SAFE PASSAGE
A COMMUNITY RESOURCE FOR TRAFFIC CALMING AND PLACE MAKING IN HUMBOLDT PARK

ChicagoLAB 2016
Under the direction of Dr. Ivis Garcia Zambrana and the Inspired Team at Archeworks
Project by University of Utah Students
School of Architecture + Planning

Christine McAllister
Gabrielle Regenhardt
Meredith Jacobsen
John Connell
Naba Faizi

Document Completed June 22nd, 2016
Presented to Our Gracious Partners:
The Puerto Rican Agenda in Humboldt Park, Chicago, IL
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.......................................................................................... 7
   - Executive Summary
   - ChicagoLab Overview
   - Humboldt Park Community Partners
   - Community Engaged Learning

2. SITE ANALYSIS..........................................................................................13
   - Site Location and Geography
   - Humboldt Park History
   - Demographics
   - Opportunities and Community Assets

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK................................................................. 21
   - Literature Review
   - Case Studies

4. METHODS & DESIGN PRINCIPLES......................................................... 27
   - Methods
   - Design Principles

5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND DESIGN ALTERNATIVES............................ 35
   - Paint the Pavement
   - Parklets
   - Considerations

6. CONCLUSION............................................................................................ 45

REFERENCES................................................................................................. 49
1. INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Located near downtown Chicago, Humboldt Park has been the center of Chicago’s Puerto Rican community for more than half a century, with the historic Paseo Boricua at its heart. Running along Division Street for the half-mile stretch between Western and California Avenues, the Paseo presents a striking image for visitors, with sixty-foot tall representations of the Puerto Rican flag spanning the street on each end. The flags represent the claiming of space, a community home, and, for some, a defiant stand against encroaching gentrification and the threat of housing displacement.

This report represents a planning document prepared by students at the University of Utah for its Summer 2016 ChicagoLab, a Community Engaged Learning project that matches students with professionals and community partners for projects in the city. This year’s program focuses on the Humboldt Park neighborhood, and this report will detail work done in conjunction with West Town Bikes, a non-profit located within Humboldt Park that focuses on bicycles and youth. We have named our project Safe Passage, and as a group have outlined four overarching goals:

1. Highlight the necessity for people focused streets and spaces.
2. Create safer routes and calmer traffic within the Humboldt Park area and along the Paseo Boricua.
3. Create an accessible framework for community driven initiatives that that can be implemented in the future.
4. Strengthen and showcase the unique cultural identity of Humboldt Park.

These goals led to research and project proposals in two distinct but related areas, which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5:

1. Paint the Pavement proposals for the Humboldt Park neighborhood.
2. Parklet proposals for the Paseo Boricua.
DESCRIPTION OF CHICAGO LAB

ChicagoLab is a six-week summer program that gives University of Utah students studying urban planning and architecture the opportunity to work on real projects in Chicago for a variety of clients and stakeholders. Focusing on different projects each semester, ChicagoLab is administered by Archeworks, an education and design studio in downtown Chicago. Archeworks partners with design firms across the city to provide office space, lectures, tours, and studio critiques for student projects, and also matches students with professional mentors, giving each student the opportunity to receive personal feedback.

The class is taught by Ivis Garcia Zambrana, PhD, Assistant Professor of City and Metropolitan Planning at the University of Utah, who also facilitated many of the community partnerships in Humboldt Park. The community-focused projects, combined with lectures and design-centered instruction from Archeworks, presents both planners and architects a unique opportunity to learn in a hands-on, interdisciplinary setting that draws on a broad variety of skills.

The ChicagoLab cohort for Summer 2016 consists of thirteen students: Two from the Master of Architecture program, two Architecture undergraduates, two from the Master of City and Metropolitan Planning program, and seven Urban Ecology undergraduates.

ANDREW BALSTER
Executive Director, Archeworks
INTRODUCTION

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

ChicagoLab 2016 has worked with several partners within Humboldt Park, most of which are associated with Puerto Rican community organizations. This report focuses on students working with West Town Bikes and its founder, Alex Wilson, to help develop projects that promote safe routes for pedestrians and bicyclists while emphasizing sense of place.

Along with West Town Bikes, we have received feedback from the Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC), a grassroots activist organization, and the Puerto Rican Agenda, an association of neighborhood leaders who advocate policies that benefit Puerto Ricans locally and nationwide. Puerto Rican organizations in Humboldt Park are tightly networked and have relationships with each other and with Professor Zambrana, so the group has depended on their knowledge and feedback to shape our projects.
COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING

The principle guiding ChicagoLab is Community Engaged Learning, which the University of Utah defines as “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development.” We focused on an asset-based approach, emphasizing what the community has to offer rather than what it lacks. Assets include individual gifts and abilities, community organizations, and physical infrastructure. Focusing on assets means approaching the community not as a problem to solve, but as an area that offers a tremendous amount that we can learn from and contribute to.

The Safe Passage group organized our Community Engaged Learning around a few key principles, which we’ve adapted from the University of Utah and class guidelines:

**Education**
Education for ChicagoLab came from many sources, including readings and documentaries on Puerto Rican history and grassroots activism in Chicago. The most important knowledge has been experiential, from spending time in the area and interacting with its members.

**Engagement and Reciprocity**
This principle comes from experiential learning and requires that students communicate with partners as equals, and with humility. Reciprocity assumes a willingness to offer ideas and receive feedback, which we did through multiple iterations of the project. We believe this process enabled us to develop a deeper appreciation for the value and complexity of community engagement, which is extremely valuable knowledge in planning and related fields. It should be a useful building block for future collaboration among students, the University, and communities through ChicagoLab.
2. SITE ANALYSIS
SITE ANALYSIS

SITE LOCATION AND GEOGRAPHY

Humboldt Park is about a mile from downtown Chicago, bound roughly by Pulaski Road to the West, Western Avenue to the East, North Avenue to the North, and Union Pacific railroad lines to the South. The neighborhood is not contiguous with Chicago’s official Humboldt Park community area, but includes parts of both the Humboldt Park and West Town community areas. The neighborhood is accessible from downtown via the CTA Blue Line running southeast to northwest along Milwaukee Avenue, and there are also a several bus lines that run around and through the area. In the center of Humboldt Park sits the eponymous 220-acre park, which features open areas, playgrounds, trails, a fitness center, and a large lagoon.

HUMBOLDT PARK HISTORY

Throughout Chicago history, successive waves of immigration led Humboldt Park to become a home for German, Scandinavian, Italian, and Polish communities. These groups, like many immigrants across the city, organized themselves in ethnic enclaves that shifted over time. By the mid 20th century suburbanization and white flight made many residents of European descent move out of the city.

In their place, Puerto Rican migrants began moving into Humboldt Park. Despite their status as American citizens since the 1917 Jones Act, Puerto Ricans had long faced poverty, discrimination, and hostility, with European descended residents treating them as unwelcome outsiders. Puerto Rican children were separated in schools, and in some cases were even barred from worshipping in local Catholic churches. In 1966, after years of simmering tensions within the community over government neglect and police mistreatment, a riot broke out after police shot and killed a Puerto Rican man. The riot lasted for three days, and in its wake the first Puerto Rican community organizing began to demand better treatment for the community and agitate for political change. Some of those organizations have persisted through today, including the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and the Spanish Action Committee of Chicago.
SITE ANALYSIS

In the ensuing decades Humboldt Park, particularly Division Street, became a focal point for Puerto Rican identity and pride. The street’s identity was affirmed in 1995 when a public art project consisting of two fifty-nine foot tall steel representations of the Puerto Rican flags were installed, one on each end of the newly christened Paseo Boricua: “Boricua” referring to the indigenous Taino name for Puerto Rican, and “Paseo” meaning “promenade” or “way.” Today, the flags act as literal gateways to the Paseo, although concerns about rising property values and gentrification in surrounding neighborhoods have created concerns for some residents about the future of the neighborhood. Puerto Ricans are no longer the majority racial or ethnic group in Humboldt Park, which has a mix of white, black, and Latino residents, the last group increasingly including Mexicans and residents with heritage from other Spanish speaking countries. Meanwhile, ChicagoLab partners like the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and West Town Bikes continue to promote the Paseo as a uniquely Puerto Rican space while trying to encourage community engagement in the creation of safe routes for youth and safe street spaces for all.
DEMOGRAPHICS

Puerto Ricans as a whole comprise the second largest Latino population in the United States, with about 4.6 million Puerto Ricans in the country as of 2010, compared to 3.7 million in Puerto Rico itself. Puerto Rico is an unincorporated American territory, so all its residents have American citizenship and passports, although individuals with residence in Puerto Rico cannot vote in national elections. Throughout its history Puerto Ricans have contested the meaning of their place in America, with many seeking greater local autonomy and some advocating for statehood or independence. In recent years the territory’s economic troubles and debt crisis has led to increasing out-migration.

The Chicago metro area, home to about 188,000 Puerto Rican residents in 2010, is the fifth highest Puerto Rican population in the country. About 55% of that number live in the city. The Chicago 26th Ward, which covers the majority of Humboldt Park, has a population of around 53,000, about 28% of which was Puerto Rican in 2015. Altogether the 26th Ward is 65% Hispanic, 20% white (non-Hispanic), and about 12% black (non-Hispanic).

Although Puerto Ricans are not the majority ethnicity in Humboldt Park, the neighborhood maintains a strong Puerto Rican character, due in large part to its public art and large number of Puerto Rican-centered organizations. Because ChicagoLab’s community partners are all strongly tied to Puerto Rican organizations, our work focuses on efforts that specifically benefit that community, although we believe our efforts can and should benefit the wider community as well.

OPPORTUNITIES AND COMMUNITY ASSETS

Humboldt Park contains a large number of community assets, which present opportunities to promote and develop. Grassroots organizations like the Puerto Rican Cultural Center run social services and community projects, including El Rescate, which offers housing assistance to LGBT youth, and Vida/SIDA, which focuses on HIV services, along with childcare facilities and...
SITE ANALYSIS

many others. There are also other community organizations like the Spanish Action Committee of Chicago, the National Youth Advocate Program, The Division Street Business Development Association, and the Africaribe Cultural Center, which we did not work with directly but run their own projects and have ties to each other. The presence of these associations presents the opportunity to accomplish projects using existing networks that can mobilize and leverage their political connections. Members of many of these organizations and services are represented in the Puerto Rican Agenda, which brings together community leaders to advocate on behalf of the Puerto Rican community.

Another asset is the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture, which showcases local art, hosts events, and provides a space to celebrate Puerto Rican identity. The Paseo Boricua also has over a dozen restaurants, and every year the neighborhood hosts festivals that draw in tens of thousands of visitors. Many visitors may not realize that Humboldt Park is a hub for several medical campuses, with facilities near the Paseo Boricua: Norwegian American Hospital, St. Mary’s Hospital, and St. Elizabeth’s Hospital. The hospitals could represent an opportunity to better integrate medical services with other community activities.
West Town Bikes, our partner in this project, is a community development hub that is focused on promoting bicycling in the city of Chicago and particularly in Humboldt Park. They focus on educating youth in underserved populations using the bicycle as a symbol of accessibility to not only recreational spaces, but higher education and viable jobs as well.

Humboldt Park also has a number of physical assets, including the Paseo Boricua, its murals and art, the park, the museum, and, a few blocks north of North Street, the 606 Bloomingdale trail, a recently completed public trail that runs along an abandoned railway line. Our framework for creating safer streets throughout Humboldt Park will become an an additional physical asset to the culturally rich neighborhood.
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
“The first thing to understand is that the public peace- the sidewalk and the street peace- of cities is not primarily kept by the police, necessary as they are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves.”

- Jane Jacobs, Activist and Author

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

LITERATURE REVIEW

In preparing for our project we relied heavily on data from the Puerto Rican Agenda, including detailed demographic reports and comparative analyses of the demographics in Chicago and other cities. For us this information has been particularly helpful for understanding the relationship of Puerto Ricans within the broader Latino community, and their unique situation in housing, education, and migration patterns.

Our understanding of Humboldt Park’s history and politics has been strongly influenced by discussions with Jose Lopez of the Puerto Rican Community Center and Alex Wilson of West Town Bikes. We became further informed through Rachel Rinaldo, whose 2002 ethnography of the PRCC used a framework of the “Resistance of Space.” Rinaldo draws from Henry Lefebre’s ideas about space being an “arena for social struggle” in which power relationships are continually negotiated among and between groups, technologies, and ideologies, and how those relationships shape and are shaped by the built environment. This framework helps us conceptualize the ideological importance of maintaining a uniquely Puerto Rican space, particularly against a historical backdrop of neglect and conflict between the community and city.

Today, concerns about gentrification are also driving desires to maintain the Paseo as a Puerto Rican space, especially for our community partners. The neighborhood has seen median household incomes rise in the past decade, and a proliferation of businesses that stereotypically cater to wealthier and whiter outsiders. This trend of displacement has created tension regarding city projects like the 606, causing community members to contest over the meaning of the space. Some see it as another driver of gentrification, while others we spoke with talked about the necessity of “claiming” the trail with their presence and not simply ceding it to others.

On a more practical level, for background research regarding our project we looked at a handful of traffic calming manuals centered around tactical urbanism. Through researching the work of other cities and neighborhoods both nationally and
internationally, we discovered that traffic calming does so much more than just create safer streets. In addition to creating safer environments for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users, it is also an important tool for placemaking. Placemaking capitalizes on a local community’s assets, inspiration, and potential in order to create a unique space that residents can connect to.

CASE STUDIES

In brainstorming and developing ideas for the Humboldt Park, we drew from several case studies with research gathered from secondary sources and from personal experiences.

Case Study 1: City of Minneapolis- Paint the Pavement Instructions and Forms
The Minneapolis guide to Paint the Pavement outlines the purpose of this method, eligible applicants and sites, how to take public safety into account, materials, community involvement, deadlines, timelines, the application process, and what forms or permits may be necessary. This guide creates a comprehensive overview that can be used and applied to any location.
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Case Study 2: Boulder, Colorado- Paint the Pavement Packet
The Boulder, Colorado Packet is more focused on information and providing copies of all the necessary forms, permits, and petitions that may be required for a neighborhood looking to paint their pavement. While being straightforward, this guide heavily emphasizes the importance of a community supported project.

It is important to recognize that the reasoning for implementing Paint the Pavement in both Case Study 1 and 2 was for the method's ability to strengthen community bonds and celebrate the unique culture, rather than for traffic calming qualities.

Case Study 3: Seattle Department of Transportation- Parklet Handbook
Seattle’s parklet handbook provides detailed information on the origin of parklets, the cities programs and objectives in implementing parklets, defining the pre-application process, design and technical development, installation and post installation, as well as additional supplemental information. They seek to create a vibrant Seattle through transportation excellence using parklets.
Case Study 4: Chicago, Illinois- Lincoln Hub and Lincoln Avenue Placemaking Project

This local installation was focused on combining traffic calming, public art, and pedestrian involvement to create a memorable focal point in a neighborhood. This project was part of the Lakeview Chamber of Commerce’s Placemaking Plan of 2014, therefore was primarily focused on creating a vibrant people space with painted pavement, greenery, and seating that draws further attention to pedestrians using the intersections.
4. METHODS AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES
METHODS

ONSITE OBSERVATIONS

Along with research and literature review, much of our preparation involved walking in Humboldt Park and along the Paseo Boricua. Both individually and as a group we spent time in the area observing and speaking with residents. We went to Humboldt Park numerous times during our six week visit and simply spent time on the streets. We sat on benches, rode bikes, skateboarded, and walked around all the major streets near the Paseo Boricua and its amenities. We observed driver’s and bicyclist’s behavior on the streets of the area as well as the amounts of people we saw on the streets at various times. We spoke to residents, local business owners, students, and Safe Passage employees about the area and how safe they felt when riding a bike or if they thought there was a need for traffic calming. Many people we spoke with were unsure about what exactly traffic calming was, so we progressed our plan of engagement.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The 2016 Chicago Puerto Rican Festival and Parade in Humboldt Park from June 16th – 19th seemed like the perfect platform for us to begin a dialogue amongst different demographics of the area and talk them about traffic calming and neighborhood identity formation while visioning them what kind of streets they want to have. We created a small set of questions, a blank map of the area, and a blank street perspective. Each of these items was laminated so that individuals we engaged with could draw and write on them. We first asked them to answer the set of questions, then to draw on the map where they go often and what route they take, and lastly on the perspective view they were asked to draw what their ideal street in Humboldt Park would look like. We took the responses, feedback, and ideas into account as we strengthened our visions for Humboldt and how its street life could be improved. This exercise, for us, was more about starting a conversation with the community to get them interested in the concepts we had to introduce, being parklets and Paint the Pavement. We were intent on listening to the voice of Humboldt Park in order to create a deeper understanding of the people’s needs.
Our goal for the community engagement portion of this project was to open up a dialogue with the community of Humboldt Park about the future of their streets. We had a number of participants in our “Imagine the Paseo” visioning exercise express the desire for a safer and more peaceful corridor. Many drawings included water features, a vibrant night life, street trees, and places to sit. We believe that this exercise could be easily replicated to gauge community support for future initiatives.
METHODS

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Our formal community feedback primarily took place at the Puerto Rican Cultural Festival. We spoke with residents and visitors about what they loved about Humboldt Park and what they thought was missing. We talked about how often they rode their bike or walked and what would encourage them to ride or walk more often. We took this opportunity to start a conversation about traffic calming, place making, Paint the Pavement, and parklets as future assets to the area. The feedback from the community was primarily positive and aligned with our project concepts. We believe that these community focused initiatives would be widely accepted, supported, and welcomed by the community based on the feedback we received.

We also attended a meeting of the Puerto Rican Agenda, where we presented an earlier version of the project and spoke with meeting attendees. Their feedback led to the idea for a community asset map, and helped us determine which resources to include on our maps, such as the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture.

ARCHEWORKS FEEDBACK

Throughout ChicagoLab we received periodic feedback from classmates, Archeworks staff, and members of Cannon Design. This helped us develop our conceptual approach and improve our designs and project communication. During feedback sessions, we presented our work in both formal pinups and regular, short presentations along with visualization exercises like creating collages about Humboldt Park and its built environment.

COMMUNITY PARTNER FEEDBACK

Our primary community partner, West Town Bikes Founder Alex Wilson, provided time, comments, and suggestions as the project developed. We discussed community involvement (particularly involving the youth), West Town Bikes current and future projects, our timelines, and stakeholder support. Speaking with Alex enabled us to ensure that our work aligned with his vision and West Town Bikes goals.
“Make Way for People initiative aims to create public spaces that cultivate community and culture in Chicago’s neighborhoods through placemaking. Make Way for People supports innovation in the public way by opening Chicago’s streets, parking spots, plazas and alleys to new programming and market opportunities via public and private partnerships. In addition to improving street safety and promoting walkable communities, this initiative supports economic development for Chicago’s local businesses and Chicago’s neighborhoods.”

- CDOT
DESIGN PRINCIPLES

PRESERVE CHARACTER

Foremost, we believe that the Paseo Boricua has a unique character within Chicago that is worth strengthening and preserving. While fully addressing large-scale issues like gentrification and redevelopment is beyond the scope of our project, we attempted to focus our efforts on maintaining harmony with the design elements that our research led us to conclude best exemplify Humboldt Park. This means emphasizing the importance of community driven initiatives in our deliverables. Implementing such projects in Humboldt Park have the potential to highlight the historic Puerto Rican character of the neighborhood and create a safe street network, while remaining accessible to visitors.

ENCOURAGE STREET ACTIVITY

Community partners emphasized the concept of presence, act of claiming Humboldt Park as a distinct Puerto Rican place. One of our design principles is based on the prior principle of preserving character, and it is possible to emphasize the uniqueness of the space while simultaneously strengthening its cultural identity while making it enticing for visitors. Humboldt Park should be a place where street activity is encouraged and cultivated.

Our research found that one of the best ways to do this is to increase the amount of usable public space. These spaces not only make neighborhoods safer, but also more inviting, and promote walkability and increased pedestrian activity. We also discovered that a wonderful compliment to parklets include initiatives like “Paint the Pavement”, which promote safer streets from a transit point. This method of tactical urbanism is a relatively low-cost method for calming intersection traffic and making drivers more aware of pedestrians, and coincidentally, cyclists as well.

PROVIDE RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

In keeping with the goals of emphasizing uniqueness while promoting inclusivity, we believe that our efforts should benefit
both the existing community and others. As such, we want to promote the creation of placemaking projects throughout Humboldt Park that simultaneously act as a tool for education, recreation, and social interaction. This can be as simple as including a color palette that reflects the culture and history of Puerto Rico on a parklet or as complex as telling the Puerto Rican cultural narrative through intersection murals. So long as the initiative or parklet promotes public use and engagement, it has the potential to radically transform the streets and social fabric of Humboldt Park.

ALLOW FUTURE ITERATIONS

Our time in Chicago has been brief, and as such we recognize that we are limited in our ability to engage and learn from the community in a way that facilitates a deep level of involved participation necessary to complete any of these projects. As such, we have placed a great deal of importance in providing a resource as complete and comprehensive as possible while still allowing future students or community members to build on them. All of our documents and plans should be clean, easy to understand, and able to be expanded or completed later.
5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND DESIGN ALTERNATIVES
RECOMMENDATIONS

Our project recommendations to the community consist of two categories:

1. Paint the Pavement implementation in Humboldt Park Neighborhoods.
2. Parklet creation along the Paseo Boricua.

Traffic calming can be done in a number of ways and at many levels. There are level one traffic calming measures that require no physical roadway modifications, level two changes that require minor physical roadway modifications, level three measures that require a major physical modification, and level four measures that physically prohibit vehicular travel to a certain degree. We define the level of each of our recommendations below. Regardless of the level of traffic calming measures the community hopes to make, it is imperative that they work closely with Make Way for People, a program run by the Chicago Department of Transportation.

The steps to implement a community engaged project with Make Way for People are below:
1. Identify a Make Way for People initiative for your community and discuss it with CDOT
2. Submit an application for preliminary approval
3. Gain community and aldermanic support
4. Plan your event; design your space
5. Submit documentation, sign a legal Use Agreement establishing the project location, terms and conditions.
6. Receive final approval
7. Have FUN
DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

PAINT THE PAVEMENT

Paint the Pavement is the practice of painting artwork and murals onto the roads and intersections in order to slow down drivers. This method is designed to grab the eye and attention of drivers and create visual friction. Paint the Pavement is considered a level two measure of traffic calming because it only requires paint in order to alter the roadway. As we conducted more research on this practice, we felt that Paint the Pavement would bridge the gap between major and minor modifications while also maintaining affordability.

Humboldt Park is a hotspot for culture and art in the city of Chicago, which can be seen in the countless murals that speckle the area. As we spent more time in the neighborhood and speaking with local stakeholders, it became clear that murals on the pavement would be an obvious fit for the community.

We began to examine other cities like Portland, Seattle, Ontario, and Brooklyn that also implemented Paint the Pavement.

Map of potential Paint the Pavement locations along Paseo Boricua in Humboldt Park.
DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

Mural process with community involvement.
It seemed that due to the newness of this method, there is no quantitative data to show its traffic calming effectiveness. Chicago, just like other cities across the United States are still attempting to develop precedence with this traffic calming method in regards to proper paint type, although all are required to have a percentage of grit added, as well as permitting requirements. Despite this challenge, communities all over the world are choosing this method for their streets. Many of these communities have stated their belief that it calms their car traffic. Specifically, Ontario has experienced lighter traffic and road accidents with the installation of their murals and is working to produce hard data to back these findings. With these intricate pieces of art on the pavement, residents are able to indicate to drivers that there are community members using the streets often, specifically children. Perhaps the primary reason for using this method is to allow a community to connect and bond with one another as well as their streets. By creating public art together, each person gets a stake in that street and a reason to use it.

The current focus for such a new method, like the Paint the Pavement initiative, relies entirely on a community expressing its interest to the decision makers of the city. Cities are looking to support community driven projects that will serve as a new asset to a neighborhood.

**PARKLETS (PEOPLE SPOTS)**

The concept of parklets started in San Francisco back in 2010. What began as five pilot projects has spread not only throughout San Francisco, but other cities like Seattle, Portland, Grand Rapids, Salt Lake City, and Chicago.

Parklets are a design solution to narrow streets by extending the space of the sidewalk by converting parking spaces into a public open space. Cities like San Francisco have parklets that act as pop-up museums, others that provide public seating and shade, as well as interactive spaces for children to play. According to CDOT, parklets increase sitting and outdoor activities by 25%,
create a 10% rise in perceived sense of community, and promote economic activity. The Metropolitan Planning Council found that 80% of businesses find that parklets bring more foot traffic and see a 10-20% increase in sales.

Parklets are a simple and innovative solution that provides a social space that is both aesthetically pleasing and reflective of a community’s culture.

Here in Chicago, the parklet program is conducted through Make Way for People. The program enables communities to use public ways such as streets, parking spots, plazas, dead ends, and alleys to promote more walkable communities all the while encouraging economic development in Chicago neighborhoods. Most importantly, “People Spots” as they are called in Chicago, are community driven projects. As such, they must be supported by the community with letters of support from businesses and eventually the local Alderman as well. Unfortunately, the city of Chicago does not have the budget to assist with the cost of people spots, but it is possible to raise money for parklets through community support and sponsorship. Additionally, a people spot must remain a public space to be legally recognized by CDOT. It
DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

is also important to identify whether a proposed street is either a state or city corridor before continuing the application process. State roads are likely to be denied while city roads, like Division Street, are much more likely to be accepted.

After reviewing case studies and best practices over the course of six weeks we have been able to preemptively identify locations throughout Humboldt Park that qualify for application approval. Following the Make Way for People Design Guidelines, people spots must be implemented on commercial streets. Locations for the pilot parklets in the neighborhood are recommended to be placed on Division Street between Western Avenue and California Avenue. Paseo Boricua is an ideal location for a small network of parklets and will benefit from an increase in foot traffic. There is also an opportunity to set precedence for future projects in Humboldt Park.

It is important to note that professionally certified drawings by an architect or engineer is required in order to be accepted by CDOT. The City of Chicago has worked hard to update its ordinances to simplify the process and reduce most permit fees and CDOT project managers make themselves available to help
guide applicants through the process. Our CDOT contacts are Mike Amsden and Vanessa Irizarry. We recommend reaching out to Vanessa, the Coordinating Planner at CDOT. She is also the director of the Make Way for People program and has made it clear that she is eager to help communities implement their people spots throughout the city.

We encourage the community to continue to explore this method of traffic calming and placemaking as a way to engage Humboldt Park artists, residents, and families. By doing so, Humboldt Park may be able to continue to represent its rich cultural history all while creating a safer atmosphere for all who come through the Paseo Boricua.

CONSIDERATIONS

We’ve structured our project to be modular and work on different scales. While each element is interrelated and supports the others, it’s possible to implement any single one with meaningful results.
DESIGN ALTERNATIVES

To start a Make Way for People project, a seventy-five-dollar permit allows for a year of implementation. This permit must be renewed annually. As far as permitting goes with both parklets and painting the pavement, permits are only available for three years at a time. Paint on the pavement will usually only last up to three years depending on materials and weathering. This creates an opportunity for these murals to be curated with a new concept or narrative every few years. This allows the public artwork to stay current with the community. Paint the Pavement projects can be done as an event or block party in a matter of hours with a blocked off street and with enough people. This method is non-invasive and only requires the cost for necessary permits, paint, and painting supplies. We are interested in looking at how the community can remain involved throughout this process. We suggest engaging with local artists or schools to create a strong image and empower the youth of the area to own their streets. Parklets can be built off site by a local artist. These people spots are fairly affordable at about $1,000 - $2,000 depending on the size and materials used. These parklets can be moved easily and remain installed for a short term or long term window of time. Letters of aldermanic and community support are required, as mentioned before.

Finally, because proposed parklets and Paint the Pavement directly affect the public domain it may be both useful and required to get broader public input regarding their implementation. This document could act as a resource for any additional feedback.

San Francisco, California parklet. Photo: Contemporist
6. CONCLUSION
CONCLUSION

We’ve presented a series of interrelated projects that can be independently implemented to promote safe routes and people focused streets. Taken as a whole we believe these could represent small yet significant contributions to the character and culture of Humboldt Park. The key to making Humboldt Park safer relies on an increase of pedestrian and bicycle traffic, which is possible through the use of Paint the Pavement programs and parklet implementation. As we have mentioned before, the success of any Make Way for People project goes beyond following design guidelines. Rather, it rests entirely on the community to both implement and maintain the rich public space.

The next steps towards implementing one, or multiple, of these Make Way for People spaces begins with the community. Through additional community engagement and problem solving, residents of Humboldt Park will be able to decide how to best use this resource. We encourage community groups to consider leading or sponsoring interested community members in these initiatives. Should future students work in Humboldt Park they may be able to build on our work and bring implementation to fruition. Members of CDOT and the Make Way for People initiative have expressed the desire to work closely with making this all possible.

Humboldt Park is a unique and special place with strong community ties and a large number of existing assets that benefit residents. We hope that our efforts will help strengthen its best elements and provide inspiration for future projects.

Thank you to our community partners at Archeworks, Chicago Department of Transportation, The Puerto Rican Cultural Center, The Puerto Rican Agenda, and West Town Bikes for sharing your expertise and time with us in the development of this plan.

“Tactical Urbanism enables people to not only envision change but to help create it.”
- Mike Lyndon, Author
People focused initiatives can create a vibrant and safe streetscapes in Humboldt Park.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


