

KaBOOM! Play Everywhere

Understanding Impact



Why care
about
PLAYces?
It's good for kids.

**“Kids who play are happier,
smarter, and more social
creatures — as are their
communities!**

**They stand a stronger chance
of developing into happy,
healthy, smart, successful
adults than kids who do not“**

— kaboom.org



Why care
about
PLAYces?

**It's good for
communities.**

**“The well-being of
communities starts with the
well-being of of our kids.”**

— kaboom.org

Play brings people together
and provides opportunities
for serendipitous social
interaction.



LEAVE YOUR MARK

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Why care
about
PLAYces?
It's good for cities.

“Children are a kind of indicator species. If we can build a successful city for children, we will have a successful city for all people”

- Enrique Peñalosa, *Mayor, Bogota, Colombia*



Streets that are safe enough for kids to walk, bike and play on are safer for everyone.

When we design for the most vulnerable, everyone benefits.

But! Kids
are **missing**
from public
space

Only one in four kids
in the U.S. gets the
recommended daily
amount of physical
activity

— KaBOOM.org

Even in cities with vibrant public life, like New York, kids are missing from the public realm, and account for fewer than 10% of pedestrians

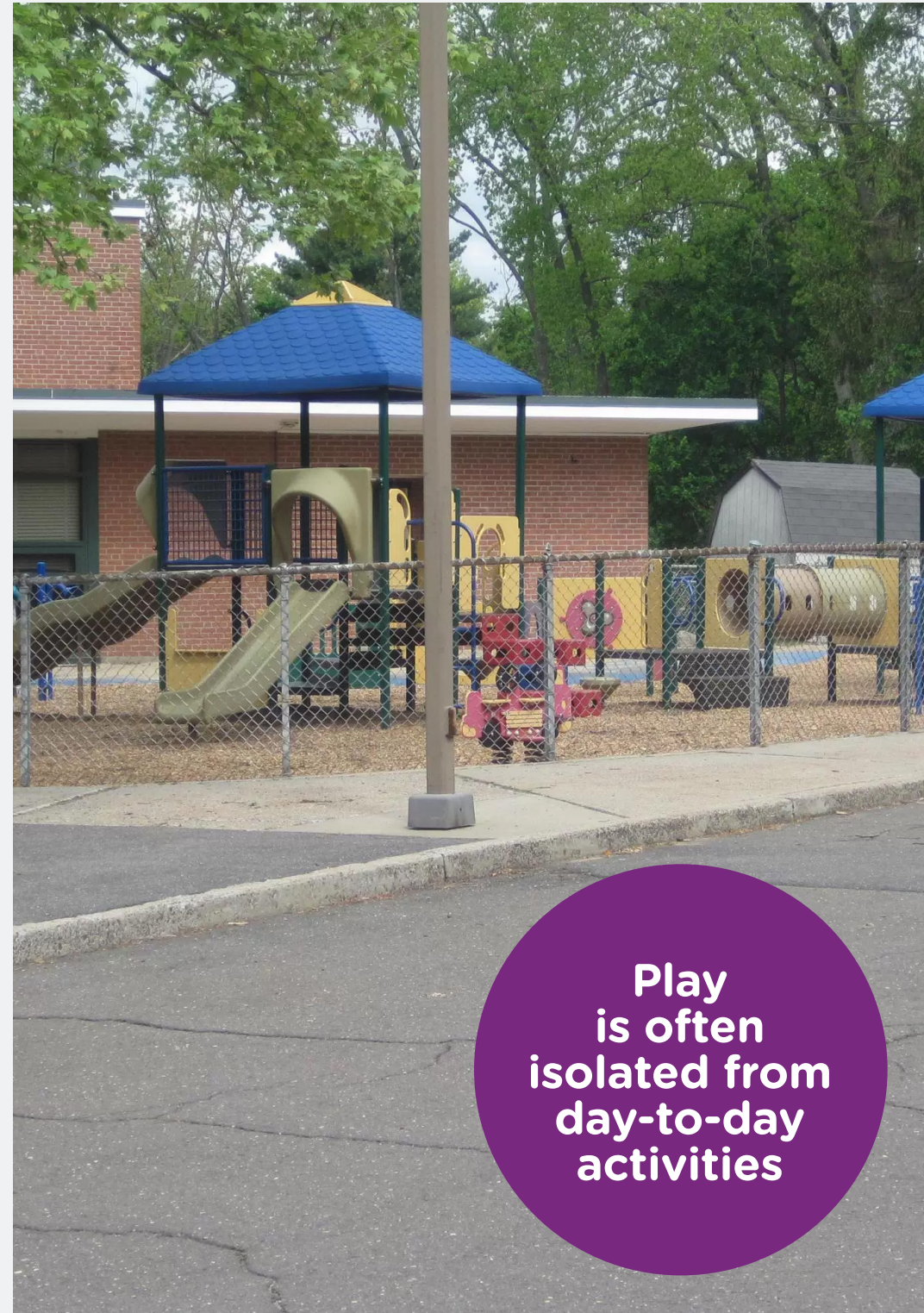


Why?

Few invitations to play in public



High quality spaces often lack play opportunities



Play is often isolated from day-to-day activities



Temptations to stay inside are ever present

Play spaces are difficult to access

Reaching the playground can be a significant undertaking that requires planning around food, water, bathrooms, and transportation

Is there a bathroom nearby?

How do I get here without a car?

Play spaces are typically designed as destinations

This looks like a fun play space, but not very play along the way

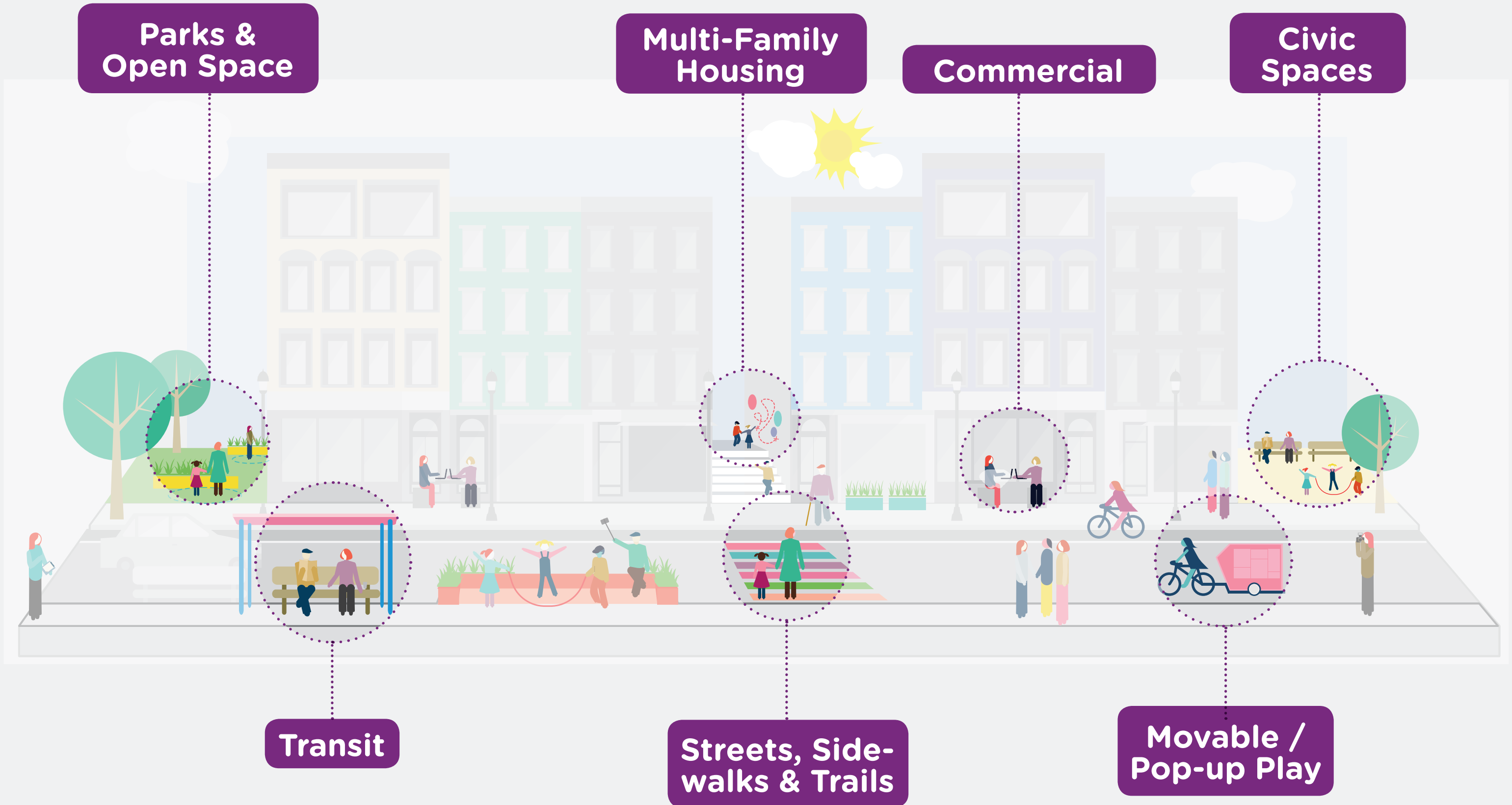




Play Everywhere

Play Everywhere is a nationwide initiative to change mindsets and culture about where play can happen

7 types of city spaces



Kit of Parts
Boston, MA



Jump Marta
Decatur, GA



**Bronx Steps 2 Health
Pathway of Plan**
New York, NY



**Upswing: Retractable Jump
Ropes and Sidewalk Play as
Neighborhood Renewal**
Richmond, VA



Knoxville Slides
Knoxville, TN



iPlay MIAMI Streets
Miami, FL



Gehl studied
the projects
to understand
**ingredients for
play everywhere**

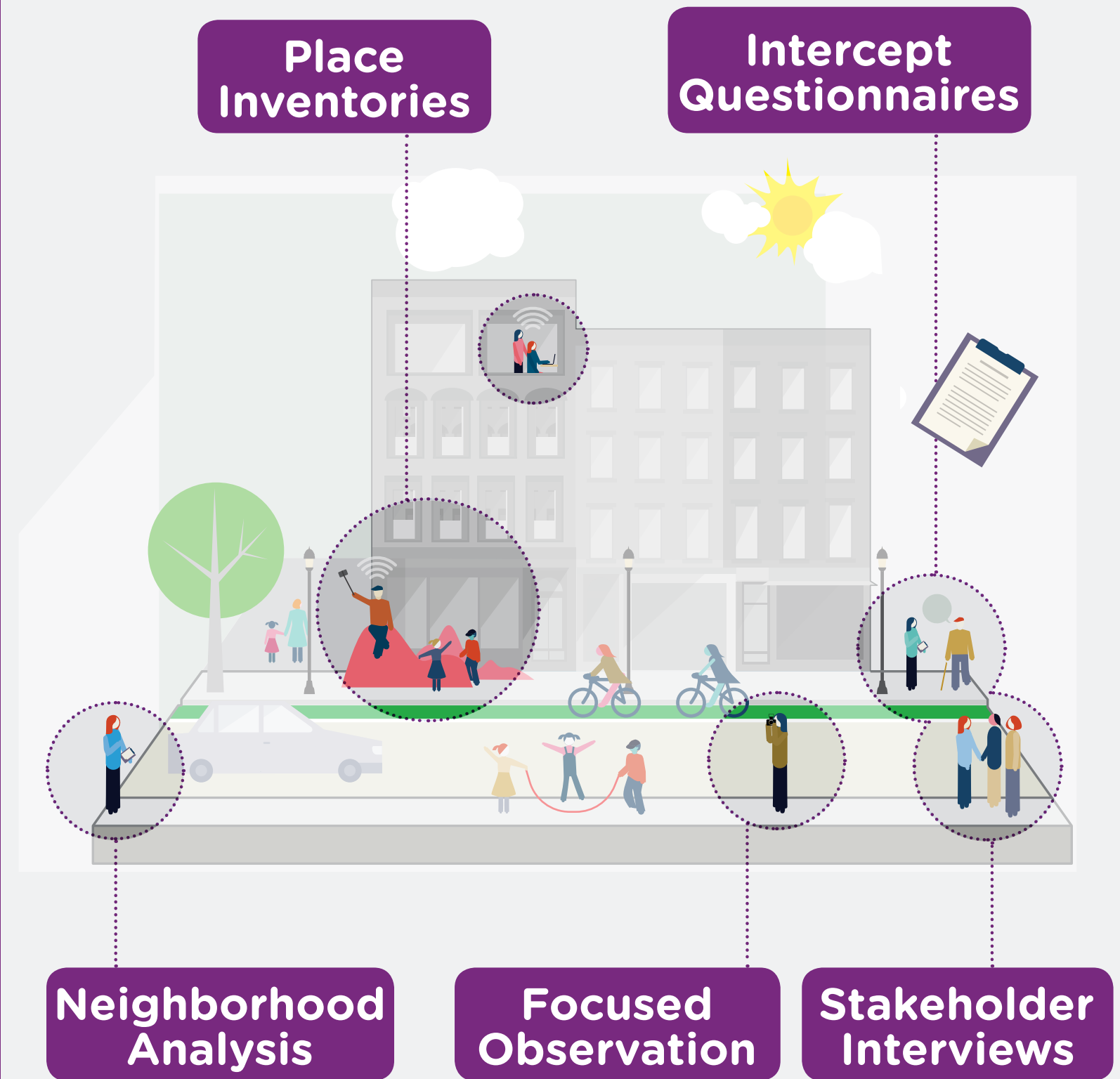
We used a multi-method approach to understand impact on:

1 Who is here?	2 What is happening?	3 How do people feel?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demographics<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Age- Gender- Income- Zip code	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who visits• Activities• Social connections• Visit length	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perception of safety• Visit purpose• Will they return• Overall perception

↑
.....**How does design impact activity?**.....
Urban design analysis

Evaluation Tools

For 9 of the 50, Gehl did a deeper dive and site visits.



Overview Evaluation Methods (50 Projects)

Place Inventory
Required

Documentation of spatial characteristics on-site

- Worksheet
- Before & After photos
- Physical Characteristics

Intercept Questionnaires
Required

Short questions to get anonymous feedback from visitors regarding access, safety, discovery, play, comfort, community, and demographics

Deep Dive Evaluation Methods (9 Projects)

Focused Observation

Spending time at the installation with an ethnographer's lens on the project, looking for patterns that relate to the guiding questions

Stakeholder Interviews

Listening to different types of visitors and stakeholders to the space to understand their perspectives and insights regarding the project, play, and community

Neighborhood Analysis

Research the surrounding sociodemographic and spatial contexts to understand the neighborhood and how the community might access and use the project

A Closer Look: **Overview of Activity and Experience**

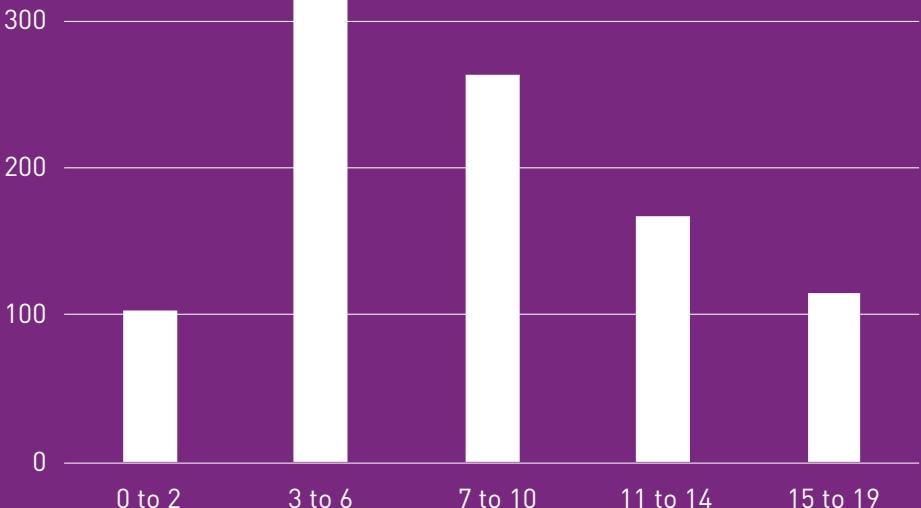
1

Who is
Here?

A draw for young kids!

60% were 3 to 10 years-old

Adaptable projects inspired spontaneous, un-programmed play



Age Range of Visiting Children



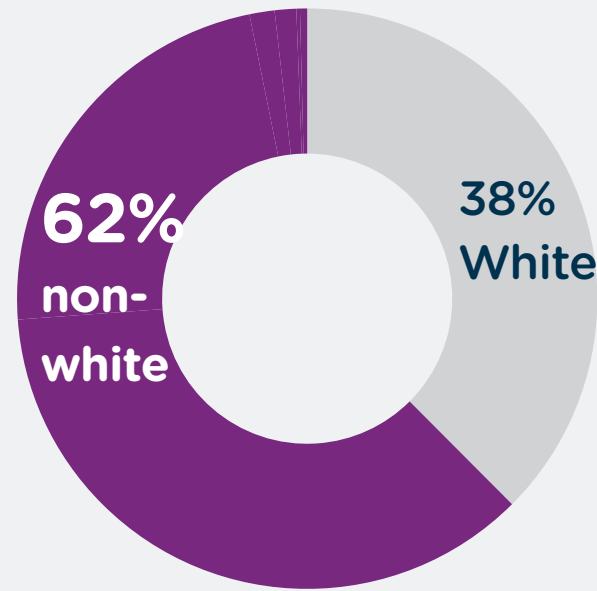
We can transform the stage!

A diverse audience

A higher rate of non-white visitors and visitors earning below the federal poverty line were represented than in proportion to the U.S. overall

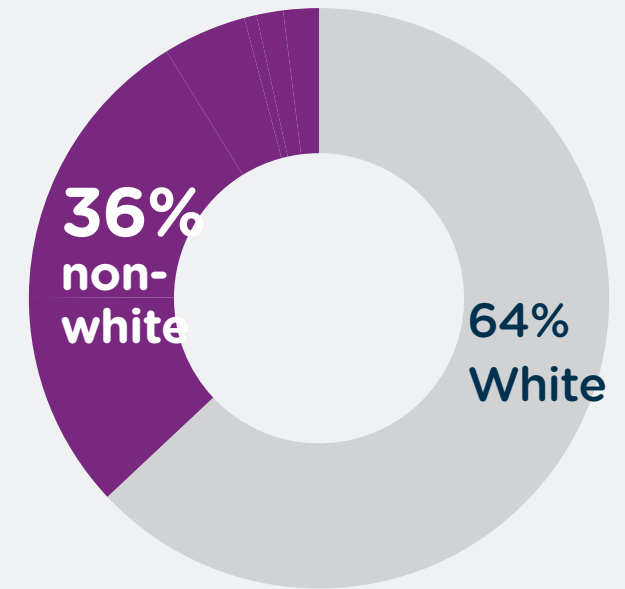
RACE & ETHNICITY

Surveyed



6 of 10 people identified as non-white

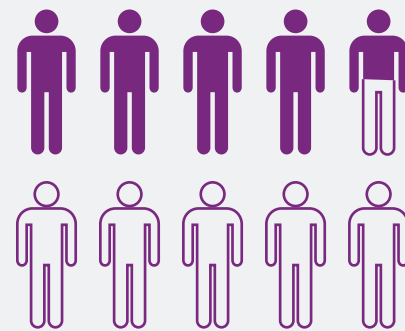
US Census (2015)



3.5 of 10 people identified as non-white

INCOME

Surveyed



4.4 of 10 people surveyed earn less than \$25,000*, the federal poverty line

US Census (2015)



2.2 of 10 people in the US Census earn less than \$25,000*, the federal poverty line

*Federal poverty line, family of four

Inviting to women

70% of people surveyed were women

Women were more likely to stay longer and to say they would return

DID YOU KNOW...

A high rate of women in public indicates that a place feels safe

Easy to stop and jump as I go about my day!



Play is local!

A majority of visitors live in the neighborhood, and 60% report ‘stumbling upon’ the project, indicating it was close to their daily routines

DID YOU KNOW...
80% of people who live within .6 mi of a park visit at least weekly, compared to 25% for those who live more than 3 mi away

Source: “Factors influencing the use of green space”

Image: Houston Community Design Resource Center

19%
Visiting



81%
Local residents

Convenient access matters!

Families with low-incomes were 2X more likely to walk to the Play Everywhere projects



2

**What is
Happening?**

Kids are active!

70% reported the project increased the amount of time their kids spent playing that day



This is more fun than taking the stairs!

Kids are learning

82% said the projects gave their kids a chance to learn or experience something new

30% said learning something new led them to stay longer!



You can build new shapes out of it

Image: KaBOOM!

What are kids learning?

“The experience of transforming any material into a musical instrument”

Loiza, PR, Zona de Paz (Peace Zone)

“Playing outdoors instead of indoors on the computer”

Miami, FL,
iPlay MIAMI Streets

“Another way to learn numbers and move with the animals painted on the sidewalk”

Spartanburg, SC
Big Play on Laundry Day



People are making new connections

2 of 3 interacted with someone new while visiting!

DID YOU KNOW...

Well maintained and safe play spaces are one of the key features that facilitate social interaction amongst residents of different tenures

Source: A good place for children? Silverman, E., Lupton, R. & Fenton, A., 2005

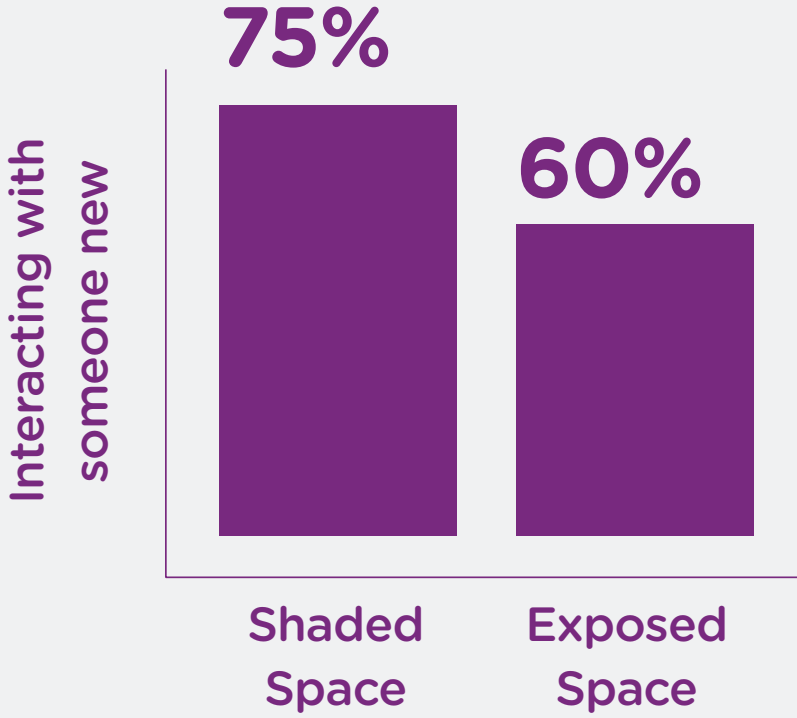


Image: KaBOOM!

Play together!

Shade and greenery facilitate interaction!

When people could sit or stand in shade, rates of social interaction with someone new jumped to 75%, compared to 60%.



Social interactions led people to stay longer

People who interacted with someone new were 4x more likely to stay longer than 30 minutes.



People are playing everywhere

Visits were mostly brief.

6 out of 10 people stayed for 10 minutes

3 out of 10 people stayed for 30 minutes

A new way to see the city

Image: Urban Periscopes



What is happening?

The installations created new public spaces that gave communities a place to program events and an opportunity to re-imagine how they connect with one another and interact with their environment.

Image: World Sport Chicago



3

How do
People Feel?

People feel safe!

90% felt safe across the board, from both traffic and crime!

DID YOU KNOW...

The size of the city affects how safe from traffic people felt:

- 88% in towns felt safe compared to 57% in large cities



Image: Jump Marta
Playscape
KaBOOM!

Those who felt safe were more likely to stay longer and to say they would return

Factors of safety...

Image: Rail Trail Symphony

Protection from traffic

Ability to talk to and hear others

Presence of women

Presence of kids!

Visibility & easy access

A part of the neighborhood

85% said the project reflected the community

88% report they are likely to return!

Image: Houston Community Design Resource Center



Understanding
Elements of Success
**Key Takeaways for
Play Everywhere**

01 Locate near existing kid hubs

Meet users where they are. Identify existing walking routes near to where kids and families live and learn to enable more play along the way

Sub Ingredients

- Safe Access
- Visibility

Destination Play.

If the location is outside of a strong kid and family hub, make a plan to generate demand through programming and partnerships.

02 Bring kids into the process early and often

Find creative ways to involve kids in the idea generation phase. This helps create an installation that responds to demand, prompts buy-in, and develops pride of place.

Sub Ingredients

- Incentives
- Engaging processes

Involve Relevant Partners.

If you can't engage kids in the design process, partner with local groups that know kids well, to gather insights on play that is popular and / or lacking in the area.

03 Emphasize flexibility & interaction

Inspire a sense of curiosity by challenging kids to try something new. Keeping designs flexible and open-ended can help spark imagination.

Sub Ingredients

- Open-ended
- Challenges and games
- Modularity
- Wonder

One-liner

Static elements, such as murals and art installations, can be great additions to a space, but shouldn't be relied on as the primary feature as they don't provide many options for interaction.

04 Communicate it's okay to play

Eye-catching and intuitive design paired with clear signage ensure kids know they can play, and what to do.

Sub Ingredients

- Be bold
- Show rather than tell
- Invite through contrast to the environment

What is that?

Creating play in atypical locations (sidewalks, bus terminals, stairwells) is new to those of us familiar with play in playgrounds - help people understand what's happening and that this too is a place to be playful!

01 Locate near existing kid hubs

02 Bring kids into the process early and often

03 Emphasize flexibility & interaction

04 Communicate it's okay to play

Working well: In Chicago, PermaPlay is on a highly trafficked, safe route, with a local primary school one block away. A crossing guard at the adjacent intersection serves as an informal Mayor of the space — encouraging kids to interact with the installation. The central, convenient location is ideal for play everywhere.



01 Locate near existing kid hubs

Challenge: is access safe? The Soundbox, in Nashville, was located near to where kids live, but was not quite 'on the way', as kids could not safely walk or cross Jefferson Street to access the play site.

02 Bring kids into the process early and often

03 Emphasize flexibility & interaction

04 Communicate it's okay to play



No crosswalk
+
No signal
=
Challenges to play

01 Locate near existing kid hubs

02 Bring kids into the process early and often

03 Emphasize flexibility & interaction

04 Communicate it's okay to play

Working Well: In Houston, kids were the focus of engagement throughout project development and were involved in design. As a result, the installation saw great pride in place and high rates of play.



01

Locate near existing kid hubs

02

Bring kids into the process early and often

03

Emphasize flexibility & interaction

04

Communicate it's okay to play

Challenge: At BUST Boredom in Lexington, city agencies and artists (aka adults) were the stakeholders most involved with project development. The project is fostering mindset change about where play can take place - but is not necessarily increasing rates of play.



01

Locate near existing kid hubs

02

Bring kids into the process early and often

03

Emphasize flexibility & interaction

04

Communicate it's okay to play

Working Well: In Houston, the movable stage challenged kids to make the space their own, and work together as a team to create something.



01

Locate near existing kid hubs

02

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Communicate it's okay to play

Challenge: The 'switchback bench' in Philadelphia, by Tiny WPA, creates places to sit and socialize - but due to its unconventional shape, was not always perceived as furniture to interact with



01

Locate near existing kid hubs

02

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03

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Communicate it's okay to play



Working Well: In Philadelphia, Urban Thinkscape was designed without barriers. The bright colors and bold design invited kids in to explore a series of challenges for kids to explore - each of which also promoted literacy and math skills, whether the kids knew it or not.

01

Locate near existing kid hubs

02

Bring kids into the process early and often

03

Emphasize flexibility & interaction

04

Communicate it's okay to play



Challenge: In Nashville, a custom designed container provided unique play elements, packaged in a curiosity-inspiring module. Yet it wasn't clear this was something to play with until someone 'in the know' showed one what to do.

Getting Started

LOCATION → PROCESS → INSTALLATION → COMMUNICATION



Locate near existing kid hubs



Bring kids into the process early and often



Emphasize flexibility & interaction



Communicate it's okay to play



If location is outside of a strong kid and family hub, make a plan to generate demand through programming, partnerships, or safer access.



If you can't engage kids, build partnerships with organizations that can or that work with them regularly.



Consider what kids will find challenging and will spark their curiosity.



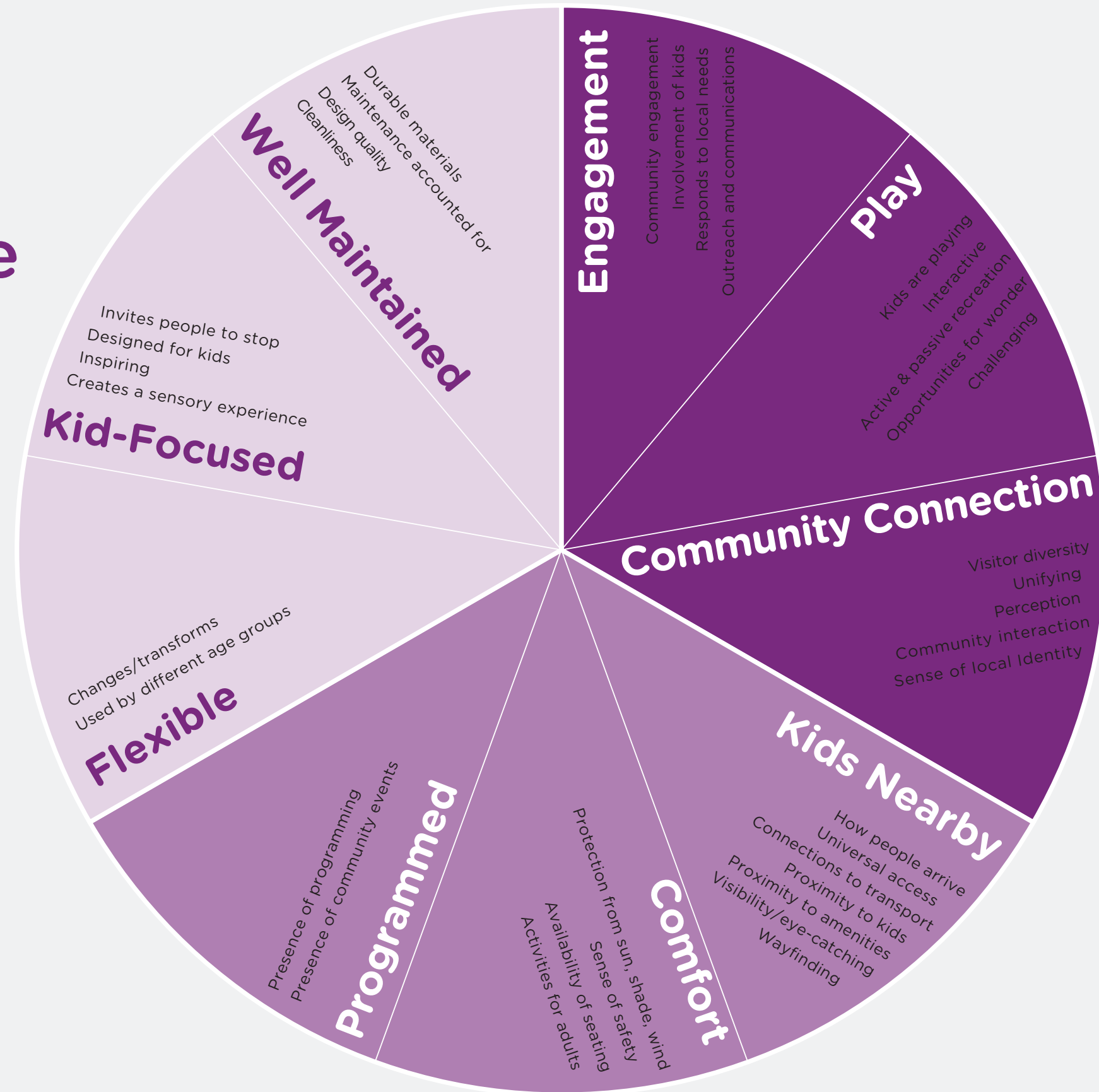
There's no one right way to do this - signage, local stewards, or the design itself can signal that play belongs in this place!

LEARN + SCALE

Evaluating Success

Evaluation Framework - Play Everywhere Themes

What themes influence successful play everywhere? There is no formula for a great play everywhere space, but there is a combination of unique factors that influence how playful a place is. Elements related to **Life** - what kids and people do and their behavior; **Space** - the location and context around it; and **Installation** - the quality and design of the Play Everywhere Project, each contribute to making a successful project.



LIFE



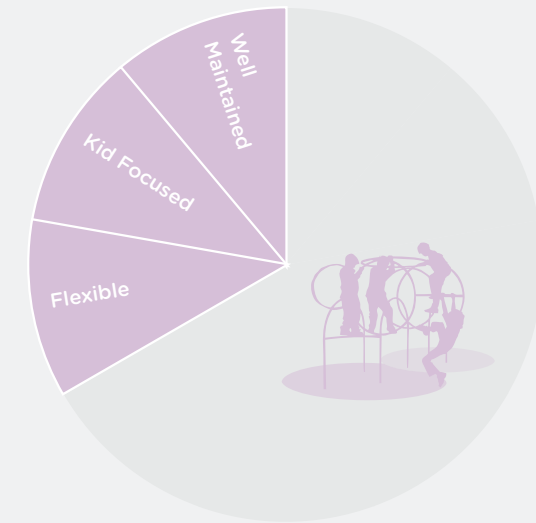
- **Engagement: Who was engaged? Were kids engaged directly?**
Evaluates if the project had an inclusive development process that incorporated feedback from kids and the core audiences.
- **Play: Are kids playing?**
Evaluates if the project facilitates play, and especially play and activities that foster imagination and creativity.
- **Community Connection: Does this project have a social impact and is it meeting community needs?**
Evaluates if the project meets needs articulated by the community, for play or other amenities.

SPACE



- **Kids Nearby: Is the project located near to where kids are?**
Evaluates if the project is close to places where kids live, study, or pass by. .
- **Comfort: Does the project offer a micro-climate that makes people comfortable?**
Evaluates if the project provides shade, seating, or other amenities for caretakers, especially if the site is more of a destination place than a play everywhere place.
- **Programmed: Is the project creating a platform to activate the public space with play activities?**
Evaluates how programming is used.

INSTALLATION



- **Flexible: Does the project accommodate different forms of play or diverse visitors (age, ability)?**
Evaluates the flexibility of the space/installation for different visitors.
- **Kid-Focused: Are kids the core audience?**
Evaluates if kids are the prime audience or if the project is tied to a larger urban design initiative not directly connected to play.
- **Well Maintained: Is the project area clean and well maintained?**
Evaluates the quality and upkeep of the installation.

Thank You

**For detailed evaluation findings on the
nine case studies, see the corresponding report -
Evaluating Impact: Case Studies**

Appendix

Civic Spaces

Includes indoor and outdoor spaces connected to civic services – city halls, libraries, and health departments



GovPorch - Charlotte, NC



Story Book Walk Outside Phillis Wheatly Library - Rochester, NY

Commercial Spaces

Includes indoor and outdoor spaces connected to commercial uses



The Hangout - New Orleans, LA



Design to Move - Madison, WI



Upswing: Retractable Jump Ropes and Sidewalk Play as Neighborhood Renewal - Richmond, VA

Moveable/ Pop-up Play

Includes
furniture and
equipment
that can move
to multiple
locations



Kit of Parks - Boston, MA



Kit of Parks - Boston, MA



The Movable Fest - Nashville, TN

Parks & Open Space

Includes parks, open spaces, plazas, and privately-owned public spaces



Playful Gardens -Tucson, AZ



Board Play - Providence, RI



Animal Tracks - Washington, D.C.

Multi-Family Housing

Includes housing complexes and other multi-family housing contexts



OX4D - Houston, TX



OX4D - Houston, TX



OX4D - Houston, TX

Streets, Sidewalks & Trails

Includes sidewalks, streets, parklets, and multi-use trails



Urban Periscopes - New York, NY



Bronx Steps 2 Health: Pathway of Play - New York, NY



Playful Gardens - Tucson, AZ



iPlay MIAMI Streets - Miami, FL

Transit

Includes transit stations and other transit-related facilities and infrastructure



Downtown Slides - Knoxville, TN



J.U.M.P.! MARTA Playspace - Decatur, GA



Urban Periscopes - New York, NY



BUST! Boredom - Lexington, KY

No silver bullets!

A mix of 4 spatial and social conditions make projects more inviting to play:



**Opportunities for
New Experiences**



**Safety from
Crime and Traffic**



**Shade
and Comfort**



**Opportunities for
Social Interaction**

