

## Contributing to Quality of Life

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# Contributing to Quality of Life: Anchoring

Author: Marilyn Higgins

Organization: Near Westside Initiative (NWSI)

Program: SALT District

Location: Syracuse, NY

## At a Glance

The Near Westside Initiative (NWSI) improves the quality of life of residents living in the Syracuse Art, Literacy, and Technology (SALT) District—a diverse, post-industrial, impoverished neighborhood bordering downtown Syracuse, New York—by channeling the human and capital resources of the area’s anchor institution, Syracuse University (SU), toward various arts and culture initiatives. Through engaged scholarship, innovative design practices, and community coalition-building during the past seven years, the NWSI has reinvigorated the local economy and fostered greater appreciation for the arts among residents. It has raised \$74 million in new investment, renovated and leased more than 350,000 square feet of abandoned warehouse space, built a Latino cultural center, and brought more than 300 new jobs to the neighborhood.

## Overview

The SALT District is a creative, rapidly revitalizing neighborhood bordering the Armory Square District of downtown Syracuse, New York, approximately 1.5 miles from the SU campus. In 2007, the university created the nonprofit NWSI, with support from the Gifford Foundation, Home Headquarters, Inc., the Syracuse Center of Excellence in Energy and Environmental Systems (COE), and a coalition of neighborhood residents and business partners. The mission of the NWSI is to use the power of art, technology, and innovation, together with neighborhood values and culture, to revitalize this diverse post-industrial, impoverished area. The NWSI’s approach capitalizes on the intellectual and creative resources of SU to improve the quality of life of area residents. From bilingual magazines and newspapers to crime prevention networks, neighborhood nutrition services, and new playground equipment, the NWSI has touched on and improved almost every facet of neighborhood life.

## Context for Creative Placemaking

Syracuse’s Near Westside has a rich multicultural base with 42 percent of residents identifying as African Americans, 31 percent Caucasian, and 23 percent Hispanic/Latino. Of the 3,300 residents, one-in-five are physically or mentally disabled, and one-half have incomes below the poverty line. The rate of homeownership is 19 percent, up from 13 percent seven

years ago, and unemployment is 52 percent. A century-old dilapidated public school stands in the center of the neighborhood, which is also home to a large public housing project and many social service agencies. Highway construction in the 1960s demolished the neighborhood's business district. The subsequent five decades saw no significant private investment, with the exception of the conversion of the Delevan Center, a turn-of-the-century warehouse, into a gallery and studios for 30 working artists. This creative asset, along with an independent grocery store, an activist Catholic Church, and a small band of committed long-time homeowners, composed the Near Westside's primary assets when work on the NWSI began.

### **How Creative Placemaking Helps**

The NWSI board of directors believes that, with the commitment of an anchor institution, art and neighborhood culture can unite to create a revitalized community. The board's creative placemaking approach was influenced in part by the relocation of university faculty and students dedicated to architecture, art, and design to a building adjacent to the SALT District.

From the outset, the NWSI adopted a nontraditional operating model. The initiative was designed to harness, not duplicate, the collective energy and resources of Syracuse University, local and state government, and existing best-in-class organizations. Residents were asked to serve on the NWSI board to ensure that the community would remain at the heart of the decision-making structure. In the NWSI's first five years, the university dedicated one full-time staff person to the effort. SU's Office of Community Engagement and Economic Development (CEED) manages the overall redevelopment initiative, forms the campus/neighborhood teams to work on projects, and leads the redevelopment of vacant commercial structures along with an active board of directors and more than a dozen local, state, and national partners.

### **Implementation**

Success in the SALT District involves engaged scholarship, innovative design, and the synergy of unlikely coalitions. This combination anchors the NWSI's work in the community while providing rich academic experiences for university students.

Engaged scholarship, for example, resulted in a former crack house being transformed into a neighborhood art center by students and faculty through a course entitled "Social Sculpture." The course began with a professor inviting residents to join her students to share their stories and memories of the building. Abandoned telephone booths in the neighborhood have become well-stocked free libraries with resident "curators" through a partnership of Library Science and Industrial Design faculty, neighborhood residents, and university students. A professor of writing helped neighbors create their own "Gifford Street Press," which publishes books on controversial topics such as community/police relations. The neighborhood's first bilingual monthly newspaper is now mailed to every home in the

neighborhood. A nationally recognized watercolorist and SU professor of art brought her students together with neighborhood sixth graders to paint portraits of their neighborhood and publish their work. Communications/Design faculty and students worked with residents to rebrand the Near Westside as the SALT District and develop the community's logo and website. Engaged scholarship has created rich learning experiences for SU students, signaling change to residents and made the Near Westside a place to expect the unexpected.

Innovative design was introduced to the neighborhood by the SU School of Architecture and involves, in most instances, green design informed by the Center of Excellence in Energy. An international competition to design green homes to fit the scale and character of the neighborhood resulted in the construction of family residences, a feature in *Dwell* magazine, coverage in the *Wall Street Journal*, and the decision by several business owners to relocate to the neighborhood and purchase the homes. A design professor and artisan from the neighborhood created a new green process to manufacture unique cast iron skillets. The NWSI is the recipient of the 2014 Richard M. Daley Legacy Award for Global Leadership in Creating Sustainable Cities for these practices.

### **Progress to Date**

The first major public art project of the NWSI was the installation of a dozen giant self-portraits of neighborhood children on the boarded-up windows of the abandoned warehouse at the entrance to the neighborhood. Created by photographer Stephen Mahan, this project juxtaposed aspirational self-portraits of children against the most visible sign of blight.

In 2009, the creation of another dramatic public art installation facilitated neighborhood dialogue and visually disrupted the barrier between the neighborhood and downtown. Artist Steve Powers painted his "Love Letter to Syracuse" on three large rusted elevated train trestles that loomed forebodingly over the intersection of the two neighborhoods. Powers drew his inspiration from going door to door to ask people simple questions, which led to profound statements about the struggles of daily life and the simple joys that take place in the Near Westside. This dialogue established a pattern of conversation between residents and artists that continues to this day, and contributes to the success of the SALTQUARTERS artist-in-residence program.

Another project, "The Talent Agency," created by two faculty members who live in the neighborhood, has deepened this dialogue. Their project enables neighborhood youth to create public art on vacant lots and simultaneously develop portfolios for entrance to art schools and colleges.

During the past seven years, the NWSI has raised \$74 million in new investment, renovated and leased more than 350,000 square feet of abandoned warehouse space, and attracted seven new employers, 40 new households, the city's first Latino cultural center, dozens of artists, and 308 new jobs to the neighborhood. Forty-six faculty and 975 students have infused the university's academic expertise in the areas of art, design, green technology, architecture, and communication into the neighborhood, revitalizing formerly vacant lots,

boarded-up homes, and abandoned warehouses. The region's public broadcasting station has relocated to the SALT District, as has the nation's largest literacy organization.

The premise that art and neighborhood culture can unite to create a revitalized community with the commitment of an anchor institution is proving to be true in Syracuse's SALT District. Resident associations, community gardens, parks, schools, job training, and social networks have all been strengthened as a result.

*Marilyn Higgins is responsible for the Connective Corridor and the Near Westside Initiative, (or SALT District); two multi-million dollar urban redevelopment projects that serve as platforms for engaged, interdisciplinary scholarship at Syracuse University. She is a founder and principal architect of the Near-west Side Initiative, Inc., a nonprofit development corporation revitalizing one of the poorest census tracts in the nation. Ms. Higgins also leads a collaborative effort with the university, Onondaga County and the City of Syracuse to create the Connective Corridor; a signature strip of urban streetscape linking University Hill to downtown Syracuse. Prior to her position at Syracuse University, Ms. Higgins was vice president of economic development for National Grid where she was responsible for attracting new business investment and jobs into the corporation's thirty-seven county, upstate New York service territory.*

# Contributing to Quality of Life: Activating

Author: Bruce Farnsworth

Organization: Light Brigade

Program: Follow the Light

Location: Anchorage, AK

## At a Glance

The Light Brigade is a collective of independent artists based in Anchorage, Alaska, that designs and executes multimedia urban art interventions in the built and natural environment. Its work is site-specific and almost always ephemeral, occurring in most cases only once. Members of the Light Brigade work collaboratively according to an agreed-on dogma that eschews standard theatrical hierarchies and titles, aiming to improve the quality of life of the citizens of Anchorage by “activating” their surroundings in creative and challenging ways. Maintaining its artistic focus on themes of special interest to northern dwellers, the Light Brigade, with the support of the Anchorage Park Foundation (APF) and other partners, planned a large-scale, month-long sculptural installation and multimedia performance series in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the city of Anchorage, culminating in January 2015.

## Overview

A growing interest on the part of audiences for opportunities to enjoy art and culture in nontraditional settings inspired the Light Brigade to consider how people might approach the arts differently. In the past, artists have depended on traditional arts organizations because of their monopoly on access to venues, equipment, audience and subscriber lists, and donors. However, the multidisciplinary tools employed by the Light Brigade—recording, projecting, broadcasting, amplifying, lighting—have become so inexpensive during the past decade that minimally and intermittently funded arts groups now have broad access to them. This encouraged the Light Brigade to bring art to the public in new and unexpected ways. The Light Brigade empowers the citizens of Anchorage by planning, designing, and executing creative, time-based interventions to activate the local landscape and built-environment using the full assortment of tools that its consortium members possess—dance, lighting, illusion, visual and sonic media, augmented reality, and poetry. The Light Brigade’s installations change how audiences relate to their everyday surroundings, which during the long, dark winter months can challenge the resilience of visitors and life-long Anchorage residents alike.

## Context for Creative Placemaking

With its increasingly diverse population of 300,000 residents, Anchorage is by far the

youngest city of its size in the United States. Like many Western cities, the community's economy depends largely on the extraction of natural resources, with its patterns of economic boom and bust and dramatic fluctuations in the population. Policy and business leaders have only recently begun to embrace economic development strategies that look beyond resource extraction, and they have yet to advocate fully for economic and environmental diversification. Progress is slowly being made, however. Community leaders and development entities are starting to acknowledge the role that the arts can play in reimagining how natural and social resources can be leveraged to promote prosperity. For example, the Light Brigade's work has been designated by the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation as part of a new class of community-born assets, citing creative placemaking as one of its seven major areas of focus for community change.

### **How Creative Placemaking Helps**

The Light Brigade has two principal goals. The first is to set the course of Anchorage's next 100 years by helping it become a fully mature winter city, like its vibrant sister cities in the circumpolar north—Oslo, Stockholm, and Alberta. For the Light Brigade, this involves creating opportunities for Anchorage residents to gather in large groups outdoors to celebrate their northern identity. The other goal is premised on the belief that a city's artists set the tone for how the community defines its aspirations, and that business and policy leaders can provide the infrastructure for making those aspirations manifest.

### **Implementation**

Pursuing effective, lasting partnerships is an integral part of the Light Brigade's mission. To this end, the group has nurtured relationships with leaders of many influential institutions whose advocacy, permission, and cooperation are required to carry out the Light Brigade's vision. The Light Brigade's main fiscal partner is the Anchorage Park Foundation, and in recent years the group has engaged the Railroad Corporation, the University of Alaska, the Anchorage Museum, the Rasmuson Foundation, the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, and the Municipality of Anchorage itself. The Light Brigade has staged multimedia interventions of various sizes in downtown Anchorage, the Ship Creek neighborhood, the Spenard neighborhood, and in the Anton Anderson Memorial Railroad Tunnel.

The largest and most ambitious one-time-only, site-specific work was called *Over Beyond Across Through (OBAT)*, which occurred on the exterior of the recently renovated Anchorage Museum. A diverse crowd of 5,000 people filled the museum's front lawn and courtyard on a late-September night in 2013 to view the performance, which consisted of an original work of "expanded cinema," incorporating video imagery and animation projected on the museum's highly reflective surface. Twenty dancers, some suspended in harnesses, engaged in an art form known as "urban aerial dance" on the museum's glass and steel walls. Others danced on three tiers of decks that the Light Brigade had constructed at the edges of the museum's roof-

tops. The dance element of the performance interacted with the projection piece through the use of real-time, movement-activated technology, which was controlled onsite by the Light Brigade's technical team. The piece was driven by an original musical soundscape composed by one of the Light Brigade's artistic collaborators. Since OBAT, the Light Brigade has observed an increased tendency of the museum to offer programming on its outdoor lawn and courtyard. This past winter, for example, the museum screened a movie outdoors in February, and in the summer, it staged several events on the museum lawn.

OBAT took nearly two years to create and required the participation of more than 75 local artists, designers, filmmakers, programmers, technicians, riggers, and stagehands, not to mention the many museum staff members who contributed enormous amounts of their time and energy. Its total budget was \$129,000, and nearly all of it was spent in the local economy, putting money in the hands of artists and local businesses. The Light Brigade spent a considerable sum on material and equipment rentals, all acquired locally with the exception of about \$1,200 worth of specialized climbing rope, which staff members could not procure in town.

### **Progress to Date**

Follow the Light is a large-scale light sculpture installed along the flowing contours of a historic and popular downtown park, and will be activated by a series of performances that are free and open to the public. Thousands of residents and visitors will experience the installation and events held within it during the winter of 2014/2015. This large-scale light sculpture and outdoor performance space will illuminate the far west end of the downtown area. Installation includes temporary decks to support performers, and projection screens of fabric, snow, and ice. Follow the Light is both longer in duration than OBAT and contains a more robust evaluation component than previous installations. Among other techniques used to document effects on and around the chosen site, the Light Brigade mounted a time-lapse camera one month prior to the launch of the project that remained in place for the duration of the month-long installation and for an additional month following the installation's activation. Through such efforts, the Light Brigade hopes to contribute something useful to the ongoing conversation about how best to assess the positive effects of activating public space.

*Bruce Farnsworth is an Anchorage-based writer, community organizer, and founding member of the art group Light Brigade. Previously, Farnsworth founded and directed the MTS Gallery in Anchorage from 2005 through 2011. During that time MTS hosted a renowned program of monthly cutting edge visual art exhibitions and performance art work by both local and visiting or invited artists from around the state and the world. In 2011, Farnsworth was the recipient of the first ever "President's Award" from the Rasmuson Foundation, an award created by the foundation's president and CEO to honor his work in neighborhood revitalization through the arts.*



# Contributing to Quality of Life: “Fixing”

Author: Joseph Kunkel

Organization: Santo Domingo Planning Department (SDPD);  
Santo Domingo Tribal Housing Authority (SDTHA)

Program: The Santo Domingo Heritage Trail Arts Project

Location: Santo Domingo Pueblo, NM

## At a Glance

The Santo Domingo Tribal Housing Authority (SDTHA), in partnership with the Santo Domingo Planning Department (SDPD), preserves and promotes the culture of Pueblo Country—located between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico. It seeks to expand the local economy of Santo Domingo Pueblo, the capital of the 19 Pueblos, and make key improvements to existing infrastructure. In 2012, with the support of the SDTHA and other local partners, SDPD began planning a 1.5-mile walking trail with intermittent stations that showcase artwork and design projects from Santo Domingo’s Native American artists and artisans. Residents were encouraged to contribute at every stage of development, from planning and design to construction. The trail is an essential component of a larger community development project linking housing developments with community- and government-sponsored tribal programs, building cohesion and pride of place among the 19 Pueblo communities.

## Overview

In 2012, the Santo Domingo Planning Department (SDPD) was awarded an Our Town grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to develop a framework for a cultural district and to create an overall community master plan that capitalizes on arts-based economies. This framework highlighted existing economic assets while focusing on potential future development of the area’s community and culture. At the same time, the Santo Domingo Tribal Housing Authority (SDTHA) and SDPD collaborated to host an Enterprise Rose Architectural Fellow (ERAF) to address issues of affordable housing and community engagement and to explore how design can positively affect community, culture, and place. In January 2013, the SDTHA, SDPD, and ERAF reached out to local community artists for input on community arts projects along a proposed 1.5-mile trail. The Santo Domingo Heritage Trail Arts Project is the culmination of these efforts. Through the creative arts, it aims to preserve the Santo Domingo Pueblo’s culture of place while distinguishing Santo Domingo as the capital of the 19 Pueblos.

## Context for Creative Placemaking

The Pueblo of Santo Domingo (also known as Kewa Pueblo) is located between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, along major historic and contemporary trade routes, which date back to the early 1920s. Serving as the capital of the 19 Pueblos, Santo Domingo is home to approximately 5,100 tribal members, with more than one-half of its population still living within the historic pueblo village and surrounding areas. Santo Domingo was a major stop along the famed Route 66 Highway, where local artists sold and traded traditional *heishi* jewelry, turquoise jewelry, and pueblo pottery. To this day, the community boasts a tradition and culture of creativity that contributes significantly to its economy. Even so, as of 2012 more than 30 percent of Santo Domingo's residents were living below the poverty line, and 23 percent were unemployed.

## How Creative Placemaking Helps

Since work on the Heritage Trail began, Santo Domingo has experienced a period of renewal and growth, drawing support from outside the community and from within. Strong tribal leadership on cultural preservation has largely made this possible, resulting in a range of community-centric, place-based projects focused on positive and creative social change. The projects range from master-planning efforts that integrate the rehabilitation of the old historic pueblo core, to the development of culturally appropriate affordable housing. Because more than two-thirds of the community consider themselves artists, makers, and doers, it is both practical and fitting that future development should be based around the creative arts and creative placemaking.

## Implementation

During 2015, the SDTHA and Heritage Trail Planning Committee will select up to 11 local Santo Domingo Artists to design and construct a series of art interventions along the 1.5-mile segment of the Heritage Trail. The planning committee is composed of an architect, a landscape architect, a national artist, a local artist, community members, and a project manager. This small committee will help guide and mentor local artists in their conceptual thinking, visioning, and implementing art interventions. Working with the community and various partners, the planning committee will also develop a unified narrative throughout the trail; each art intervention will have its own unique identity while fitting into a larger, cohesive whole. The interventions will take shape either as an observation platform, rest area, or designated stopping point, heightening the pedestrian's experience both on and off the trail. The section of the trail dedicated to art installations is a major focal point of the project, but SDTHA and SDPD will also develop the remaining mile-long stretch of road, providing pedestrians with a safe place to walk, run, or bike.

The Heritage Trail project is an essential component of a larger community development process. Through careful planning, the SDTHA and SDPD have proposed a network of

walking trails to connect new housing developments with community- and government-sponsored tribal programs and with public transportation. Through this process, the SDTHA and SDPD engaged various organizations and members of the community, including the Santo Domingo Tribal Council, Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health, the Santa Fe Art Institute, and Santo Domingo Natural Resources. Developing sustained relationships with these entities has allowed for inclusive, open dialogue that has given each vested party a sense of ownership, providing a forum for constructive criticism at every stage of the planning process.

### **Progress to Date**

Since starting this project, the SDTHA and SDPD have continued to build stronger relationships with local organizations. The Santa Fe Art Institute has dedicated a summer design-build studio to investigate how a seating and shelter prototype might influence how individuals experience a large natural landscape. This partnership also allows for local youth to participate in the design and construction of permanent objects along the trail. This helps broaden the impact of those affected by the artists' work, transferring a sense of ownership and pride to the community. The SDTHA and SDPD hope to set a precedent for other tribal communities to explore how art, culture, and place can invigorate future growth in their communities.

In 2015, open dialogue with the various partners, tribal programs, and community members will help establish standards through which the SDTHA and SDPD can measure the project's overall success. The most important factor is how the community relates with and supports the project as it continues to grow. Identifying which populations will be affected most is critical to understanding who will use the trail to access the Rail Runner for public transportation, who will use it for recreation purposes, and how the trail will appeal to both local artists and their colleagues from surrounding communities. SDTHA will gather survey data during construction to help meet the specific needs of populations who will use the trail. Once the trail is completed, SDTHA will make the survey data public in an effort to promote community-building elsewhere.

*Joseph Kunkel is an Enterprise Rose Architectural Fellow currently working directly with the Sustainable Native Communities Collaborative (SNCC), and the Santo Domingo Tribal Housing Authority. His most recent focus with SNCC has been to help research and showcase exemplary Native American housing nationwide, and to build and develop emerging best practices. His professional career has centered on community-based educational design. His work ranges from material research and fabrication to community-based planning, design and development. Joseph is currently working on a Cultural District Plan at Santo Domingo Tribe, funded by an a National Endowments for the Arts Our Town grant, which has led to an ArtPlace America grant award. This award will fund multiple arts project tying together two new affordable housing developments on the Santo Domingo Pueblo.*

# Contributing to Quality of Life: Planning

Author: Prema Gupta

Organization: University City District (UCD)

Program: The Porch at 30th Street Station

Location: West Philadelphia, PA

## At a Glance

The Porch at 30th Street Station (The Porch), developed and maintained by the nonprofit University City District (UCD), provides residents of the University City area of West Philadelphia a unique public space to sit, socialize, read, stroll, or take in magnificent views of the Center City skyline. UCD rigorously charts how its 20,000 daily users interact with the site, and periodically modifies The Porch's configurable planters and landscaping, amenities, concessions, and arts programming to fit the community's ever-changing needs and desires. Delivering a public space that is perpetually in tune with its users improves their quality of life by seamlessly integrating the arts into their daily routines.

## Overview

University City District (UCD) is a nonprofit partnership of world-renowned anchor institutions, small businesses, and residents that creates opportunity, improves economic vitality, and raises quality of life standards in the University City area of West Philadelphia. Its primary mission is community revitalization; UCD works within a place-based, data-driven framework to invest in world-class public spaces, address crime and public safety, bring life to commercial corridors, connect low-income residents to careers, and promote job growth and innovation.

In April 2011, UCD seized on a rare opportunity. Earlier that year the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation created a 55' x 500' stretch of sidewalk where 33 parallel parking spaces had previously abutted. UCD wagered that adequate demand existed at the location for a vibrant and engaging public space. In November of that year, UCD unveiled The Porch, which provides the 20,000 pedestrians who pass through the site daily a safe environment to sit, read, stroll, socialize, or take in magnificent views of the Schuylkill River and the Center City skyline. UCD envisions The Porch evolving into an iconic, inviting, and beloved public space that is both attractive to visitors to West Philadelphia and a source of civic pride for area locals. UCD is currently planning an extensive redesign, redevelopment, and expansion of the site that will include robust arts and music programming.

## Context for Creative Placemaking

Philadelphia's University City is the region's leader in education, science, and innovation, with highly esteemed universities and medical institutions. It is a destination for food lovers and culture seekers, with internationally acclaimed dining, museums, and galleries. University City's arts and cultural organizations are some of the fastest growing in the region, and the neighborhood houses numerous performance spaces of all sizes in museums and galleries, hosting artists and festivals regularly. The Porch plays an important role in attracting both artists and audiences. Once a congested parking lane and bland, barren sidewalk, The Porch has quickly become one of the most animated public places in Philadelphia. It sits adjacent to the second busiest train station in the country, between two magnificent historic buildings and within a short walk to more than 16,000 jobs, and serves as a key gateway to the region.

## How Creative Placemaking Helps

Early in the development process, UCD adopted a novel approach to achieve its goals for The Porch. When designing a new park, an architect or landscape artist will typically be hired before the site or budget is established. The assumption is that the designer will understand potential users' needs and behaviors first, and execute a design tailored to those needs. Drawing on a rigorous study of site use patterns using a method inspired by urban sociologist William "Holly" Whyte, The Porch evolves iteratively in response to user behavior.

The physical interventions at the site in 2011—the "hardware"—were basic. The space was divided into a series of outdoor rooms bounded by trees and umbrellas. High-quality seasonal plantings were used because large planters were cost-prohibitive. Agricultural feeding troughs were repurposed with green roof technology to create large, economical planters with trees to filter traffic noise and foster a hospitable pedestrian environment. Movable tables and chairs were added to allow users maximum flexibility in choosing where to sit in relation to the space, other people, and the sun.

To attract new users, UCD also made a sizable investment in the site's "software," or programming: farmers markets, yoga classes, musical performances, and concerts of different scales; food truck events; and a beer garden, among others. Using this approach, UCD effectively "beta tested" the public space, experimenting with a variety of physical configurations and programming to determine what would best attract people to the space before making permanent capital changes.

## Implementation

The first iteration of The Porch cost \$350,000 to design and build, with subsequent yearly maintenance costs of \$150,000 that included a variety of programs, horticulture, security, cleaning, and site modifications. The Porch is arguably the most rigorously observed and analyzed public space in the country. The Porch concierge walks the site hourly, mapping

and noting activity. Are users eating, talking, or participating in programming? Are users evenly divided between male and female? Are they sitting in the sun or the shade? This information is added to Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and allows UCD to observe, analyze, and evaluate use patterns and make small changes. These observations continually inform the long-term redesign of the space, as well as short-term decisions relating to its programming, maintenance, and stewardship. For example, after testing a farmers market, UCD concluded that it was not successful and replaced it with a food truck event.

Before selecting a landscape architect to design the second iteration of The Porch, UCD identified a tentative set of design elements, furnishings, and amenities that included a planted buffer, food kiosk(s), large flexible space for destination programming, adjustable shade structures, and continued use of movable tables and chairs—all informed by observations. For example, UCD has graphed the percentage of users who sit in the shade by the temperature. Although the general conclusion is obvious, UCD will be able to push its design team to develop flexible shade structures with mathematical precision, based on observed behavior at the site. UCD selected a Philadelphia-based design team—landscape architect Studio Bryan Hanes and architecture firm DIGSAU3—to redesign The Porch. Rebar, an artist collective from San Francisco, was recently added to the design team to develop, fabricate, and install a piece of functional art.

## Progress to Date

During the past eighteen months, UCD has demonstrated that iconic, inviting, animated public spaces can substantially improve the quality of life of the communities they serve. Given the vast unmet need for pedestrian amenities, as well as a fiscal climate that restricts public funding for large capital-intensive public space projects, UCD believes an iterative, user-based approach is the ideal way to develop new parks and pedestrian amenities.

*Prema Katari Gupta is University City District's director of planning and economic development, where she is responsible for the development and stewardship of public spaces, bike/ped improvements, public art, business attraction and retention, transportation management, sustainability, and market research. She has worked in real estate at PIDC, the City of Philadelphia's economic development authority, and at the Urban Land Institute, where she authored a book on placemaking in mixed-use development. Prema is a graduate of Bowdoin College and has a master's degree from University of Pennsylvania School of Design and a certificate in real estate from the Wharton School.*