

SPRINGFIELD'S URBAN PARK

Adam Tregoning | ASA Symposium | Fall 2016 |



Springfield's Issue

Downtown Springfield, Illinois, the capitol of the state, is seeing a loss of residents and businesses at its core. Reasons for this loss include commercial development along the western corridor, loss of state government jobs and lack of public parking. In order to stimulate the development of downtown Springfield, this poster outlines the ways an urban park space could help bring residents and businesses back. Recently, many cities have succeeded in developing urban parks to revitalize their cores including Millennium Park in Chicago and Klyde Warren Park in Dallas.¹ While these examples vary in size, the impact on the local housing economy was similar drawing numerous developers to the respective areas. If more people were to live downtown and rely less on personal automobiles, a safer, more pedestrian downtown core would be created. If residents instead relied more on public transportation, private downtown surface parking lots in Springfield could be reused for new development. A variety of functions could be developed on those spaces to fulfill the wants and needs of the residents.

In the next ten years, the city of Springfield has plans to convert the soon to be vacant Third Street railway into a green pedestrian corridor, which will run north/south through the heart of downtown. With this green belt acting as a spine, new pocket parks could be developed off of it on the now unused surface parking areas and act as a catalyst for development back to the area. If a fraction of the surface parking lots were utilized, a multitude of pocket parks could be developed throughout the downtown.

This park will impact Springfield throughout the downtown core that will be a catalyst for downtown Springfield development. Using this park as a pilot program, multiple parks could spread around the city to attract residents throughout the city. Spaces designed tie into the culture of the city, and could attract a diverse set of residents and businesses that the city hopes to bring back to the core.

¹ Uhlig, E. K., FAIA, (n.d.). The Millennium Park Effect (pp. 20-25, Rep.). Perez, C. (2015, September). How Klyde Warren Park Has Changed Dallas Real Estate. Retrieved July 07, 2016, from <http://www.dmagazine.com/publications/dceo/2015/september/how-klyde-warren-park-has-changed-downtown-springfield>

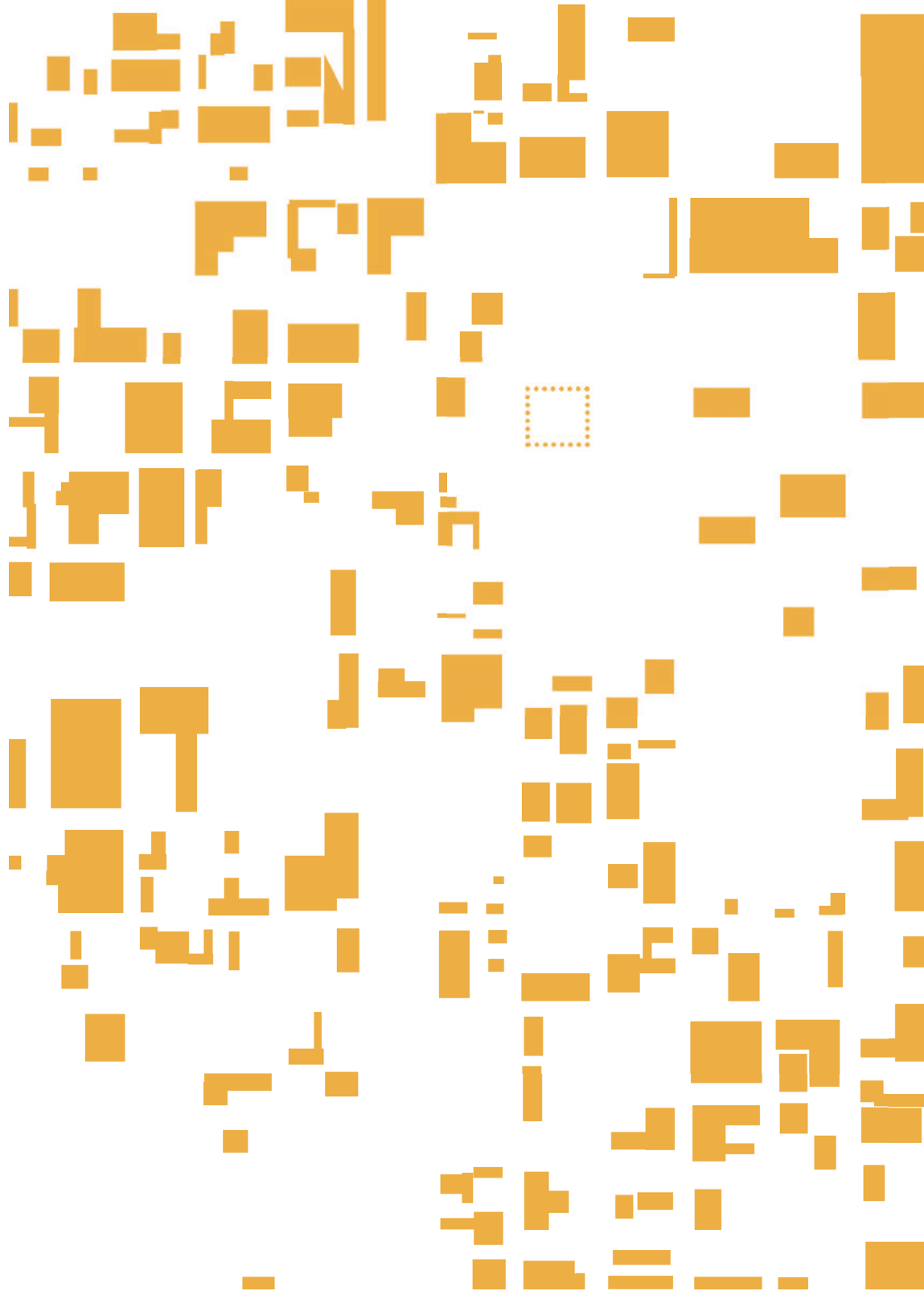
Springfield's Need

Springfield possesses many of the necessary attractions people look for in a city, just spread out over the 65 square miles. In a meeting with several downtown business owners, many commented on how difficult it is to keep visitors downtown for an extended period of time. "The Hoogland board definitely expressed to me that once people leave a show they go out and...They leave." The Hoogland Center for the Arts is a popular performing arts theater downtown that represents the trend for those in the area. Many people do one of three things downtown, commute to work and leave at the end of the day, eat or shop at a specific location then leave, or tour the Lincoln sites and heading back to the hotel or head to the west side.² This development could not only bring more tourists downtown, but also bring more residents to live downtown.

A sense of community is not the largest issue, as many residents of Springfield love their city and the downtown core. This feeling is evident in the number of historic buildings downtown that have been restored rather than torn down. Throughout the year, downtown hosts a variety of festivals. Something that is missing is a larger gathering space that can hold these festivals without shutting down many vital streets downtown.

While Springfield does have a 150 acre park a few miles west of downtown, the downtown core lacks green space.³ There are three small green spaces downtown and none of them give a sense of welcoming. A multifunctional park downtown could provide a huge impact to multiple areas in Springfield. In many urban environments, the addition of green space can provide many benefits for the city including social interaction, environmental, economics and health related.³ Two cities studied to see how urban parks impacted the local housing economy were Chicago and Dallas.

¹ Catching up with downtown Springfield. (2015, May 10). Retrieved July 07, 2016, from <http://springfieldbusinessjournal.com/2016/05/catching-up-with-downtown-springfield/>
² Springfield Park District - Washington Park. (n.d.). Retrieved July 06, 2016, from <http://www.springfieldparks.org/parks/washington/>
³ Tuffelmin, M. (2013, October 09). Why parks matter: How our parks affect city life | The Rapidan. Retrieved July 07, 2016, from <http://www.therapidan.org/why-parks-matter-how-our-parks-affect-city-life/>



Downtown Parking

When looking at an urban area, nine percent parking is a rule of thumb that Christopher Alexander developed when understanding how much land a city should give to parking. If cars were to pass that limit, the environment would become overwhelmed, and create a sense that the area and environment were no longer "ours". People would feel that they do not belong there, because of the intense density of cars. In order to store and use the automobiles, many elements are built to service and house them that humans can not simply use themselves. Roads, driveways and garages are all examples of those iterations, and while humans to "use" those, they do not directly lead to social interaction. In fact they help inhibit interaction with others and the likelihood is it decreases because of these complex mazes. Outside environments do not tend to invite people out, but to instead stay indoors - inside the building they "belong" to and have been a part of. When consolidating the parking, it is important that it is not simply thrust to another location within the city. The nine percent rule applies to every town, and should be carefully planned in order to best understand how the parking should be separated.¹

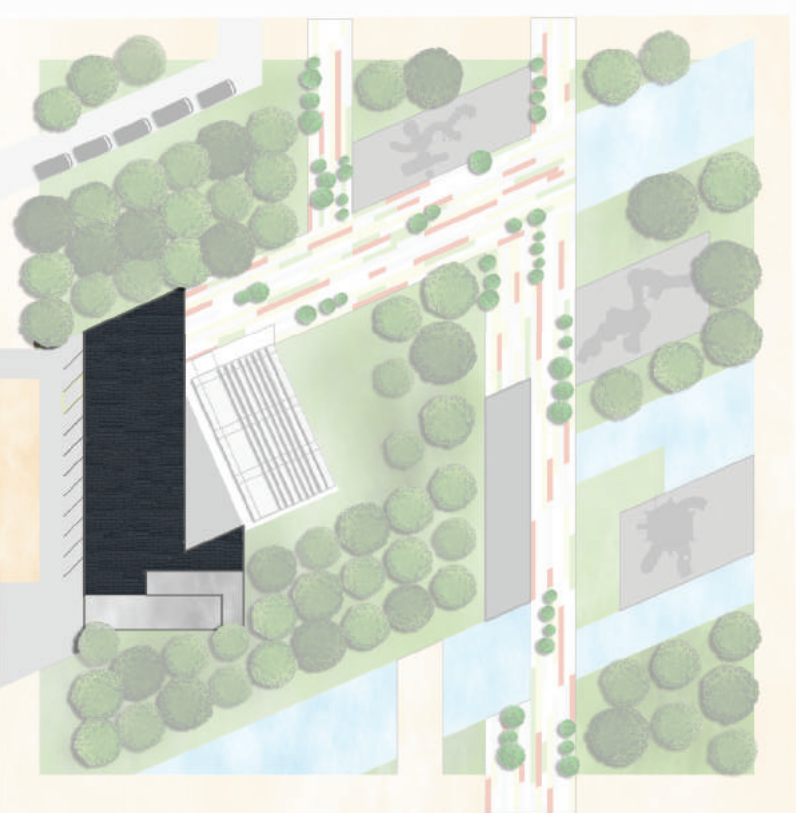
Two parking types that could not only follow the nine percent rule, but also begin to help alleviate those extensive lots are both above ground and underground parking. A difficult one to design for is the underground parking. It is important that the area above the parking is not restricted due to the bay spacing throughout. While these are minor adjustments for the parking structures, keeping within these guidelines can help alleviate automobile presence in urban areas.²

There is no need to completely alleviate automobiles. They serve a purpose, and are not to blame for the destruction of many cities. According to Jane Jacobs, we as humans were the ones that allowed the automobiles to take over cities. In fact the car is cleaner for the city than the earlier option, the horse drawn carriage. Where things went wrong was when the horses were being replaced, six cars would replace the one horse drawn carriage. In reality it should have been the other way around. An efficient process would have been that each mechanized vehicle would take over for six carriages. Consolidating where and how much room there is to park in Springfield would greatly reduce downtown congestion and open the pedestrian tie in the city.³

Downtown Springfield has nearly 26% of the land covered by surface parking lots. That is nearly three times the amount Alexander suggests for urban areas, similar to downtown Springfield. Many of these lots only serve their purpose for one third of the day, parking for employees working from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. After those hours, many times, the lots do not allow for public parking, and remain empty, prohibiting public use.

What if even half of those surface lots were devoted to park space? Those lots could even be reutilized to serve as housing or commercial developments. Any way to densify the downtown core, and put programs in that space that would have functions more than just one third of the day.

¹ Alexander, C., Ishikawa, S., & Silverstein, M. (1977). A pattern language: Towns, buildings, construction. New York: Oxford University Press.
² IBID
³ Jacobs, J. (1989). The Death and Life of Great American Cities. New York, NY: Random House.



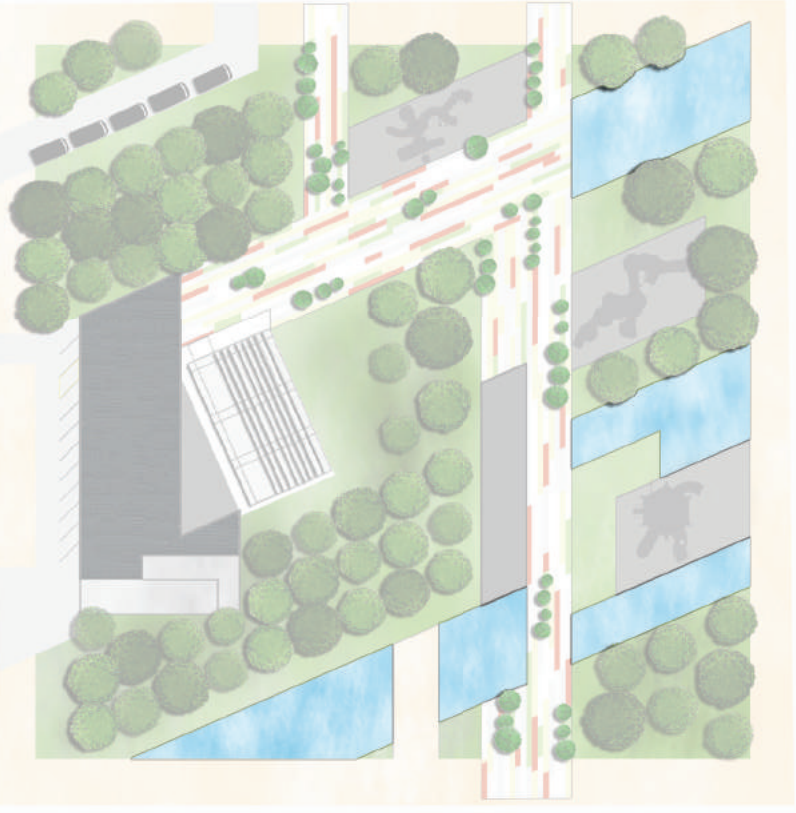
MICROBREWERY

FOOD TRUCKS



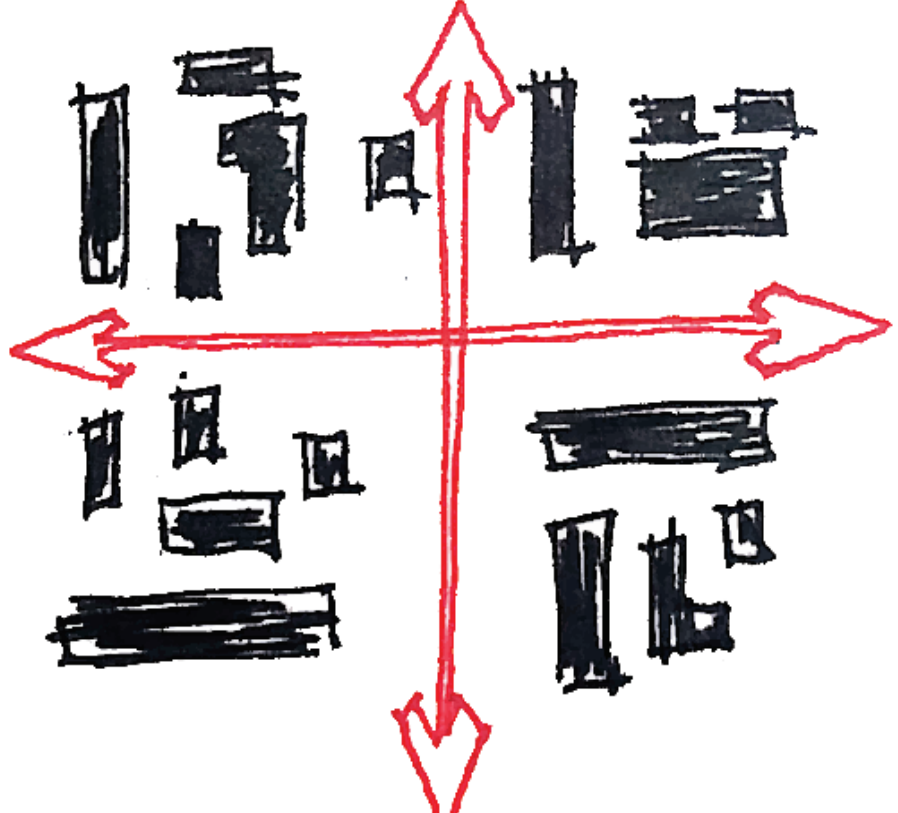
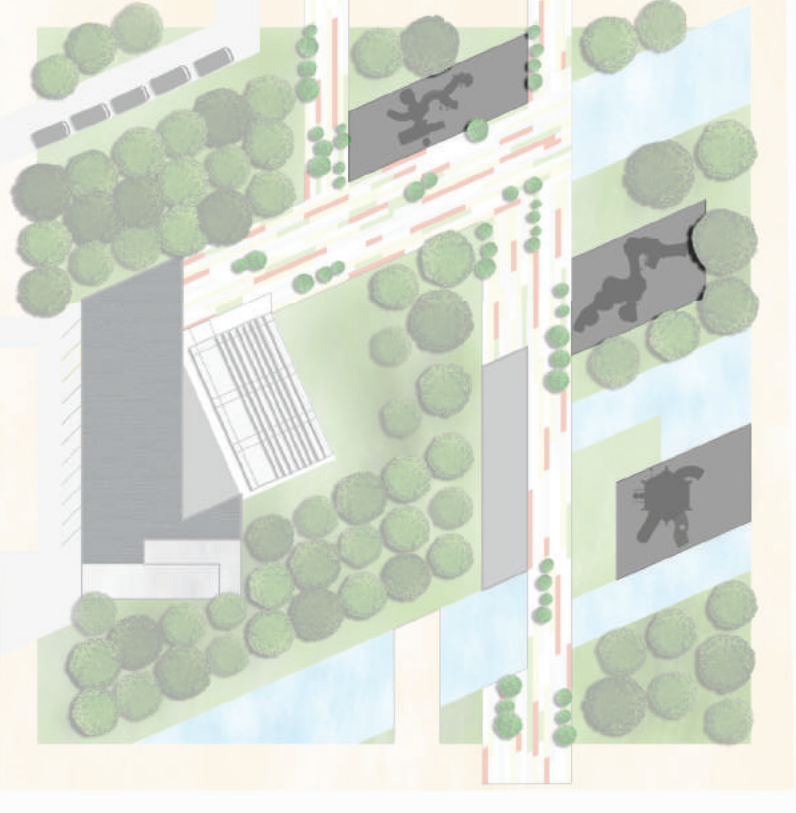
OPEN LAWN

WATER FEATURES

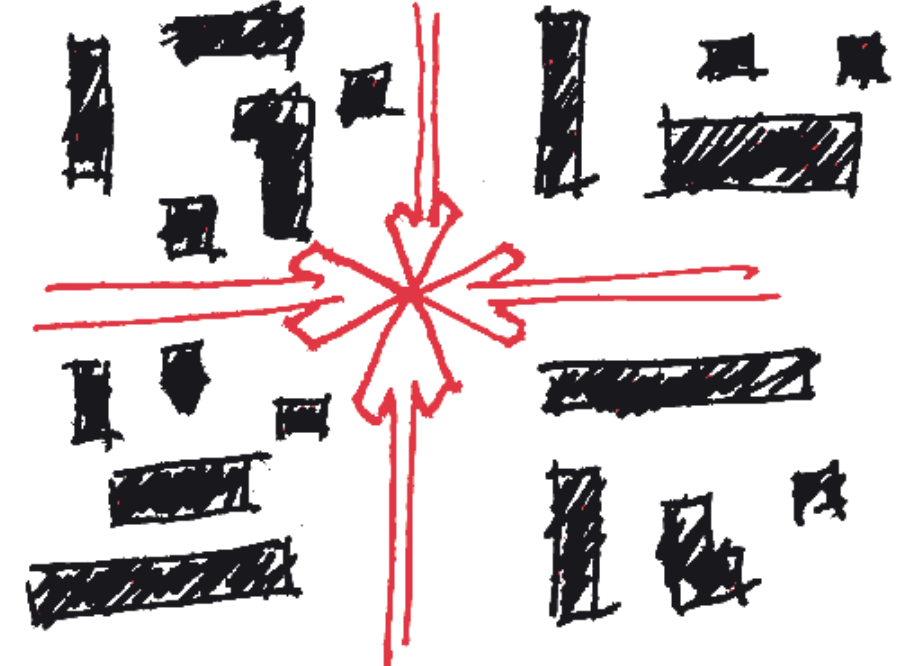


MAIN THROUGHFARE

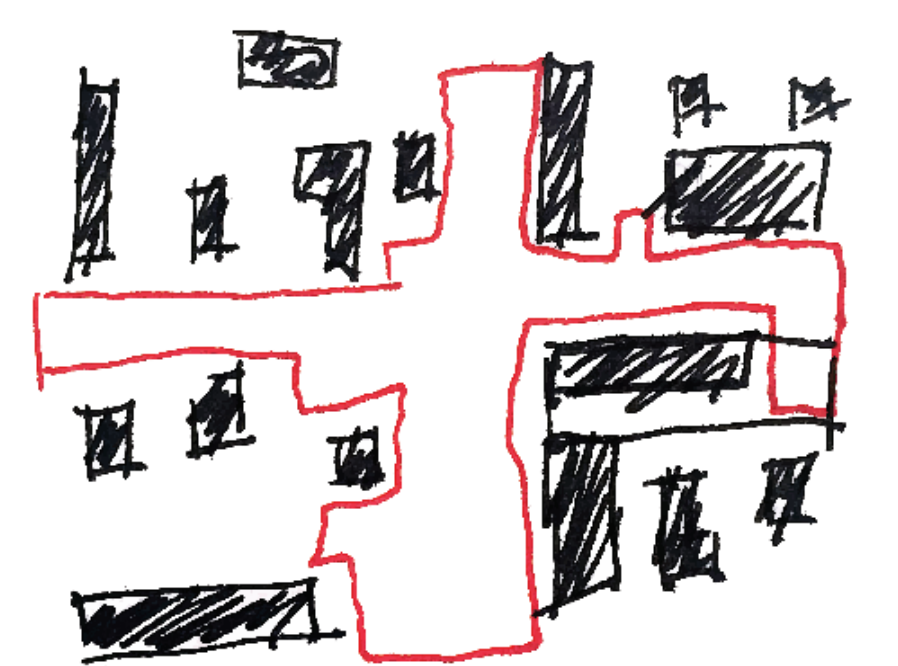
INTERACTIVE PLAY AREAS



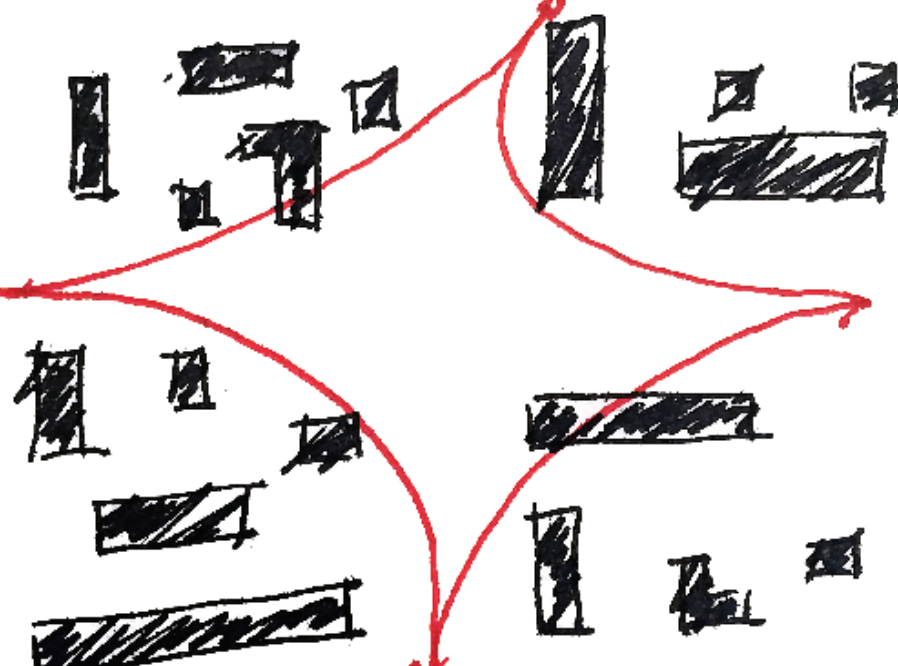
STRUCTURAL CONNECTOR



ACTIVITY ATTRACTOR



PARK BOUNDARIES



STRETCH THE PARK ZONE

