

A photograph of a lumber yard with stacks of wood. The image is overlaid with a stylized graphic that reads "PARK to PARK". The word "PARK" at the top is in grey with a white outline, and the word "PARK" at the bottom is in green with a white outline. A teal arrow points from the top "PARK" to the bottom "PARK", with the word "to" in white inside the arrow. A horizontal dashed white line is positioned below the graphic.

**PARK**  
to  
**PARK**

Mt.  
Vernon  
Park

MT VERNON PK 5

ROOSEVELT





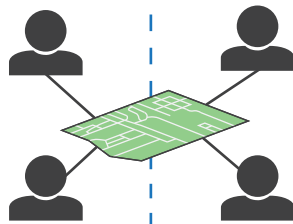
# Contents

01



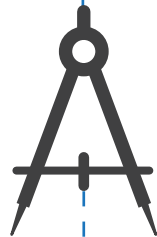
Introduction 1-12

02



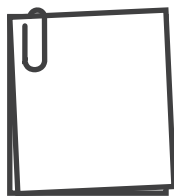
Community Engagement 13-24

03



Design Process 25-42

04



Appendix 43-



# Project Introduction



**1.1** Park to Park..... 1

**1.2** Partners..... 3

**1.3** Scope and Timeline..... 5

**1.4** Site Investigation..... 7

**1.5** Vacant Lots..... 9

Phase Timeline:





## 1.1 What is Park to Park?

Parking lots take up a large amount of land in cities and contribute to crime, pollution, continued vacancy, and broken communities. Park to Park is a project that works to create temporary or permanent community spaces in underutilized parking lots and vacant properties. In creating these spaces, Park to Park revitalizes neighborhoods and creates stronger communities by engaging residents in the building and design process. As a result, new designs begin to respond to community needs and increase pride while promoting healthy living, culture, and art. The spaces are also created using recycled materials, making the projects incredibly affordable and accessible for anyone to replicate. Park to Park is a partnership and a vessel that will aid individuals, organizations, businesses, and neighborhoods in improving their communities.

Park to Park began as a design project by Nicholas Geers during the ID5 studio at Lawrence Technological University. This project was created as a theoretical project to help develop and engage communities. It is now developing into a tool to help create new activity spaces for communities and neighborhoods.







## 1.2 Project Partners

After the initial design studio was done, Nick was approached by a representative from Bridge of Grace Compassionate Ministry Center in Fort Wayne, Indiana. BGCMC is a non-profit organization that focuses on crime prevention, child and adult education, life skills training, and community development in Mt. Vernon Park, an under-served community. The partnership with Park to Park aims to aid BGCMC in community development to help unite residents and make the neighborhood a stronger community. Mt. Vernon Park has vacant lots spread across the neighborhood and the community had expressed interest in seeing something happen with these lots. This partnership focused on transforming these lots into usable community spaces. The primary point of contact was Réna Bradley, Bridge of Grace's Community Development coordinator. Various other community partners were also engaged in the project.

Bridge of Grace thought the concept was a great fit for the Mount Vernon Park neighborhood based upon resident feedback that was obtained in a community listening tour. After reaching out to community youth, adult residents, neighborhood association members and block captains, Bridge of Grace determined the community's primary concerns. Those concerns included their components of revitalization that had the potential to be addressed by a Park to Park Installation. Those include: Beautification, Recreation, and providing additional opportunities for social interaction.





# Mt. Vernon Park

## Partners



## Role

Professor Mike Styczynski aided in the entire process of the project and offered his design and prototyping expertise.



Project coordination was led by Réna Bradley. BGCMC owns or acquired permission to use the lots in the neighborhood. They also organized and hosted events and worked to get the word out about the work that was being done.



The neighborhood association for Mt. Vernon Park helped give input about the neighborhood and approved the project.



Worked to build custom design elements that were used in the final park. Designs were created using recycled wood and pallets.

## Local Residents + Volunteers

Provided valuable feedback, design ideas, and help at every step. They also gave a lot of time to volunteer to build the final product.



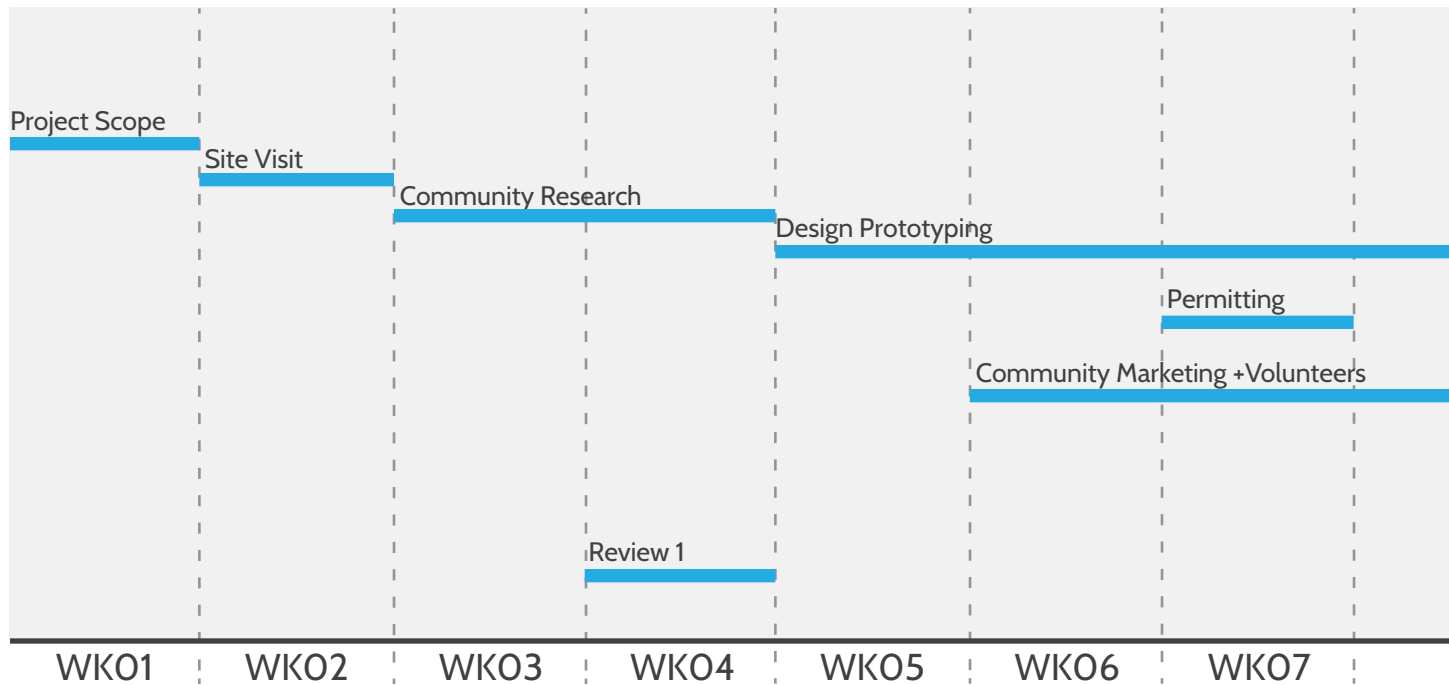
Student at Lawrence Tech and the project designer.



## 1.3 Project Scope

After Nick was initially approached by Rena and BGCMC, it was decided through a collaboration of LTU and BGCMC that Nick would work with BGCMC as part of a directed study elective from LTU. In order to do this, goals, timelines, and final deliverables to be accomplished for the project were established between Nick, LTU, and BGCMC. These objectives stemmed from what Bridge of Grace wanted to do with the project as well as requirements for the independent study that was being done through LTU.

### Initial Timeline



# Project Objectives

01

Work with the community to figure out the desired outcomes and potential uses for the new green spaces.

02

Utilize easy-to-find reclaimed materials in design of the spaces and their components.

03

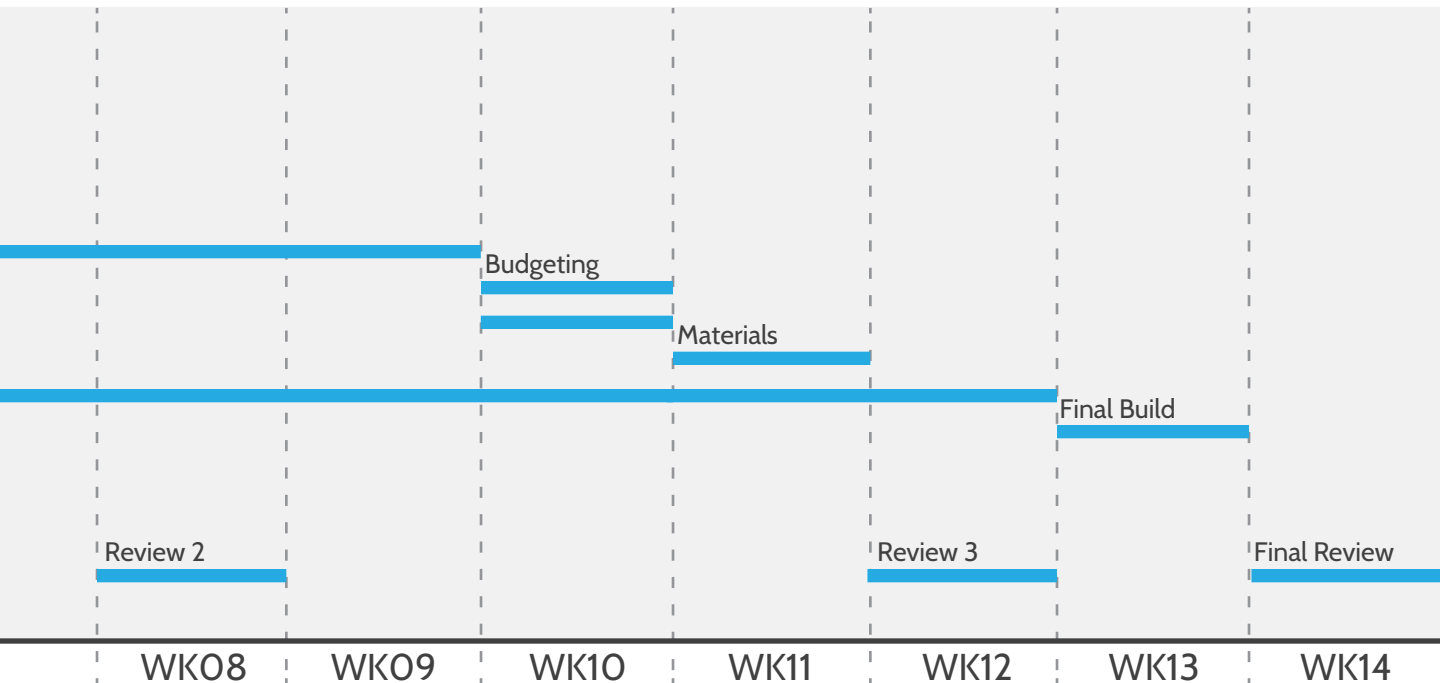
Create Ikea style guidebook for individuals in community who would like to create similar installations

04

Work with the community to build the final park.

05

Create a recommendation list of uses for other neighborhood lots.





## 1.4 Site Investigation

Mt. Vernon Park is a neighborhood in the southeast quadrant of Fort Wayne, Indiana. This area is one of the more under-served parts of Fort Wayne. It has a number of vacant lots and a small number of usable community spaces.







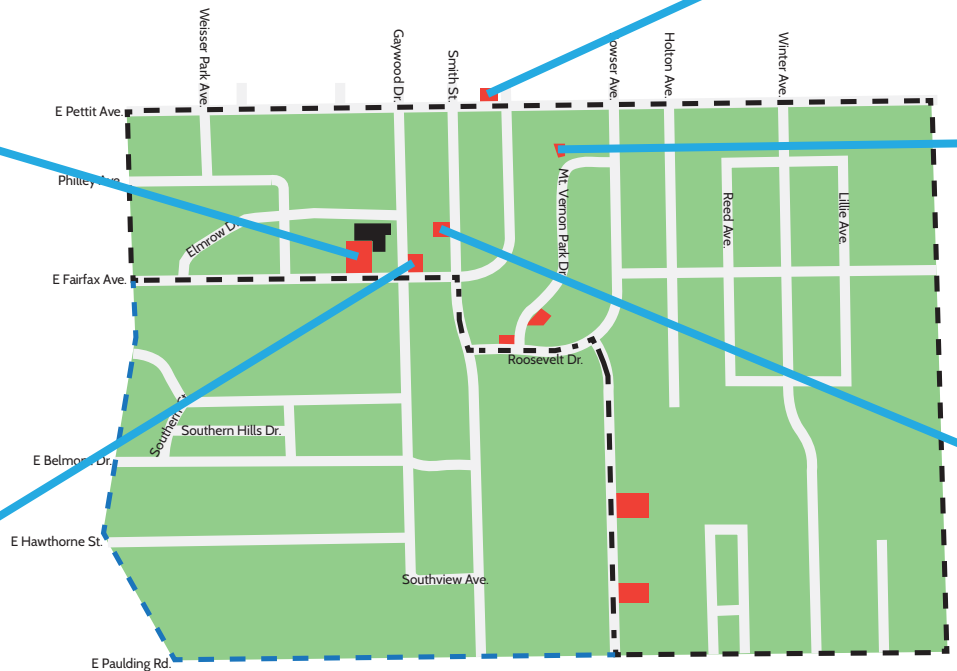
# Site Investigation

The vacant lots that were available to use for the project were scattered around the neighborhood and presented a wide range of sizes and condition. BGCMC has access to all the lots either as the lot owners or from permission received to use the lots from the owner. Because the timeline was limited to one semester there was only time to design two of the lots. Therefore a decision had to be made about which lots were going to be used.



## Site 1 : Parking Lot Adjacent to BGCMC

This parking lot is used for both BGCMC and Many Nations Church and it often sits vacant on weekdays. It's also located across the street from Levan A. Scott Academy, making it a great, accessible location for kids in the neighborhood. The parking lot is very wide open and in close proximity to a lot of residents.



## Site 2: Corner of Fairfax Ave. and Gaywood Dr.

This lot sits right across the street from Many Nations Church and BGCMC. It also sits across the street from Levan A Scott Academy and right next door to employees of BGCMC. The site is also level, flat and open, with very few trees.



**Site 4:** Corner of Pettit and Oliver

This corner lot is located along Pettit, one of the busier streets in the neighborhood. It also has a bus stop in front of it, making it more open to the public.



**Site 5:** Along Mt. Vernon Park Dr.

This lot sits on a half cull-de-sac along Mt. Vernon Park Dr. Because of this, the lot is very narrow by the road and wide in the back.



**Site 3:** On Smith St.

This lot is located on Smith St. locked between two homes. It is small and shallow and flat. Because it is in the middle of the street instead of a corner, it is accessible to more adjacent homes.



# Site Investigation

Criteria for Lot Selection: When considering which lot to select, we took the following criteria into consideration:

- 1) Location/proximity to Bridge of Grace
- 2) Proximity to major landmarks and nodes of activity including
  - a. Churches
  - b. Schools
  - c. Existing Parks/ Green space
- 3) Sufficient existing infrastructure (especially lighting)
- 4) Defensibility/Visibility of all corners of the lot from the street
- 5) Lot Size + Orientation
- 6) Drainage (lack of pooling water)
- 7) Access to electricity and tools close by

## Site 7: Corner of Mt. Vernon Park Dr. and Roosevelt Dr.

This lot is flat and open and shaded. It is also adjacent to a lot homes, making it very accessible to the people that live nearby.



## Site 8: Along Bowser

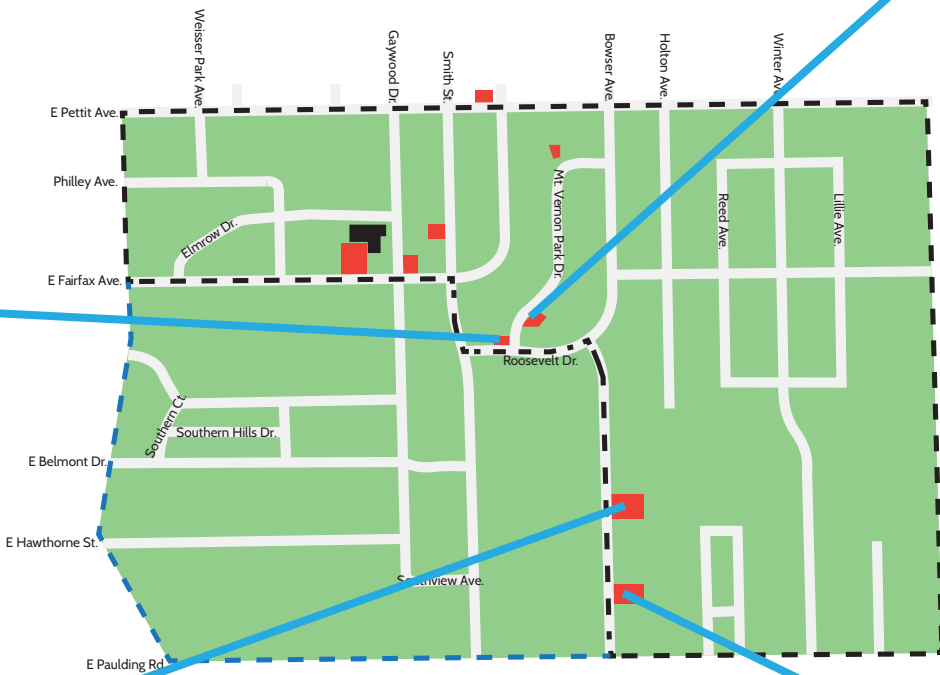
Huge vacant lot along Bowser Ave. with big trees and a wide open area. This lot would be perfect for walking paths and a nice park.





**Site 6:** Mt. Vernon Park Dr.

This lot is located along a curved section of Mt. Vernon Park Dr. making the lot a long curved shape. This lot has a few large trees and is close to many different houses.



**Site 9:** Along Bowser 2

Just like Site 8, this is a large, wide-open space with a lot of potential. Also along Bowser Ave.





# Community Engagement

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2.1 Feedback Activities..... 13

2.2 Congregation Event..... 15

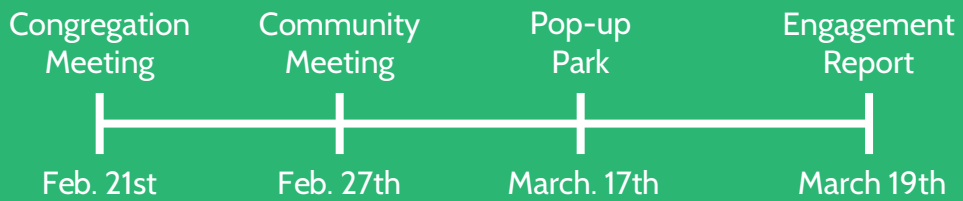
2.3 Community Event..... 17

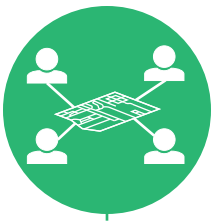
2.4 Initial Design Ideas..... 19

2.5 Pop-Up Event.....21

2.6 Results..... 23

Phase Timeline:





# Feedback Activities

In order to make this project successful, it was very important to engage the community and get their feedback about the vacant lots in the neighborhood. Several strategies were used to peak the interests of the various residents. A decision was made by Réna and Nick to center all of these activities around different community events in order to get a large amount of people to show up. They also decided to design the activities in ways that encouraged the people to design, create, and brainstorm ideas for the parks themselves.



## Surveys

This strategy is a very simple but effective one. It's a great way to get a lot of data and a lot of people to participate with little effort put in. The questions that were asked were:



What do you think the Neighborhood needs?



What do you like to do for fun in the neighborhood?



Where do you like to hang out in the community?

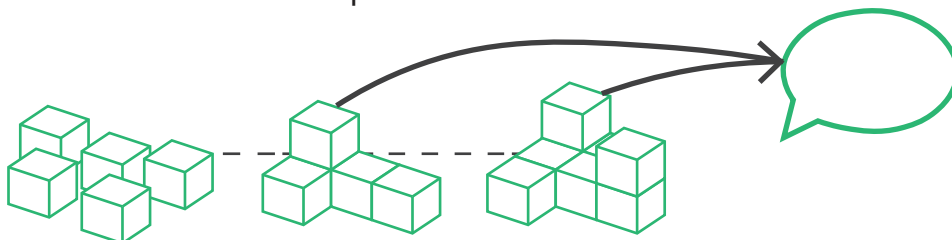


What do you think should go in these empty lots and parking lots?



## Models

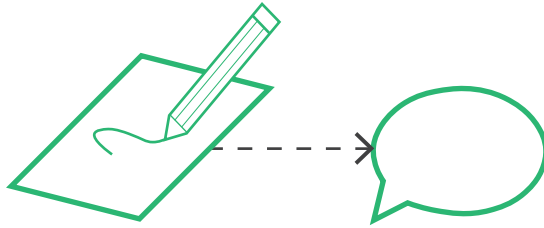
One way to get people more involved is to have them create or build something that gets them thinking about the project. One strategy that can be used to get to get feedback is to have the people build models and create layouts of the things they want to see in these vacant spaces.





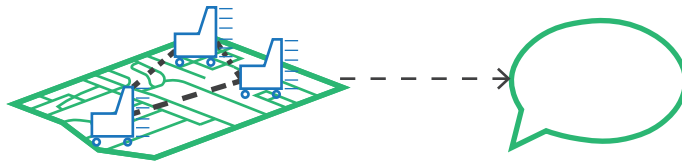
## Drawings

This strategy provides another way for people to be creative and express their ideas. Participants draw illustrations for outdoor activities or spaces that they would like to have in the neighborhood.



## Traveling Bench

For this strategy, residents will be engaged with a question written on a bench that will be moved around the neighborhood. The bench will have blank spaces that people can write their ideas on. In theory this idea could get a lot of feedback while also creating a nice installation for the neighborhood.

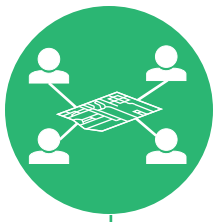


## Community Events

Holding community-wide events is a great way to get a lot of feedback and spark interest in the project. People are drawn to events and are usually more comfortable giving feedback when they're in a crowd. Events were planned to try to engage all the of the people in the neighborhood. The community events are also a good place to use the other engagement strategies listed.

## Neighborhood Map

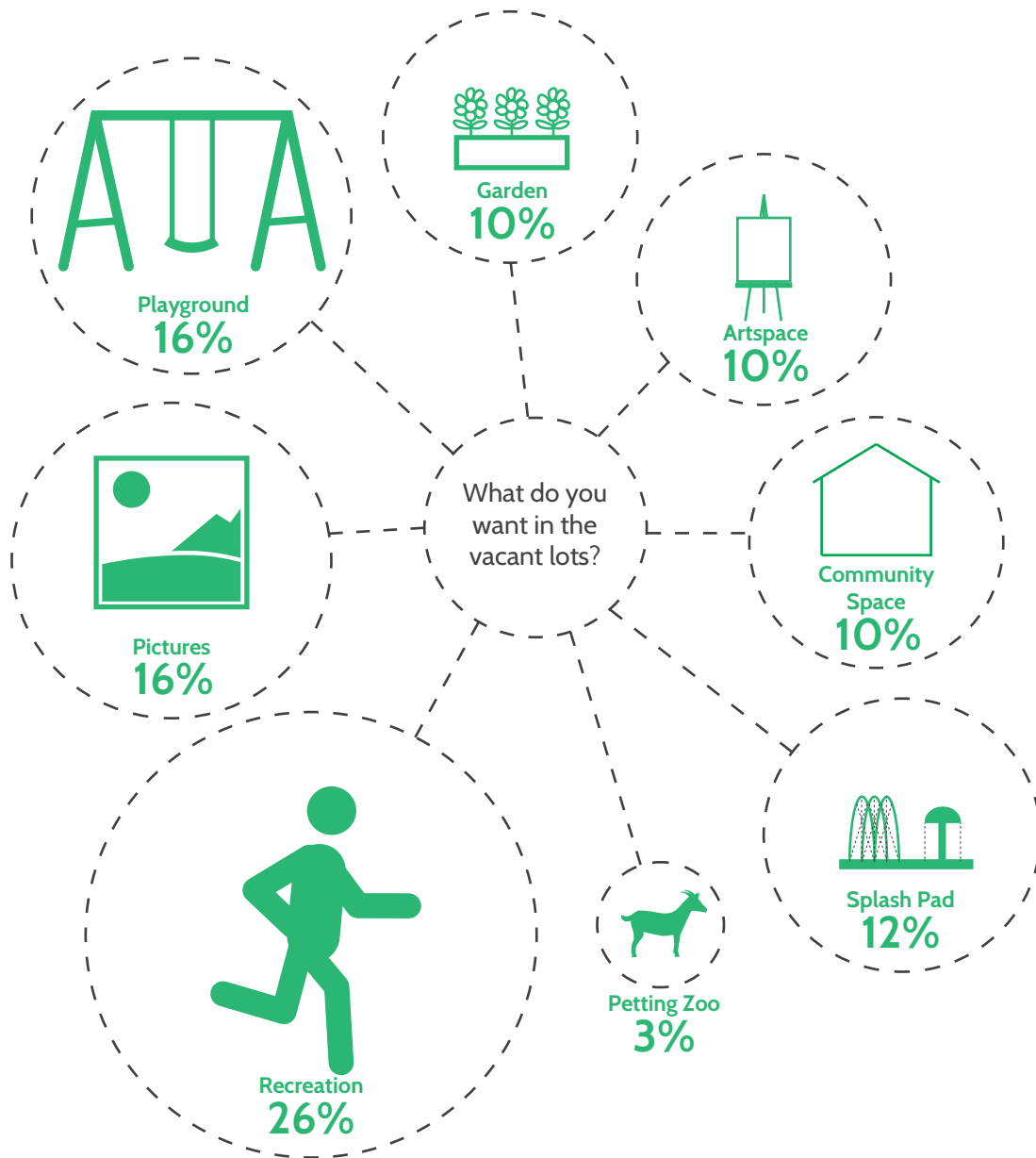
A large map of the neighborhood will be shown with the lots marked. Provided stickers representing different activities and park functions can then be used to map what community members want and where they want to put in the Neighborhood.



## Congregation Event

As Bridge of Grace and Many Nations Church are partner organizations and a lot of the project was planned to take place at the church, it was decided to start the engagement effort with the congregation and let them know what was going to happen with the project. It was also important to get their feedback and ideas on what should be put in the vacant lots and to get the community members interested in the project. Nick started by speaking to the congregation during a Sunday church service. After the service, the members of the church were engaged with surveys, drawings, and models. Conversations with the members also addressed their concerns and discussed their ambitions for the lots. Results from this event can be found in the Appendix.





## Strategies Used

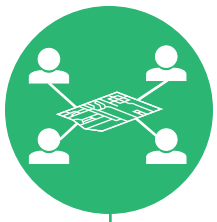


## People Attended



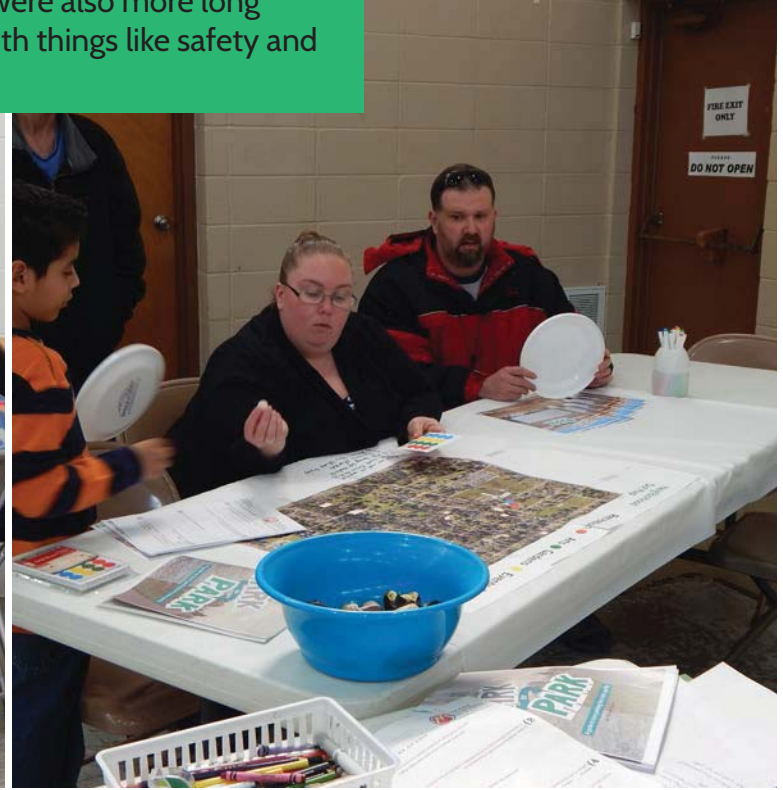
## Event Results and Takeaways

The Congregation event was successful in letting the congregation members know what was going on and gathering all of the ideas that people had. The drawing activity very quickly became the most popular among the kids. In fact, it represented the majority of the recorded feedback that was received from this event. The adults mostly filled out the surveys and also came over to talk. All of the conversations and feedback pointed at the need to create more spaces for kids and recreation in the neighborhood.



# Community Event

After the congregation event members of the neighborhood were invited to come to the church and give us more feedback about their ambitions and ideas for the lots. Although there wasn't a huge turnout, the conversations provided very good input. At this event the same techniques as the previous were used to gather feedback. There were also more long conversations about their concerns with things like safety and infrastructure.







## Strategies Used

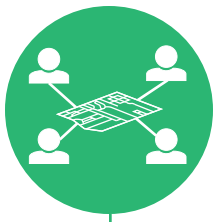


## People Attended



## Event Results and Takeaways

The feedback collected from this event was very similar to the feedback collected from the congregation event. The conversation was really focused on building new spaces for kids to be able to play, exercise and be more active in the neighborhood. One of the best ideas that was given was to fill the church parking lot with drawn on activities. This meant painting on activities like bike paths, games, and sports on to the pavement. It was very clear after this event that the residents of the community were in need of new spaces for recreation and community events.



## Initial Design Ideas

After the congregation and community events it was decided based on both the conversations with the residents and the results of the activities, that spaces for kids to play and be active was the most important thing that people wanted. After that the residents also wanted community gathering places and gardens. From these results, renderings were created to give people in the neighborhood a better look at what these vacant lots could become and what they would look like with some of the things they wanted. At this point in the process it was also decided that it would be best to develop the church parking lot and the lot next to the church first because of the convenience and near proximity to the church and homes of some of the BGCMC staff.

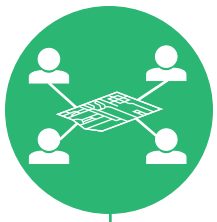




Site 2 | Option 1: Gardens



Site 2 | Option 2: Playground



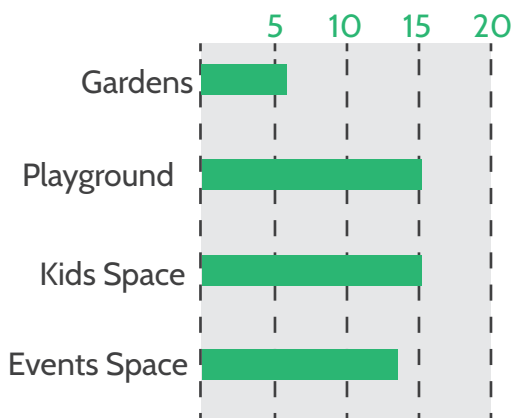
## Pick up/Pop-up Park Event

After creating the renderings for lots 1 and 2, an event was needed to narrow down the final uses of the parks. To get this feedback a full scale installation and pop-up park was built using benches, a planter, painted pallets, and painted tires. This lot is located right next to a school and the pop-up park was set up right as kids were getting out of classes for the day. Popsicles were then offered in exchange for feedback on what the best options for the lots were. Along with the pop-up park, a full scale park was also created in the back of a pickup. This pick up park was then driven around the neighborhood and used to get more feedback from neighborhood residents.



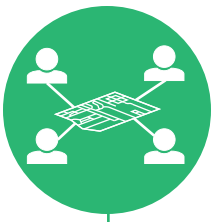


Number of Votes for each option



## Event Results and Take Aways

This event was by far the most successful in terms of the number of people that came to see what we were doing. After giving them the four options for what could be in the lots, we got a lot of positive feedback. This meant that the neighborhood as a whole thought that these options were good ideas not just people from the church. The results from the pop-up event were pretty close in numbers. The playground and kids space both had 15 votes. This event basically just reassured us that building a playground and having a mixed use space were the right way to go.



# Results of Community Engagement

Overall the community events and feedback gathered was really valuable for the project. People got really excited about the project and the possibilities that it offered. From the results of the engagement with the residents of the neighborhood it became easy to figure out what the community needed and wanted in the neighborhood. There were many things that worked great and some that didn't work as well.

## Things that worked:

### Creative Activities

Allowing people to draw and show what they were thinking was valuable, it also helped the residents engage in the design process more than just answering questions.

### Holding Events

Events brought people out of their homes and into the community. The helped the residents to start building a stronger community.

### Food

Food gets people out to events. People bond over food and will often participate in things in order to get food. Food is a must-have with any event.

## Things that didn't work:

### Model Building

When used to engage the community this event didn't work as well as desired. The main issue was with the documentation of the results and what people built.

### Traveling Bench

The bench was a good idea but the timing didn't work out. Because it was winter when the activities were going on this activity didn't reach a large number of people.

### Timeline

Because the timeline was limited to a school semester the events seemed a little rushed. More time was needed to engage more people and spread awareness of the project

## Decisions Made

The results of the engagement helped Réna and Nick decide that the best lots to use for this project were Sites 1 and 2 because of their convenience and locations. Site one would become a mixed use space with biking, games, and an event space. Site 2 would be used for a new playground.

Site 1:



Site 2:





# Design Process







|            |                         |    |
|------------|-------------------------|----|
| <b>3.1</b> | Design Parameters.....  | 25 |
| <b>3.2</b> | Lot 2: Design.....      | 27 |
| <b>3.3</b> | Lot 1: Design.....      | 33 |
| <b>3.4</b> | Design Prototyping..... | 41 |

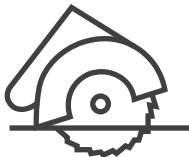


## 3.1 Design Parameters

Parameters for the designs for lots 1 and 2 were created collaboratively by Professor Styczynski, Réna Bradley, and Nicholas Geers. The design parameters were created based on the requirements for the class and were influenced by the feedback given by the community.

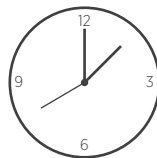
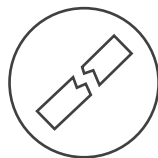
### Easy-to-Build

This project is intended to create designs that are simple to build by anyone. In order to do that the designs will be built with simple tools are accessible and easy to use. Because of this, only tools like saws and drills will be used in the construction.



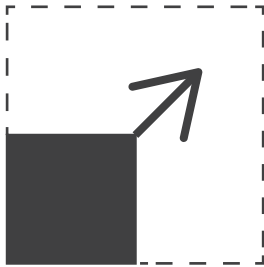
### Durable

All of the designs for the parks need to be durable, able to withstand the weather, wear and tear, and able to stand the test of time.



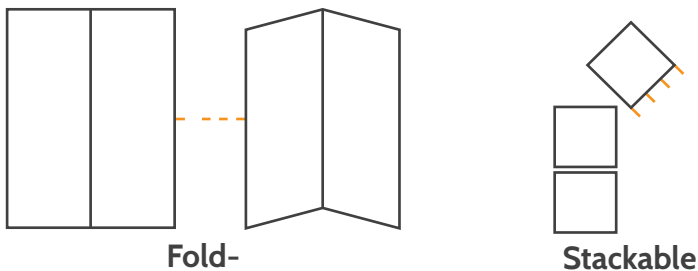
## Scale-able

These parks are meant to be replicable and be able to be created in any size and formation. In designing these parks in a way that can be scaled to fit different needs, the parks can become a model that is accessible for any size and need.



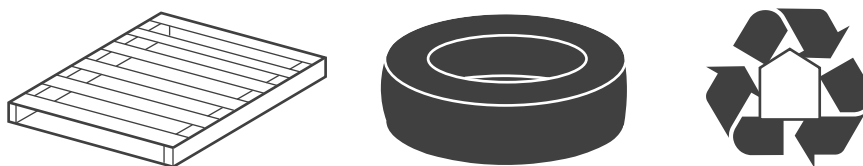
## Flexible

In order to build parks that are easy to build, designs will be made to be fold-able stackable and movable. This flexibility will allow the designs to be built on any site.



## Low Cost Materials

Low costs are another important part of make designs easy to build. These materials include things that are easy to find; like pallets, tires, and other recycled materials.





## 3.2 Lot 1 : Kids Area

For Lot 1 in the church parking lot, the popular idea was to create a mixed use space that had an area for kids to bike and play games, and a space for the community and church to hold events. This way the church could use the space for its normal worship services and activities on Sunday. Then; during the week, the lot could be used by kids and for other types of events.

### Lot Uses:



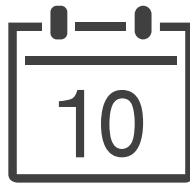
#### Biking

Parents want a space that is safe and away from traffic, and is nearby so that they will not have to drive to a far away park.



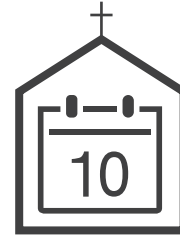
#### Sports/Games

Besides a few other parks there isn't a lot of space to play sports or any kind of outdoor games. The parking lot could provide a space to do these things.



#### Outdoor Events

Neighborhood events are a good way to create a better sense of community. The Mt. Vernon Park neighborhood has had a few block parties that were very popular.



#### Church Activities

The parking lot is a large amount of outdoor space that could be utilized for all kinds of meals, outdoor worship, and any other activities that the church regularly does.

To bring this new mixed use space into being several things will need to take place regarding each area of use. Ultimately it's up to the church, BGCMC, and the members of the community to decide what activities and games would take place in this new space.

## Design Elements

### Painted-on Activities

This idea came from our community event: to simply paint on activities in the church parking lot for kids to play on. The activities could include a route or track for bikes, foursquare, hopscotch, lines for basketball, hockey, etc.

### Movable Furniture/Planters

In order to create a space where church activities or events can happen, movable and easy-to-store furniture are needed for seating and dining. Tables, chairs, benches, and planters could be made to easily store in a docking system and then removed during events. This would allow for the space to be very flexible.

### Stage

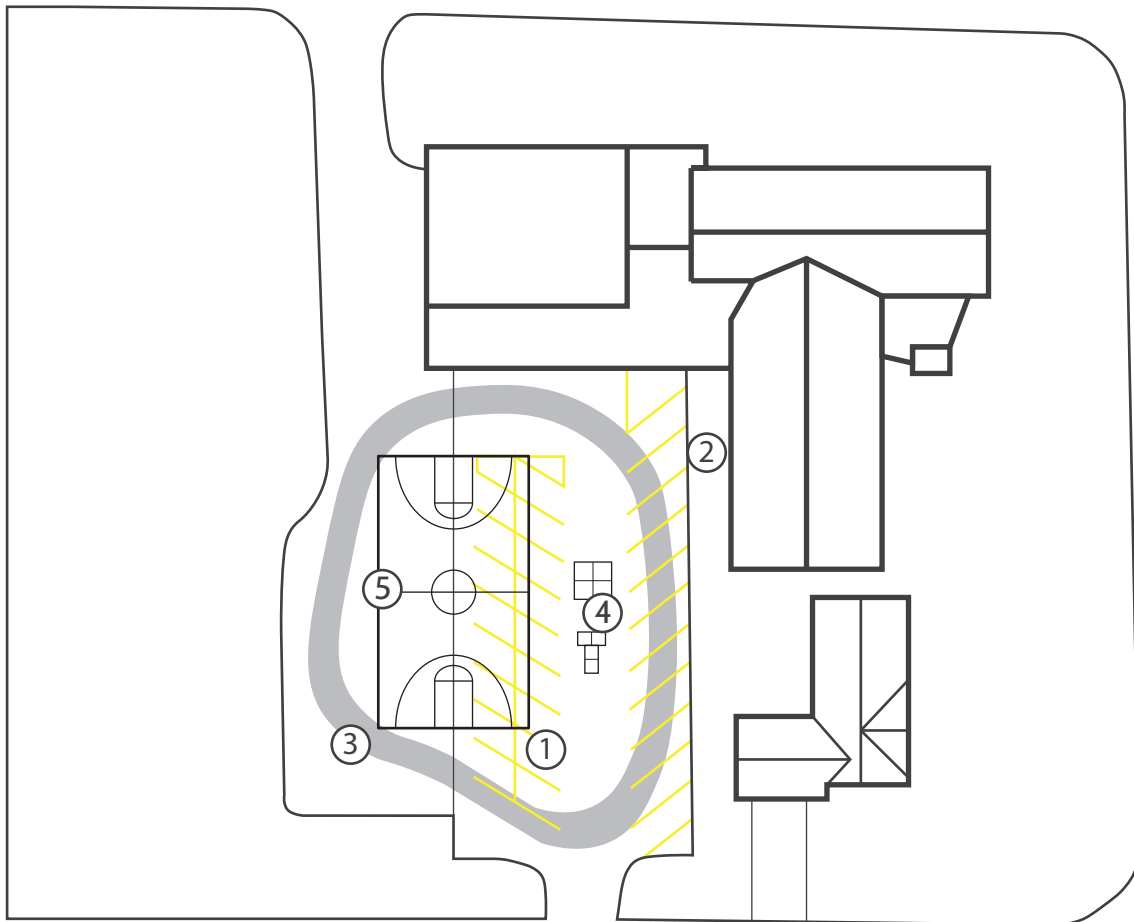
For events space like church worship or community-wide events, it would be nice to have a temporary or permanent stage out in the parking lot. This stage could also potentially incorporate the docking system for the movable furniture.



## 3.2 Lot 1 : Kids Area

The diagram below shows the potential layout of the new mixed use space and includes only a few of the possible activity options. It also shows the existing parking lines to indicate that they will be staying in their locations.

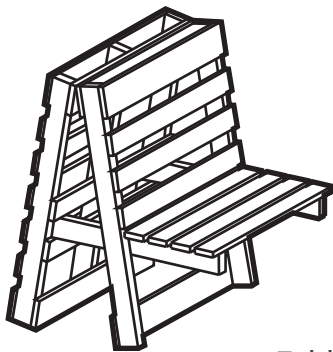
### Painted on Activities Layout



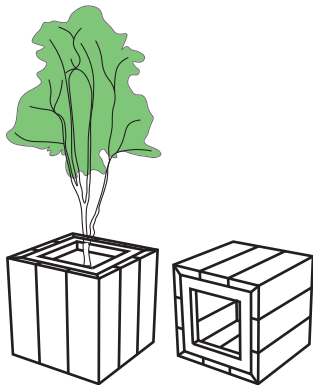
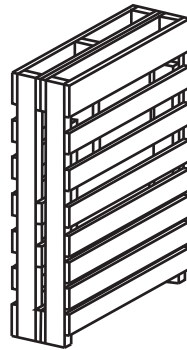
- ① Existing Parking Spaces
- ② Potential Storage Locations
- ③ Bike Path
- ④ Painted Activities
- ⑤ Basketball Court

## Movable Elements

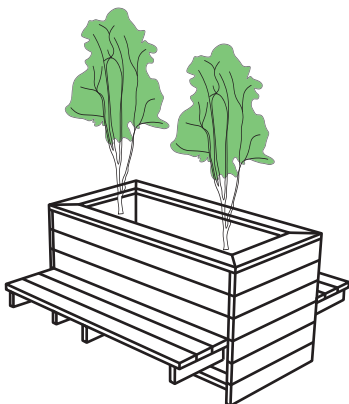
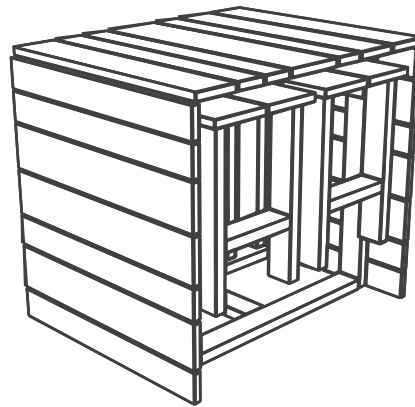
Movable elements will include foldable benches, stackable box benches and store-able tables and planters. Here are some examples of potential designs for these elements.



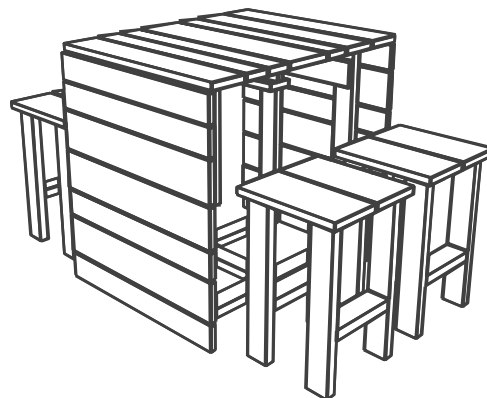
Folding Bench



Box Bench/Planter



Bench and Planter



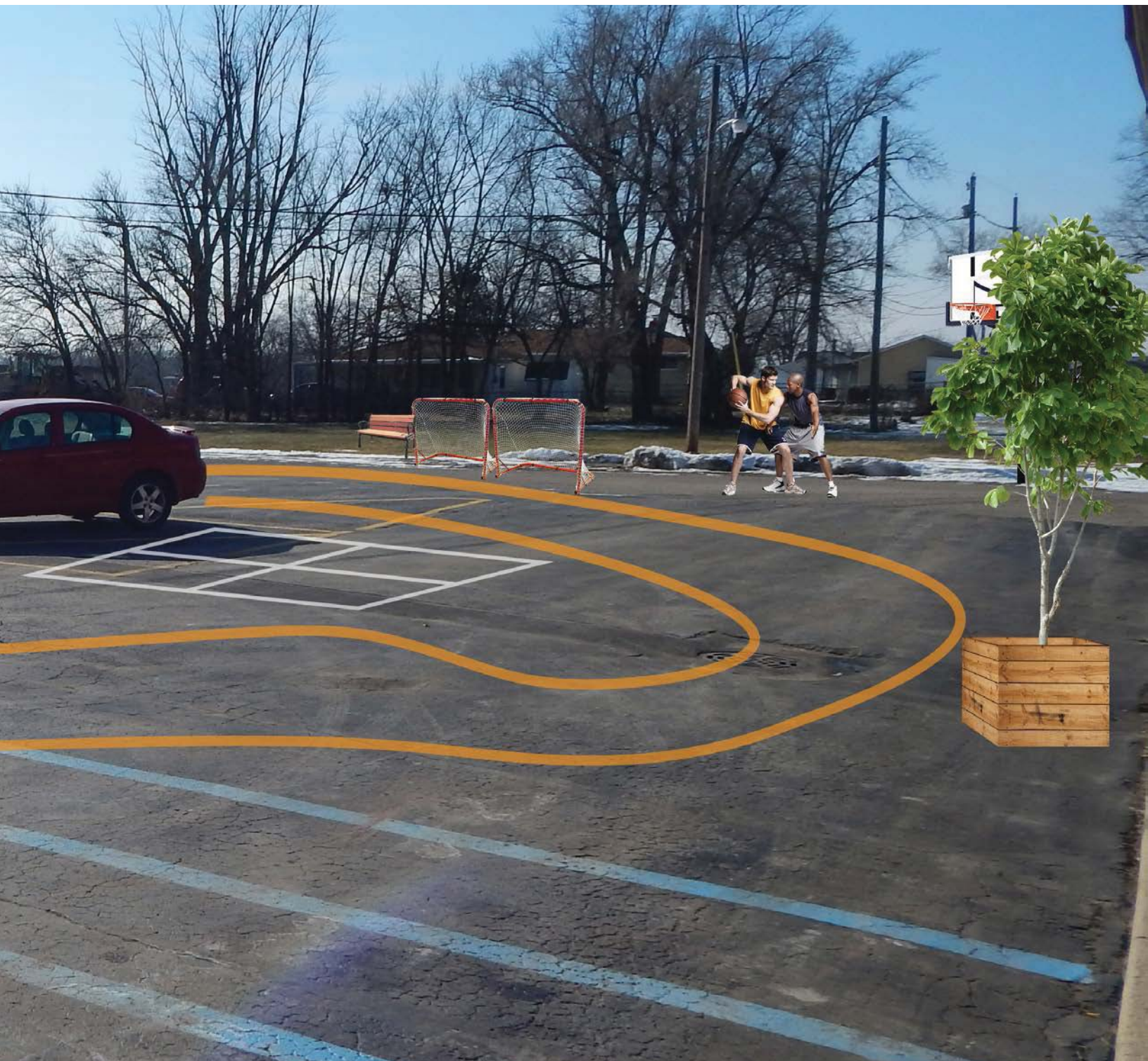
Movable Table and Benches



## 3.2 Lot 1 : Kids Area Final Design









## 3.3 Lot 2: Playground Activities

After the decision was made to turn Lot 2 into a playground; the original feedback results were revisited to look for the specific activities that people wanted. Each of these things were going to have an influence on the way that we designed everything and how it was going to look. We also wanted to make the designs easy enough for anyone to build using reclaimed and easy-to-find materials.

### Activities:

The top activities that were asked for were as follows:

**Swings**

**Monkey Bars**

**Slides**

**Rock wall**

**Tire walk**

**Sandbox**

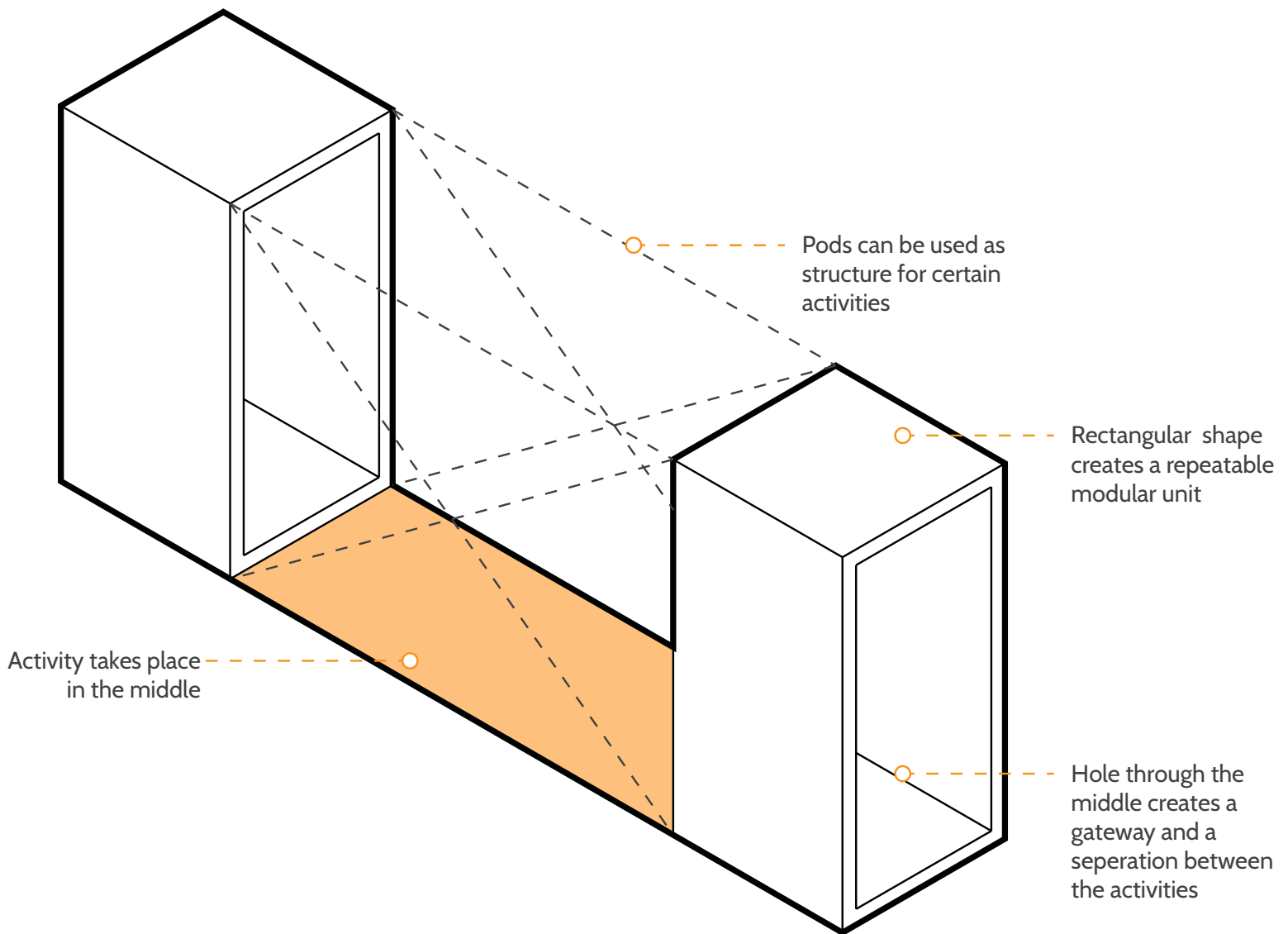
**Obstacle Course**

**Art**

**Games**

**Musical  
Instruments**

The design for the playground structures was created in response to the feedback from the community and from the parameters that were put in place for the project. The result is a design that uses modular structures with activities in between. This creates a design that is easily repeatable and can be put in many different layouts.



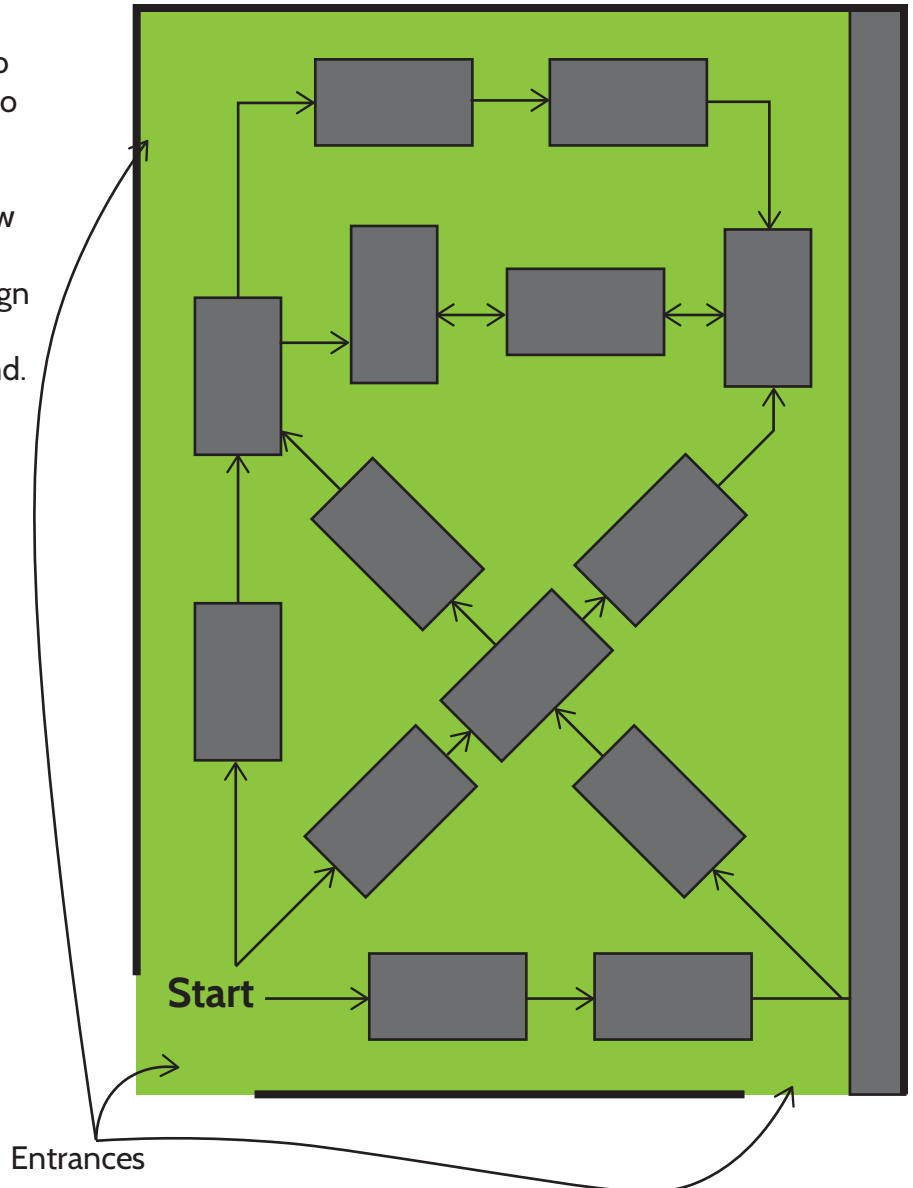


## 3.3 Lot 2: Initial Design Ideas

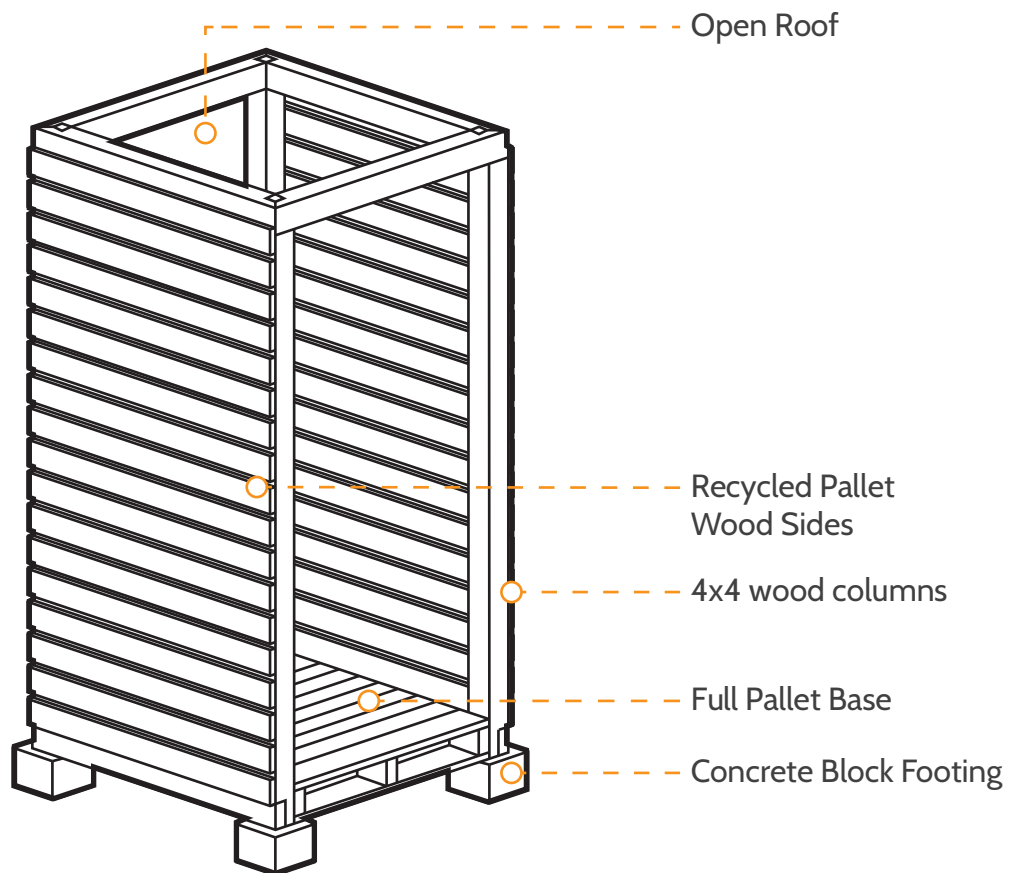
This modular idea also works with the goal of using reclaimed materials in the building process. Materials like pallets and tires come in predetermined sizes and units that can be used to create a repeatable design that is easy to build. The module should be built to be temporary and able to be made permanent. This way the modules can be versatile for any site that they are placed on.

### Possible Playground Layout

With modular units and activities, we will be able to configure the playground to create different routes and courses. The community will also be able to add new activities as needed and wanted. This modular design can allow for any layout to be made for the playground.



The base of the unit or pod will be made from a full pallet and will be connected with a combination of 2x4s and 4x4s. The horizontal boards along the sides will also be made from pallet wood. The 4x4 structure will sit in four concrete blocks making it sturdy while also making it temporary or movable.



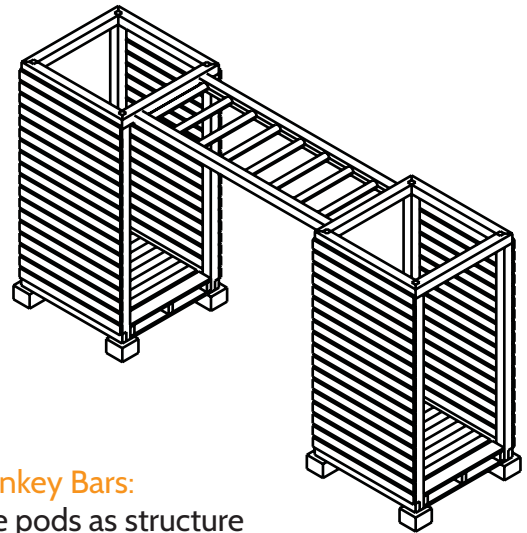


## 3.3 Lot 2 : Activities Design

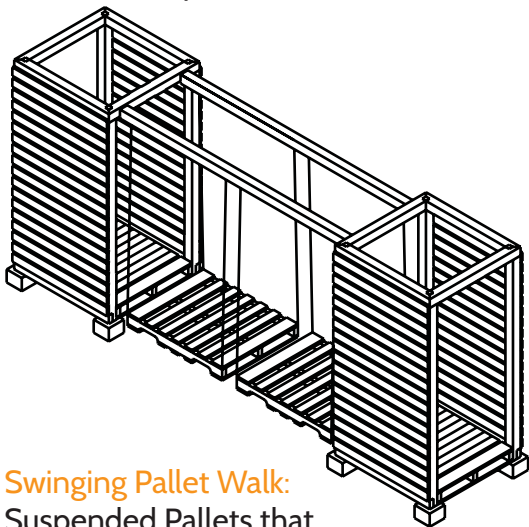
Below are just some of the many possibilities for the activities that can be made with these pod structures using reclaimed materials.



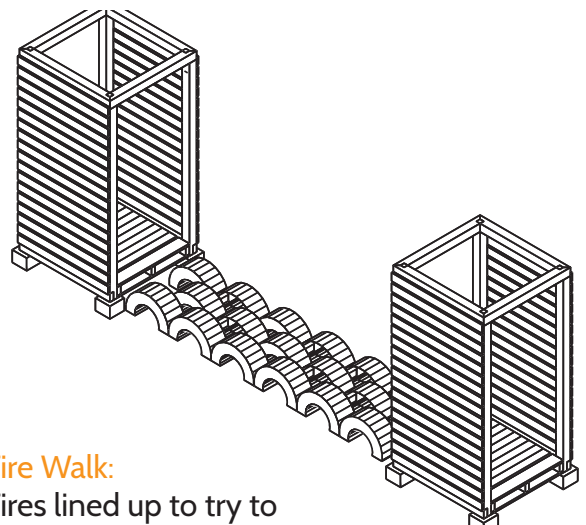
**Balance Beam:**  
Created with 4x4s spanning the distance between the pods



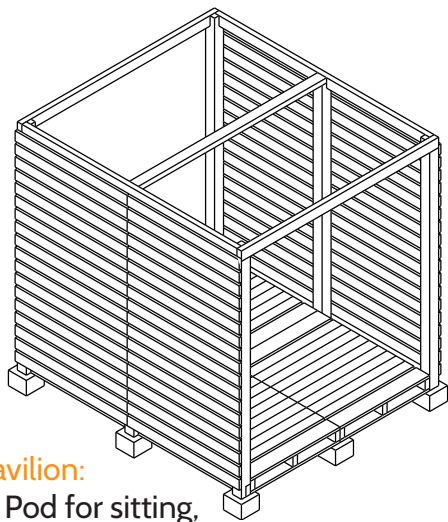
**Monkey Bars:**  
Use pods as structure to climb between



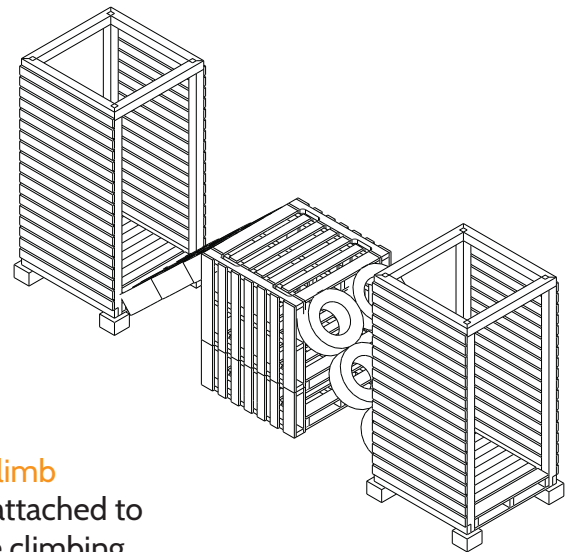
**Swinging Pallet Walk:**  
Suspended Pallets that move as you try to run across them.



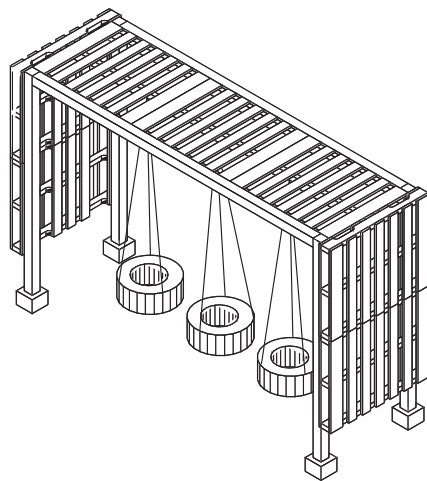
**Tire Walk:**  
Tires lined up to try to walk across.



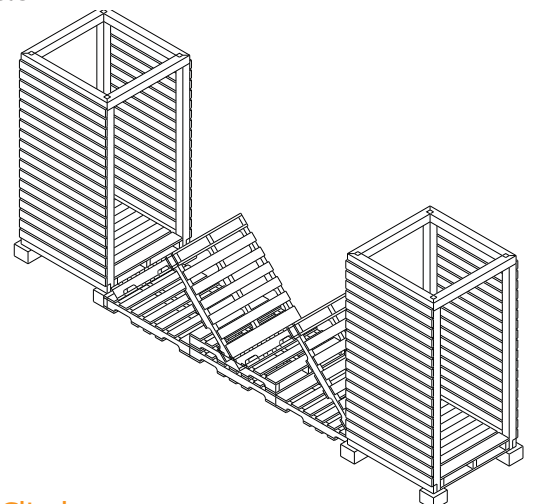
**Pod Pavilion:**  
Larger Pod for sitting,  
art, or quiet space.



**Tire Climb**  
Tires attached to  
create climbing  
obstacle



**Tire Swings:**



**Pallet Climb**  
Angled pallets creating  
a small climbing  
obstacle



## 3.3 Final Design









## 3.4 Initial Prototyping/Moving Forward

Here are some of the initial prototyping attempts of the playground pods. The first version used pallets as the top, bottom, and side pieces. This version was not very stable and resulted in adding 2x4's to the frame and only using pallets for the base and sides. After this initial prototype, one full activity with two pods was created.



1. Current Status: After the test build was completed, Bridge of Grace submitted a Special Use Application to the City of Fort Wayne Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) requesting for a special use permit to allow the obstacle course to be built. Specifically Bridge of Grace requested the BZA to allow a neighborhood facility (playground) in an R1 zoning district.

2. Next Steps: In the Spring of 2017, Bridge of Grace plans to host a multi-weekend community build to complete the first Park to Park installations. Neighborhood residents and youth, along with volunteers from nearby organizations and churches, will be invited to help build pods and activities and celebrate the park's opening.

3. Note: Please see section of the appendix to see how the initial design was "red-lined" and refined per the advice of community volunteers.













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