



Brooklyn Center - Alatus
Phase 1
Engagement Report

May 31, 2021

In partnership with:

NDC

Building Neighborhood Economies From Within



JUXTAPOSITION ARTS

NORTHSIDE SINCE '95

Brooklyn Center/Alatus - Phase 1 Engagement

Introduction

This community engagement report reflects the input of about 200 individuals in the Brooklyn Center (BC) community, as well as engagement and art work by four BC youth and the Juxtaposition Arts Environmental Design Lab (JXTA).

From late September to October 2020, JXTA and the BC youth team created an interactive public art installation, flyered the neighborhood, completed an online survey, and held an Online Design Conversation for the Phase 1 project. The goal of these efforts was to inform people about the proposed Incubator and Housing project, and to learn what people's priorities might be for the project.

Founded in 1995, JXTA is a youth-staffed art and design center, gallery, pop-up retail shop, and an adult artists' studio space. One of the largest employers of youth in Minneapolis, JXTA is committed to developing and amplifying the talents of local emerging artists in its North Minneapolis neighborhood, one with the highest concentration of residents under 21 in Minneapolis.

Thank you to Meg Beekman for connecting us to some of the many people engaging community in BC, including Rebecca Gilgen, Andrew Mua, Paul Vang, Chloe Cotheman, and the BC youth team: Alex Garcia, Kimberly Osoy, Joana Lopez, and Donnie Yang.

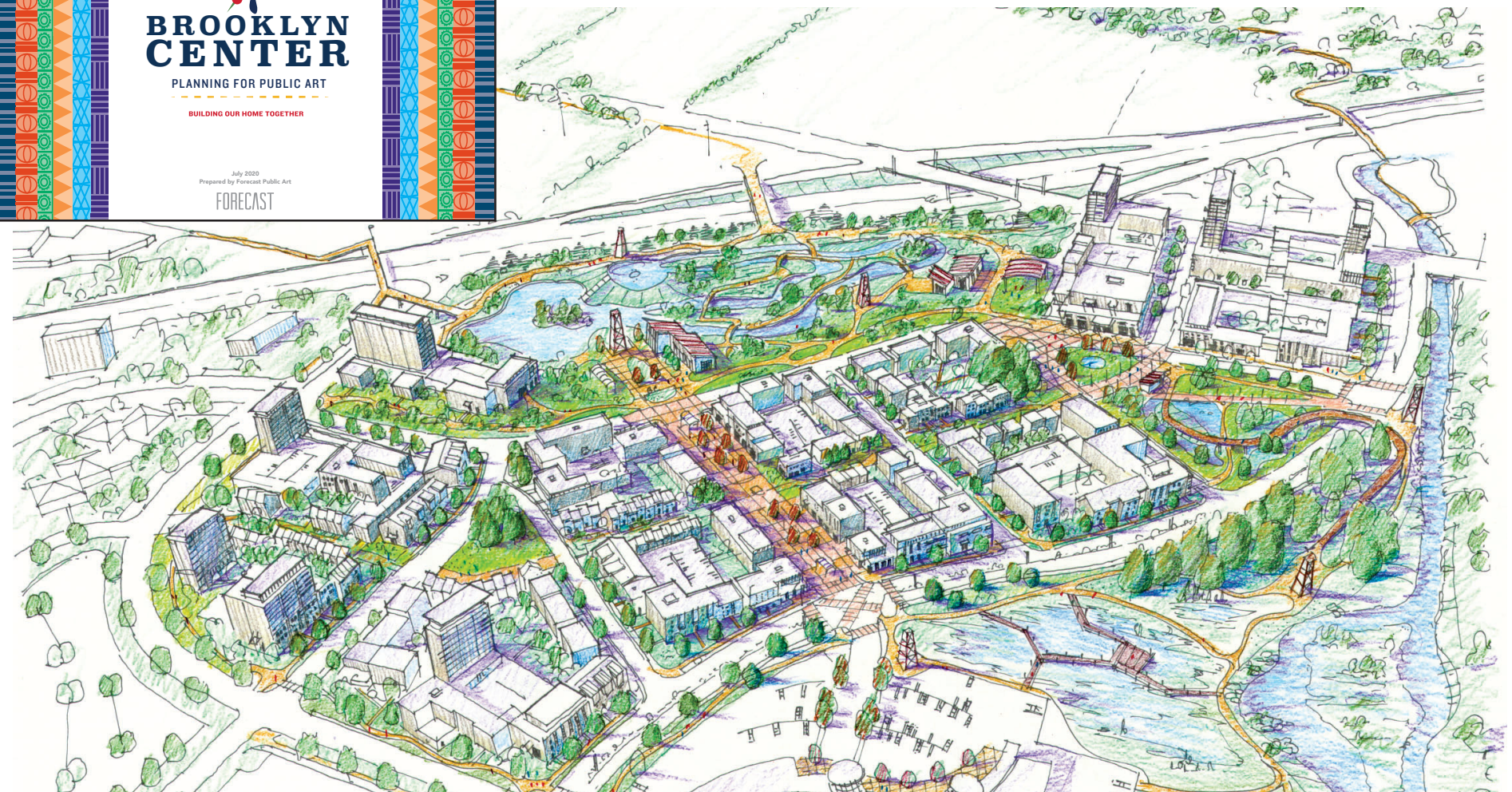
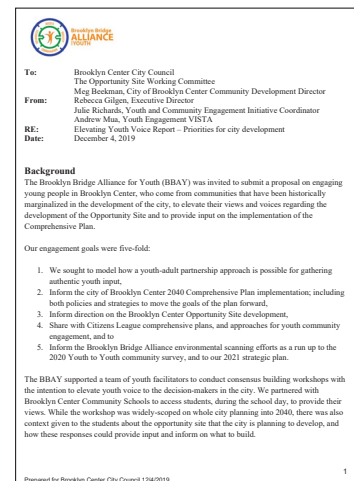


Kimberly and Donnie assemble the Art installation titled *We Grow Together*

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Building on Previous Work

This engagement work builds on previous engagement work and studies completed in BC, most notably the 2020 Downtown Brooklyn Center Master Plan.



Inset, left to right:
Alatus Summary Report,
Brooklyn Bride Alliance for Youth
Elevating Youth Voice Report,
Forecast Beautify Brooklyn Center
Report

Online Survey

1. Market - what goods should be sold here? when would people come?
2. Program - what infrastructure and activities should be supported in the outdoor space?
3. Feel - what elements will help people feel safe and welcome?

Left: Program Question
Right: Survey overall format

Help us design a new outdoor market in Brooklyn Center!

Andie, a local developer, is building new housing near the corner of George Cooke Highway and Rice Lake Road, where Brooklyn Square and Brooklyn First used to be. This is a first step in transforming the area into a vibrant downtown for Brooklyn Center, along with new housing, this building will include an indoor "mini-market" space to support new businesses and an outdoor market. Will your ideas or thoughts inspire this outdoor market in the new part of the Brooklyn Center community.

Here is a simplified map of the proposed building. It shows housing below and the new residential space on top. The questions in this survey will address the orange Outdoor Market Plaza space. The Market sign also appears on the top of the George Cooke Highway.

What would you like to buy at the market?

(Select as many as you want)

- ☐ Locally sourced fruits and vegetables
- ☐ Prepared foods to eat on site
- ☐ Prepared foods to go
- ☐ Locally crafted beverages
- ☐ Arts and crafts
- ☐ Clothing
- ☐ Other (please write below)

When would you come to this market?

Time of year

- ☐ Spring
- ☐ Summer
- ☐ Fall
- ☐ Winter

Days of the week

- ☐ Mondays
- ☐ Tuesdays
- ☐ Wednesday
- ☐ Thursday
- ☐ Friday
- ☐ Saturday
- ☐ Sunday

Time of Day

- ☐ Morning
- ☐ Afternoon
- ☐ Evening

In addition to an outdoor market, there will be space for other activities. Which of these activities would you also like to see? (Pick your top 3 activities.)

	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice
Performance space	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Open courts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Garden	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adults (65+ in the area)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (65+ in the area)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Here are photos of different outdoor markets from around the world. Would you like to see these kinds of spaces in Brooklyn Center? Please explain why you feel this way, using examples, such as "I like this environment because it is colorful and open."

1. Would you like to have this kind of space in Brooklyn Center?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

What do you like or not like about it?

2. Would you like to see this kind of space in Brooklyn Center?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

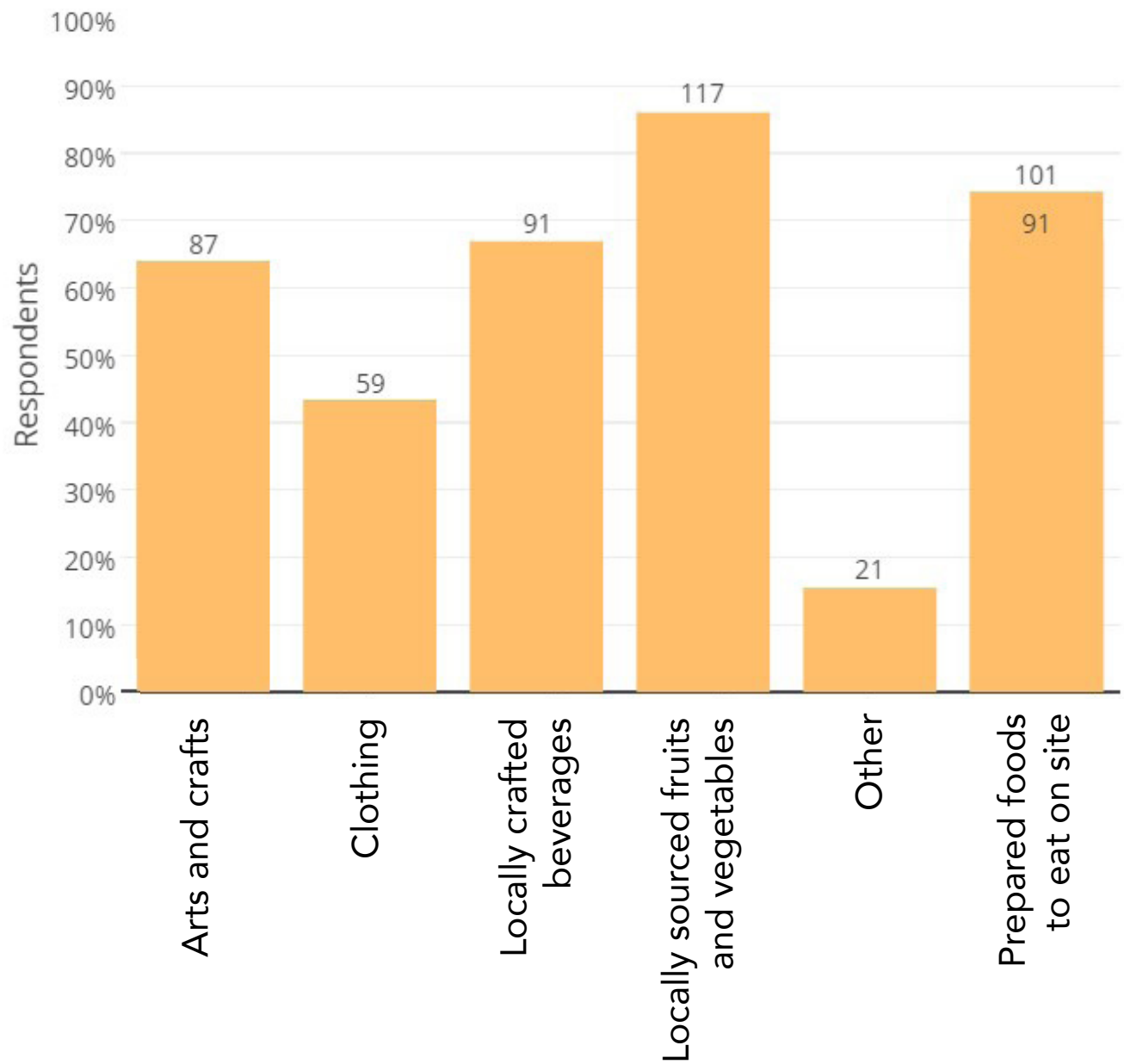
What do you like or not like about it?

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Survey Results

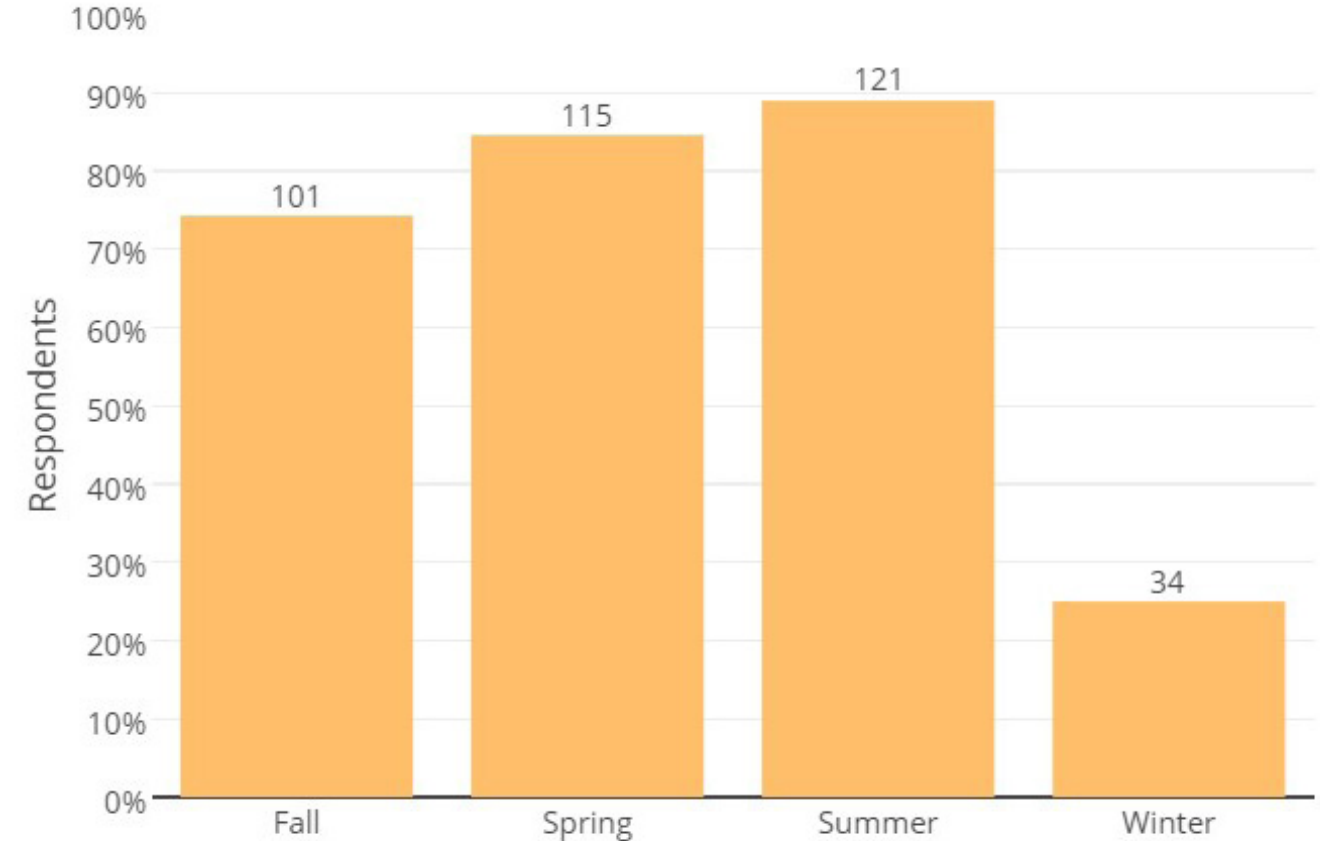
What goods should be sold here?

Locally sourced fruits and vegetables was most popular, followed by Prepared foods to eat on site and Locally crafted beverages



What seasons would you come to the market?

People were generally happy to come as long as it isn't winter.



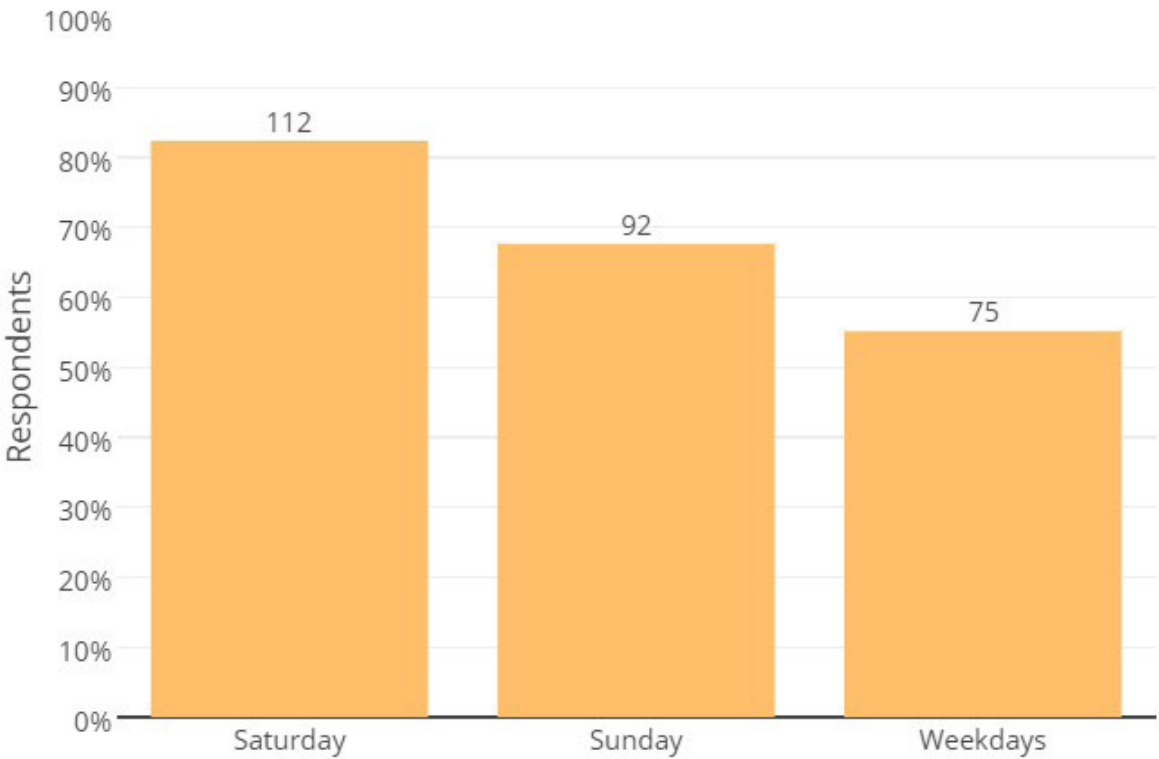
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Survey Results

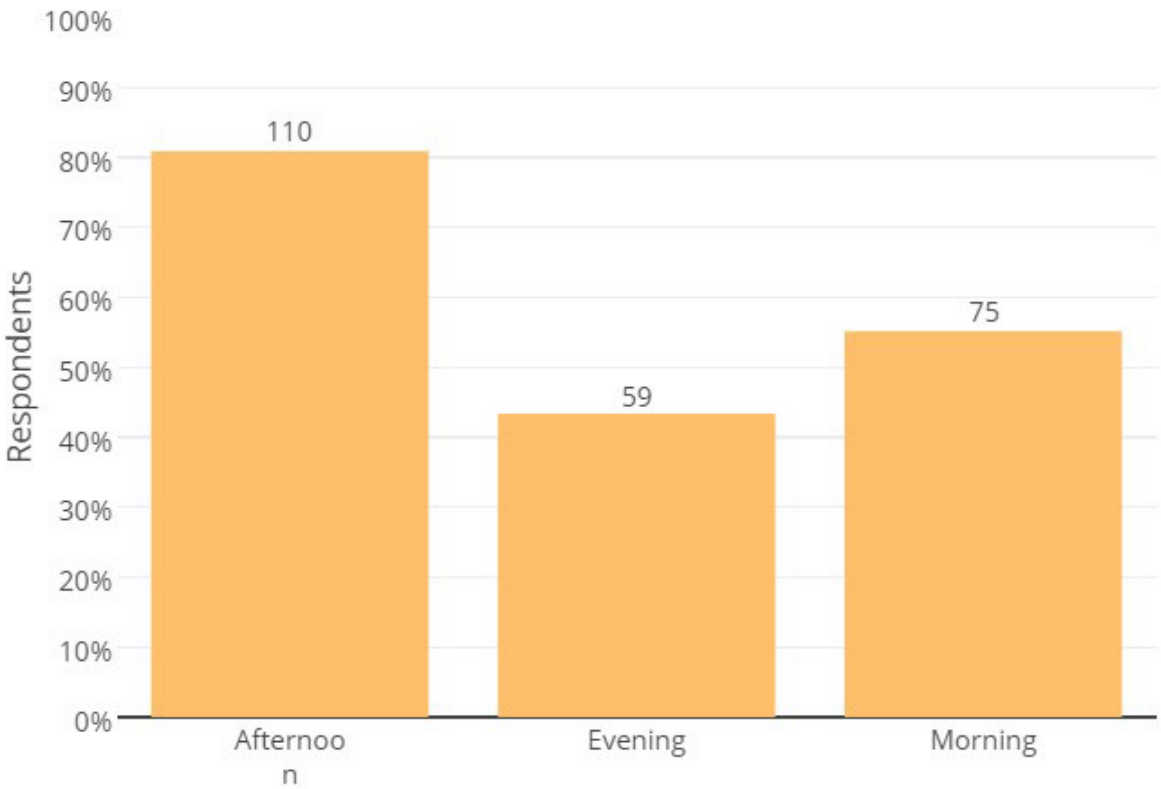
When would you come here?

Weekend afternoons were the most popular time chosen, but it may still be worth exploring weekdays and other times of the day.

Days of the week



Time of Day



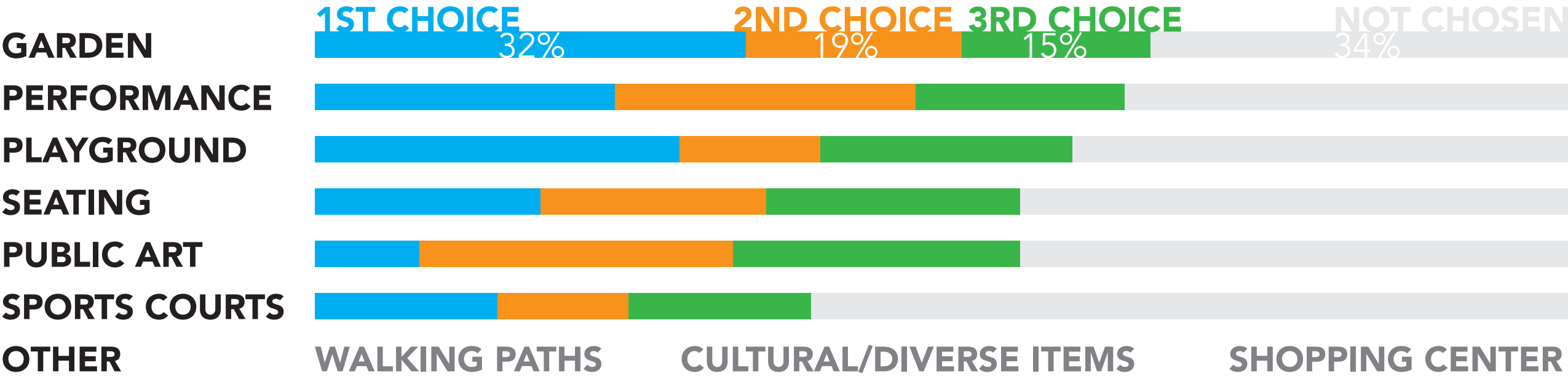


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Survey Results

Supporting Activities/Infrastructure

To support the market, we asked what else customers would like to see in the plaza. Garden was picked most often, but participants were interested in most of the other options as well.



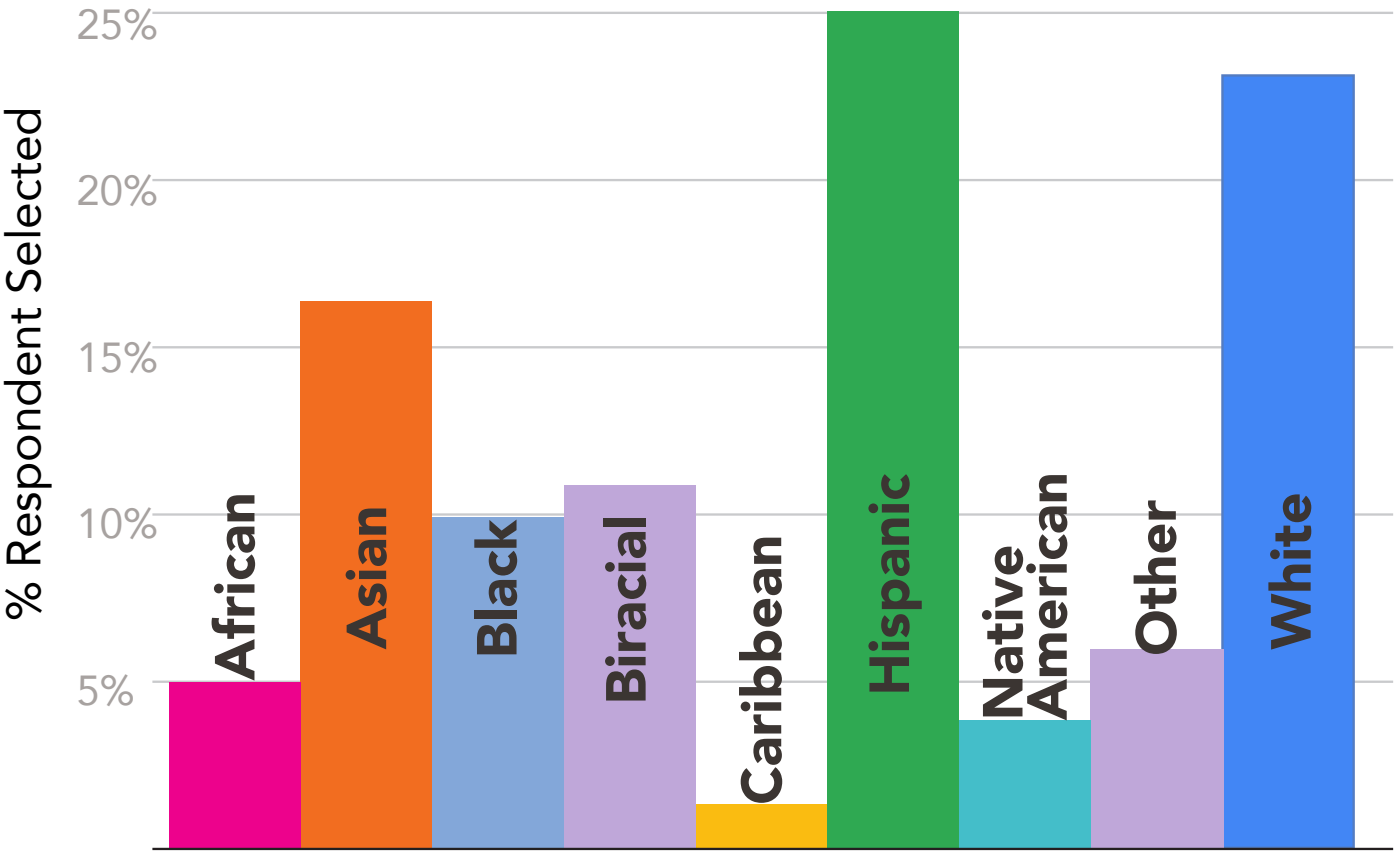
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Survey Results

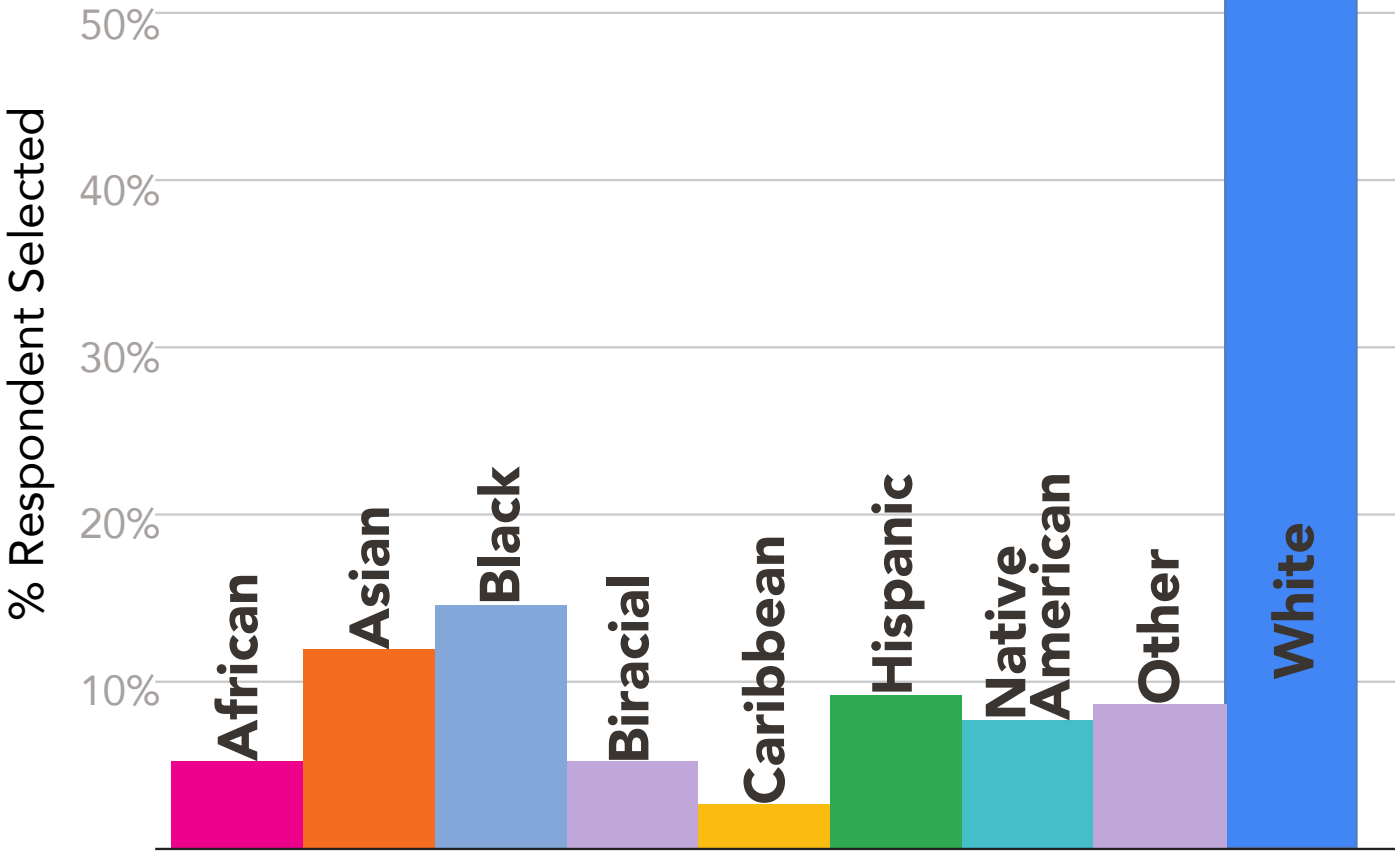
Respondent Race

We tracked respondent race as the surveys came in; initial surveys were focused on reaching POCl and young people, then on October 19th the survey was pushed out to larger email lists and Facebook groups. Because of this, the earlier results better reflected BC demographics, although Black and African people were still under-represented, while the Oct. 30th results are most over-represented by white people. Despite these large changes in participant race, general results stayed relatively similar. Please contact niko.kubota@juxtaposition.org for further information.

Race of Survey Participants
Oct 19



Race of Survey Participants
Nov 23



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Who we talked to: Community Surveys

Write-in Input

In addition to the three areas of targeted input, survey respondents were also able to ask general questions, raise concerns, or volunteer new ideas for this project.

General Support

- This would add new life to a dead space
- An opportunity to take advantage of this space, highlight diversity, and create facilities for families to enjoy
- Encourages new businesses and relationships amongst neighbors to flourish
- It's accessible

Quality/Character

- Reflective of the Community
- Great space for community gatherings
- Looks inviting with seating/tables and performances

Amenity Ideas

- Variety of Local multi-cultural commerce: Bakeries, gift shops, shopping, furniture, antiques, etc
- Public restrooms
- Local food vendors/ trucks
- Emphasis on recycling or earth friendly products
- Plaques/info displays for mentioning notable moments and events in Brooklyn Center
- Community gardens with seating/ green landscaping
- Rotating guest business/ vendors/ themes per different cultures in Brooklyn Center
- Playground/water parks/crafts for kids
- Security or police always on site
- Pet friendly spaces
- Sports field to accommodate different sports



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Write-in Input (cont.)

In addition to the three areas of targeted input, survey respondents were also able to ask general questions, raise concerns, or volunteer new ideas for this project.

Art Opportunities

- Cultural recognition
- Changing art displays/ showcases
- Live music

Environment/Design Concerns

- Not spacious enough to satisfy COVID-19 guidelines
- Lack of colors & uniqueness
- Looks too relaxed/tacky/unorganized and does not convey a clean city modern look
- Seems to be a temporary aspect of Brooklyn Center
- With crime concerns in mind this does not seem attractive for families
- Crime magnet
- It's just more market rate housing
- Is this development going to help the city grow in the future?



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Community Design Discussion

To dig deeper into the responses from the online survey, the online Community Design Discussion represented this feedback to participants and elicited discussions on the more complex topics that were difficult to pursue through the survey.

The discussions took place on a zoom meeting on 10/24 from 11am-12:30pm with 32 participants, including JXTA and other associated groups from the design team, and community members, many who had taken the survey.

The goals of the discussions were:

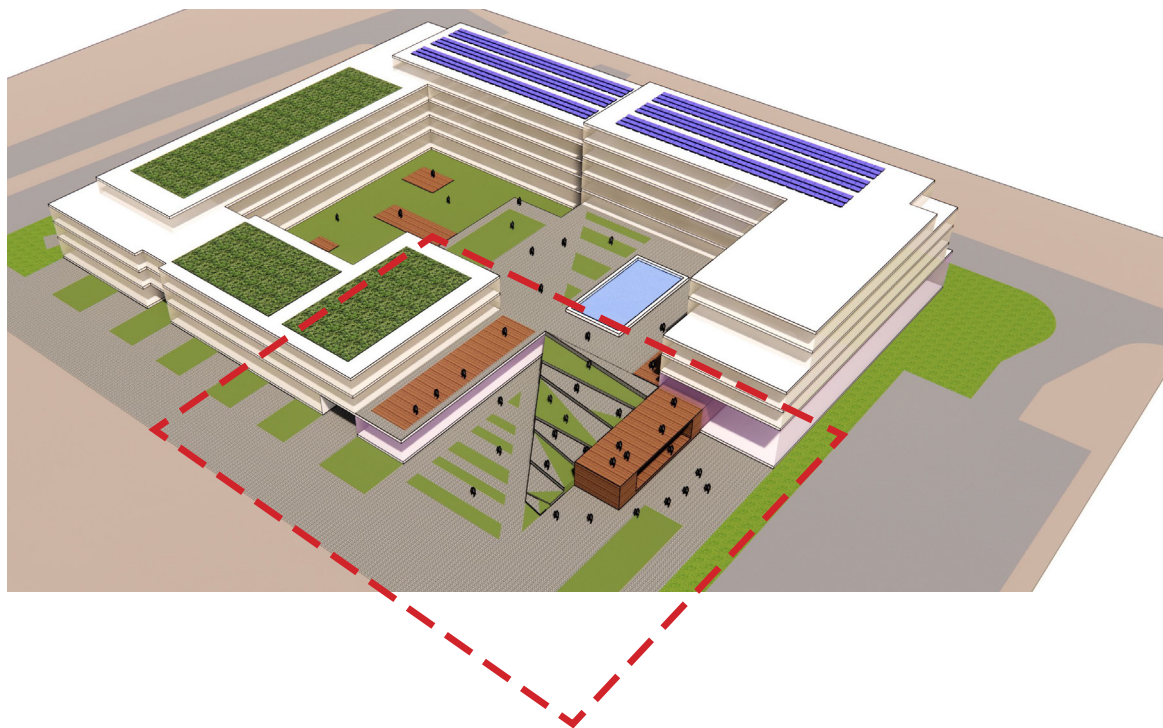
1. Dive deeper into the question of how people would feel safe/secure in the plaza
2. How the design of the space could contribute making members of many different cultures feel welcome.
3. Get feedback on early design ideas - JXTA produced "design approach" sketches to compare and contrast in order to get specific feedback for the space design.

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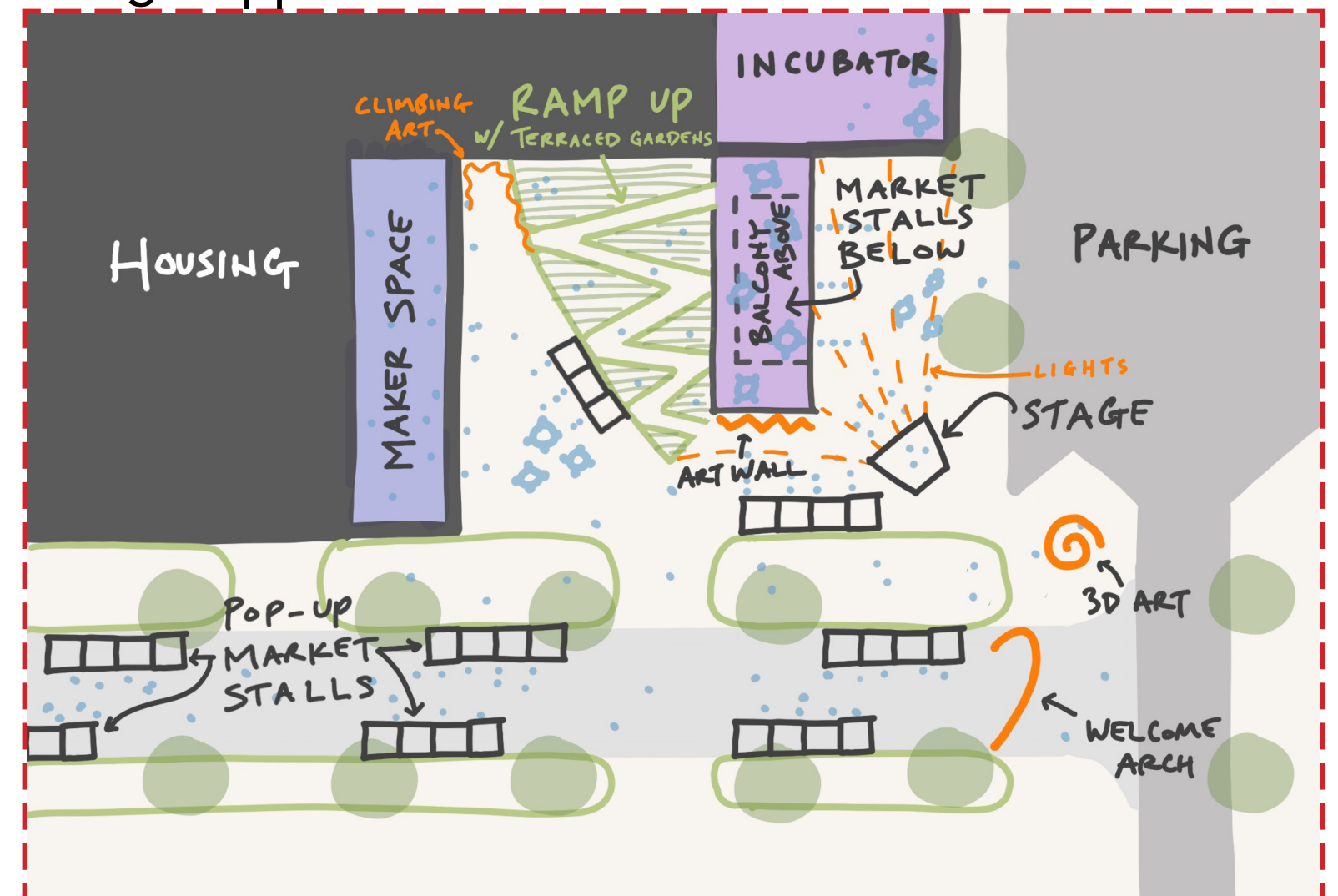
Community Design Discussion

Community Design Discussion

JXTA sketched some possible interpretations of the survey data onto the project site to support further discussion. Questions such as: does this layout support what was popular in the survey? What is missing now that you see how this layout might work? JXTA created two options to allow for better comparison.



Design Approach 1

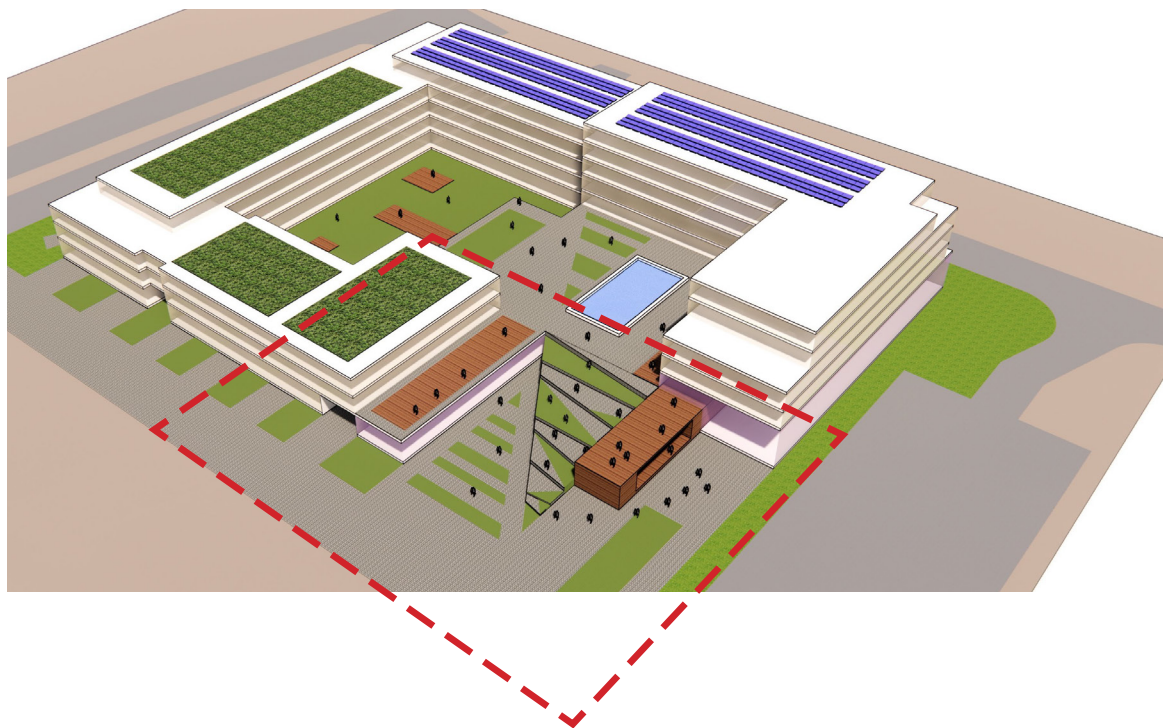


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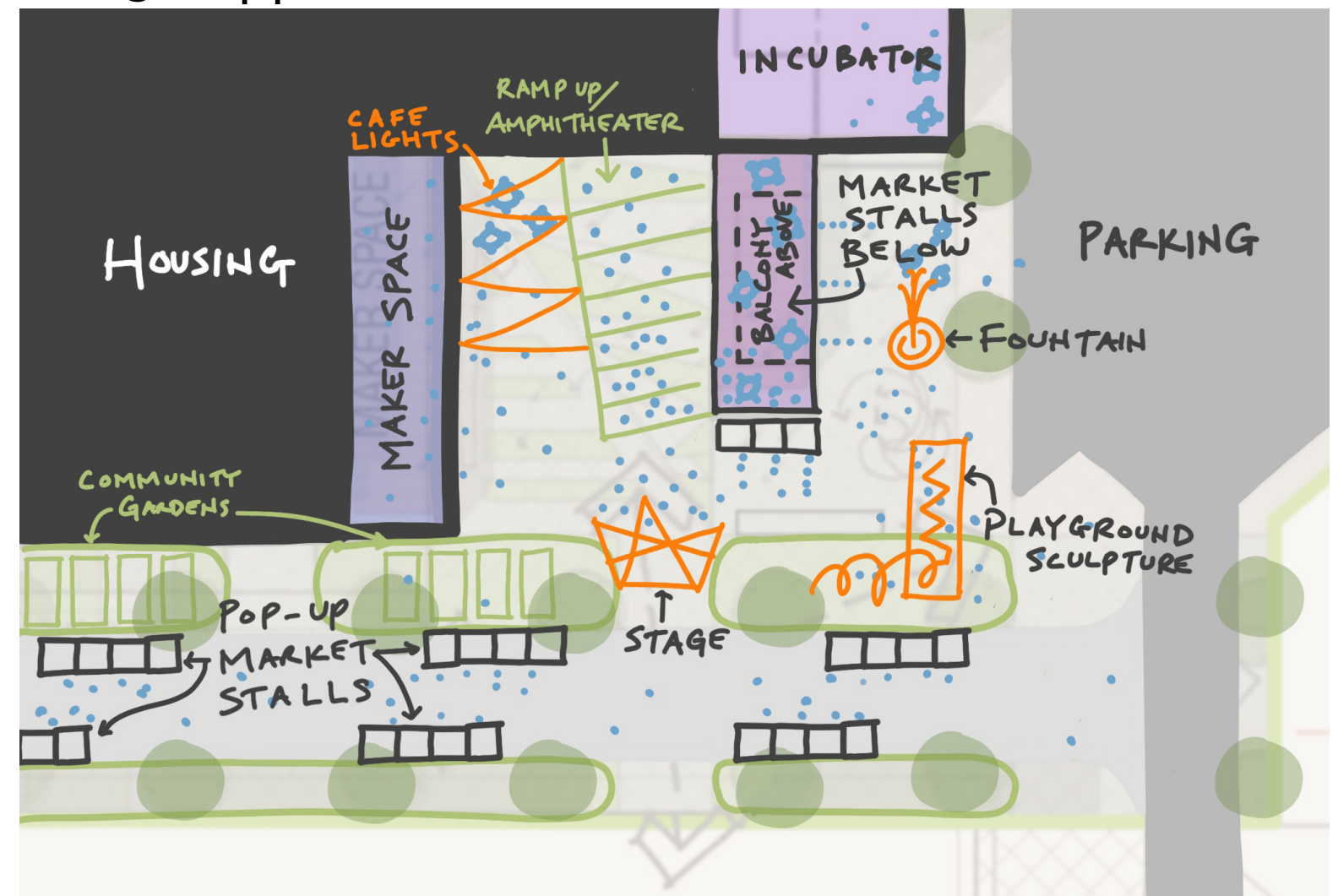
Community Design Discussion

Community Design Discussion

This version moves the performance space to the inner part of the plaza and makes the outer part more active with the playground structure on the corner. Community garden plots are also proposed on the green spaces.



Design Approach 2



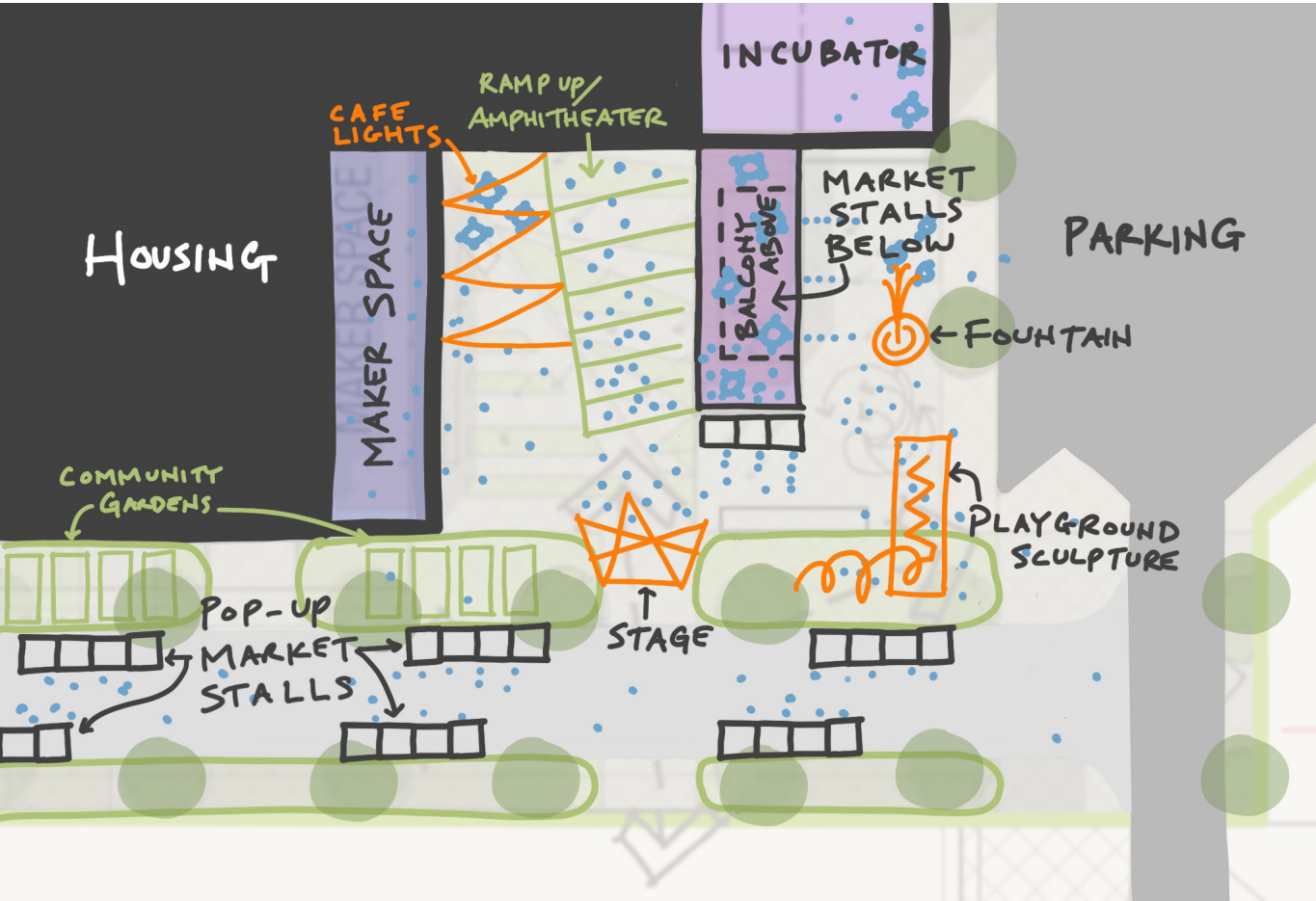


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Community Design Discussion

Walk-through exercise

In small groups, participants were asked to imagine their experience of this new space, how they would use the market and amenities, and how they would feel. What is working well? What is missing? Below are three examples from the session.



Walk-through 1

It's Saturday morning and my whole family gets together to go to the market. We always do the shopping on Saturdays but typically we have to go to a big store or the farmers markets in Minneapolis. Instead, today, we go to the outdoor market in Brooklyn Center. The stalls have the kinds of organic foods that my family likes to buy. Food shopping takes a while, so I'll also check out the clothing and other things on sale. After we finish shopping, we buy some prepared food and find a place to sit and eat. And then see the art that's around. I'll call some friends and see if they want to come down and hang out.

Walk-through 2

It's the weekend and I'm taking my nine grandkids to the market. We go eat great local, ethnic food. We see art from artists in residence. My grandkids have a lot of energy to get out so I watch them as they play in the splash pad and climb up a lookout tower. It all feels safe. There's great people watching, local music all the time, and the best coffee in Brooklyn Center.

Walk-through 3

It's Friday evening. I meet at the market with a group of friends to hang out and de-stress from the week. We eat some food and check out the art. (Brooklyn Center has lots of artists but nowhere to show their work.) We'd go to the playground, even though we're 16 and 17. I wouldn't get bored going here because it's a different kind of space for Brooklyn Center. It's active and there's always something new going on.



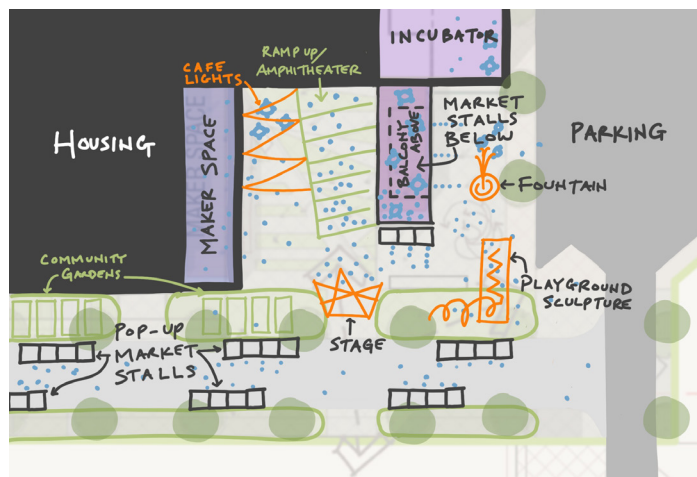
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Community Design Discussion

What helps you feel safe?

Safety and security has been a topic of interest in previous engagements, and we addressed this in the Community Design Discussion with the following prompt. While there was not complete agreement, the general trend was that participants preferred to rely on the qualities of the space and the inherent safety brought by large numbers of people rather than security or police presence.

Start with the first image from the survey and discuss the physical environment; lighting, how open the space is, whether other people are around, or if there are windows opening onto this space. Another aspect is security personnel or police – whether their presence helps participants feel safer or not. We want people to feel safe in this space, but also understand that this is not always a simple issue.



General Agreement

- good lighting and open spaces.
- lively spaces that are used by people feel safer.
- general agreement that having someone consistently there to keep an eye on things would help, someone who makes connections with people and builds relationships.
- welcoming entrance point, maybe an archway, something with a nice sense of entry – some kind of welcoming thing
- trash cans – making sure there isn't litter

Individual Thoughts with Less Agreement

- having police there wouldn't feel good.
- some conversation on plain-clothes police, but mostly not well received - might feel disingenuous?
- could it be fenced off in some way, with limited entrances and exits?
- security teams that can come and monitor the space
- skyways to connect to other locations



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Community Design Discussion

How can this space include a diversity of people?

This was another topic of interest in previous engagements, and we addressed this in the Community Design Discussion with the following prompt:

Inclusion / Cultural appropriateness is another very important but complex topic. While some design moves can help a variety of people feel more welcome in a space, other designs might feel expressly tied to a single culture and make some people feel less welcome. For example, bright and varied colors in the second photo on the online survey had broad appeal, but some felt it was too specific a reference to particular culture and found it less welcoming.



General Agreement

- want it to feel like the Midtown Global Market where there are stalls with food from lots of different cultures.
- opportunities to share the same spaces – playgrounds with kids from different cultures playing together, parents from different cultures sitting next to each other, watching their kids and talking.
- welcoming means a variety of many things – colors, flags or symbols, performances, and of course the flavors and products

Individual Thoughts with Less Agreement

- one suggestion – have times when specific cultures are emphasized. Like an evening when Mexican vendors come through and can offer a wider variety of culturally specific goods.



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Community Design Discussion

Other discussion points

Organization/Separation

- preference for Approach 1 - feels more open
- needs to be flexible, change over time
- keep the architecture original/ try to attract new businesses by changing the a façade periodically
- minimum level of organization needed (but Disney around the world is too much)
- considerations of mixing commercial with housing - smells, noise
- will there be underground floors to this facility? storage space will be important – all the outdoor market stalls will need storage.
- food sellers will need storage
- some protection between the playground and parking lot – fence, etc.
- connection (skyway?) to existing amenities and assets such as Crest Apartments, Avivo building
- how do we create connections to Shingle Creek? (connection to nature)

Other Ideas to add

- would be great to have food trucks for larger events – but no storage for the trucks themselves!
- have a museum and indoor art center
- more nighttime activities
- things to make it feel active and fun
- story time and other activities for children to gather

General Benefits

- fountains are good gathering points.
- creating affordable stable commercial space
- create spaces that influences residents to congregate
- a social gathering spaces

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Community Design Discussion

Other discussion points

General Concerns

- there's currently little walking traffic in that area
- worries about Brooklyn Center farmers market being put out of business
- Location sucks
- COVID worries
- concerns about areas that aren't well lighted.
- it looks catered to seniors (concern about not being able to attract youth)
- issues with being too upscale? [other responded that they didn't think so - BC needs to be a regional draw]
- the building is tall and will block beautiful views
- we need to think about panhandlers and drug addicts
- privately-owned public space - restrictions on hours of operations

During the wintertime, how could this space stay lively?

- general worries about winter time usage
- indoor space to warm up. could even be a temporary, greenhouse structure underneath the balcony.
- have big, community snow ball fights.
- ice skating
- drive up movie showings
- holiday decorations and events – lots of lights
- communal fire ring
- retractable roof
- pop-up igloos
- heat lamps

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We Grow Together

Placemaking Sculpture

JXTA built a temporary placemaking sculpture at the project site to keep engage people with this location and keep the conversation going about its future. The sculpture, titled "*We Grow Together*" celebrates the people of Brooklyn Center's diverse, vibrant characters as well as their interconnected, interdependent roots. Collaboratively designed and built by youth in the Juxtaposition Arts Environmental Design Lab, as well as Brooklyn Center youth led by Alex Garcia, this installation encourages viewers to become part of the work by answering the questions posed by each tree.

What is something hard that happened to you in 2020?

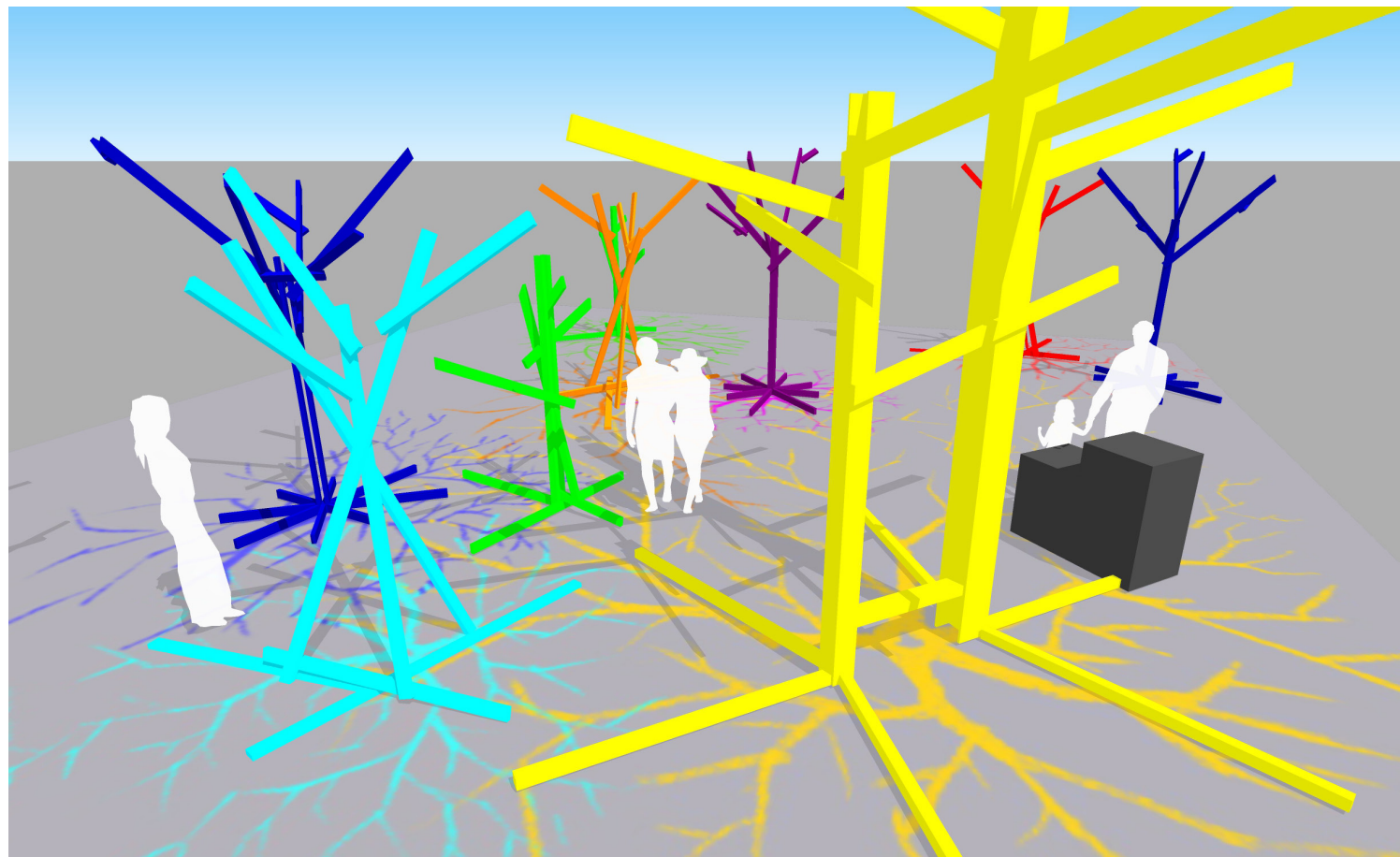
Who is your hero?

What is your dream for BC?

What is an important tradition you have in your family?

If you started a business, what would it be?

Please write your name – if it is from another language, please write it in that language!





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We Grow Together - Feedback

Themes and quotes from participant feedback:

What is something hard that happened to you in 2020?

Unsurprisingly, impacts of the Pandemic came up often. Disconnection was a big theme, whether it was the shift to online school or not being able to see family and friends outside of school and work.

- Moving into PSEO and making the decision to take a break from sports and focus on my education.
- Not being able to meet my other family and running out of food
- Not being able to go to school in person and also not being able to socialize with friends in person.
- There isn't anything except for COVID [right now].
- Going to a few funerals that were for my relatives and a few friends.
- Being separated from other people (because I am an extrovert)
- Online school was kind of stressing
- Something hard was trying to find a motivation and understanding for school
- Not able to talk to my friends at school.
- Covid-19. I'm not able to go out anymore.

Who is your hero?

Many young people said their mother or parents were their heros during this difficult time. The following quote fills in some of the reasons why: "my hero is my mom because she is my mentor and my support system. She motivates me everyday to continue to stay focus in school and reach my goals."

If you started a business, what would it be?

Many people said they would like to start a cafe or restaurant. Other ideas included:

- Tech repair shop because I enjoy fixing things and I think im pretty okay at it
- cafe bookstore
- clothing and beauty products
- helping others with mental illnesses
- Help people get out of poverty

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Themes and quotes from participant feedback (continued):

What is your dream for BC?

This question was more difficult for many participants to answer, at least in the format that we presented. But many people focussed on increasing opportunity for the people here.

- to see more youth involved in the community
- to have lots of opportunities for everyone and have events that show that everyone is a community
- [for BC] to be more empathetic and understanding
- to just have lots of opportunities around the community.
- To have more collage readiness conversions
- To become a bigger and better community

What is an important tradition you have in your family?

There were many different answers to this question, but many people focussed on cultural traditions and giving thanks.

- to be thankful for the little things we have and not be wasteful
- taking pictures because my family has taken pictures since I was born
- giving foods to the past ancestors of my dad family before every new year. This is a tradition that we must do to respect and honor the past ancestors for a better year
- Hmong New Year.
- having a get together once in a while
- give thanks for everything especially food
- Ua neeb ...in case someone is sad or depressed it can help boost their spirit



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Next Steps

For the next phase of engagement and design, the JXTA team will continue to broaden its partner network and deepen the conversations that have started.

1. Work with Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth to reach more stakeholders and have deeper conversations about the project
2. Regular meetings with BKV group landscape architecture and architecture teams to get engagement results into design drawings in real time
3. Work with the Brooklyn Center Parks and Rec Department, focusing on public space programming and aligning with BC's overall approach to infrastructure improvements
4. Design, and engage community on the design of the public art elements for the market plaza