



Innovation: Identifying a novel mechanism for quickly introducing new public space in regions of the city characterized as park poor.

Impact: This project resulted in a municipal policy framework that made these public spaces feasible. With the policy change in effect (which KDI helped facilitate), these programs created a series of new public spaces in a lower-income BIPOC neighborhoods of Los Angeles.

LA Public Space Initiative: Play Streets / Adopt-A-Lot

Two programs that transforms city streets and un-used lots into vibrant spaces for community recreation.

Location: Los Angeles, CA

Team: Los Angeles Department of Transportation and Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti / Inclusive Action for the City, Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust

Completion date: 2015 - Ongoing

Los Angeles faces extreme public space inequity. While high-income neighborhoods with predominantly White populations have many public space options, lower-income BIPOC communities lack access to safe and healthy public spaces. For our Los Angeles Public Space Initiative, we designed and implemented multiple innovative programs—LA Play Streets and Adopt-A-Lot—that delivered new public spaces in neighborhoods that have long lacked such space.



Design + Build

Plan + Program

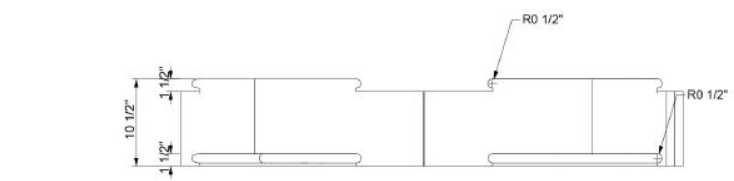
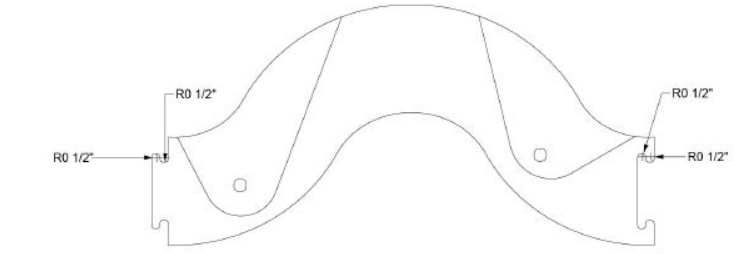
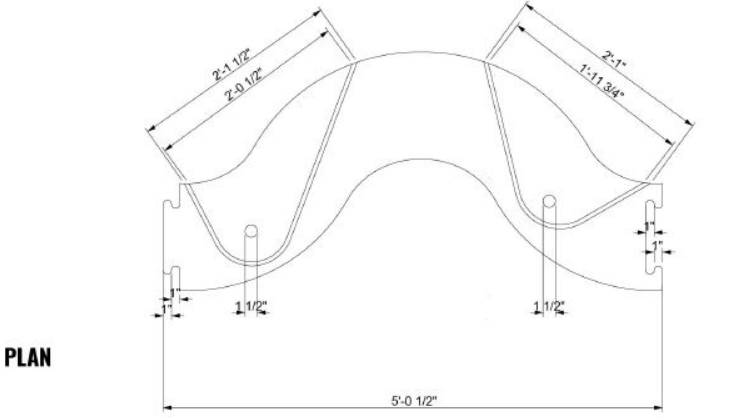
Advocate + Educate

Research + Test



Play Streets In 2015, KDI launched Play Streets, an ongoing initiative that transforms Los Angeles streets into vibrant public spaces. To do this, we partnered with the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), giving residents the legal, technical, and operational support to realize these neighborhood-based public spaces. In Los Angeles, the city has an overabundance of streets with the single purpose of conveying automobiles, but it also has a dire shortage of public spaces, particularly in low-income communities of color. So this project sets out to transform that which is abundant, streets, into that which is lacking, public space. This project delivers public spaces to neighborhoods quickly and with few upfront costs, sidestepping what can be a many-years-long approval and construction process. The program was adapted by other cities during the COVID-19 pandemic as a way to provide outdoor space for people to safely gather.

KDI's landscape architecture scope includes considerations at a wide range of scales. Here, with Play Streets, we designed and fabricated a Wobble—a custom furniture element that communities can use and reconfigure in multiple ways, creating seating and play elements at various scales.



SECTION ELEVATION

Local community groups had full agency over how best to use their new spaces. Here, a young resident voices her choice.



Adopt -A-Lot Over half of Los Angeles residents do not have walkable access to public space. And because of systemic inequities built into the city's land use policies, nearly all the communities in that 50 percent cohort are low income communities of color, meaning access to public space has become a function of race and income. To undo that disparity, KDI launched and continues to lead an initiative that transforms city-owned vacant lots into welcoming, vibrant community spaces. Working with the Mayor's Office of Budget & Innovation, the General Services Department, the City Attorney, and elected officials, we created the Adopt-A-Lot pilot program as the mechanism to transform these underutilized city assets into much needed amenities. In this program, resident groups can 'adopt' lots for up to two years, designing, building, programming, and maintaining them with technical assistance from KDI. As part of this initiative, KDI designed and fabricated a user-friendly kit-of-parts that allows communities to create public space features—including seating, play equipment, and performance space—without needing additional design services or technical expertise. At the end of the adoption period, groups will have the option to jointly develop the lots into permanent public spaces. To date, we have worked with more than 1,500 residents on a series of vacant lot activations in the Watts, El Sereno, and North Hills neighborhoods, with more neighborhoods to come, providing much needed open space in park-poor neighborhoods, all within a matter of months.





The design for Adopt-A-Lot included not only the policy framework to make the program possible, but also a user-friendly kit of parts that allow communities to adapt into seating, shade, raised gardens, and play elements.