all ages and members of a community. Programming a space through play and games creates a greater chance for interaction between people as these types of programs encourage intermingling an act as ice breakers to conversation and connection.

WOBBLES: Wobbles, or transitional play equipment, adds to a public space by being more than just a play object. Transitional play equipment, such as wobbles, can transform into a seesaw, lounge chair, stacking block, or skateboard hurdle, providing options for multi-use in a space. This type of object gives people options and allows them to choose how they utilize they space. With options, a person is better connected to a space because they offer people the opportunity to make the space their own, depending on what they need or want. Wobbles can also be implemented in all levels of phasing—from pop-up to permanent.

4.1.5 TRANSIT CONNECTIONS

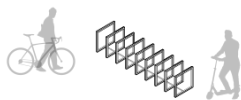
Transit stations, stops, and lines can become focal points in a community when they are associated with a public space. To achieve this, a stop needs to be considered more than just a singular experience, but an opportunity for a multi-experiential place. Currently, transit stops already embody an inherent idea of urban space—a place for connection. By reimagining a transit stop as an edge condition and entry to an open, public, green space, the transit stop offer duality in placemaking. Transit stops add value to surrounding neighborhoods and increase the viability of commercial districts by connecting commuter consumers to businesses. Transit stops also help make a better-connected city. Not only do they serve as connection points and lines between neighborhoods, but they also serve as a connection hub between people in the community. Public transit encourages interaction, whereas a car or a parking lot is a disconnection point. Parking is usually associated with transit stops and makes the destination less attractive. With these stops already possessing inherent urban connection values and serving as high-volume pedestrian areas, their pedestrian space should extend beyond the bench or sidewalk and into a space for the public to enjoy as they wait.

BICYCLE CONNECTION



BIKE LANE CONNECTION: Creating a linkage between a public space and bike lanes is an important factor in increasing activity in a public space. Bike lanes are expanding and successful infrastructure in cities, and in Kansas City, and they encourage people to bike instead of drive. Biking offers more opportunities for connection to happen and can help connect a network of public spaces—enhancing the quality of the public realm and connectedness of a city.

Fig. 40: Bike Lane Connection.
SOURCE: created by author.



BIKE RACK: Bike racks help furnish a public space and encourage bicycle use as they provide cyclists a place to stop, park, and engage with others.

Fig. 41: Bike Rack.
SOURCE: created by author.

STREETCAR CONNECTION

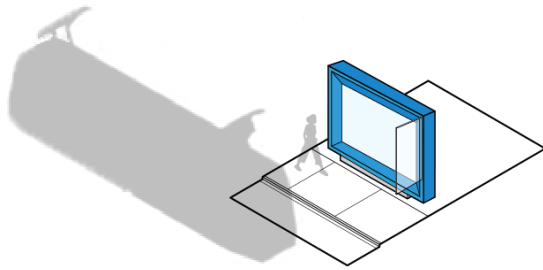


Fig. 42: Streetcar Hub.
SOURCE: created by author.

STREETCAR HUB: Streetcars and light rail systems are important modes of transportation in the city and a sustainable choice. In Kansas City, the Streetcar is a popular destination and it helps provided much needed connection between the districts that run along Main Street. Streetcar hubs should be highly visible, easy to find, and easy to navigate. They should engage the rider and the community, and these notions also coincide with public placemaking. Streetcar hubs are inherent points of connection and draw people to a space, so they can serve as main attracting factors to a public space as well.

BUS CONNECTION

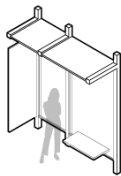


Fig. 43: Bus Stop.
SOURCE: created by author.

BUS STOP: A bus stop should be comfortable, safe, provide shelter from the elements, be accessible to all, and provide helpful information. It should reflect city or district character so that it becomes a marker and helps with navigation of the bus stop and public space it is linked to. Like with the streetcar hub, bus stops can act as major connection points within the city and can help promote future connectivity.

5.1 THE CROSSROADS DISTRICT

For the purpose of this capstone, the Crossroads District of Kansas City, Missouri has been investigated and deemed the chosen district to implement the created toolkit. The area is rich in diversity and art, yet series of skinny, un-kept sidewalks and parking lots plague the area. The urban form is severely unbalanced and underutilized, open space dominate the urban landscape. Even with surface parking lots causing a major disconnection within the district, the area is rapidly revitalizing and growing as more people inhabit the district. Through the implementation of public space, the Crossroads has an opportunity to serve as a catalyst toward a network successful public space projects across the city. To test this theory, the capstone investigates three surface parking lot typologies in the Crossroads District and reimagines them as public spaces through the implementation and testing of the toolkit. Through this exploratory investigation, the capstone aims to envision that transforming the surface parking lots through the means and methods of the toolkit will lead to a better-connected space that enhances the social, environmental, cultural, an economic wellbeing of the space. The capstone will treat these sites as catalyst projects towards an eventual network of public spaces that would expand throughout the downtown and provide a viable solution to the current disconnected condition of the city.

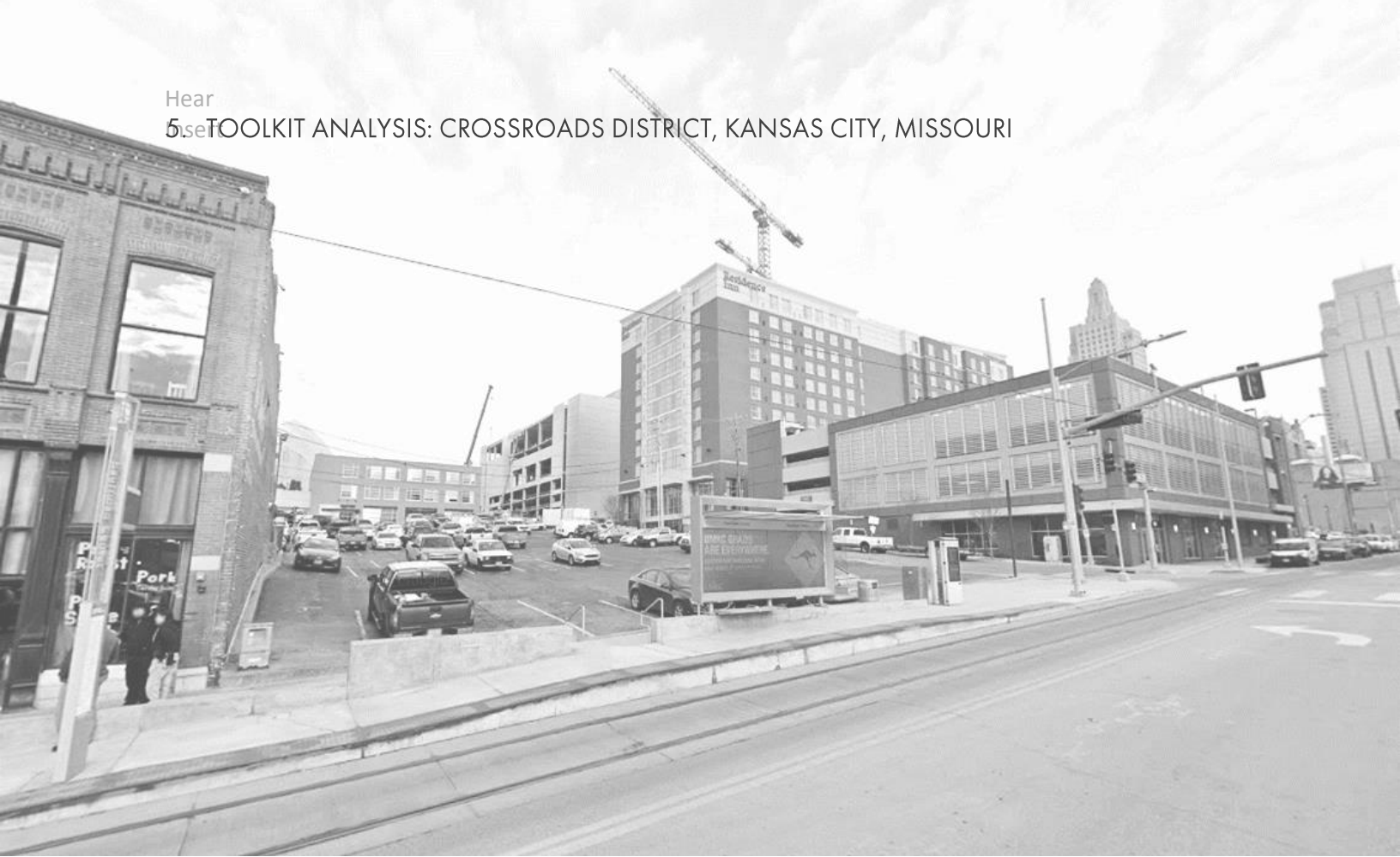


Fig. 44: Site 1: Park, Play, and Ride.

SOURCE: Image from Google Earth.

5.2 SITE 1: PARK, PLAY, and RIDE

The first site chosen for this public space toolkit analysis in the Crossroads District is a large, sloping, surface parking lot located along Main Street and West 16th Street, along a major hub of the Kansas City Streetcar. Main Street serves as one of the main players in the current revitalization of downtown, as the Streetcar was implemented along in it in a 2.2-mile route. The Streetcar is already enacting connection between Kansas City's districts, as it links prominent public amenities and is free to all, making it the most accessible mode of transportation in downtown. This capstone aims to build upon successful connection strategies happening in downtown, and the Streetcar is currently one of them. Although it is only a singular loop along Main Street, it holds future promise for expansion, so the capstone investigates the possible adjacency of public space coinciding with the Streetcar hubs in order to create a connected network that will eventually link districts and people together throughout the city. There are two typologies determined for this site: 1) It is a large surface parking lot with three (or more) open edges that meet either open space or the street and 2) it will be a public space for the visitor.

This site is already a pedestrian destination in the Crossroads District. As noted in figures 45 and 46, this site is located near hotels and popular bars and restaurants, as well as hosting a main Streetcar hub on its edge. With the areas around it attracting people and visitors of the city (because of the adjacency of the site to four hotels), this site provides a great opportunity to bring those same people and visitors throughout the city into the public realm by transforming this surface parking into a public space. By using the methods determined in this capstone, the areas around the site demonstrate high social characteristics, and the site itself holds the possibility for a successful public space because of its size, location, and open edge conditions.

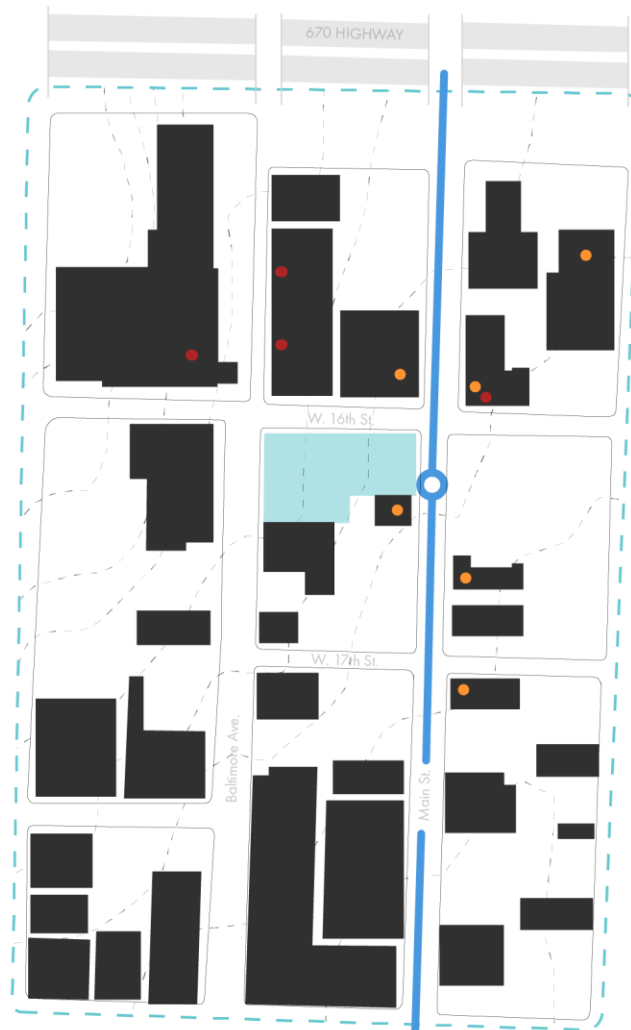


Fig. 45: Site 1 Existing Conditions Plan.
SOURCE: created by author.

Hear

5. TOOLKIT ANALYSIS: CROSSROADS DISTRICT, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI



Fig. 46: Site 1 Social Characteristics.
SOURCE: created by author.

5.2.1 APPLYING THE TOOLKIT



Fig. 47: Site 1: Park, Play, and Ride Vision Rendering.
SOURCE: created by author. Image from Google Earth.

With the site's adjacencies to the streetcar hub, hotels, and restaurant, this is a public space for the visitor. To best engage community members and visitors, this surface parking lot is reimagined as a public play space. Public play encourages exploration, imagination, and social interaction as it creatively programs a space by creating physical icebreakers of interaction. In this site, the toolkit works to increase socialization and connectivity through these play elements.

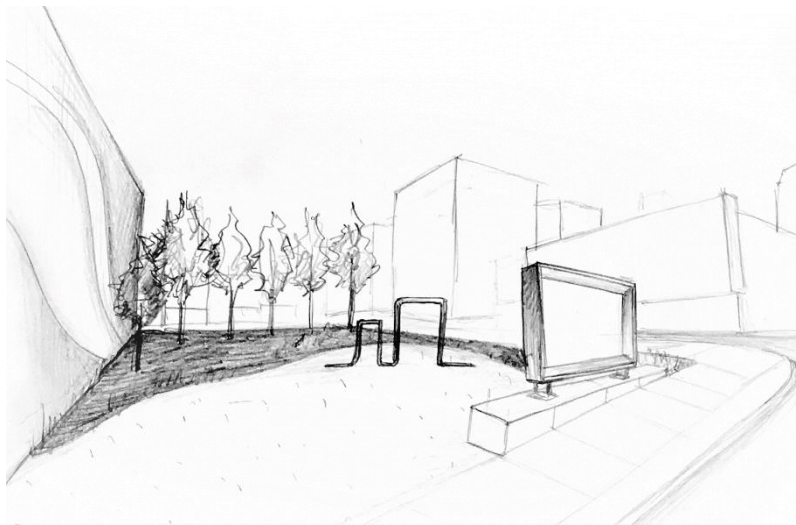
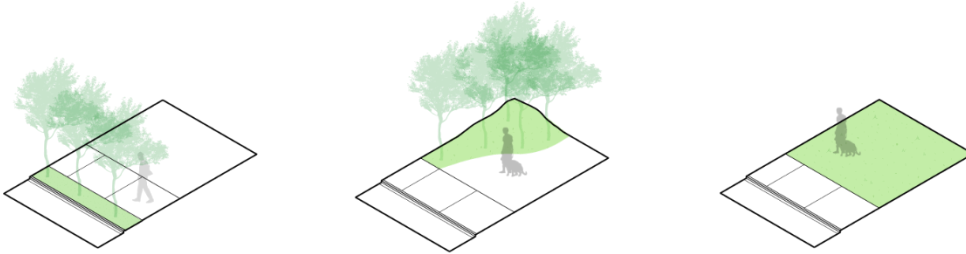


Fig. 48: Site 1: Park, Play, and Ride Vision Sketch
SOURCE: created by author.

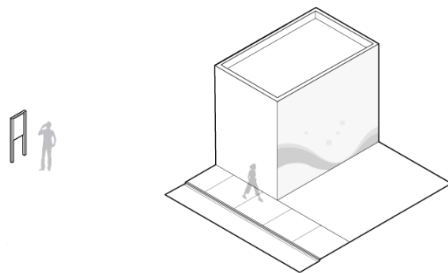
GREENSCAPE



FURNISHINGS



BRANDING



PLAY



TRANSIT CONNECTIONS

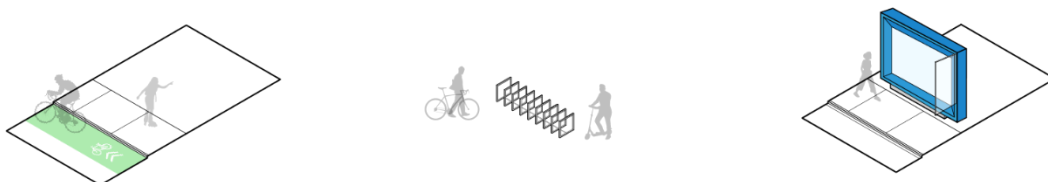


Fig. 49: Park, Play, and Ride toolkit.
SOURCE: created by author.

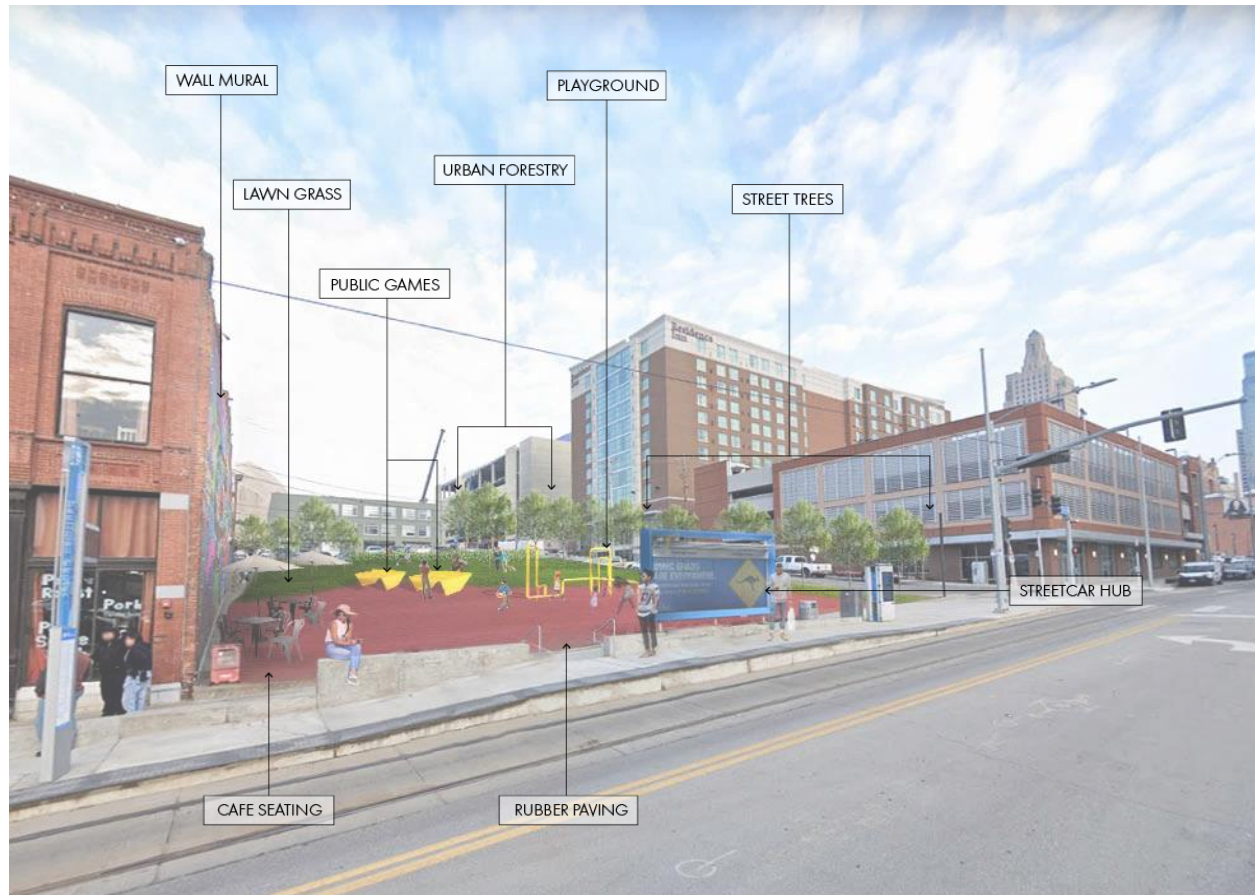


Fig. 50: Site 1: Park, Play, and Ride Toolkit Application

SOURCE: created by and annotated by author. Image from Google Earth.

This site design utilizes all the play elements in the toolkit—rubber paving that encourage safe physical activity, playground that attracts people of all ages to the site, public games that promote social interaction by programming the space with the activity of play, and wobbles that give people options for how they interact with the space. Landscape is another major element of the toolkit applied to the site. The reimagining consists of extensive grass lawn for recreation and urban forest that provides shade and appeals as a place for refuge, as well as providing one of the open edges with a semi-permeable barrier. These elements, as well as the others applied to this site work together to transform this site into an interactive, playful social hub that reinforces ideas of identity, play, and connectivity as it extends out to the environment around it and pulls the community through its amenities and high quality for social wellbeing in the public realm.



Fig. 51: Site 2: A New Edge.

SOURCE: Image from Google Earth.

5.3 A NEW EDGE

The second site chosen for this toolkit analysis is located at the corner of Central Street and Southwest Boulevard. Currently, it serves as the location for the Crossroads district signage and a large surface parking lot. Kansas City's district signage is meant to act as a gateway into a district and represent its character and culture. Although this district signage is displayed as a more sculptural object, reminiscent of the Crossroad's arts culture, the rest of the site does not embody this same character. The areas around this site, however, do. This site is surrounded by apartment buildings, popular restaurants, and bars, and are currently attracting revitalization projects and new development, as a new apartment building and adaptive reuse hotel were just completed in the past year. This area exudes the essence of Kansas City's pockets of density, but in the middle is a major point of disconnection—this surface parking lot. There are two typologies determined for this site: 1) It is a medium-size surface parking lot with two open edges that meet either open space or the street and 2) it will be a public space for the resident.

This capstone investigates this site under the belief that public space can reinforce cultural identity and encourage greater attraction, connection, and growth in the public and built realm. Figures 52 and 53 analyze the exiting site conditions and social attractions in the site's adjacencies.

Hear

5. TOOLKIT ANALYSIS: CROSSROADS DISTRICT, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

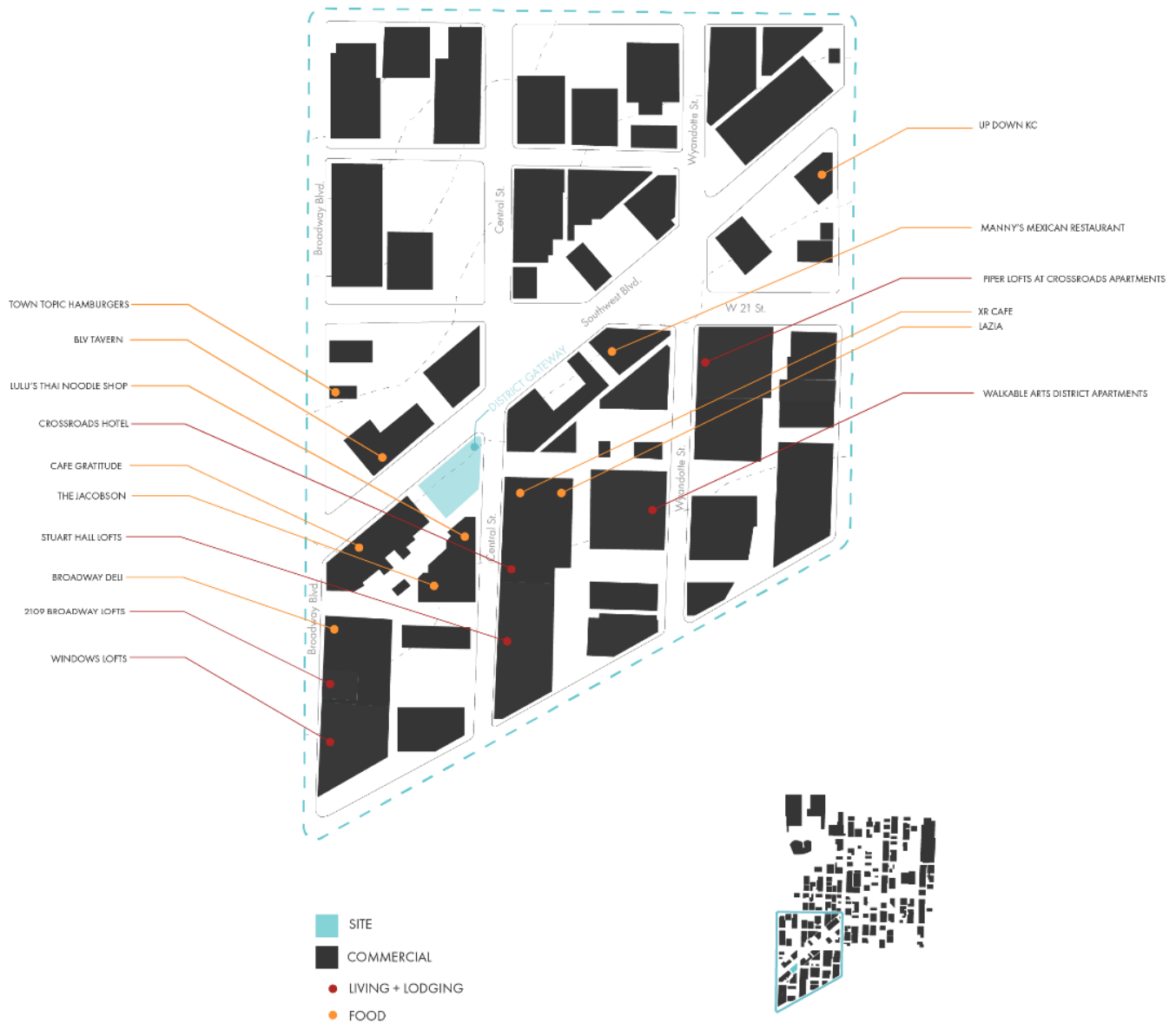


Fig. 53: Site 2 Social Characteristics.
SOURCE: created by author.

5.3.1 APPLYING THE TOOLKIT



Fig. 54: Site 2: A New Edge Vision Rendering.
SOURCE: created by author. Image from
Google Earth.

This capstone reimagines this surface parking lot as a public space for the resident. Located in a high pedestrian area and surrounded by apartments, this reimagination focuses on creating a new gateway that better represents the cultural and social identity of the Crossroads District.

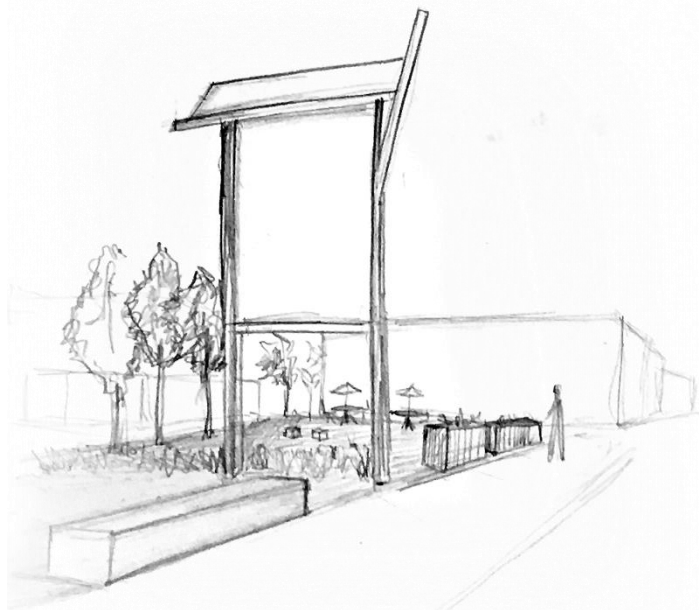
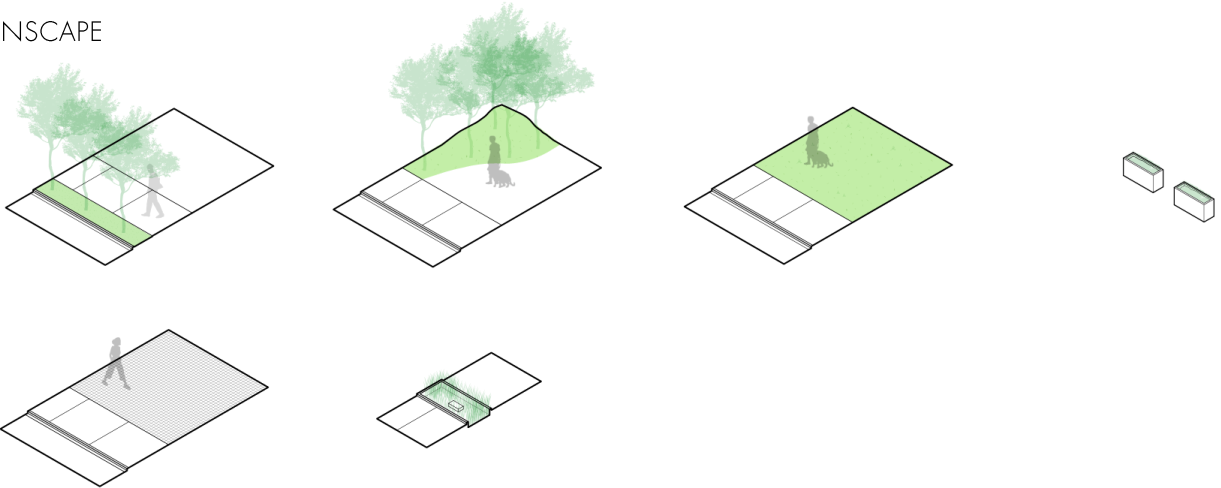


Fig. 55: Site 2: A New Edge Vision Sketch.
SOURCE: created by author.

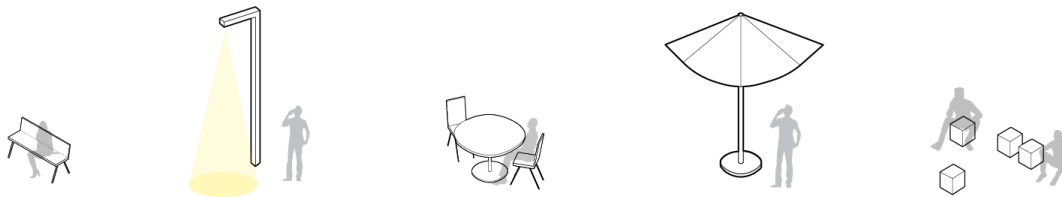
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USE TOOLKIT ANALYSIS: CROSSROADS DISTRICT, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

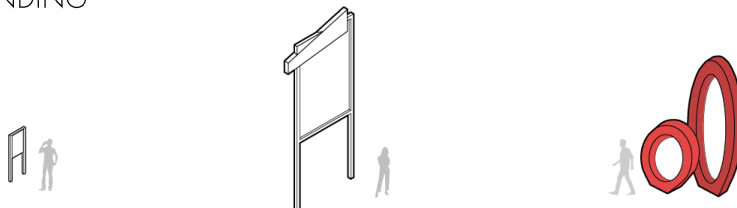
GREENSCAPE



FURNISHINGS



BRANDING



PLAY



TRANSIT CONNECTIONS

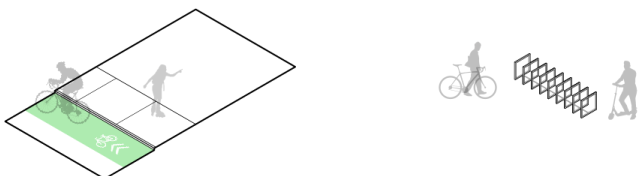


Fig. 56: A New Edge toolkit.
SOURCE: created by author.

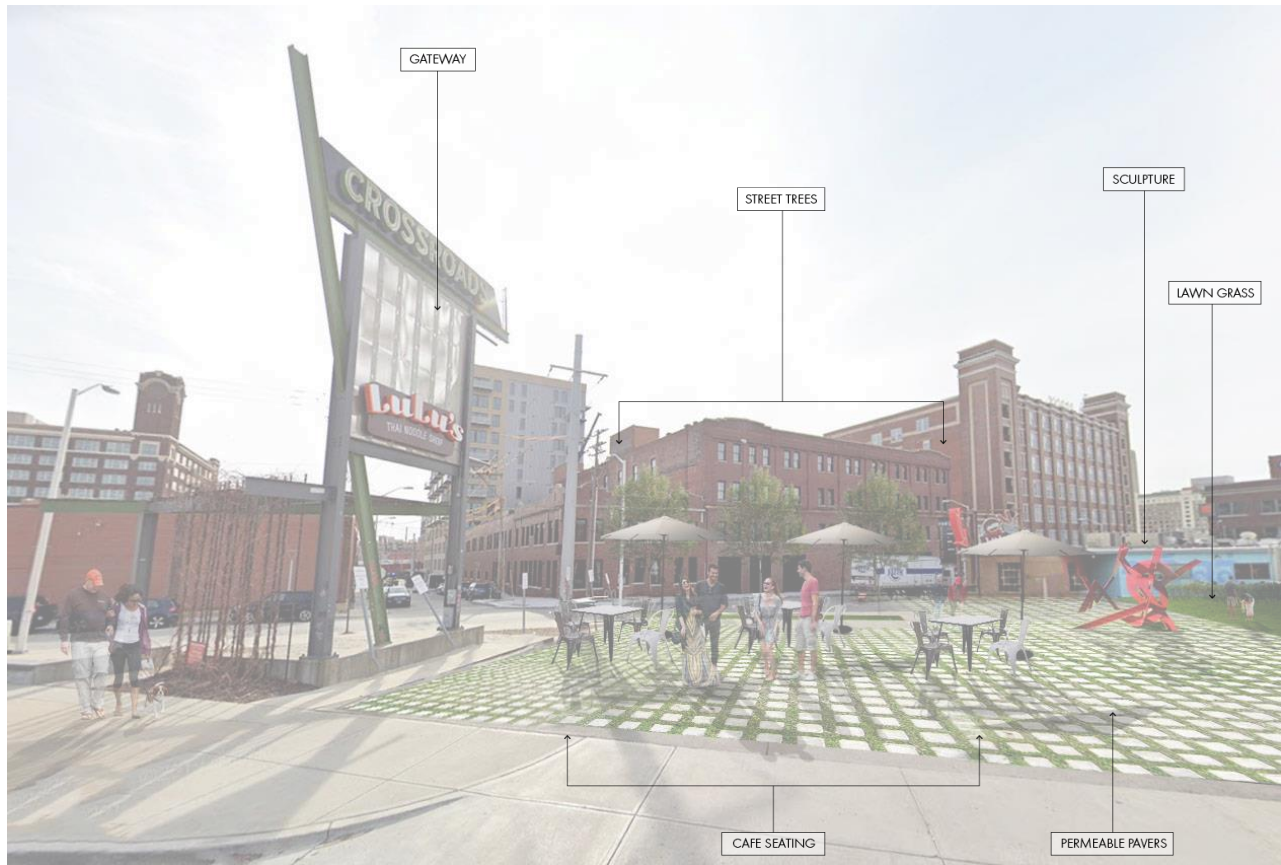


Fig. 57: Site 2: A New Edge Toolkit Application.

SOURCE: created by author. Image from Google Earth.

This site design transforms an unprogrammed surface parking into a major public plaza and new gateway for the Crossroads District. The toolkit elements utilized heavily focuses on the implementation of landscape, branding, and furnishings. Permeable paving delineates the plaza space and paired with water gardens, street trees, grass lawn, and urban forestry, greatly enhance the environmental wellbeing and sustainability of the site. Green space in the city improves the mental and physical health of its inhabitants, and this green space encourage exercise and recreation, as well as provides nearby residents to walk and play with their pets. The public plaza serves the needs of the people, as the furnishings allow people to choose how the engage and arrange the space, making the design their own and enhancing their sense of place and connectedness to the space. The café seating connects nearby restaurants, bridging the gap between them, and provides an option for people to eat outside. Because the Crossroads is the arts district, public art is a main focal point in the site. Greenery and art beautify the space, and the sculpture within it reinforces the arts identity of the district and acts as a cultural connection point that will enrich the lives of the people living in and visiting the city. Through the implementation of the toolkit in this site, the site transforms into a whimsical, vibrant public plaza that fosters social and cultural cohesion.

5. TOOLKIT ANALYSIS: CROSSROADS DISTRICT, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI



Fig. 58: Site 3: The Space Between.
SOURCE: Image from Google Earth.

5.4 SITE 2: THE SPACE BETWEEN

The final site chosen for this toolkit analysis is a surface parking lot tucked in between two buildings off McGee Street. This site was chosen because the spaces in between buildings in Kansas City are almost always surface parking lots. These residual, open spaces are important in the spatial composition of the urban form, and this capstone assumes that implementing public space instead of surface parking in these spaces is a better use of space and better means of connection. An activated space in between buildings encourages businesses and people to inhabit the space and extend ideas of interiority outside. By using the methods determined in this capstone, the site demonstrates a high level of enclosure already and provides opportunities for sun and shade. Its located in a block of buildings that house art galleries, directly relating the site to local artwork in the arts district, prominent bars, businesses, and restaurants, as noted in Figures 59 and 60. There are two typologies determined for this site: 1) It is a small-scale, only open on one edge site and 2) it will be a public space for people who work downtown.



SOURCE: created by author.

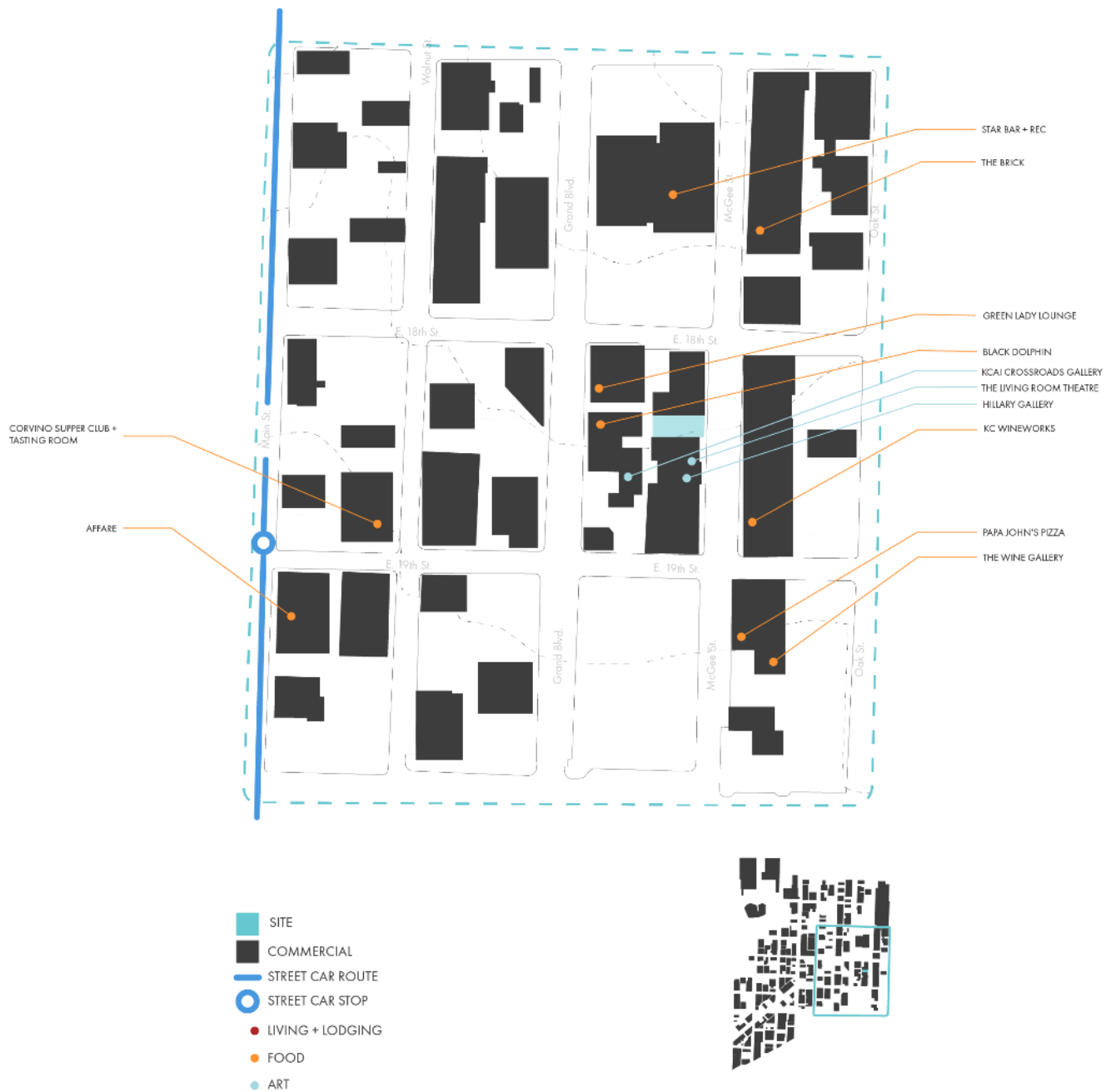


Fig. 60: Site 3 Social Characteristics
SOURCE: created by author.

5.4.1 APPLYING THE TOOLKIT



Fig. 61: Site 3: The Space Between Vision Rendering.

SOURCE: created by author.

This final site investigation is a public space for people who work downtown. Many interstitial spaces like this one is a common site typology in downtown Kansas City, and the reimagination of them as public spaces creates small scale, high-impact points of connection within the city, proving that even the smallest residual space has the ability to serve as a vibrant pedestrian node in the public realm.



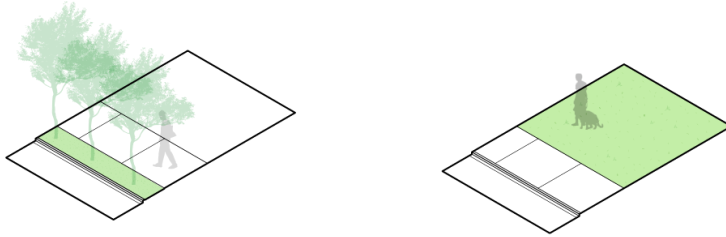
Fig. 62: Site 3: The Space Between Vision Sketch.

SOURCE: created by author.

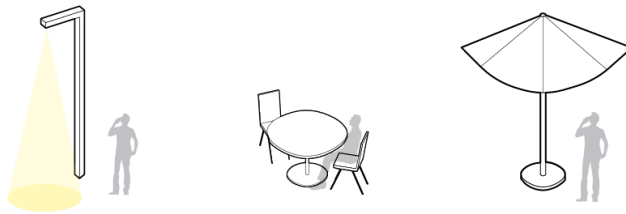
Hear Insert

5. TOOLKIT ANALYSIS: CROSSROADS DISTRICT, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

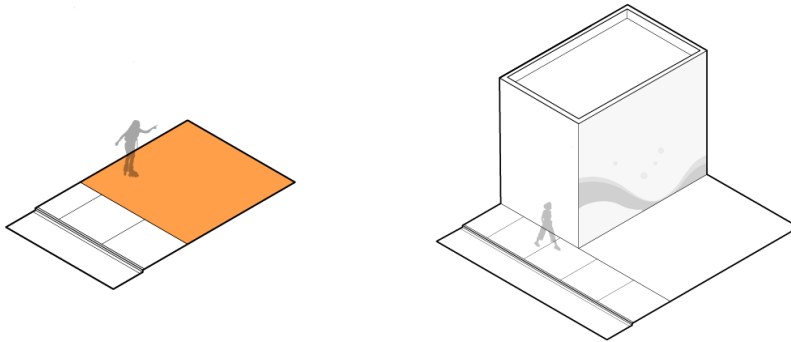
GREENSCAPE



FURNISHINGS



BRANDING



TRANSIT CONNECTIONS

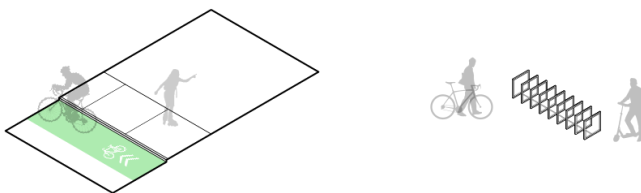


Fig. 63: The Space Between toolkit.
SOURCE: created by author.



Fig. 64: Site 3: The Space Between Toolkit Application.

SOURCE: created by author. Image from Google Earth.

The approach to this site reimagination is focused around using tactical placemaking strategies to create the greatest impact to transform the space into a vibrant destination. The painted surface is an easy, quick, and inexpensive way to define the space, and the color adds character and identity to the site. Color is also implemented on one of the edge walls through a wall mural. This wall mural adds a point of cultural connection and serves as a wayfinding tool throughout the city, promoting further connectivity. Green space and trees soften the concrete and brick confines of the space and provides the community a chance to connect with nature and seek refuge from the sun. Wind flowing through the trees creates soft, rustling noises and add peaceful ambience to the space as people sitting in the café seating and converse with each other. Café seating entices those work nearby to take their lunch hour outside and encourages passersby to engage with the space.

The tactical nature of the design approach encourages similar sites to utilize these elements of the toolkit to create small public spaces that pack powerful impact in the connection in the public realm, as these sites hold the greatest potential for iteration throughout the city to create a connected network.

6.1 INTRO

Kansas City, Missouri can be the future epitome of the connected sprawl city. As it currently undergoes transformations and revitalization, making strides towards becoming a 21st century city, it is hitting a roadblock in the success of revitalization, and this is because of its disconnection between its districts and people within its districts. This disconnection is the result of the disproportion of the built form to underutilized, open, residual space, which is typically in the form of surface parking lots. The goal of this capstone is examine the viability of the toolkit as a public space placemaking method, in relation to Kansas City, and ultimately answer its initial research question: How can public space serve as an ultimate layer of connectivity in a currently disconnected city? This capstone investigates this question through the reimagination of surface parking lots in the Crossroads District of Kansas City, Missouri as public space and explores how a public space toolkit transforms Kansas City's surface parking lots into public spaces that provide better connectivity between its districts, neighborhoods, and people.

6.2 LIMITATIONS

For the purpose of this capstone, the scope was limited due to time constraints in the completion of this capstone. The narrow scope was applied to the selection of a single district in Kansas City to investigate, the Crossroads District, as it best embodied the idea of a district wanting to connect, but not being able to due to its severe lack of public space, and only three sites within the district were selected to test the application of the toolkit. The toolkit elements were also determined through a limited scope. To best create a clear and concise toolkit, the capstone only created five categories of placemaking strategies and selected only a few elements as they were deemed as best practices to help improve connectivity specifically relating to the Kansas City Crossroads District. Although the limitations of the capstone study and toolkit investigation helped guide the creation a concise toolkit, the limitations determine that a further examination and more extensive study and application of a larger toolkit is necessary in actually determining what elements best suite a site and best promote connectivity.

6.3 FURTHER RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION

There is a great opportunity for further study after this capstone. The next steps would be to engage in a community-driven placemaking process, on-site analysis, and temporary installations of objects to test the viability of elements in the toolkit. It is only through these methods that this capstone would be able to truly test what elements create a public destination space that promotes connectivity in Kansas City. The future investigation of this capstone might determine that elements in this toolkit do not work, or that there needs to be additional elements added to the toolkit, such as water elements, water receptacles, areas for food trucks, a public pavilion for live music, a community garden aspect, etc. Even though there is opportunity for future exploration in this capstone, it is still a valuable exploration of how public space enhances the public realm of a city.

6.4 A FUTURE LOOK

This capstone created a public space toolkit for Kansas City, Missouri and through a series of exploratory studies, it was applied to three surface parking lot sites in the Crossroads District. Through the reimagining of these sites as public spaces, this capstone determined that these transformations could enhance connectivity between people and the city through creating spaces that allow people to



Fig. 65: Before and After of Crossroads District Connectivity with implementation of public space.
SOURCE: created by author.

pause, stay, play, and interact with each other through a series of programs, materials, furnishings, and landscape. In earlier public space case studies, the creation of public space ignited a network of public spaces to be implanted throughout the city. This capstone assumes this same notion would happen in the Crossroads District, with the three sites investigated acting as catalyst projects, as envisioned in Figure 66. Eventually, a network of public spaces would develop throughout the city—transforming this currently car centric, surface parking lot-plagued city into a city for the pedestrian, and in turn, allow connectivity to bloom, finally propelling Kansas City, Missouri forward as a 21st century city.



Fig. 66: AFTER: The Connection of Kansas City, Missouri.
SOURCE: created by author.

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