A Prototype of Place:

Using Tactical Urbanism to Create Design Changes with Lasting Effects

04.25.19

Building A Better Block

What Is a Better Block?

Image: The Better Block Foundation

- A community driven preview of what a place can become
- Uses tactical urbanism techniques to prototype temporary design changes that can bring public life back to the street
- Better Block projects are undertaken with the aid of the Better Block Foundation
- A 501(c)3 nonprofit that educates, equips, and empowers communities and their leaders to reshape and reactivate built environments to promote the growth of healthy and vibrant neighborhoods
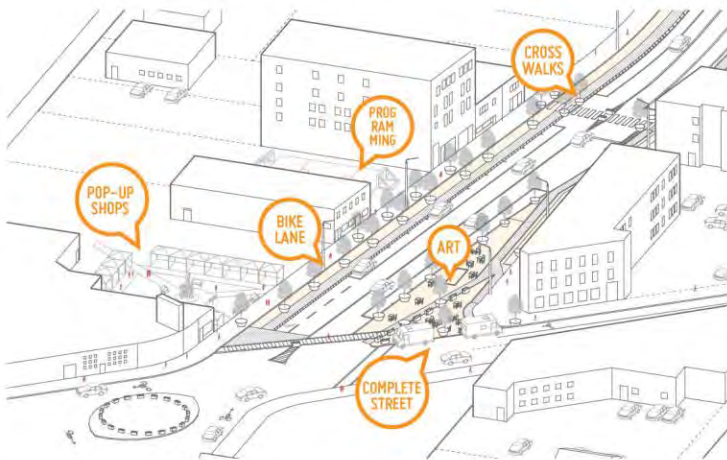
How to Build a Better Block

Image: The Better Block Foundation

- Safety (Real and Perceived). The key to changing a place is addressing its perceived safety.
- Shared Access. Ways to bring more people into the area by various modes of transportation.
- Stay Power. Encourage people to visit the area, have them linger, and invite others.
- 8-80, Dog-Owners - Indicators of a healthy environment that feels welcoming

The Keys to a Successful Better Block

Image: City of Charlotte

- Better Blocks have a two-fold purpose: They show the community that they have the power to make changes in their neighborhoods, and they show City Hall how these changes would work.
- Community engagement comes in many forms; the whole premise of a Better Block is to get a community to come together. Projects are not successful if the community is not involved.

Two Neighborhoods. One Approach.

FIVE POINTS:
Comprehensive Neighborhood
Improvement Program (CNIP)

BELMONT AVE:
Real Estate Redevelopment

Belmont Ave.
Better Block

- Charlotte's Historic Mill Village
- Rapidly Gentrifying Area
- Publicly-owned Assets
- Opportunity to Shape Redevelopment of a Corridor

Image: UNC Charlotte Urban Institute

Belmont Avenue Better Block

Image: City of Charlotte

Belmont Avenue Better Block

Image: City of Charlotte

Belmont Ave.
Better Block

Image: UNCC Urban Institute

Image: City of Charlotte
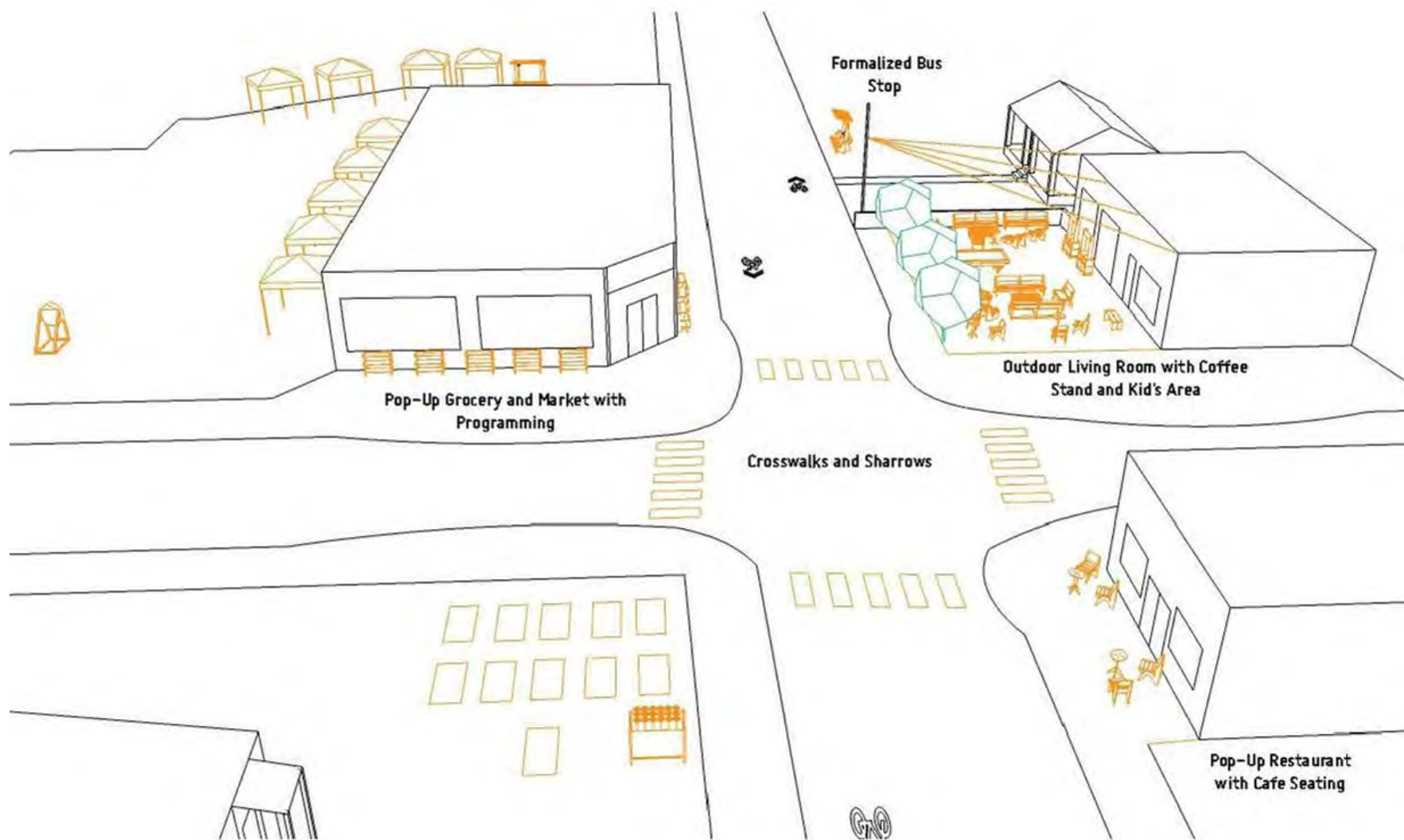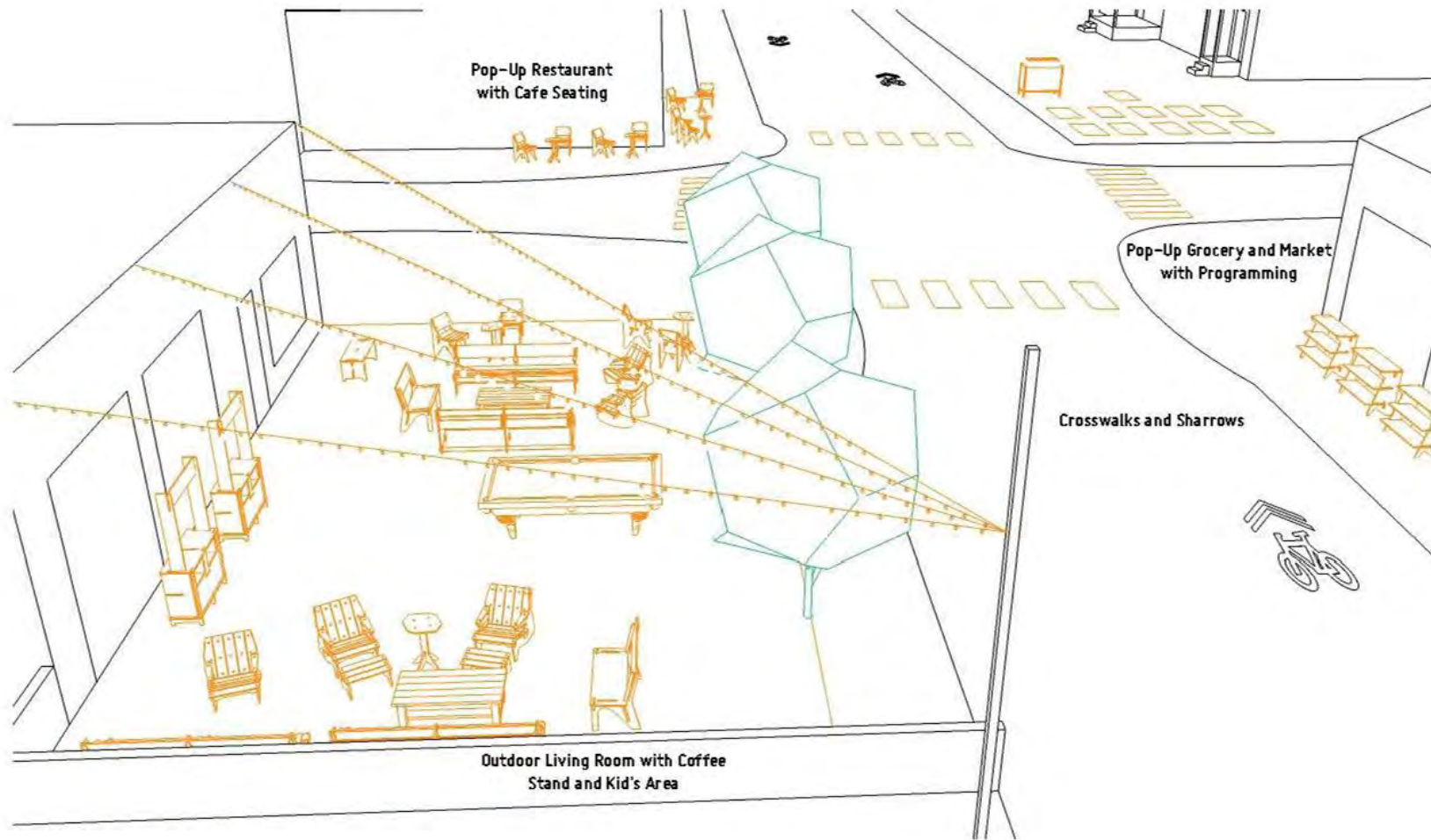
Formalized Bus Stop

Outdoor Living Room with Coffee Stand and Kid's Area

Pop-Up Grocery and Market with Programming

Crosswalks and Sharrows

Pop-Up Restaurant with Cafe Seating

Pop-Up Restaurant
with Cafe Seating

Pop-Up Grocery and Market
with Programming

Crosswalks and Sharrows

Outdoor Living Room with Coffee
Stand and Kid's Area

Image: City of Charlotte

Image: City of Charlotte

Image: City of Charlotte

Image: City of Charlotte

Image: City of Charlotte

Image: UNC Charlotte Urban Institute

Image: UNC Charlotte Urban Institute

Image: Mark Gordon

Image: Mark Gordon

Image: City of Charlotte

Image: Belmont Community Association

Image: City of Charlotte

Fast Forward 18 Months

Pharr Convenience Store Building

Rezoned from R-5 to MUDD-O in 2017 by Charlotte City Council

Image: UNC Charlotte Urban Institute

CITY OF CHARLOTTE.

Image: CharlotteFive

Image: Siggy's Good Food

Image: Siggy's Good Food

Service Station Building

Proposed rezoning from B-1 to MUDD-O

Image: City of Charlotte

Image: Sweet Lew's Barbeque

Image: Sweet Lew's Barbeque
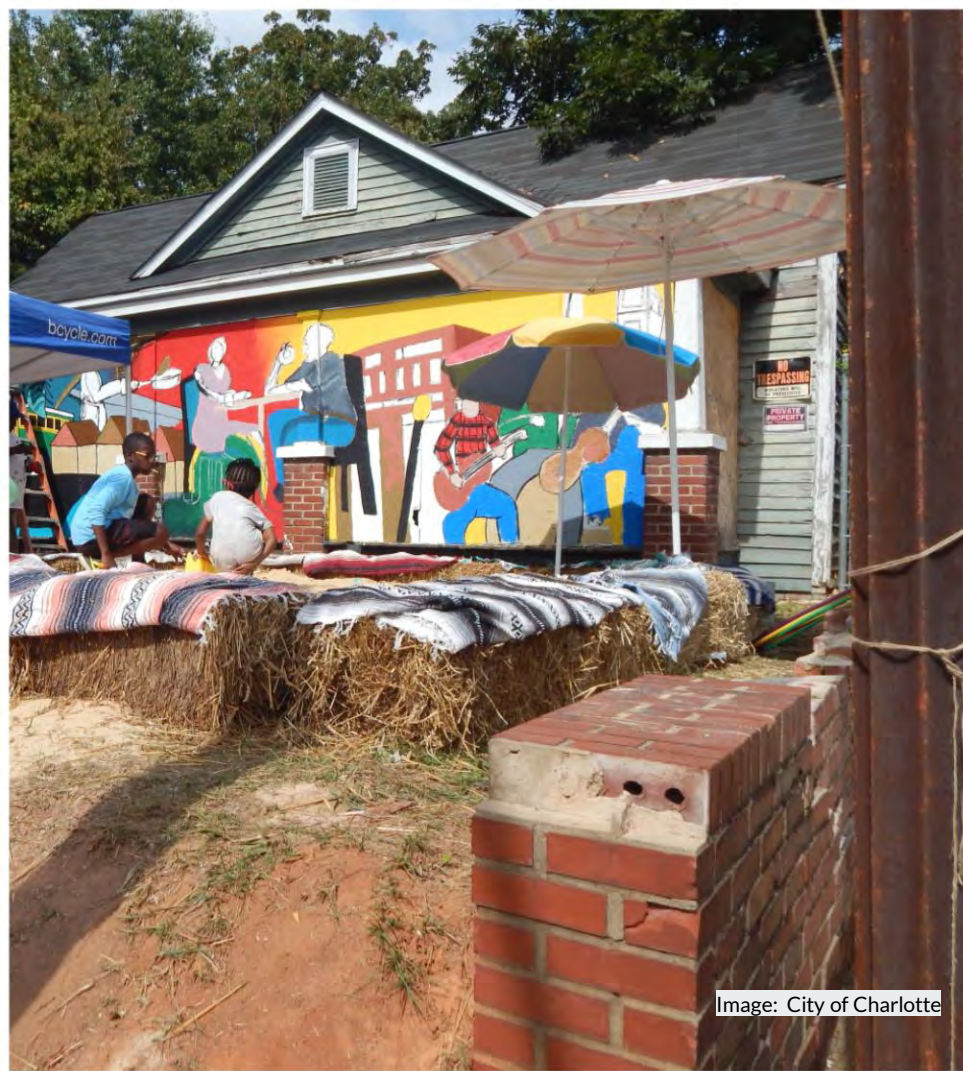
Image: City of Charlotte

Image: Sweet Lew's Barbeque

Image: Sweet Lew's Barbeque

Image: CharlotteFive

Image: Sweet Lew's Barbeque

Placemaking:
AARP Porch Swings

During the Better Block project, the community tested improved bus stops and an activated community space. In 2018 through the AARP Community Challenge Grant, two porch-style swings were installed near bus stops.

Image: City of Charlotte

Farrar Grocery Store Building

Proposed rezoning from B-1 to MUDD-O

Image: City of Charlotte

Image: Queen City Animal Hospital
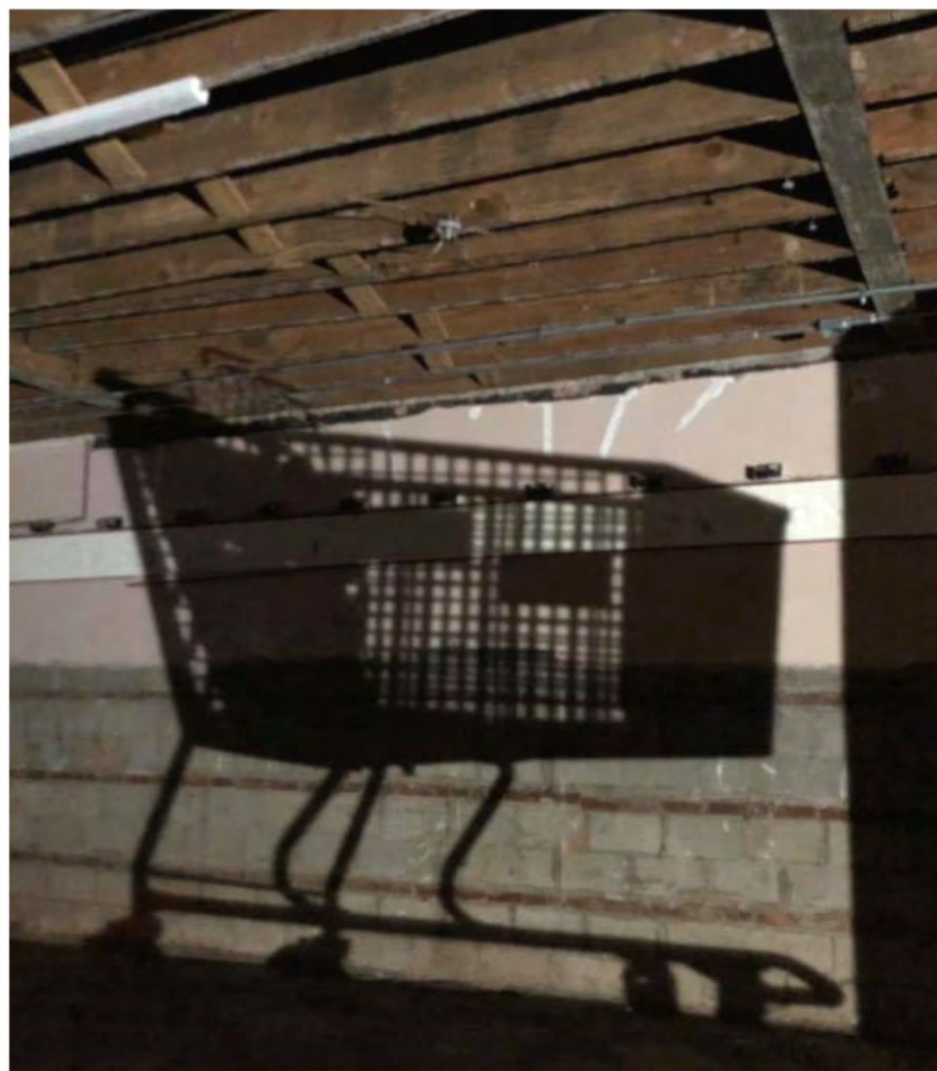
Amon's Paving Company

A former grocery store turned furniture store, now serves as the office for a paving company.

Image: Mecklenburg County

2019 Neighborhood Bodega

The building is currently under contract to be renovated and repurposed as a bodega.
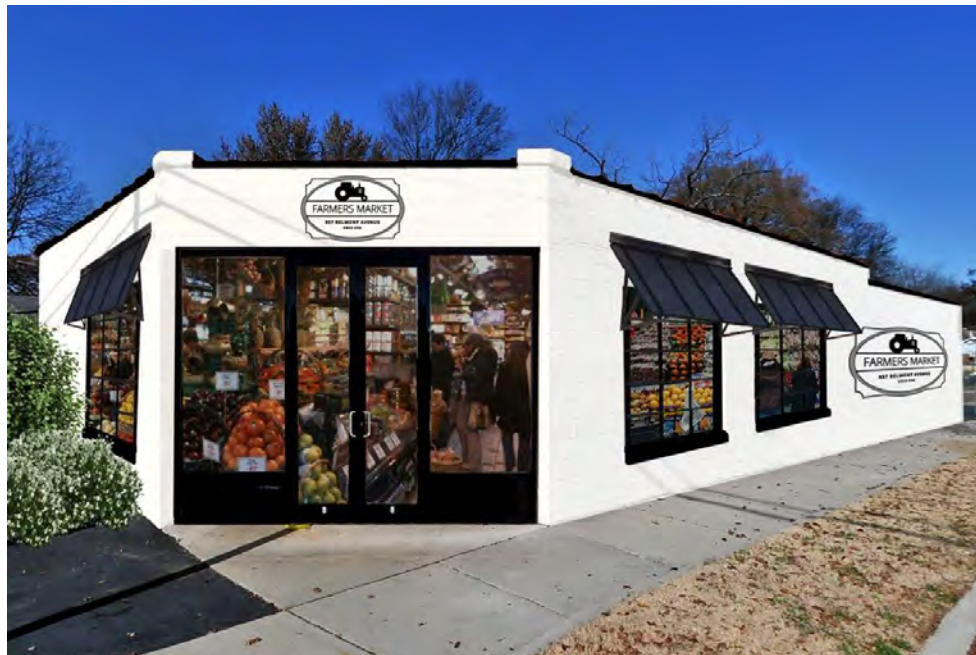
Rendering: Charlotte Urban Design Center

Five Points Better Block

Charlotte's Historic West End

Five Points Plaza Objectives:

➢ Create a central point around JCSU using complete streets and creative Placemaking design principles that can integrate neighborhood activities to create urban vibrancy
➢ Establish connectivity within the study area and surrounding development and destinations to:
  - Improve safety
  - Enhance neighborhood livability and quality of life
  - Afford equitable transportation choices (especially active modes and transit); and
  - Improve community cohesion and identity

PROJECT CONCEPT

WEST TRADE PLAZA

STATE STREET PLAZA

BEATTIES FORD RD

Johnson C. Smith University

ROZZELLES FERRY RD

W 5TH ST

W TRADE ST

CITY OF CHARLOTTE.

WEST TRADE PLAZA (ACTIVE SPACE)

ENLARGED PLAN - WEST TRADE PLAZA

FIVE POINTS PUBLIC PLAZAS, CHARLOTTE, N.C.
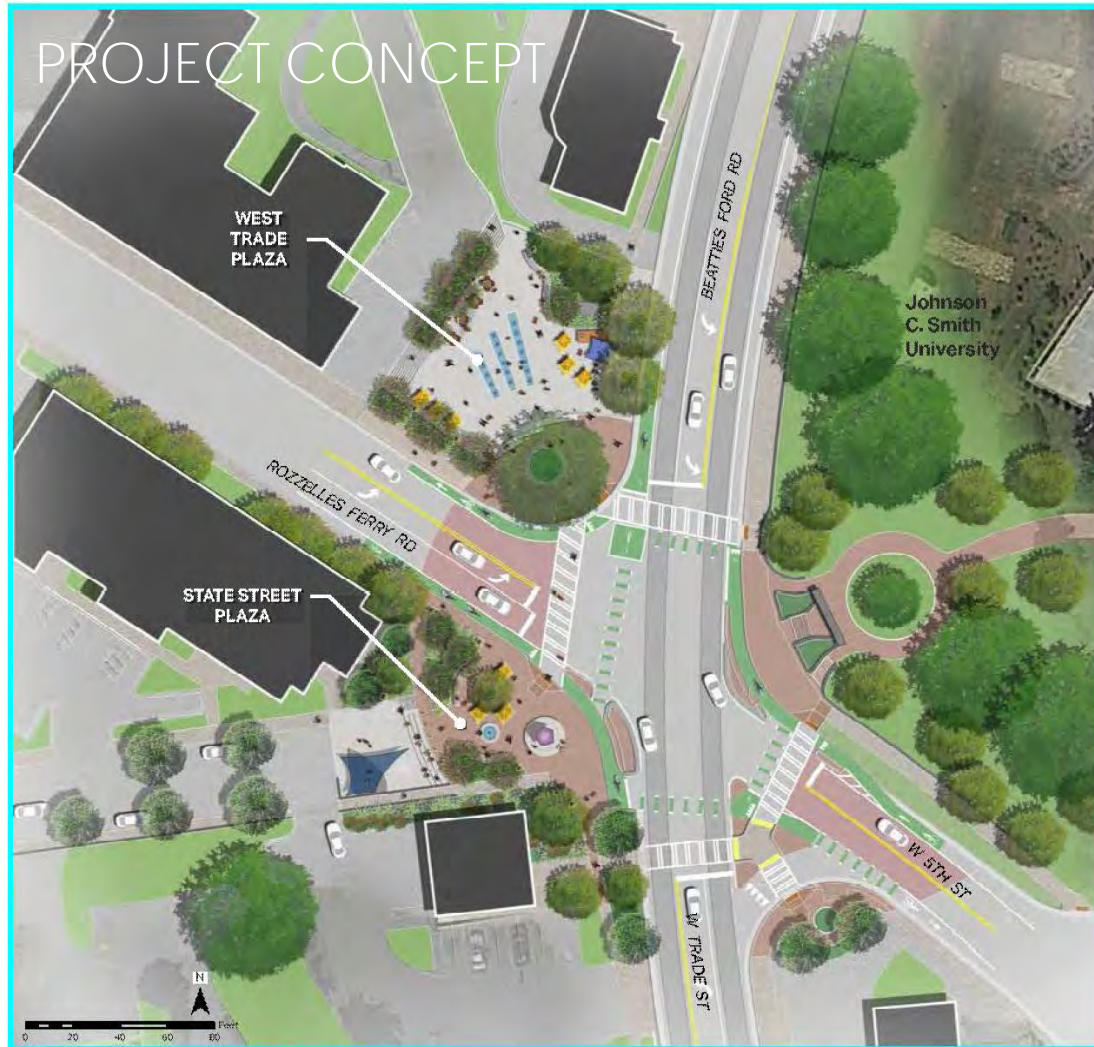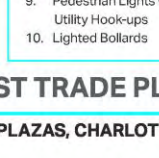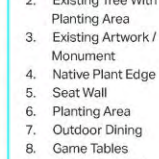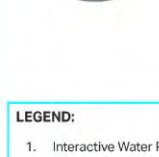
LEGEND:

1. Interactive Water Play
2. Existing Tree With Planting Area
3. Existing Artwork / Monument
4. Native Plant Edge
5. Seat Wall
6. Planting Area
7. Outdoor Dining
8. Game Tables
9. Pedestrian Lights with Utility Hook-ups
10. Lighted Bollards

BEATTIES FORD RD

ROZZELLES FERRY RD

CITY OF CHARLOTTE

STATE STREET PLAZA (RELAXATION SPACE)

LEGEND:

1. Water Fountain
2. Sculpture / Monument
3. Stage with Utility Hook-ups
4. Native Plant Edge
5. Seat Wall
6. Planting Area
7. Outdoor Dining
8. Art Wall / Fence
9. Pedestrian Lights with Utility Hook-Ups
10. Lighted Bollards
11. Amphitheater
12. Accessible Route

ENLARGED PLAN - STATE STREET PLAZA

FIVE POINTS PUBLIC PLAZAS, CHARLOTTE, N.C.

CITY OF CHARLOTTE.

Programming Roundtable

August 24, 2017

Programming Roundtable

Five Points Plazas – Public Space Stewardship Models

Case Study Comparison Table

Please see legend on the following page.

	Lead Organization					Space Type					Use Level			Budget		Model Overlap				
	Government Agency	Non-profit (established)	Grassroots Groups	Large Private Company	Small Local Business	Plaza	Park	Alley/Street	Playground	Curbside (e.g. Parklet)	Heavy	Moderate	Light	Cost to set-up/create	Manager Resource Level	Events	Grassroots Partnerships	Public/Private Partnerships	Assessment Districts	Maintenance Partnerships
EVENT-BASED MODELS																				
Festival Street Program (Seattle)	•		•					•			•	•	•	❶	⑦			•	•	
People in Plazas (San Francisco)	•	•				•					•	•		❶❷❸	❶❷❸			•	•	
Pop-up Beer Gardens (Philadelphia)		•			•	•	•				•			❺	❶❷❸❹❺				•	
GRASSROOTS PARTNERSHIP MODELS																				
Friends of Duboce Park (San Francisco)		•					•		•		•			❺	❷	•		•		
78th Street Play Street (New York)		•						•	•			•		❷	❶	•		•		
Linden Living Alley (San Francisco)		•						•				•		❶❷❸❹	❷			•		
Noe Valley Town Square (San Francisco)		•			•							•		❶❷❸❹❺	❷	•		•	•	
SFPA Street Parks Program (San Francisco)	•	•	•			•	•					•	•	❶❷❸	⑦	•		•		
PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP MODELS																				
People St Program (Los Angeles)	•			•	•	•		•		•	•	•	•	❺	⑦	•	•		•	
Powell St. Promenade (San Francisco)	•	•		•							•	•		❶❷❸❹❺	❶❷❸❹❺				•	
Make Way for People (Chicago)	•				•			•		•	•	•	•	❺	⑦	•	•		•	

THE
BETTER
BLOCK
ACTIVITY
PLOTS

Plan by Charles A. Trowell

0	Bike Lanes *Better Block*
1a	Education Program & Inspiration Rest Stop *Clinton Chapel AME Zion Church/MCC*
1b	Children's Village/Play Area *Westside Community Land Trust*
1c	Staging Area for Build *Better Block*
2	Local Store Front Shops *MCC*
3a	Street Mural *Better Block*
3b	Beer Garden *Blue Blaze Brewery/MCC*
3c	Local Business Pop-Up Market/Vendors *MCC*
4a	Declaration of Independence Installation *LOCI/MCC*
4b	Bandshell Area *Better Block*
5	Better Block Build Staging & Storage Area *Better Block*

november 17th & 18th

FIVE POINTS
BETTER
BLOCK

Note:
"MCC" - Materials+Creations Committee
"LOCI" - League of Creative Interventionists

CITY OF
CHARLOTTE.

Fill vacant store fronts with local businesses

Build bike racks
Test protected bike lanes

Build benches, seating, and kiosk
Local art installations

Local entertainment and music

Local vendors, fresh food & food trucks

Implement paving pattern to create pedestrian mall

Research and technology

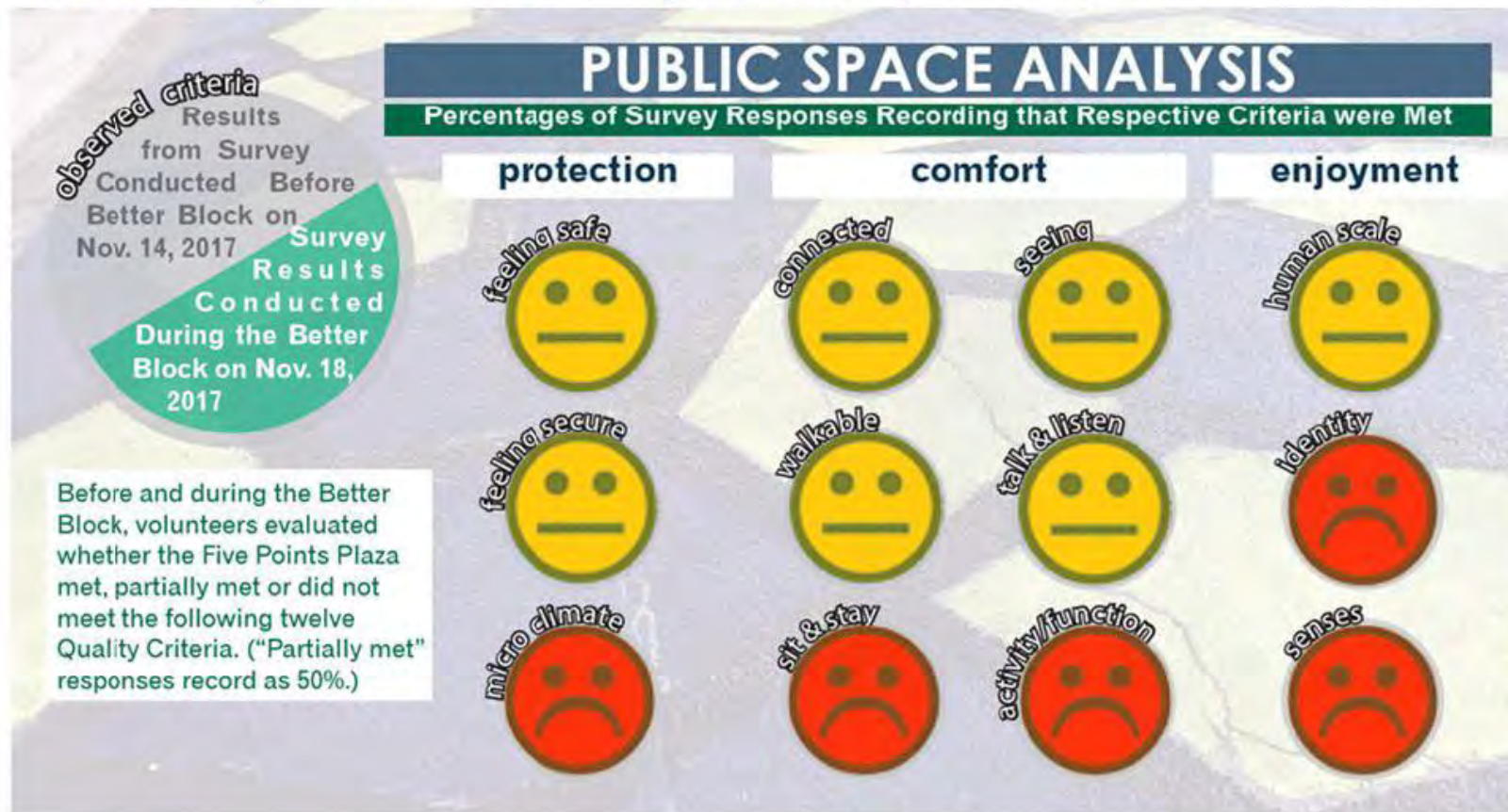**Opportunities to provide feedback**

Collect Observation Data

Better Block
Desire Lines

Date:
Time:
Weather:
Notes:

Set a timer for 10 minutes, and trace the paths of moving pedestrians, bikes, cars, etc. over that period of time. Be sure to use different markings for each mode of transportation.

car
bike
pedestrian

Better Block
Dot Map

Date:
Time:
Weather:
Notes:

Set a timer for 10 minutes, and put a mark on the map for every person you see who stays in a place for more than a few minutes. Be sure to use different marks for people doing different actions.

sit
stand

Better Block
12 Quality Criteria

Date:
Time:
Weather:
Notes:

Observe the space around you, and rate it on each of the categories below. Fill in the circle completely if the space meets the criteria, half way if it partially meets, and leave it blank if it doesn't.

PROTECTION

feeling safe
feeling secure
micro climate

feeling safe – protection for pedestrians against cars

feeling secure – protection against crime and violence

micro climate – protection against the elements (rain, cold, etc.)

COMFORT

connected
walkable
sit & stay

connected – space is connected to surroundings and resources

walkable – room for walking, interesting features, accessible for everyone

sit & stay – opportunities to sit in the space and reasons to stay

seeing
talk & listen
activity & function

seeing – good sight lines, pleasant views, and reasonable viewing distances

talk & listen – space is conducive to talking and listening

activity & function – varies range of activities and functions

ENJOYMENT

human scale
identity
senses

human scale – things are at eye-level, you can recognize faces across the space, you don't feel small in the space

identity – space has a strong visual identity

senses – good design, rich sensory experience

Better Block
Counting

Date:
Time:
Weather:
Notes:

Set a timer for 10 minutes, and count the number of people you see by age and gender. It helps to draw an invisible "line" and when someone crosses it, you count them. Use an "M" for male and an "F" for female.

0-15	15-30	30-60	60+

Better Block
Speed Gun

Date:
Time:
Weather:
Notes:

Note the time and record the speed of the car. Be sure to note down the location in which you are gathering data.

time	speed (mph)	time	speed (mph)	time	speed (mph)	time	speed (mph)

"WHAT DID YOU ENJOY ABOUT THE BETTER BLOCK DESIGN?"
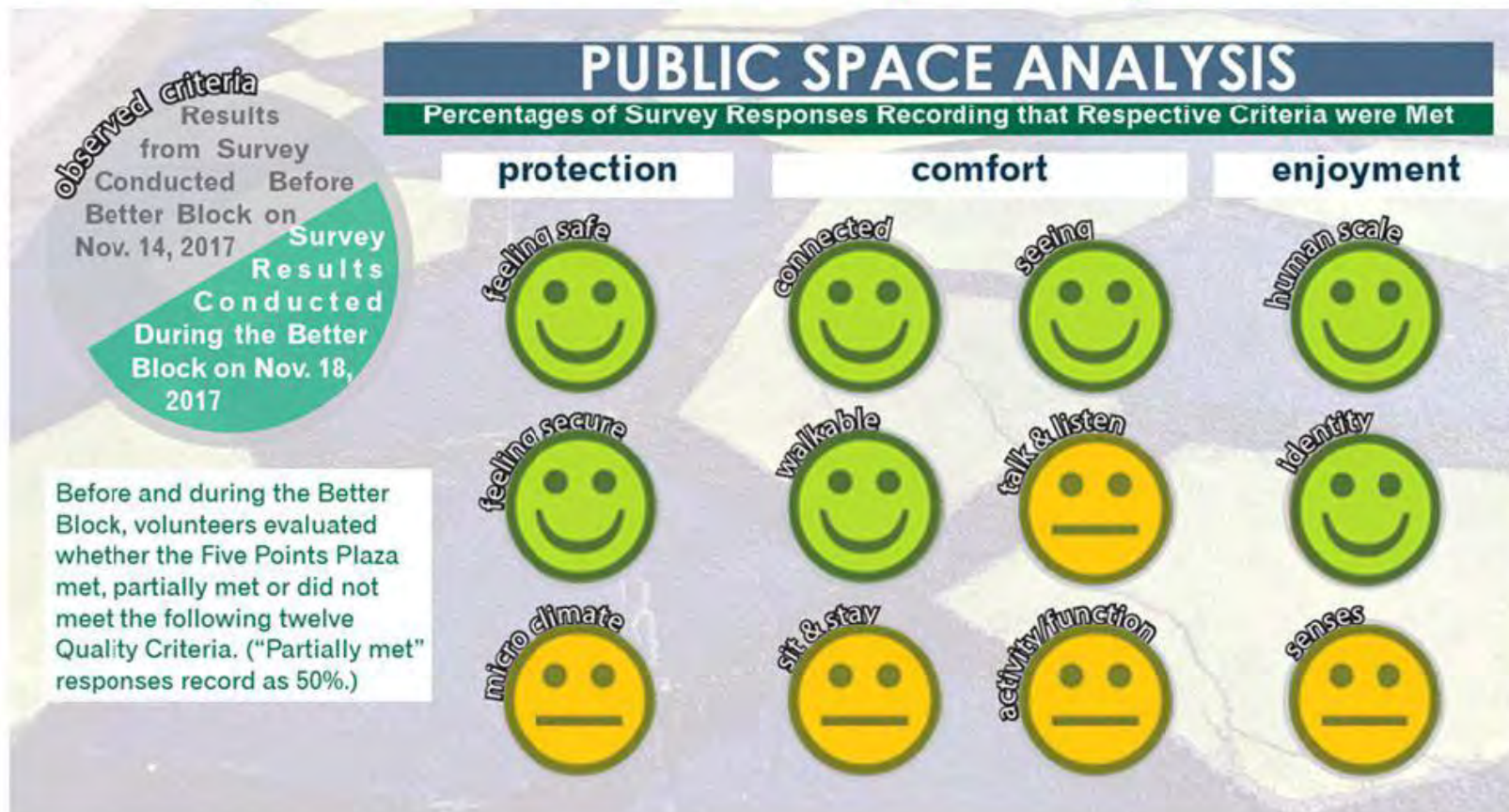### PREFERENCE POLL RESULTS AS VOTED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE BETTER BLOCK*

15 Community Board	**15** Separated Bike Lanes	**15** Outdoor Reading Room
28 Festival Plaza	**27** Art	**18** Amphitheater
16 Games	**24** Outdoor Dining	**15** Bike Racks

*Respondents also wrote in: "*Preserve & Add More Trees*" & "*Trash/Recycle Receptacles*"

CITY OF CHARLOTTE.

Nov. 14, 2017 Public Space Analysis Before Better Block

FIVE POINTS PLAZA IMPROVEMENTS

WTRF CNIP

FIVE POINTS PLAZA IMPROVEMENTS

WTRF CNIP

Lessons Learned

- Works best when used as a solution to an opportunity identified by the community;
- Engage with the community early and often;
- Take the time to build capacity within the community;
- Collect data to inform design choices and programming decisions
- Use it as an opportunity to educate about city planning and development; and
- Engage with other government staff and resources to promote efficiency and relationships for future endeavors.

Thanks.

Lorna Allen, PLA, ASLA

Charlotte Urban Design Center

Lorna.Allen@CharlotteNC.gov

@CLTurbandesign

Erin Chantry, LEED AP ND, CNU-A Charlotte

Charlotte Urban Design Center

Placemaking Program

Erin.Chantry@CharlotteNC.gov

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