



Investing in Detroit

Asia K Williams



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00

PREFACE



Abstract

This thesis aims to interconnect various aspects of the unjust system affecting these communities, exploring both the causes and effects while proposing solutions to address these challenges and layout a system for resilient and equitable programming while also recognizing the transformative potential of youth engagement, this thesis places a special emphasis on involving the younger demographic in the process of community development in Detroit.

Analyzing factors such as economic policies, urban planning decisions, and cultural shifts helps understand this transition. Fieldwork and observation are important components, requiring visits to urban centers to observe physical environments, street dynamics, and interaction patterns among residents and visitors. Youth engagement in Detroit neighborhoods can have a transformative effect by allowing leadership skills, educational opportunities, and community pride.

Youth engagement in Detroit can have a transformative effect by allowing leadership skills, educational opportunities, and community pride. Programs that focus on mentorship, arts and culture, and civic participation empower the youth to become advocates for positive change, contributing to the overall vibrancy and sustainability of the community. Attending community meetings also furthered an understanding of perceived challenges and visual data such as photos and videos were captured

on-site to assess walkability and the quality of the neighborhoods. Engagement with a youth program will be facilitated through workshops, creating reciprocal learning opportunities and the process will be documented through quotes, videos, photographs. These workshops will include group discussion, informal interviews with youth organization leaders that ensure an examination of research questions.

Interconnecting different aspects of the unjust system affecting these communities, this study dives into the causes and effects, proposing solutions to create a resilient and equitable foundation. The finding of this research contributes insights to community development, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities that are inherent in establishing sustainable neighborhoods.

Thesis Statement

Community development is a catalyst for sustainability, advocating for rights, equality, economic opportunities, social justice, and participatory democracy. Within Detroit, it has played a key role in enhancing and establishing sustainable neighborhoods, like low-income areas where systematic injustices have previously hindered progress. This thesis aims to interconnect various aspects of the unjust system affecting these communities, exploring both the causes and effects while proposing solutions to address these challenges and layout a system for resilient and equitable programming while also recognizing the transformative potential of youth engagement, this thesis places a special emphasis on involving the younger demographic in the process of community development in Detroit.

In the book, McKoy, Deborah L, *Planning Cities with Young People and Schools*. Routledge, 30 Nov. 2021. Allowing equitable and inclusive growth requires strategic commitment to investing in people. When these strategies often become fixated on the physical environment, vibrancy often favors new residents leading to displacement of existing community members and business owners. This approach falls short of comprehensive revitalization, missing the opportunity for development necessary to maximize community gains, ensuring that revitalization efforts benefit all residents and contribute to the overall well-being of the community.

In the book, Moor, M., & Rowland, J. (2006). *Urban Design Futures*. Routledge. Towers, Graham. *Building Democracy*. Routledge, 2 Sept. 2003. Urbanization, consumerism, public space design, impacts social interactions. Exploring case studies of urban centers have experienced commercialization and transformation that provides valuable insight. Analyzing factors such as economic policies, urban planning decisions, and cultural shifts helps understand this transition. Fieldwork and observation are important components, requiring visits to urban centers to observe physical environments, street dynamics, and interaction patterns among residents and visitors. Key stakeholders such as urban planners, architects, residents, business owners, and graffiti artists offer diverse perspectives on the changes in urban centers and public space usage.

Unjust systems in low-income neighborhoods can be rejected through community organizing, advocacy for policy changes, and slowing grassroots movements that demand equitable representation. There can be discriminatory practices and promote social, economic, and educational opportunities that empower residents. Shifting the focus of city development from downtown to neighborhoods involves implementing policies that provides investment in these areas. This can include offering tax incentives to businesses, creating infrastructure projects, and promoting mixed-use developments. By allowing a diverse and vibrant urban landscape beyond the downtown core, cities can promote more inclusive growth and address problems in different neighborhoods.

Thesis Statement

Urban and socio-cultural systems created for low-income neighborhoods could include affordable housing projects, community centers, training programs, and small business support. Community-driven planning, where residents actively participate in decision-making processes, can help ensure that these systems are responsive to the unique needs and goals of the community.

Revitalization strategies counteract future decline by emphasizing sustainable development, investing in education and skills training, and creating economic opportunities. Implementing long-term plans that prioritize the community's voice, preserve cultural heritage, and address environmental concerns can contribute to the resilience of the community against future challenges. Youth engagement in Detroit neighborhoods can have a transformative effect by allowing leadership skills, educational opportunities, and community pride. Programs that focus on mentorship, arts and culture, and civic participation empower the youth to become advocates for positive change, contributing to the overall vibrancy and sustainability of the community.

Development shapes future users through the creation of spaces and opportunities that influence behavior and social interactions. In the context of urban planning, thoughtful design that considers accessibility, inclusivity, and environmental sustainability can shape a community's identity. Also, educational and cultural initiatives incorporated into

development projects contribute to the formation of informed and engaged citizens who actively contribute to their community's ongoing evolution.

This thesis aims to propose strategies for supporting low-income communities, driven by the commitment to empower minorities through youth engagement and development. Rooted in my personal experience on the east side of Detroit, the mission focuses on providing access to skill development as key tools for breaking the cycle of underdevelopment. The goal is to equip individuals and the youth to be catalysts for positive change within their communities, allowing sustainable and inclusive development. This initiative responds to persistent disparities, serving a call to action to bridge gaps and ensure individuals can thrive and contribute to their community's growth.

To address research questions, I will imply a diverse range of data collection methods. This includes conducting interviews with community leaders and residents to gain insights into the specific problems and issues within the neighborhoods. Additionally, I performed mapping exercises to document the demographics and development areas, providing an overview of the resident population. Attending community meetings also furthered an understanding of perceived challenges and visual data such as photos and videos were captured on-site to assess walkability and the quality

Thesis Statement

of the neighborhoods. Engagement with a youth program will be facilitated through workshops, creating reciprocal learning opportunities and the process will be documented through quotes, videos, photographs. These workshops will include group discussion, informal interviews with youth organization leaders that ensure an examination of research questions.

Critics may argue that the emphasis on empowering minorities may create a narrative of dependency, reinforcing stereotypes and creating divisions. Additionally, opponents may think the single focus on education and skill development oversimplifies the complex factors contributing to underdevelopment in low-income communities. They may suggest that a more comprehensive approach, addressing economic policies, systemic inequalities, and broader societal structures, is necessary for meaningful and sustainable change. Furthermore, one might say the diversity of challenges within these communities may leave certain groups underserved.

The limitations of my position could be that challenges come from the lack of resources, such as limited funding that may constrain the implementation of comprehensive initiatives. Along with resistance to change from entrenched interest can delay progress. Time-intensity of a sustainable community development process may hinder the resolution of urgent issues and cultural insensitivity in approaches may lead to ineffective interventions. Despite community efforts, existing policies and institutional barriers may create systemic injustices. Gentrification is also a risk creating potential displacement of existing residents, highlighting the need for careful planning. Economic downturns,

political instability, environmental challenges and the necessity for engagement furthers the complex nature of community development in achieving lasting, equitable change.

01

BACKGROUND



1.1 Relevance

This study has significant value as it addresses the issue of community development in Detroit, particularly in low-income areas grappling with systemic injustices while also including the voice and perspectives of the youth. Interconnecting different aspects of the unjust system affecting these communities, this study dives into the causes and effects, proposing solutions to create a resilient and equitable foundation. The finding of this research contributes insights to youth engagement shedding light on the challenges and opportunities that inherent in establishing sustainable neighborhoods. The proposed solution can inform innovative design strategies that prioritize inclusivity, accessibility, and cultural sensitivity. This study not only addresses a societal concern but also brings forth practical implications for the discipline of architecture and design, encouraging a holistic and socially conscious approach to build environments.

1.2 Introduction

Detroit neighborhoods stands out as the most densely populated Black city in the nation, yet it predominantly comprises low-income neighborhoods. Growing up on the East side of Detroit, I've had the opportunity to witness the city's evolution firsthand. Unfortunately, I haven't seen substantial growth in the areas that arguably need it the most. This disparity underscores the importance of thoughtful and equitable investment strategies that prioritize community needs and foster inclusive growth across all neighborhoods.

1.3 History of bankruptcy

Detroit filed for bankruptcy in 2013, forcing it to reassess its financial priorities and strategies. In late 2014, Detroit came out of bankruptcy, paving the way for the city to redirect funds towards its neighborhoods. However, much of the subsequent investment has been concentrated in downtown Detroit, neglecting the neighborhoods where a large portion of the population resides.

As the city emerged from bankruptcy, there was a shift in focus towards revitalizing its downtown areas. Investment began pouring into redevelopment of commercial spaces sparking debates and concerns about the neglect of the city's neighborhoods. Many residents discuss that the investment led to inequalities and neglecting the needs of residents in these neighborhoods, highlighting the challenges of balancing the revitalization of urban cores with the broader development and well-being of the city's entire population.

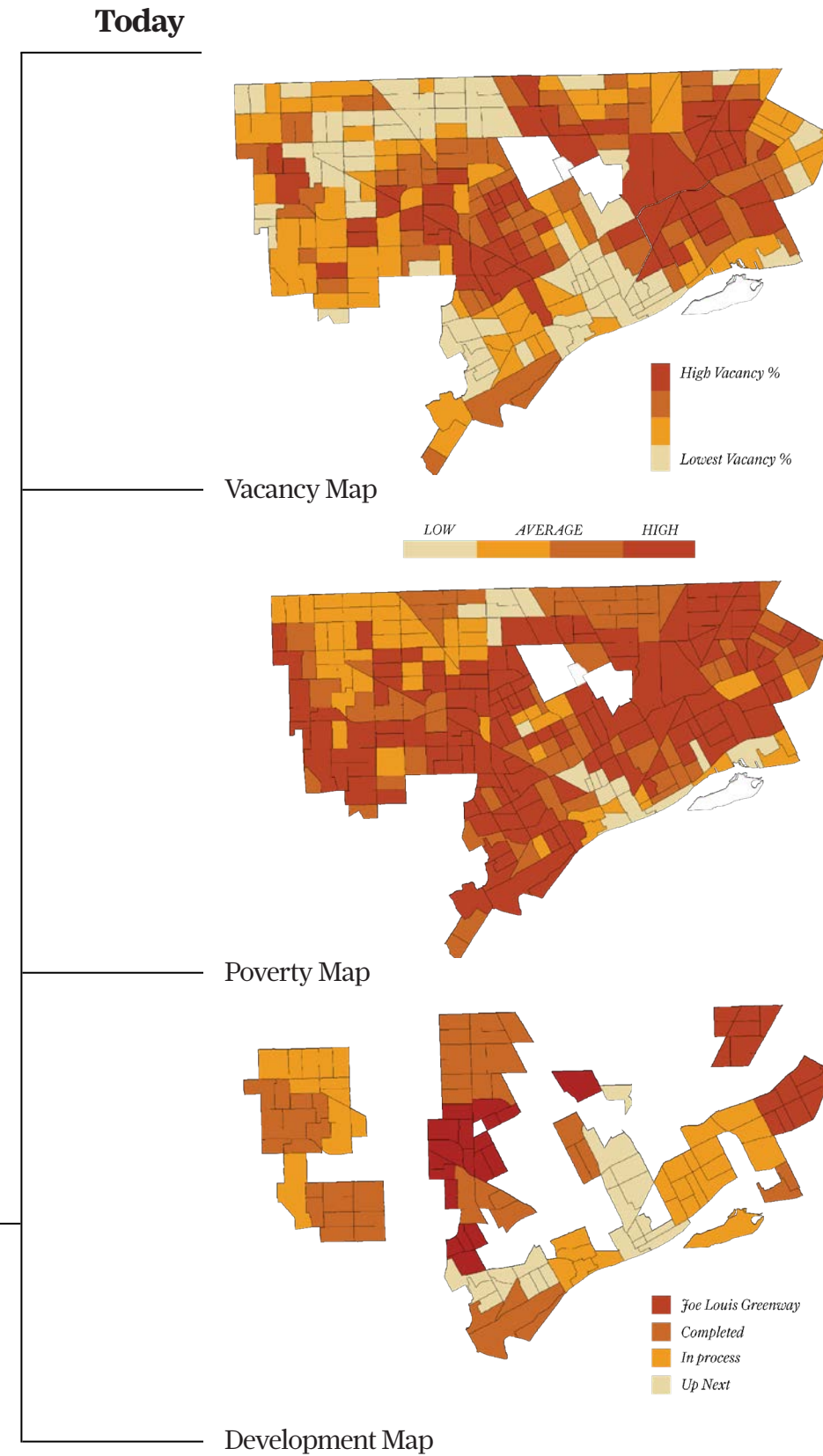


Fig. 1.3 Site Analysis

1.4 Residents' Opinions

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 78% of Detroit's population is identified as African American or Black. This makes Detroit one of the most black populated cities in the United States. With Detroit poverty percentage being 30%, low-income percentage being 60%, and over 30% being abandoned stabilizing Detroit should be the city's first effort.

"Banks wouldn't give to Black neighborhoods because they were labeled as risky,"

- Ruth Johnson

Ruth Johnson's statement highlights a long-standing issue of systematic racism and redlining. Redlining refers to the practice of banks and other financial institutions denying or limiting services to residents of specific geographic areas. Historically, Black neighborhoods were labeled as risky by lenders due to racially biased perceptions and practices, rather than creditworthy or economic stability. This system denied many black families and communities' access to affordable housing, homeownership and the capital needed for local businesses and community development.

"Inclusive regeneration strategies can both serve community residents with the high quality and affordable goods and services they require and fuel the growth of local Black-and-Brown communities."

- Resident

The resident spoke about regeneration strategies in equitable development and supporting the growth of black and brown

communities. These strategies prioritize the needs and aspirations of residents, ensuring that development grows economically but also our quality of life is improved. With collaborative efforts from government, businesses, community organizations, and residents to create solutions that address systemic barriers, promote social justice, and ensure that development benefits are shared equitably across these neighborhoods.

"Some of the things that we're asking for are collaboration with coalitions to track the progress that they are investing in Black and brown communities, their progress on race and ethnicity, to ensure they're working with these coalitions and communities to come up with a great community benefits agreement,"

- Phyllis Edwards

Phyllis Edwards' speaks about the importance of collaboration and accountability in ensuring that investment and development initiatives truly benefit black and brown communities. She suggests that while downtown investment can bring economic growth and opportunities, it is crucial to ensure that these benefits extend to all residents, especially those in low-income areas. Without intentional efforts to include and prioritize the needs of these neighborhoods, there is a risk of leaving behind segments of the populations that have been historically underserved.

Edwards' call for community benefits agreements reflects a demand for equitable development strategies that prioritize social

justice and inclusivity. These agreements can serve as mechanisms to hold developers and investors accountable for delivering on promises to uplift and invest in local communities. This approach could help bridge the gap between downtown revitalization and neighborhood development, ensuring a more balanced growth.



Housing



Transit



Economic



Commons



Governance

Issues stated by Residents

Fig. 1.4 Detroit's People Platform

1.5 District 5

Taking a closer look at a high poverty, low-income, under development area district 5 Detroit. District 5 in Detroit is one of the city's neighborhoods that has faced significant challenges related to poverty, low-income levels, and underdevelopment. Located on the city's east side, District 5 has a diverse range of communities, each with its unique history, culture, and socioeconomic characteristics. District 5 is home to a predominantly African American population, reflecting Detroit overall demographic composition. This district has high poverty rated with a significant percentage of residents living below the federal poverty line.

Like many parts of Detroit, District 5 has many vacant properties, which contributed to neighborhood deterioration and decreased property values. Abandoned homes and commercial buildings pose safety hazards, detracting from the overall quality of life for residents. These issues are beginning to be addressed through demolition, rehabilitation, and community-led revitalization initiatives. Access to quality education, health care, transportation, and recreational facilities has been a concern. Schools in the area have struggled with funding, academic performance, and infrastructure issues that have impacted educational outcomes for students. Despite these challenges, District 5 is a place of resilience, community pride, and activism. Residents, local organizations, and community leaders have been actively engaged to improve conditions, economic development and advocate for equitable

resources and opportunities. Community gardens, youth programs and neighborhood associations are some of the ways they reflect the community's commitment to positive change and empowerment.

The transition from downtown Detroit to neighborhoods along Gratiot Avenue in District 5 visually represents the contrast that reflects the broader challenges and disparities facing the city's urban landscape. As one travels north on Gratiot Avenue from the heart of downtown, the scene begins to shift, revealing a landscape marked by neglect, abandonment and disinvestment that characterizes many neighborhoods within the district. The journey highlights the disparities between the city's revitalized core and its struggling neighborhoods. As you venture north, vacant lots, abandoned buildings and deteriorating infrastructure become more prevalent, showing the impact of economic decline, population loss, and systematic inequalities that have shaped the neighborhoods' trajectory.

Engaging with Gratiot Avenue and the neighborhoods of District 5 offers an opportunity to confront the realities of urban decline, the complexities of neighborhood transformation, and the importance of collective action shaping a more inclusive resilient and vibrant future for Detroit.

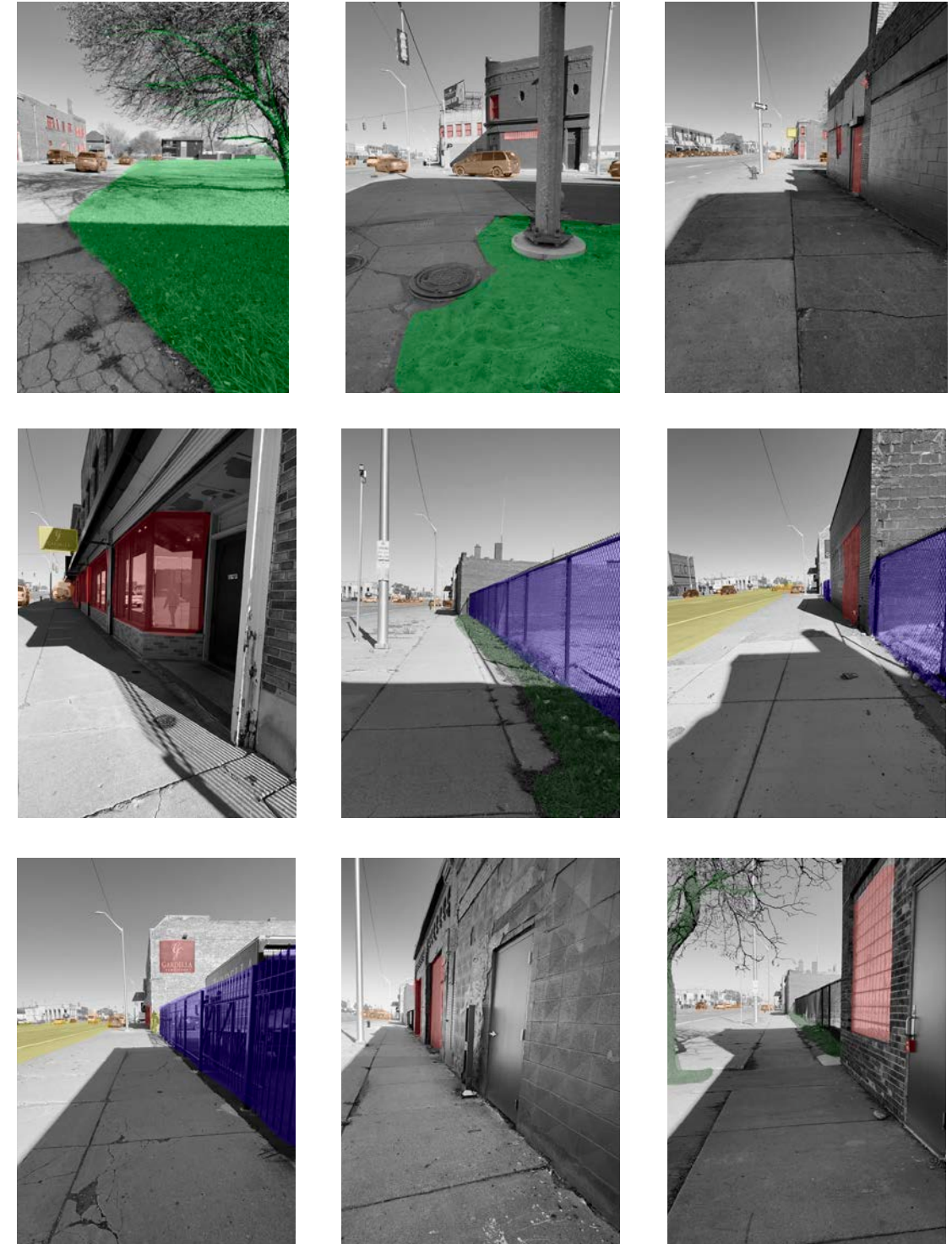


Fig. 1.5 Images taken along Gratiot Ave, Detroit MI

1.5 District 5

1. Community Centers:

Youthville Detroit: A community-based organization offering programs and services focused on youth development, education, and leadership training.

Focus HOPE: A nonprofit organization dedicated to intelligent and practical solutions to poverty by offering education, workforce training, and community development programs.

2. Educational Institutions:

Detroit Public Schools: Several schools and educational programs operate within District 5, providing K-12 education, vocational training, and extracurricular activities for students.

Local Libraries: Detroit Public Library branches in District 5 offer resources, programs, and services to support literacy, lifelong learning, and community engagement.

3. Healthcare and Social Services:

Community Health Centers: Organizations like CHASS (Community Health and Social Services Center) provide comprehensive healthcare services, including medical, dental, and behavioral health care, to residents regardless of their ability to pay.

Social Service Agencies: Nonprofits such as Matrix Human Services offer a range of social services, including food assistance, housing support, job training, and family support programs to help individuals and families achieve self-sufficiency.

4. Economic Development and Entrepreneurship:

Local Development Corporations: Groups like the Eastside Community Network and Jefferson East, Inc. work to stimulate economic growth, attract investments, and support small businesses in District 5.

Business Associations: Organizations like the Jefferson-Chalmers Business Association promote local businesses, encourage commercial revitalization, and organize community events to help promote economic vibrancy.

5. Arts, Culture, and Recreation:

Cultural Institutions: Places like the Heidelberg Project and various community arts organizations promote artistic expression, cultural heritage, and community engagement through art installations, workshops, and events.

Recreation Centers: Parks and recreation facilities in District 5 provide opportunities for sports, fitness, outdoor activities, and community gatherings, enhancing the quality of life for residents.

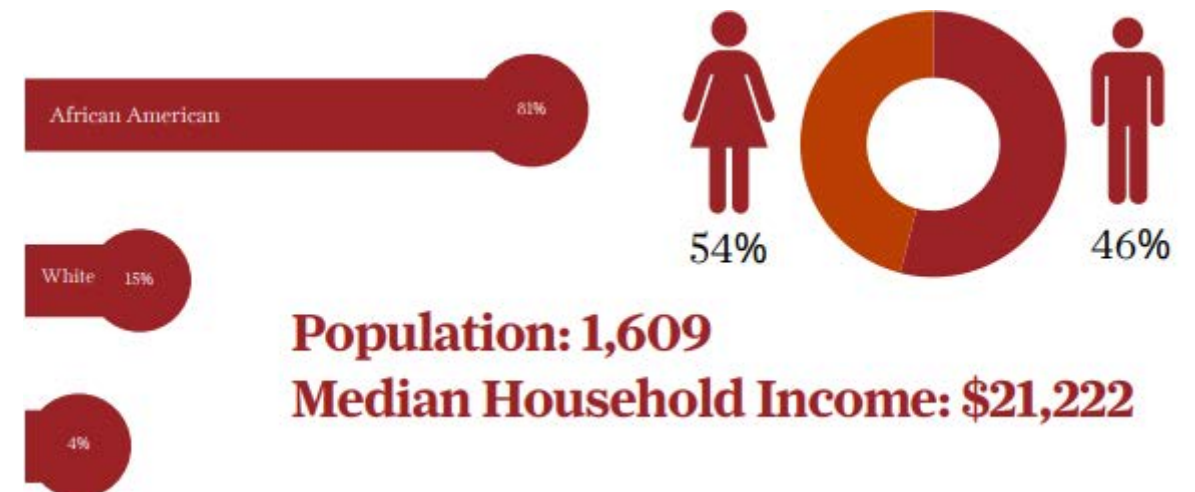


Fig. 1.5.1 Google images of District 5 Detroit

02

YOUTH
ENGAGEMENT



2.1 Background

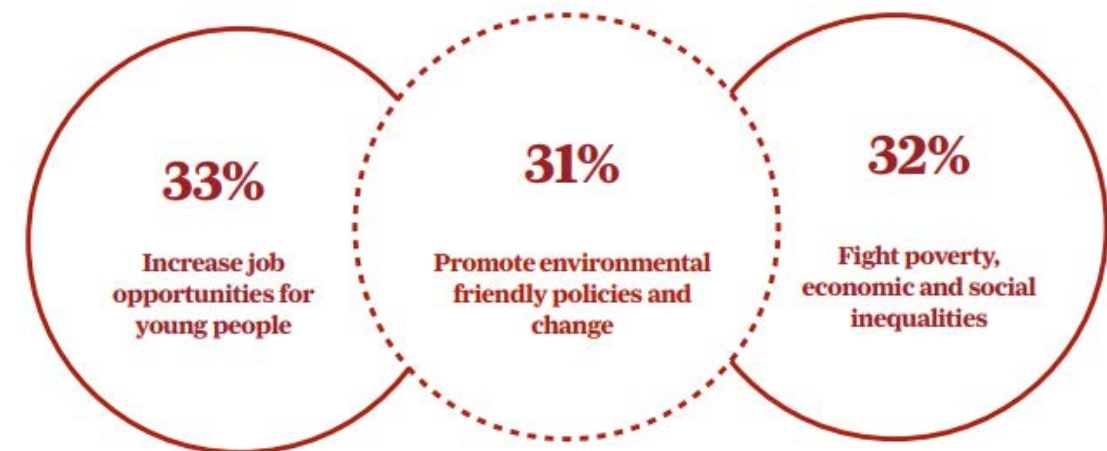
Youth engagement is the active and meaningful involvement of young people in decision-making processes, activities and initiatives that affect their lives, communities, and futures. Youth engagement provides the youth to voice their opinions, express their ideas, and act on issues that matter to them. Involving them will recognize their capacity to contribute meaningfully to solutions and empower them for change in their communities. The youth bring fresh perspectives, creativity, and innovative ideas to the table. Their unique insights can challenge conventional thinking, inspire new approaches, and drive positive change across various sectors, from technology and entrepreneurship to social justice and environmental sustainability. Encouraging youth engagement is essential for cultivating a culture of active citizenship. When the youth are informed, involved, and invested in their communities, they are more likely to participate in civic processes, vote and advocate for policies that reflect their interests and concerns. By prioritizing youth perspectives and needs, we can develop more effective and relevant solutions to these complex issues.

Detroit stands to gain significantly from embracing youth engagement as a cornerstone of its revitalization efforts. Using energy, creativity, and perspectives of its young people can bring about transformative change, and allow community resilience, and pave the way for a brighter future for Detroiters. By investing in the potential, creativity, and leadership of its youth, Detroit can unlock new opportunities, overcome challenges, and forge a path towards a thriving future that honors its past and future

9 out of 10 Detroit students are unidentified and homeless



Current Detroit issues



Youth engagement has a positive impact on communities

Fig. 2.1 University of Michigan, Detroit analysis

2.2 Precedent

Hip Hop Architecture Camp is a transformative program that blends the worlds of hip hop culture and architecture to inspire and empower young people. Through innovative workshops, hands-on design projects, and engaging discussions, participants explore how architecture intersects with their everyday lives, using hip hop as a lens for critical thinking and creative expression. This unique camp not only introduces youth to the principles of design and urban planning but also fosters a deeper understanding of their communities and the potential for positive change through architectural innovation. By connecting the dots between art, culture, and the built environment, the Hip Hop Architecture Camp cultivates the next generation of socially conscious designers and leaders, leaving a lasting impact on both individuals and communities alike.

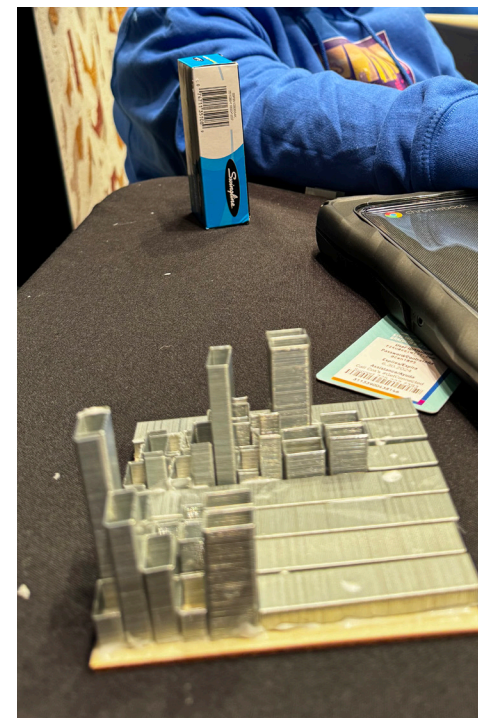
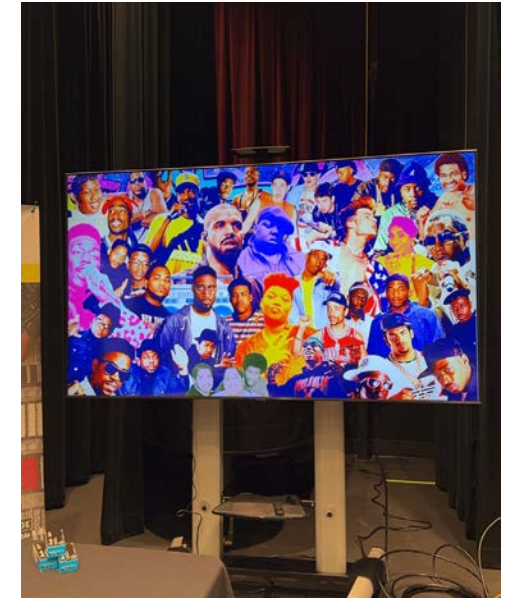


Fig. 2.2 Images taken at Hip-hop Architecture Las Vegas 24'

2.2 Precedent

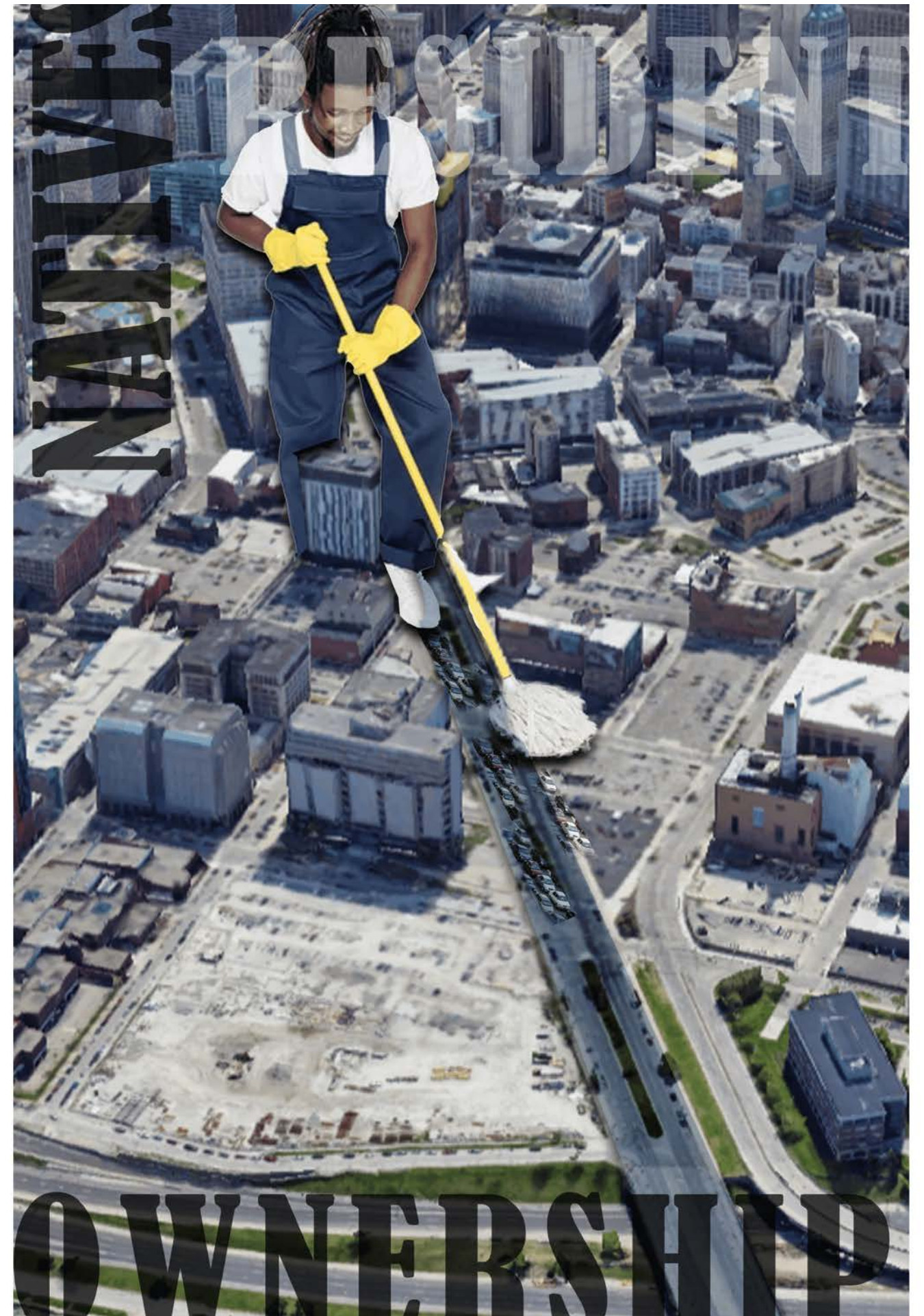
Project Pipeline Architecture Camp in Detroit is a dynamic initiative that seeks to cultivate a passion for architecture and urban design among young people in the different cities. Through immersive workshops, hands-on projects, and mentorship from industry professionals, participants delve into the multifaceted world of architecture, exploring its intersections with community development, sustainability, and innovation. This camp serves as a platform for nurturing creativity, critical thinking, and leadership skills, empowering youth to envision and shape the future of their city's built environment. By providing access to resources, knowledge, and mentorship, Project Pipeline Architecture Camp inspires the next generation of architects and urban planners to become catalysts for positive change, revitalizing Detroit's neighborhoods and fostering a more inclusive and vibrant urban landscape for all.



Fig. 2.2.1 Images found through Project Pipeline architecture camp

03

FRAMING CONCEPTS



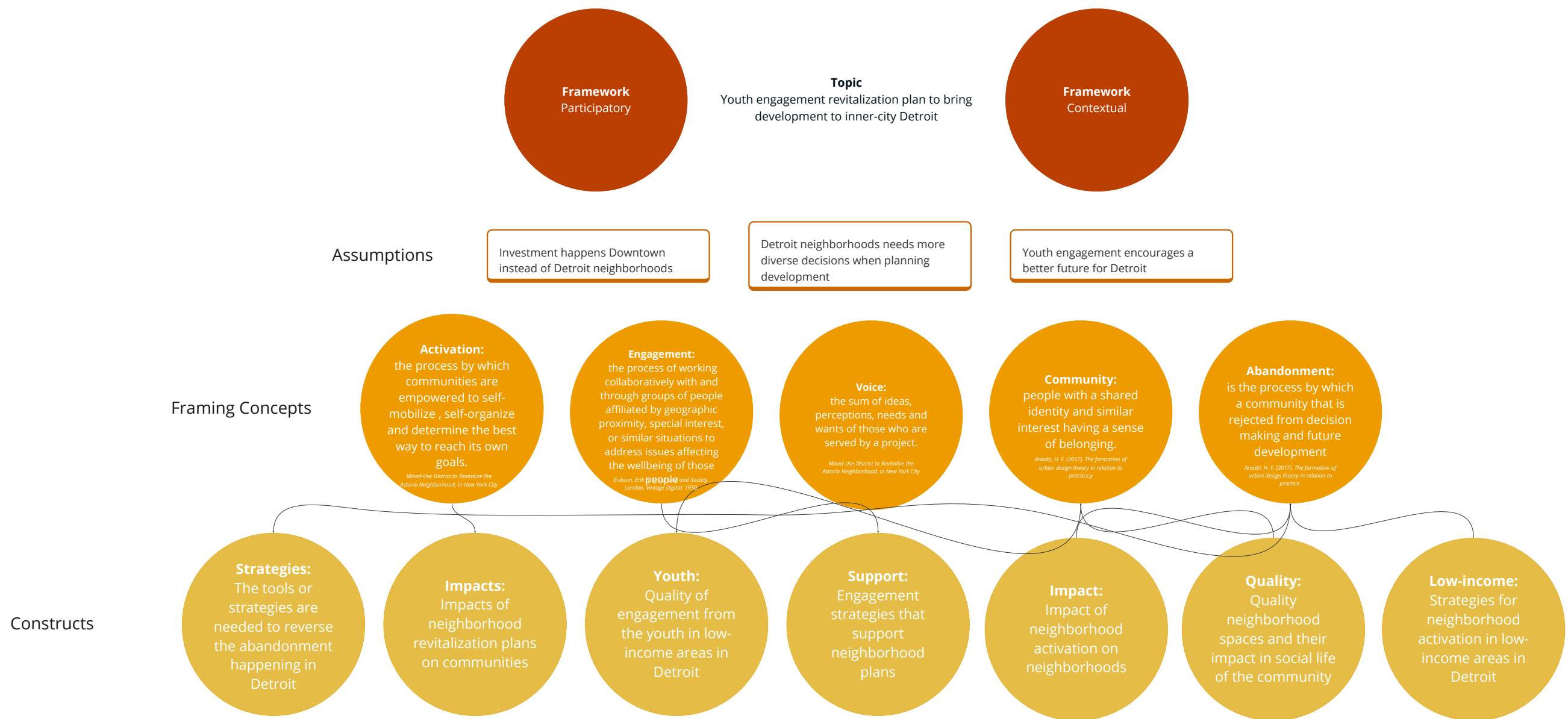


Fig. 3.1 Concept Diagram

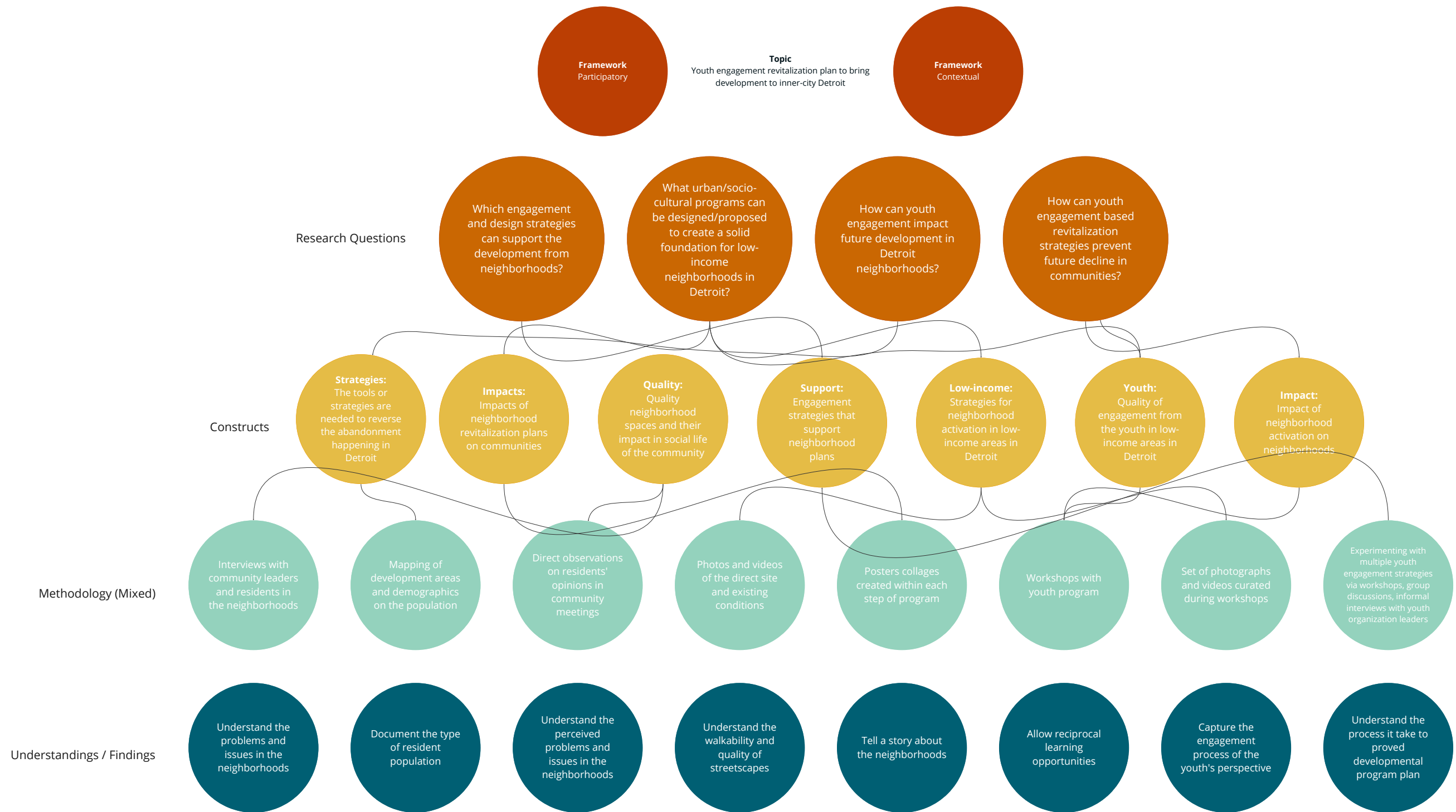


Fig. 3.2 Methods Diagram

04

YOUTH
PROGRAM



4.1 Selecting a Program

Finding a youth program to work with for youth engagement in District 5, I began by conducting research to identify organizations specifically operating within this community. I focused on local nonprofits and community centers that are deeply rooted in District 5 dedicated to serving its youth program.

Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program: This program offers academic support, mentorship, and athletic training to Detroit youth, using boxing as a platform to instill important life skills, values, and academic excellence.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan: The Boys & Girls Clubs operate several locations throughout Detroit, including sites within District 5, providing after-school programs, sports leagues, educational enrichment, and leadership development opportunities for youth.

YouthVille Detroit: A community-based organization that offers youth development programs, leadership training, and enrichment activities designed to empower young people to reach their full potential and become positive contributors to their communities.

Detroit PAL (Police Athletic League): Detroit PAL offers a variety of sports and recreational programs, including basketball, soccer, baseball, and more, providing opportunities for physical activity, skill development, teamwork, and mentorship for

Detroit youth.

Skillman Foundation: The Skillman Foundation supports various youth-serving organizations and initiatives in Detroit, including those in District 5, focusing on education, youth leadership, community engagement, and neighborhood revitalization.

4.1 Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program

The Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program is a transformative initiative based in Detroit that goes beyond traditional athletic training to offer support and development opportunities for the youth. Founded by Khali Sweeney, the program uses discipline and structure of boxing as a platform to instill important life skills, values and academic excellence among the participants. The program is more than a boxing gym, it provides a safe nurturing environment where the youth receive academic tutoring, mentorship, and enrichment activities designed to empower them.

The program serves as hope and resilience for the youth facing economic challenges, systemic inequalities, and educational disparities. Through support, mentors and a strong community, the program equips the youth with the tools, confidence, and resilience to overcome obstacles, realizing their potential, and pursue pathways to success.

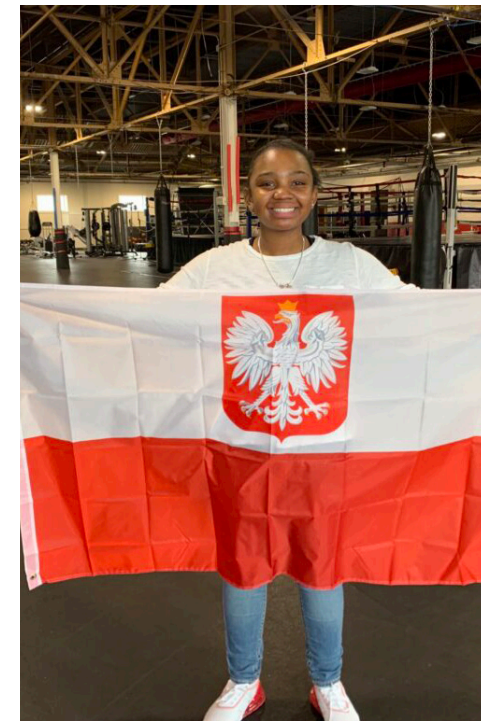


Fig. 4.1 Images pull from Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program

Fig. 4.1.1 Images of me attending the Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program

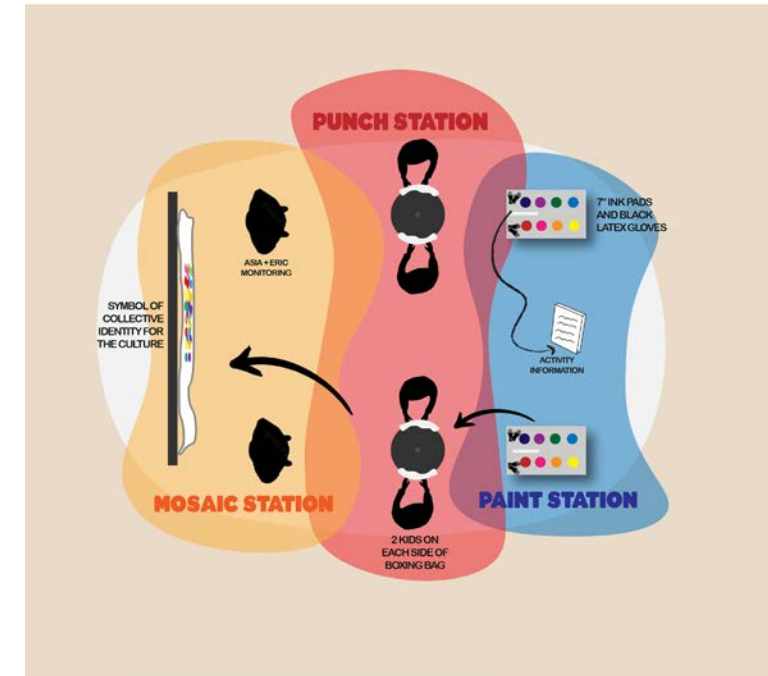
4.3 Collaboration Project

Developing a series of interactive fashion pieces for the elementary kids, that tell cultural stories while allowing the structure of the Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program to create punches that represent emotions that the youth may experience throughout their lives. The community within the program will create a series of tee shirts that incorporates a unique, immersive experience expressing their identity through punches placed on the shirt. These punches are shown words that are identified by colors / emotions. Within this workshop, the students will begin to learn each term and definitions, while also understanding the history of the stencils and spray paint that is used to create logos on the shirts. Expressed the importance of culture and the identity it comes with.



Visual of finished shirt

Working with the Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program would inspire the youth to begin investigating architecture, design, and community development field creating a passion using their creativity and skills to make a positive impact on the world around them. By integrating architecture and design into the program's existing framework of the set academic support, mentorship and development will contribute to the growth and empowerment of Detroit's youth.



Floorplan of activity

Name: _____

Connect the word to the image that explains it.

| | | |
|--|-----------|--|
| | HELPFUL | |
| | KIND | |
| | WELCOMING | |
| | CARING | |
| | ACTIVE | |
| | COMMUNITY | |
| | CREATIVE | |
| | JOYFUL | |

COLOR KEY

HELPFUL
KIND
WELCOMING
CARING
ACTIVE
COMMUNITY
CREATIVE
JOYFUL

Name: _____

Draw an image that describes the word.

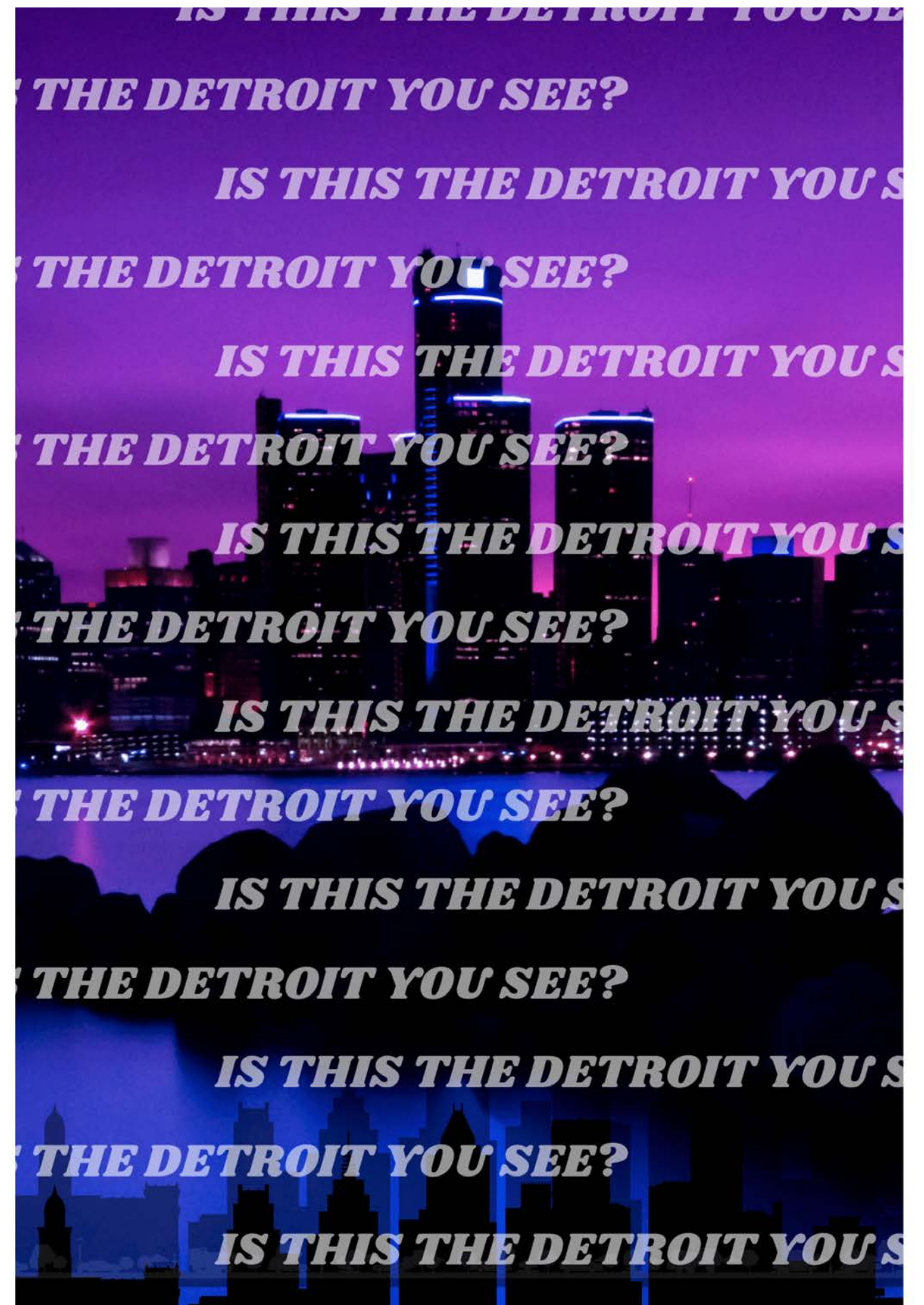
| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| HELPFUL | KIND |
| WELCOMING | CARING |
| ACTIVE | COMMUNITY |
| CREATIVE | JOYFUL |

Worksheets for student to complete

Fig. 4.3 Model created for workshop at Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program

05

SERIES OF
WORKSHOPS



5.1 Workshops

Hosting a series of workshops at the Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program allowed a unique and impactful opportunity to introduce students to architecture and embowered them to have a voice in shaping the future of Detroit and their neighborhoods. In these workshops the students learned the fundamentals of architecture and were encourages to apply these concepts to real-world challenges and opportunities within their communities.

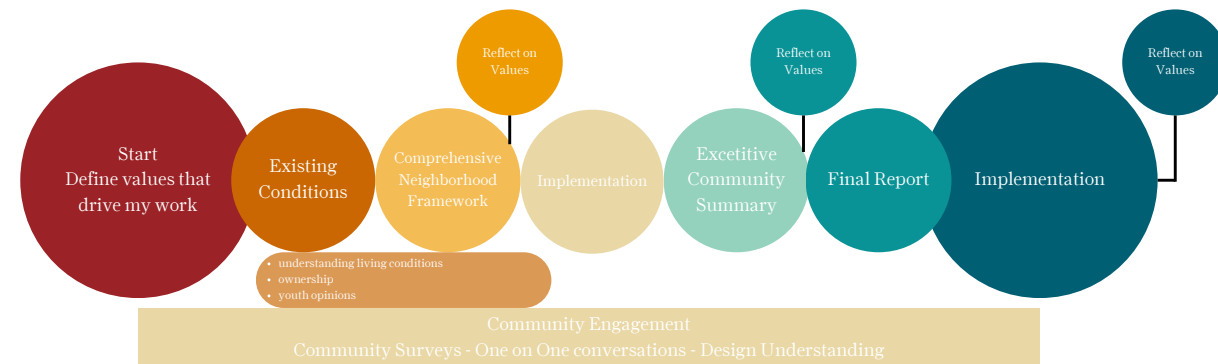


Fig. 5.1 Implementation plan

TIMELINE

DESIGN PROCESS

The design process that the DBG students will go through. This will be placed over a series of workshops.



5.2 Introduction

The first workshop in the series focused on providing an introductory experience for the students, offering them a glimpse into the world of design and architecture while emphasizing the potential impact they can have on their environments. The workshop was designed as an interactive and engaging session, fostering a sense of curiosity, exploration, and empowerment among the participants.

During the workshop, students had the opportunity to get to know one another, building connections and creating a supportive community within the group. This initial bonding phase set the stage for collaborative learning and teamwork as the series progressed, encouraging students to share ideas, perspectives, and insights with one another.

The workshop also introduced fundamental concepts of design and architecture, highlighting the role of these disciplines in shaping the built environment, enhancing quality of life, and fostering community development. Through interactive presentations, discussions, and hands-on activities, students were encouraged to think critically about their surroundings, identify opportunities for improvement, and envision creative solutions to address local challenges.



Fig. 5.2 Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program students' work

5.2 Introduction

Reflecting on the first workshop, participants delved into the concept of “Attachment to Place,” exploring the profound emotional and psychological connections individuals form with their homes and neighborhoods. This foundational exploration set the stage for deeper insights into the intricate relationships between people, their environments, and the elements that shape their daily experiences.

Attachment to Place (Home):

During the workshop, students engaged in introspective activities and discussions to reflect on their personal connections to their homes and neighborhoods. They explored the significance of “home” beyond physical structures, acknowledging the emotional, cultural, and social dimensions that contribute to a sense of belonging, identity, and well-being.

Observing Street Elements from Walking:

Participants embarked on a walking tour to observe and document various street elements, gaining firsthand experience and insights into the characteristics, nuances, and dynamics of their immediate surroundings. This experiential learning approach encouraged students to engage with their environment actively, fostering observational skills, curiosity, and critical thinking as they explored the streetscape from a pedestrian perspective.

Understanding Direct Street Neighborhoods (Neighbors but not Entire Street):

Students examined the dynamics of their direct street neighborhoods, recognizing the interconnected relationships, interactions, and narratives that unfold within their immediate communities. While acknowledging the familiarity and closeness with neighbors, students also explored the broader context of their neighborhoods, considering the diversity, complexity, and potential opportunities for connection and collaboration within the broader community.

Ways the Youth Better Understand Neighborhoods:

Through reflective discussions, collaborative activities, and interactive exercises, students identified various strategies and approaches to deepen their understanding of neighborhoods:

Engaging with Community Members:

Building relationships, listening to stories, and learning from community members to gain diverse perspectives and insights into the history, culture, and values that shape the neighborhood.

Exploring Public Spaces:

Utilizing and exploring parks, public squares, markets, and other communal spaces to observe, interact, and engage with the vibrancy, activities, and social dynamics of the neighborhood.



5.3 Site Analysis

The second workshop in the series delved deeper into the realm of architecture, focusing specifically on site analysis—a crucial step in the design process that informs and shapes the development of architectural projects. This workshop provided students with an opportunity to explore the Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program’s site in detail, examining its context, surroundings, and potential opportunities and challenges.

Physical Features:

Analyzing the site’s topography, existing structures, vegetation, and natural elements to understand its physical attributes and constraints.

Environmental Factors:

Assessing environmental conditions such as sunlight, wind patterns, climate, and sustainability considerations to inform design strategies that optimize energy efficiency, comfort, and environmental performance.

Cultural and Social Context: Understanding the site’s cultural heritage, community dynamics, and socio-economic factors to ensure the design resonates with the local culture, values, and aspirations of the community it serves.

Accessibility and Connectivity:

Evaluating transportation networks, pedestrian circulation, and accessibility to public amenities and services to enhance connectivity, mobility, and inclusivity within the site and its surrounding context.

Legal and Regulatory Requirements:

Identifying zoning regulations, building codes, and other legal considerations that may impact the design and development of the site to ensure compliance and mitigate potential risks.

Exploring the Youth Program’s Site:

During the workshop, students engaged in hands-on activities and exercises to analyze the Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program’s site, applying the principles of site analysis to identify and document key elements and features surrounding the site. They examined the site’s physical characteristics, observed its surroundings, and considered how these factors influence the program’s operations, user experience, and potential for future development.

By conducting a site analysis, students gained valuable insights into the complexities and considerations involved in architectural design and urban planning. They learned to recognize the interconnected relationships between a site and its context, appreciating the importance of thoughtful site planning and design in creating spaces that are functional, sustainable, and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the community.



Fig. 5.3 Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program students’ work

5.3 Site Analysis

Reflecting on the second workshop, participants delved into the intricate relationships and dynamics between major streets, direct placements, and the surrounding context of their neighborhoods. This exploration provided valuable insights into how streetscapes, landmarks, and amenities influence navigation, connectivity, and the overall experience of moving through and interacting with urban environments.

Connection from Major Streets to Direct Placement:

Participants explored the connections between major streets and direct placements within their neighborhoods, recognizing how the layout, design, and accessibility of streets influence the flow, accessibility, and connectivity of the urban fabric. They discussed the importance of clear pathways, intersections, and signage in guiding movement, enhancing accessibility, and fostering seamless connections between major thoroughfares and local destinations.

Observing Street Elements from Walking:

Engaging in walking tours, students observed and analyzed various street elements, gaining insights into the design, functionality, and aesthetics of their surroundings. By actively engaging with the streetscape, participants honed their observational skills, developed an appreciation for the nuances of urban design, and recognized the impact of design choices on pedestrian experience, safety, and comfort.

Gets Around Better with Wayfinding:

Participants explored the concept of wayfinding, discussing strategies and tools to navigate and orient oneself within the neighborhood effectively. They emphasized the importance of clear signage, landmarks, and intuitive design in enhancing wayfinding, reducing confusion, and empowering individuals to navigate their surroundings with confidence and ease.

Major Streets Help with Surrounding Sites:

Students recognized the pivotal role of major streets in shaping the character, accessibility, and connectivity of surrounding sites within the neighborhood. They discussed how major streets serve as key arteries, linking neighborhoods, commercial areas, recreational spaces, and other significant sites, contributing to the vibrancy, accessibility, and functionality of the urban environment.

Restaurants and Schools Are Key Places:

Participants identified restaurants and schools as key places within their neighborhoods, acknowledging their role as community hubs, gathering spaces, and focal points of activity, social interaction, and cultural exchange. They discussed the importance of supporting local businesses, fostering community connections, and creating inclusive and welcoming environments that cater to diverse needs and interests.



5.4 Streetscapes

The third workshop in the series shifted its focus towards the intricacies of streetscaping, providing students with an opportunity to explore and understand the various elements that contribute to creating vibrant and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes. This interactive session aimed to empower students to reimagine and reshape their urban environment from a youth-centric perspective, emphasizing the importance of inclusive and user-friendly design.

Sidewalks and Pedestrian Zones: Creating safe, accessible, and inviting walkways for pedestrians to encourage walking and active mobility.

Street Furniture and Amenities: Incorporating benches, seating areas, bike racks, lighting, and signage to provide comfort, convenience, and enhance usability.

Landscaping and Greenery: Integrating trees, plants, gardens, and green spaces to improve air quality, provide shade, and create a more pleasant and sustainable environment.

Street Art and Public Installations: Incorporating public art, murals, sculptures, and interactive installations to foster creativity, cultural expression, and community engagement.

Traffic Calming Measures: Implementing design strategies such as traffic islands, crosswalks, speed bumps, and curb extensions to enhance safety, manage traffic flow, and prioritize pedestrian and cyclist safety.

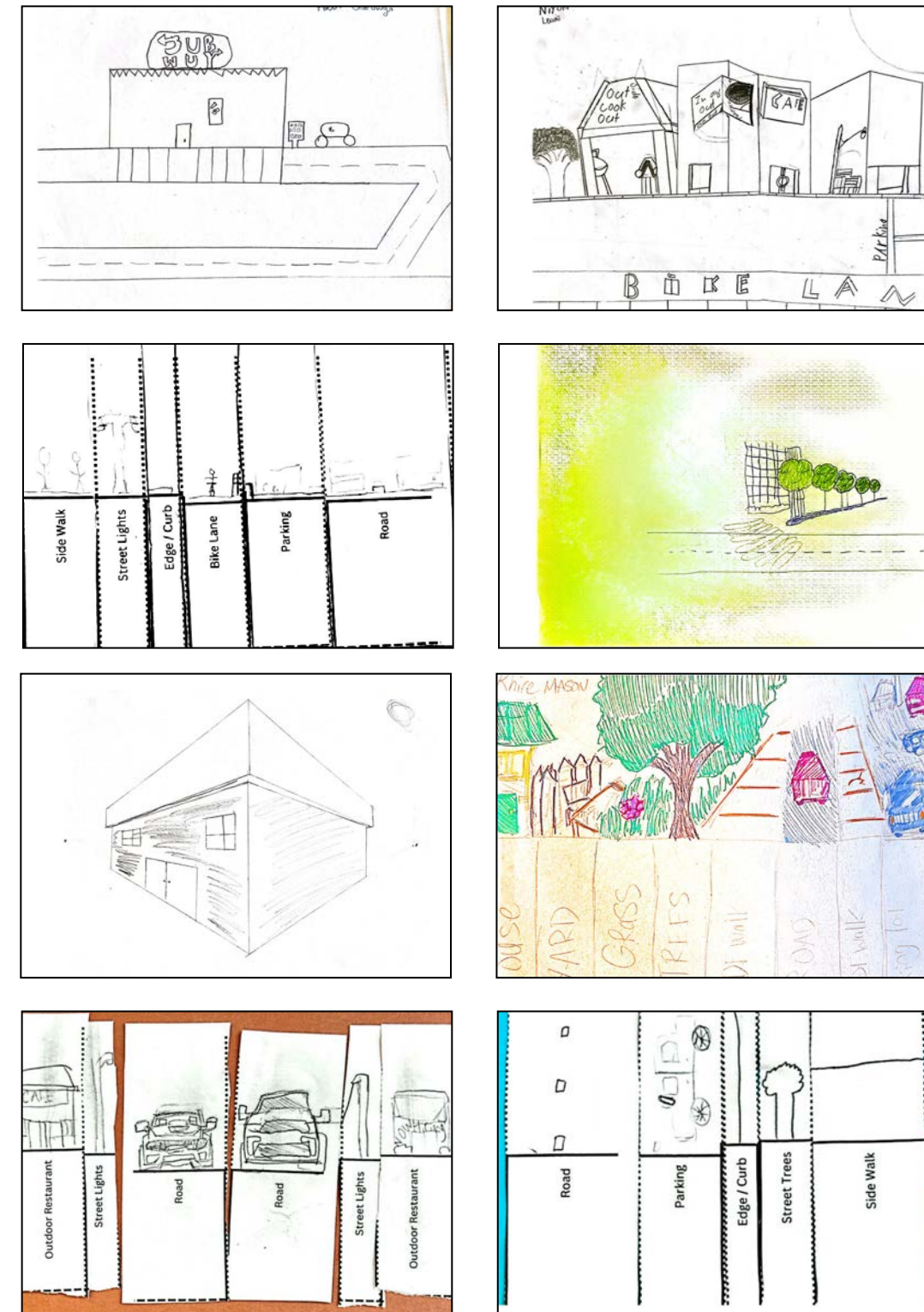
Youth-Centric Perspective:

During the workshop, students were encouraged to critically analyze and identify the different elements of a streetscape, considering their preferences, needs, and perspectives as young users and community members. They explored how the arrangement, design, and integration of these elements can influence their daily experiences, activities, and interactions within the urban environment.

Through interactive discussions, group activities, and hands-on exercises, students collaborated to conceptualize and design their ideal streetscape, considering the sequence and placement of elements from a youth-centric viewpoint. They learned to prioritize elements that enhance accessibility, safety, social interaction, and overall livability, reflecting the diverse interests and aspirations of young people in shaping their communities.

By engaging in this creative and collaborative process, students gained a deeper understanding of the role they can play in advocating for inclusive and sustainable urban design. They learned to appreciate the importance of considering diverse user perspectives, fostering community engagement, and promoting active participation in shaping the future of their neighborhoods and cities.

Fig. 5.4 Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program students' work



5.4 Streetscapes

Reflecting on the third workshop, participants delved into the fundamental principles of pedestrian-oriented design, emphasizing the centrality of pedestrians in shaping vibrant, accessible, and inclusive urban environments. This exploration provided valuable insights into the key elements that contribute to creating walkable, connected, and livable neighborhoods that prioritize people over vehicles.

Pedestrians Are the Most Important:

Participants reaffirmed the principle that pedestrians are the most important users of urban spaces. They emphasized the importance of designing streetscapes that prioritize pedestrian safety, comfort, and accessibility, fostering environments that encourage walking, active mobility, and social interaction while reducing reliance on cars and promoting sustainable transportation alternatives.

Highlights the Importance of Sidewalks:

Students discussed the crucial role of sidewalks in creating pedestrian-friendly environments. They emphasized the need for well-designed, continuous, and accessible sidewalks that accommodate diverse users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and individuals with disabilities, ensuring safe and enjoyable walking experiences throughout the neighborhood.

Restaurants and Stores Bring Neighborhood Together:

Participants recognized restaurants and stores as vital community anchors that bring people together, foster social connections, and contribute to the vibrancy and vitality of their neighborhoods. They discussed the importance of supporting local businesses, creating welcoming gathering spaces, and promoting economic vitality and cultural richness within the community.

Needs More Parks and Bike Lanes:

Students identified a need for more parks and bike lanes within their neighborhoods, highlighting the importance of providing accessible, inclusive, and well-maintained recreational spaces and cycling infrastructure. They discussed the benefits of parks in promoting physical activity, mental well-being, and community engagement, as well as the role of bike lanes in encouraging cycling, reducing traffic congestion, and promoting sustainable transportation options.

Understands Perspective Drawings:

During the workshop, participants developed an understanding of perspective drawings, exploring their role in visualizing and communicating design ideas effectively. They learned to interpret and create perspective drawings, gaining valuable skills in representing spatial relationships, scale, and design concepts, enhancing their ability to communicate and visualize design solutions in a clear and compelling manner.



5.5 Posters

The fourth workshop in the series centered on amplifying the voices and perspectives of the youth, emphasizing the importance of active participation, advocacy, and expression in shaping their neighborhoods. This workshop provided students with a platform to articulate their aspirations, concerns, and visions for their communities through creative poster-making activities.

Focusing on Youth Perspectives:

Recognizing the unique insights, experiences, and creativity that young people bring to urban planning and design, the workshop prioritized the youth's perspective as a central guiding force in envisioning and advocating for positive change within their neighborhoods. By placing the students at the forefront of the design process, the workshop empowered them to become active contributors and decision-makers in shaping the future of their communities.

Expressing Through Poster-Making:

The poster-making activity served as a dynamic and interactive medium for students to express their thoughts, ideas, and goals for their neighborhoods visually. Each poster became a canvas for students to communicate their vision, highlighting key goals, priorities, and aspirations that reflect their values, interests, and desires for positive transformation within their communities.

Students were encouraged to be creative and innovative in their approach, utilizing various artistic techniques, symbols, colors,

and messages to convey their messages effectively. From advocating for safer streets, accessible parks, and vibrant public spaces to expressing the importance of community unity, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability, the posters captured a diverse range of perspectives and priorities that resonate with the collective aspirations of the youth.

Empowering Youth Voices:

The fourth workshop reinforced the importance of empowering youth voices and fostering a sense of ownership, agency, and pride in their neighborhoods. By providing a supportive and inclusive platform for expression, the workshop encouraged students to engage in meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and reflection, fostering a deeper sense of connection, empathy, and understanding among participants.

Through this creative and reflective process, students not only honed their communication and artistic skills but also developed a deeper appreciation for the power of collective action, advocacy, and community engagement in driving positive change. The posters created during the workshop serve as powerful reminders of the youth's capacity to inspire, influence, and transform their neighborhoods, demonstrating the transformative potential of youth-led initiatives in creating more inclusive, vibrant, and resilient communities.

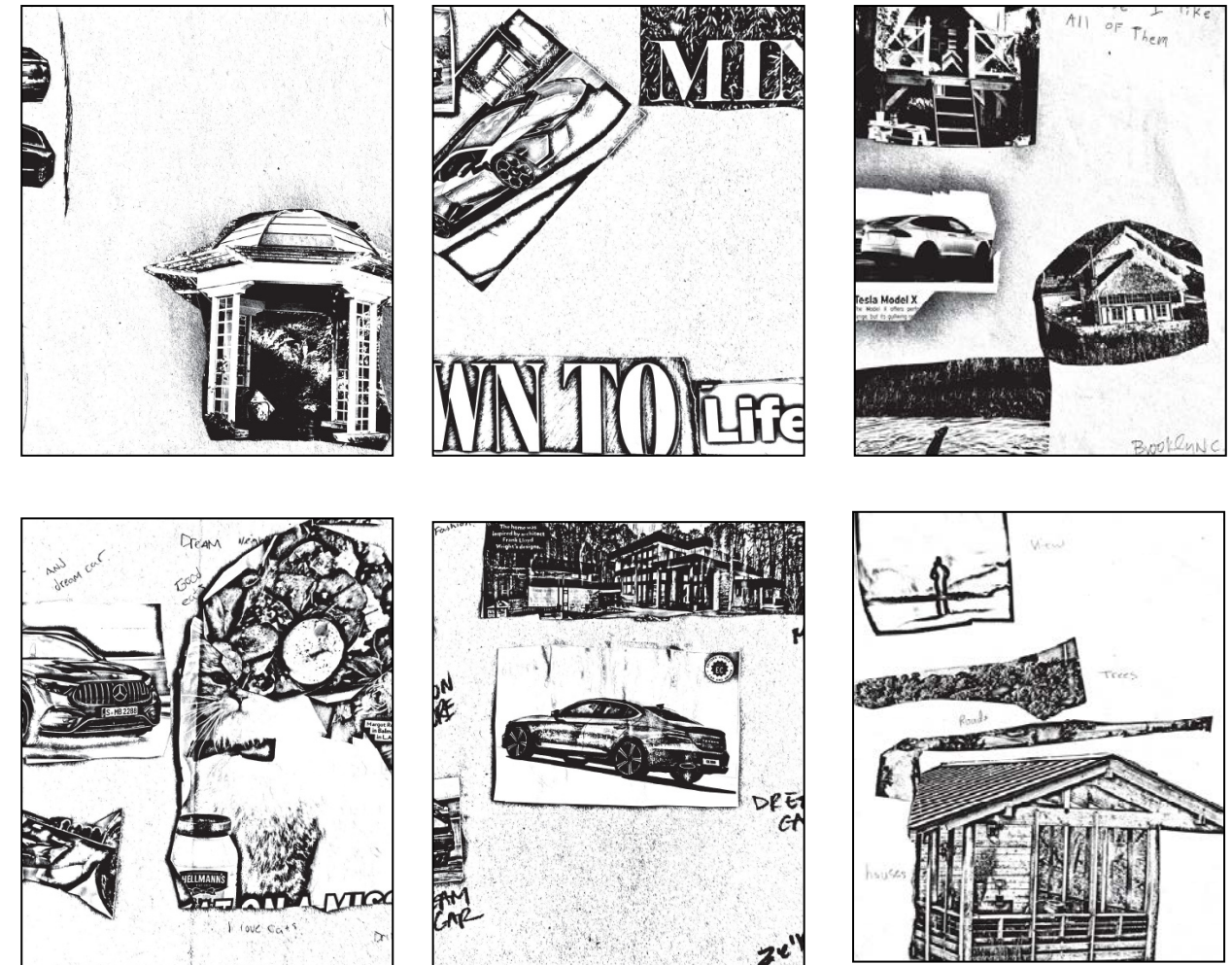


Fig. 5.5 Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program students' work

5.5 Posters

Reflecting on the fourth workshop, participants engaged deeply with the theme of creating safer, more inclusive, and people-centered neighborhoods. Through creative poster-making activities, students were encouraged to express their visions, values, and aspirations for their communities, focusing on themes of reducing violence, promoting positive values, and fostering community cohesion.

Posters Express Less Violence:

Participants explored ways to convey messages of peace, harmony, and non-violence through their poster designs. They discussed the importance of using imagery, colors, and text that promote understanding, empathy, and conflict resolution, aiming to inspire positive behaviors and attitudes within the community.

Values Are Labeled:

Students identified and labeled core values that resonate with their personal beliefs and aspirations for their neighborhoods. They emphasized the importance of values such as respect, kindness, unity, and empathy, highlighting their role in fostering a sense of community, belonging, and mutual respect among residents.

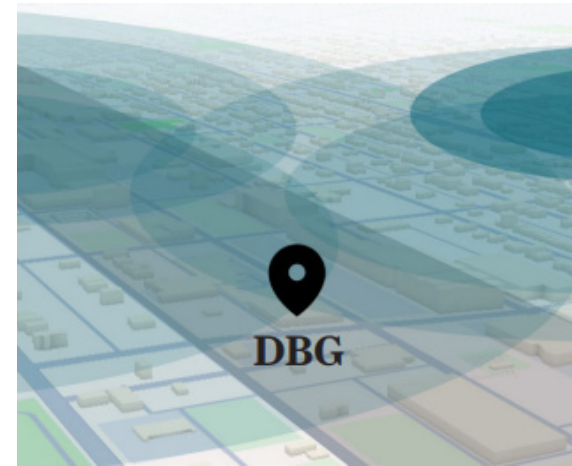
Neighborhoods to Be About the People Who Live There:

Participants reaffirmed the principle that neighborhoods should be designed around the needs, interests, and aspirations of the people who live there. They discussed the

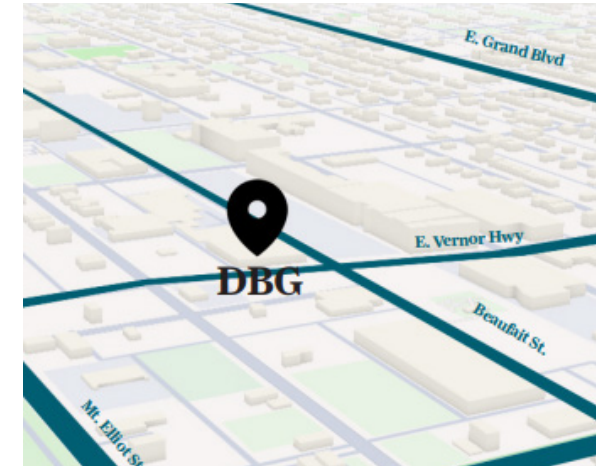
importance of community engagement, participatory design, and inclusive decision-making processes in shaping neighborhoods that reflect the diverse identities, cultures, and values of their residents.

Utilize the Car Industry to Promote Less Violence in the Neighborhoods:

During the workshop, students explored innovative approaches to leverage the car industry's influence and resources to promote safer and more peaceful neighborhoods. They brainstormed ideas such as designing safer streets, advocating for traffic calming measures, supporting sustainable transportation initiatives, and promoting responsible driving behaviors that contribute to reducing accidents, conflicts, and violence within the community.



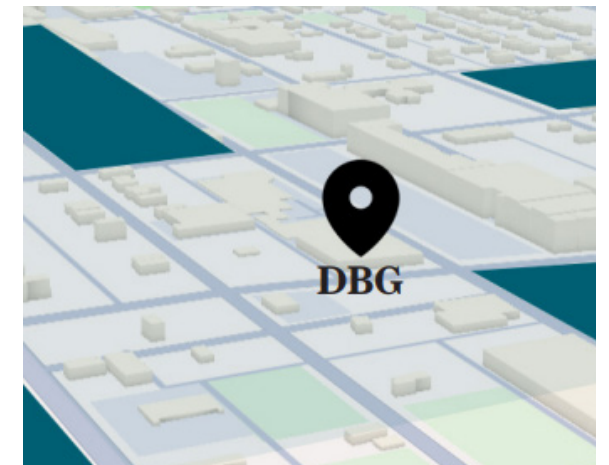
Violence Areas



Major Roads



Streetscapes



Important Locations

Fig. 5.5.1 Site analysis surrounding Downtown Boxing Gym Youth program



Fig. 5.5.2 Images during workshops at Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program

06

REFLECTION



6.1 Reflection

Pocket parks offer a place where youth can safely interact and play, allowing a sense of community and belonging. By incorporating bike lanes throughout the site and designing the surrounding streetscape with greenery and pedestrian-friendly features, these parks can promote accessibility and connectivity. Each play scape, inspired by career choices selected by students, ignites imagination, and provides insight into various professions. Involving youth in the design and activation process empowers them to take ownership of their environment, ensuring that these spaces reflect their needs and aspirations. As these pocket parks become vibrant hubs of activity, they not only create opportunities for future development.

This project is a pocket park initiative future workshop, offering students a unique opportunity for hands-on involvement and skill development. The future workshop equips students with practical skills in construction and design, empowering them to contribute to the development of the park. Through this integrated approach, students not only engage in meaningful activities but also gain valuable experience in both physical and practical craftsmanship, laying the groundwork for their personal and professional growth.

6.2 Issues Identified

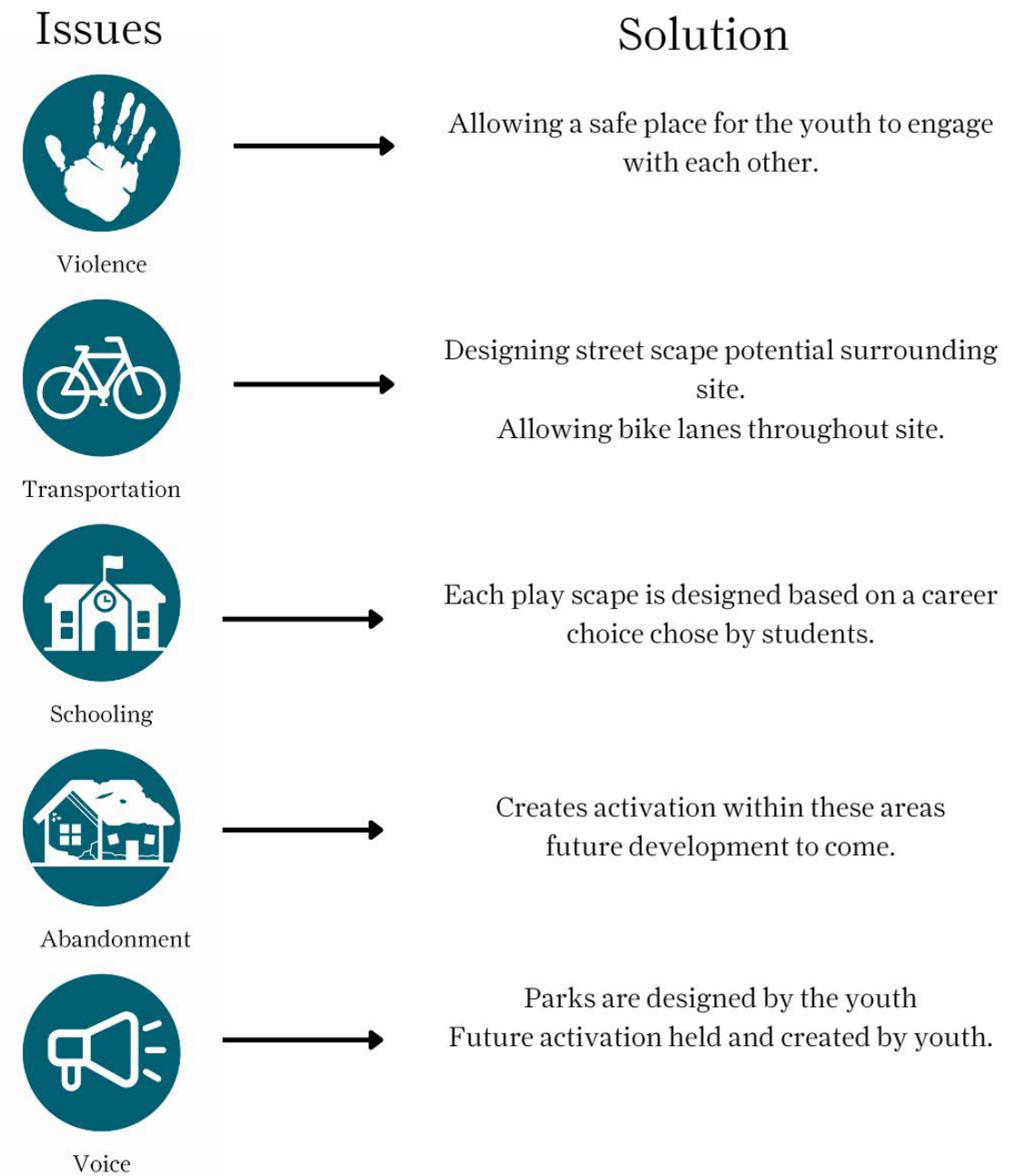


Fig. 6.2 Issues Identified by Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program

6.3 Solution: Pocket parks



Phase 1

Phase 1 of the pocket parks initiative begins with the careful selection of a vacant lot that is already frequented and utilized by local youth. This initial step involves identifying a space that holds significance to the community, often serving as a gathering spot or informal recreational area for young people. By choosing a vacant lot that is already embraced by the youth, the project ensures that the pocket park will be rooted in the community's existing social fabric and meet the specific needs and preferences of its young residents. This deliberate approach lays the foundation for a collaborative and inclusive design process that empowers youth to play an active role in transforming their beloved space into a vibrant and inviting pocket park.



Phase 2

Phase 2 of the pocket parks initiative focuses on the maintenance of the selected lot and the communication of upcoming development plans to local residents. This stage involves ongoing efforts to keep the vacant lot clean, safe, and accessible, demonstrating a commitment to community stewardship and revitalization. Additionally, informing residents about the planned development of the pocket park, ensuring that their voices are heard and their input is considered throughout the process. By actively engaging with the community and demonstrating tangible progress, Phase 2 builds trust, fosters a sense of ownership, and generates excitement for the future transformation of the vacant lot into a vibrant community space.



Phase 3

Phase 3 of the pocket parks project, the focus shifts to the physical transformation of the vacant lot into a temporary community space. This involves the construction of playground equipment, benches, and other amenities that create a welcoming environment for neighborhood residents to gather, play, and socialize. By providing accessible and inviting recreational facilities, Phase 3 aims to foster a sense of community cohesion and enhance the quality of life for local residents. This interim step allows the neighborhood to begin enjoying the benefits of the future pocket park while also generating excitement and anticipation for the forthcoming permanent development.



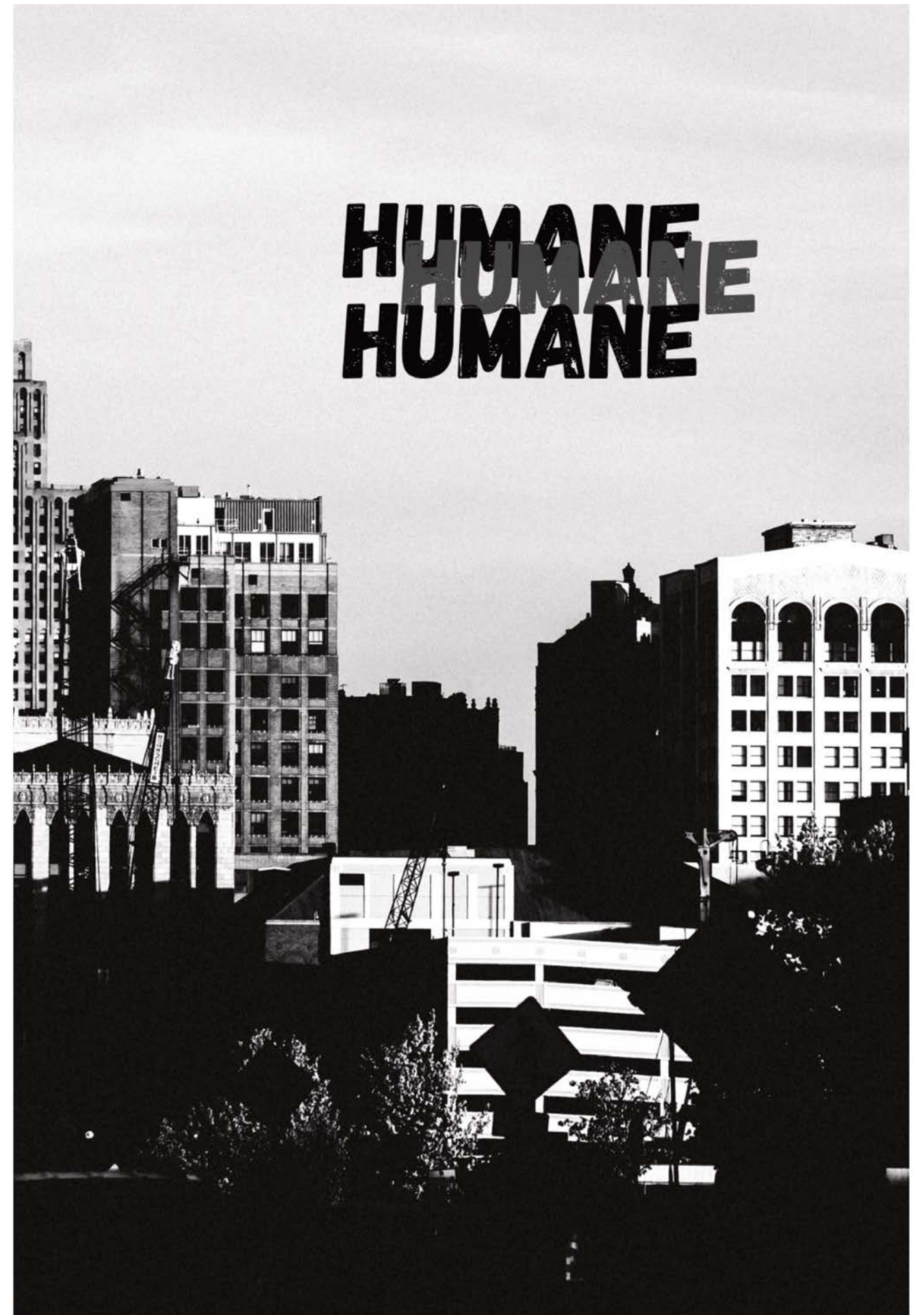
Phase 4

Phase 4 of the pocket parks project marks the culmination of efforts with the construction of permanent structures and the acquisition of the lot to establish an official park. This phase involves the installation of durable amenities, such as playground equipment, seating areas, landscaping, and other features that enhance the functionality and aesthetics of the space. Additionally, the purchase of the lot ensures long-term stewardship and sustainability of the park, providing a dedicated community asset for generations to come. By completing Phase 4, the pocket parks initiative realizes its vision of creating vibrant, inclusive, and permanent green spaces that enrich the quality of life for residents and contribute to the revitalization of the neighborhood.

Fig. 6.3 Development phases of pocket parks

07

**Voice of the
Youth**



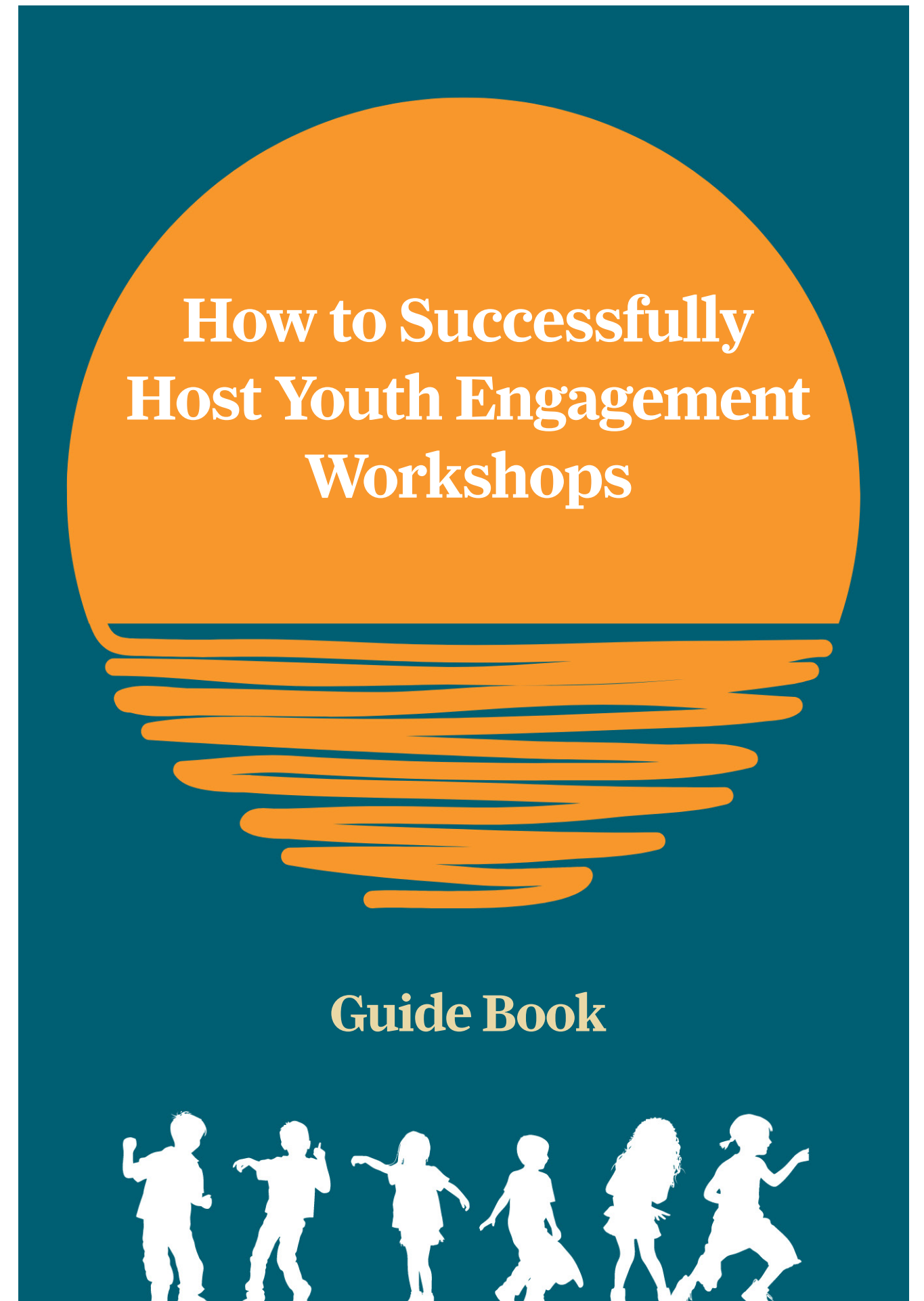
7.1 Importance

The youth's perspective is important in shaping the world, influencing change, driving innovation, and allowing a more inclusive future. Their perspectives, energy, creativity and passion empower them to challenge the status quo and inspire new ideas for transformative solutions to address global challenges.

Youth possess a forward-thinking mindset, envisioning the future with optimism, resilience, and a commitment to sustainability, equity, and social justice. Engaging youth in decision-making processes, policy development, and community initiatives empowers them to voice their opinions, contribute their insights, and actively participate in shaping their present and future.

08

GUIDE BOOK



8.1 Guide Book

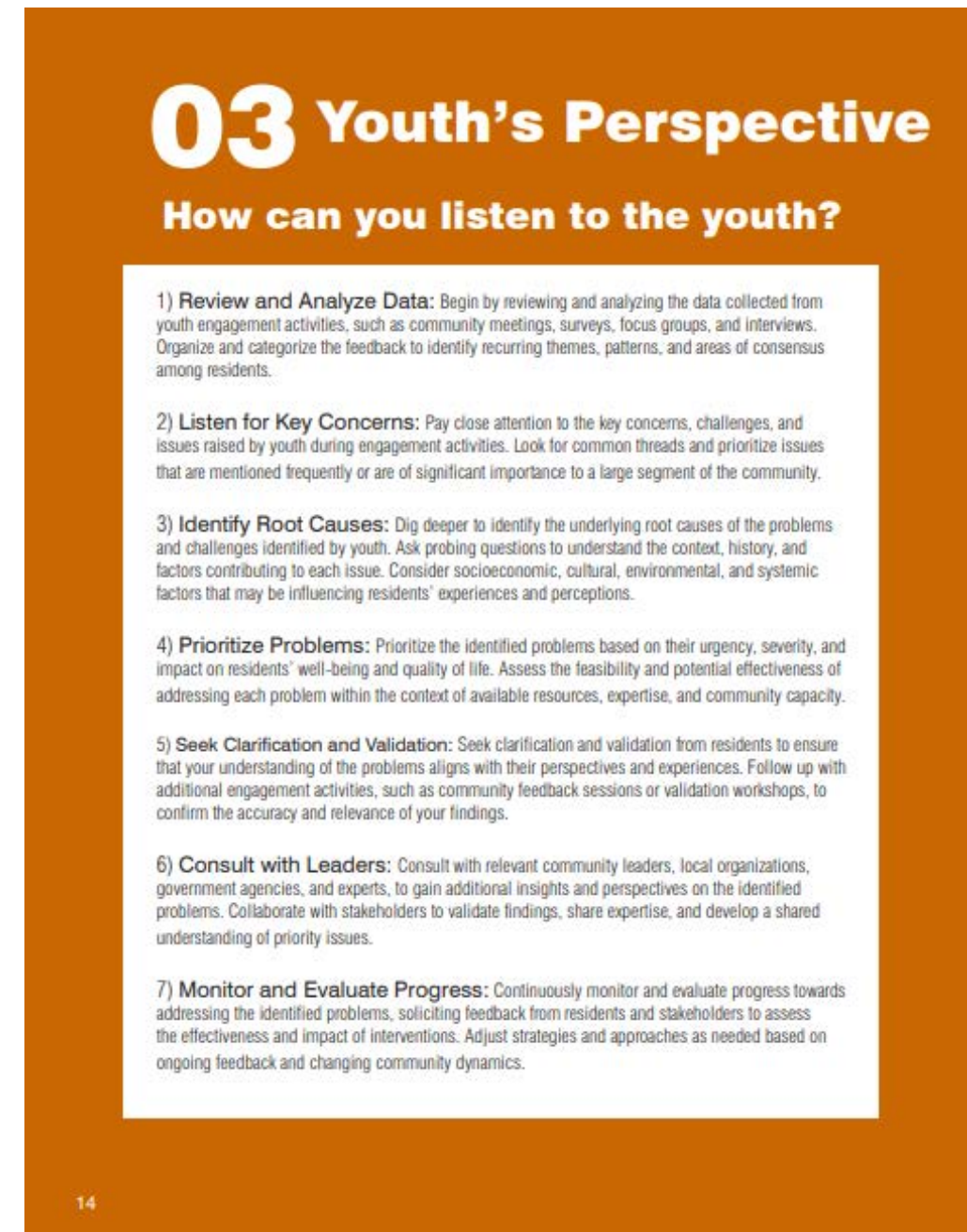
Creating the guidebook “How to Successfully Host Youth Engagement Workshops” as a comprehensive resource designed to bridge the gap between community development and the transformative potential of youth engagement. This essential guide aims to empower individuals, organizations, and communities to harness the creativity, energy, and perspectives of youth in co-creating vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable environments that reflect the needs, aspirations, and values of all community members.

The guidebook emphasizes the importance of collaboration, dialogue, and partnership between youth, community members, stakeholders, and decision-makers. By creating inclusive spaces for meaningful engagement, workshops enable participants to co-create solutions, share insights, and develop strategies that address local challenges, strengthen social bonds, and foster community resilience and cohesion. Recognizing youth as valuable assets and active contributors to community development, the guidebook provides tools, techniques, and best practices to empower youth to voice their opinions, lead initiatives, and drive positive change within their communities.

The guidebook offers practical guidance on planning, organizing, and implementing successful youth engagement workshops, from defining objectives and identifying participants to selecting methodologies and

evaluating outcomes. By providing clear, actionable steps and customizable templates, the guidebook equips readers with the tools and resources needed to design and facilitate engaging and impactful workshops tailored to their community’s unique needs and context.

Fig. 8.1 Youths’ Perspective page from guidebook



09

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9.2 Figures

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Fig. 1.4 Detroit's People Platform

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Fig. 5.3 Downtown Boxing Gym

Youth Program students' work

Fig. 5.4 Downtown Boxing Gym

Youth Program students' work

Fig. 5.5 Downtown Boxing Gym

Youth Program students' work

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Fig. 5.5.2 Images during workshops at Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program

Fig. 6.2 Issues Identified by Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program

Fig. 6.3 Development phases of pocket parks

Fig. 8.1 Youths' Perspective page from guidebook

